Approving Competence Standards: guidance for Boards of Studies and College Curriculum Boards (September 2026)

This academic year 2026-27 is the first year Boards of Studies and College curriculum Boards have been required to endorse and approve Competence Standards (CS). The following guidance is intended as useful information to support members of BoS and College committees to undertake this task effectively. Please ensure all members of Boards of Studies and College Curriculum Committees have completed the Competence Standards and Reasonable adjustments online training

Competence Standards Frequently Asked Questions are available to supplement the brief guidance below.

If you have completed the online course, read the guidance here, and checked the Frequently asked Questions and still need further support, we invite **College Curriculum Board members and BoS Convenors** to contact Catherine Bovill or Victoria Buchanan. If both are unavailable, please contact your College Dean for Education.

1. Competence Standards are normally captured at **programme level**.
2. **Programmes which are overseen by one or more professional bodies are more likely to have CS**. These CS will be either word for word, or closely aligned with requirements set out by the professional body. Although the professional body may not use the term competence standards, but something similar e.g. 'requirements', 'Day one competencies', 'core capabilities'.
3. A good test of whether something is a competence standard or not is whether a student can graduate from the programme without having met the particular CS. **If there is flexibility for a student not to meet the standard but still graduate, it is not a CS**. CS are non-negotiable required standards every student needs to meet. According to the equality act, both programme and course learning outcomes should be adjustable although the degree of adjustment may be affected by whether a programme learning outcome is closely aligned with one or more CS.
4. **We do not want to proliferate CS** unnecessarily, as it may create a barrier to some disabled students accessing programmes.
5. **We would expect course learning outcomes to feed into the achievement of programme level CS**. The CS itself remains non-negotiable and can't be adjusted. But at course level, reasonable adjustments to assessments should be made for disabled students.
6. It will be **important to distinguish core areas of the curriculum considered to be really important to the discipline, from CS**. Colleagues may believe some important parts of the curriculum or ways students learn should be a CS but they may just be important elements of the curriculum apart from in some isolated instances. Examples are given here to illustrate this with common areas of confusion.
    a. **Group work**. Group work may be a very important approach to learning in some disciplines, but if the programme does not set a pass/fail test of group working skills, it's unlikely this is a CS. It is perfectly acceptable for Programme information to emphasise the importance of/extensiveness of group working within the curriculum without this being a CS. Exceptions may be where group/team working is specifically required by a professional body.

b. **English language competence**. A specific English language competence level is often an entry requirement for a programme. For most programmes we do not have the same requirement for exit, which makes it unlikely in most cases that this is a CS. It is also very unusual to have CS that would apply across a range of degree programmes. Language programmes may have CS related to required levels of speaking, writing, reading, listening to a language.
c. **Oral presentations**. Oral presentations are an assessment method and are usually eligible for reasonable adjustments. It is unusual for oral presentations to be a CS. There are some limited exceptions where e.g. a PRSB stipulates competence in presenting to a professional group.

Further information about recording CS and communicating with students:

Competence Standards approved by the College Curriculum Board must be uploaded into Euclid so that standard wording of the CS is captured in the DPT notes section (to appear in notes for the Programme Final year of study), and then in programme handbooks. Any CS which may cause potential barriers to prospective disabled students should be noted in Degree finder, with encouragement to contact the Programme Director if a student is in doubt whether they would be able to successfully complete the programme. An example is provided here:

Example of Disclaimer statement:

If you have any pre-existing medical conditions that could affect your health or ability to safely participate in anatomy lab activities, this may impact your ability to meet some programme requirements. Please contact the Programme Director before applying so we can discuss any appropriate support or adjustments. MSc Clinical Anatomy