

Training and Assessment FAQs

What is a DOPS assessment?

DOPS stands for Direct Observation of Practical Skills. They provide a framework for a standardised assessment of practical tasks and are used to evidence your competency, alongside your training records. When you have a DOPS assessment you are being assessed against the DOPS for the technique or process you are following.

Can I write a DOPS?

Only assessors can write DOPS. If your group doesn't have an assessor, contact the [Training Centre](#) for help. When drafted, all DOPS must be sent to the [Training Centre](#) to be confirmed and added to MCMS and Moodle for use. Please check there is not already a DOPS written before creating a draft.

Where can I find DOPS?

DOPS are on MCMS and they are also housed on a Moodle site. All assessors and NACWOs have access to the Moodle site. If you need any help finding a DOPS, please contact the [Training Centre](#).

Where can I find SOPs?

SOPs are also on MCMS. If you need any help with SOPs, contact the UBS Operations and Standards Coordinator, [Helen Cooper](#).

Which tasks do I need to be DOPS assessed in?

You need a DOPS assessment for any husbandry, regulated, or non-regulated procedure that you will be carrying out.

Why do I need to be assessed for husbandry tasks?

Although many husbandry tasks seem 'unskilled' or 'low risk', the direct effect on the animals' welfare cannot be underestimated. Poor technique and lack of understanding of the process can cause unnecessary suffering – physical and / or psychological – to an animal, as well as any regulated procedure. By ensuring training and assessment of all techniques performed with animals, we are minimising the negative effects on the animal's welfare and so enhancing the robustness of the resulting data.

Training and assessing of husbandry / non-regulated procedures ensures at least a minimum standard is consistently met by all those performing that same technique. Under ASPA, all aspects of animal care – not just regulated procedures – must meet strict standards. Training and assessment demonstrate compliance and accountability.

Can I be assessed against more than one DOPS at the same time?

Yes. If you are carrying out processes which will fit together e.g. animal handling and weighing, it can save time to be assessed together. This is also routinely done when carrying out Schedule 1 and confirmation methods. Please request all assessments you require when organising your assessments, as your assessor may not be able to accommodate additional DOPS which haven't been pre-agreed.

How long does it take to get trained and assessed?

This will vary based on your previous experience and how quickly you learn the skills. There is no set amount of time people must train for. The trainee is deemed ready for assessment when the skills have reached an appropriate level to pass the assessment. Please book training and assessments promptly and attend any booked sessions to ensure the process is as fast as possible.

Why do we need to have separate trainers and assessors?

Good practice in regulated competence assessment normally means that the assessment is undertaken by someone who can objectively verify the outcomes — not simply by the same person who delivered the training — to avoid bias and ensure the Home Office can have confidence in licence applications.

This principle is implicit in the Home Office frameworks and in historical training/assessment guidance developed under ASPA and related EU-derived standards.

Who can train?

UBS Staff: Only UBS staff who have completed the Train the Trainer course are able to train. They will only be able to train in tasks which they are competent in themselves (with an up-to-date MCMS competency), and for which they are deemed to be an appropriate trainer.

Research staff: Can train in any technique they are competent in, except Schedule 1 techniques which are always trained by UBS staff. We encourage group leaders and/or researcher assessors to be proactive in ensuring trainers have an appropriate skill level and attitude towards the task, and it is encouraged that they attend a Train the Trainer course.

I am a researcher and am competent in a technique, but MCMS doesn't show me as a trainer. Why is this?

There is no overarching 'trainer' role on MCMS, instead people must be manually added as a trainer for each technique they wish to train. To be marked as a trainer on MCMS, please contact the [Training Centre](#) or ask your local UBS Or researcher assessors who will be able to amend your records.

When you are being assessed, you may also tell your assessor that you intend to be a trainer, and they can mark you as such when they upload your assessment.

Who can assess?

Both UBS and research staff must have completed an assessor course to be an assessor. This is either the Nominated or Researcher Assessor course. Upon completion, they are given assessor status.

An assessor does not need an up-to-date competency on MCMS to assess a technique however they must have a good enough understanding of the task to assess in it. An example of this is where an individual previously had competency but no longer carries out the technique, or if their competency has recently lapsed. Assessors should not usually assess techniques or species they have no experience in. **Researcher assessors should never assess Schedule 1 techniques which are all assessed by UBS staff.**

Can I become an assessor?

Research staff can become assessors by completing the [Researcher Assessor course](#). UBS staff should speak to their manager about whether they can attend the [Nominated Assessor course](#).

Which DOPS need to be trained/assessed by UBS staff?

All Schedule 1 techniques must be trained and assessed by UBS staff.

In facilities where there are automated watering systems (AWS), they are also trained and assessed by UBS staff. Some facilities may prefer animal handling is trained and/or assessed by UBS staff. If you are not sure about this, please speak to your facility NACWO or assessors.

In the aquatics facilities, some basic DOPS are completed prior to access being granted to the facility as part of the induction process.

How do I get assessed for new techniques or new pieces of equipment?

For novel techniques, speak to your NACWO and NVS or contact the Training Centre. There are a range of options available depending on the complexity of the process and the skills involved. Please contact us as soon as you are aware of this upcoming need to avoid delays.

I have a new team member starting. What should I do to make their training and assessment as smooth as possible?

Contact your NACWO as early as possible to book initial training, such as induction, and ensure you are clear on the requirements for Occupational Health clearance and any security checks.

Book training and assessment sessions well in advance and allow time for trainees to take several sessions to attain competency in handling and Schedule 1, especially if new to handling animals.

You do not need to wait until the PIL course has been passed to arrange any of this or to carry out induction and basic handling training. ***Please note that trainees will not be able to start training in any regulated procedures until the PIL has been received.***

Who can I ask about training and assessment?

The [Training Centre](#) will usually be the first point of contact for any training and assessment queries. You may also speak to your NACWO and local trainers and assessors.

What do I need to do when a competency is coming up to expiry?

There are a few options available.

1. Arrange a re-assessment or review as soon as possible
2. De-activate the record(s) if it is not currently required but this may change. For example, you don't currently carry out the procedure but may in the future
3. Delete the record(s) if you will not be carrying out the procedure for the foreseeable future, for example, you have moved from working with fish to working with rodents on a permanent basis

You should arrange re-assessments yourself. For deactivation or deletion of records contact the [Training Centre](#) or the Database Manager [Mary Ann Haskings](#)

Competency reviews vs competency reassessments – what is the difference? What documentation is needed?

A reassessment is carried out if people have not been regularly performing the task or if there has been a problem / lapse of competency. **In a reassessment, a DOPS assessment is carried out and is uploaded to the record.**

A review is carried out if people have been consistently performing the technique with no problems throughout the review period. **In a review, the DOPS assessment is used as a guide and isn't required to be completed and uploaded unless there is no DOPS assessment already on the system.** The assessor watches the technique and confirms on MCMS that a review has taken place by adding an assessment. Please write 'competency review' in the comments box.

What can I do if I'm unhappy with any aspect of training and assessment within UBS facilities?

If you are experiencing any delays with organising training or assessments, or unhappy with any aspect of training or assessment, we encourage you to contact the training team at ubstraining@admin.cam.ac.uk or the NTCO team at ubsntco@admin.cam.ac.uk. Please give us as much detail as possible so we can help and/or investigate any issues.