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# Competence frameworks for building safety

Part 1: Core criteria – Code of practice

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### Summary of pages

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# Foreword

## Publishing information

This part of BS 8670 is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 31 May 2024. It was prepared by Technical Committee CPB/1, *Competence in the Built Environment*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to the committee manager.

BSI Committee CPB/1 takes collective responsibility for the preparation of this part of BS 8670. The Committee wishes to acknowledge the personal contribution of Richard Harral as Technical Author.

## Supersession

This part of BS 8670 supersedes BSI Flex 8670 v3.0:2021-04, which is withdrawn.

## Relationship with other publications

BS 8670 is expected to be published in the following parts:

- Part 1: *Core criteria; and*
- Part 2: *Core criteria for construction products<sup>1)</sup>*

## Information about this document

This part of BS 8670 has its origins as BSI Flex 8670, versions 1, 2 and 3. This part of BS 8670 builds upon experiential feedback from industry based on putting the BSI Flex into operation.

This part of BS 8670 is part of a wider programme of work around competence in the built environment<sup>2)</sup>.

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As a code of practice, this part of BS 8670 takes the form of recommendations and guidance. It is not to be quoted as if it were a specification. Users are expected to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

Users may substitute any of the recommendations in this part of BS 8670 with practices of equivalent or better outcome. Any user claiming compliance with this British Standard is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

<sup>1)</sup> Under development.

<sup>2)</sup> For more information, go to: <https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/industries-and-sectors/construction-and-the-built-environment/built-environment-competence-standards/>

### **Presentational conventions**

The provisions of this document are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “should”.

*Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type and does not constitute a normative element.*

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* is used (e.g. “organization” rather than “organisation”).

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## 0 Introduction

### 0.1 Background

People have the right to expect that buildings and their immediate environment are designed, built and maintained safely. Occupants (including residents, workers and visitors) need to have confidence and trust in the people responsible for ensuring that their interests are properly considered, and that safety is a priority. Assuring the competence of all who work in industries within the built environment sector throughout the life cycle of a building is key to achieving this outcome.

This part of BS 8670 sets core building safety criteria for built environment competence frameworks. It is intended that the core criteria be contextualized within sector-specific frameworks to reflect the appropriate scope and level of competence required for an individual to undertake a defined role, function, activity or task. Contextualization can be:

- a) within sector-specific competence frameworks, e.g. to reflect different levels of sector priority or responsibility;
- b) in relation to specific types of buildings (e.g. higher-risk buildings) or activities (e.g. manufacturing of construction products); or
- c) linked to other standards for organizational competence, which establish the context necessary for individual competence.

Compliance with this part of BS 8670 in the development of competence frameworks can be achieved by mapping new or existing sector-specific competence frameworks against the core competence criteria and scope, and explaining any divergence arising from the context within which the framework will be used (see 0.4).

Sector-specific competence frameworks are defined as being competence frameworks relevant to a specific role, function, activity, task, trade or discipline. In applying this part of BS 8670, it is recognized that owners might need to modify language to be relevant to their target audience. It is important that this is recorded as part of any mapping process.

This part of BS 8670 is one part of a broader standards framework for the competence of individuals in the built environment.

### 0.2 Objectives

This part of BS 8670 is included to support wider industry reform, with the ultimate objective of minimizing safety risks and improving the protection of consumers and occupants, including residents in and about buildings. There are three overarching objectives:

- a) set core criteria for building safety competence, prioritizing fire safety, structural safety and public health for all individuals working in the built environment, to improve safety outcomes throughout the building life cycle;
- b) facilitate consistent and objective development, evaluation or use of sector-specific competence frameworks by certification, licensing, accrediting, qualifying, and validating bodies, regulators, clients and employers; and
- c) support a more consistent approach in the development and use of competence frameworks across the built environment.

This part of BS 8670 is also intended to meet the following specific objectives:

- 1) support the development of a robust oversight, monitoring and feedback process for sector-specific competence frameworks;
- 2) support the development of competence frameworks for key duty-holding or appointed roles in managing safety;
- 3) identify core building safety criteria that are likely to be common to all sector-specific competence frameworks;
- 4) support commonality and consistency in building safety competence across sector-specific frameworks; and
- 5) support individuals and organizations working in the built environment to adopt an approach based on validation and periodic revalidation.

### 0.3 Competence and competence frameworks

#### 0.3.1 General

Competence-based assessment is widely adopted across most industries. However, the definition of competence, and how to assess it, can vary across or even within sectors. Competence is used as one part of a systemic approach to describing job roles and job specifications, interviewing candidates for employment or promotion, and managing performance. It is also commonly used to assess eligibility for qualification, membership, registration, certification and licensing in specific disciplines or roles.

It is common for legislation aimed at protecting people to set requirements for duty holders to check the competence of individuals undertaking work. This part of BS 8670 enables this principle to be extended more broadly so that competence assessment also includes those whose work impacts on the safety of buildings.

While oversight of competence might rest with organizations, professional, trade or training bodies, competence is ultimately an individual responsibility relevant to every person in the construction and built environment workforce. Embedding building safety competence at all levels and across all roles, functions, tasks and activities is critical to protecting occupants, including residents, throughout the building life cycle.

This part of BS 8670 is intended for use in the development and evaluation of sector-specific competence frameworks. It is not intended for use as a competence framework against which individuals can be directly assessed.

This part of BS 8670 sets out core criteria against which sector-specific competence frameworks can be developed or assessed in relation to building safety, including:

- a) core criteria for the information, structure and procedural components of sector-specific competence frameworks;
- b) core behavioural criteria to support industry in the development of a stronger safety culture; and
- c) core competence criteria for building safety, which need to be identifiable within sector-specific competence frameworks where relevant to the role, function, activities or tasks covered by that framework.

The majority of a typical building's life consists of being maintained or refurbished while in occupation, which means that managing building safety during this period is as important as during initial construction. As existing buildings significantly outnumber new construction projects, residual risks are mainly found in this existing stock. As a result, it is important that sector-specific

frameworks are structured to maintain a balance of competence between new and existing buildings, including alterations, extensions, retrofit, renovation, repair and maintenance, change of use or function, and other work where relevant.

*NOTE* The core competence recommendations within this part of BS 8670 are to be interpreted in the context of the role, function, activities or tasks relevant to each sector-specific framework.

### 0.3.2 Competence

Competence is defined in many different ways across different industries. This is necessary to reflect the specific circumstances and meet the specific needs of the individuals and organizations that employ individuals operating in those industries.

The work undertaken by individuals in the built environment is particularly diverse and encompasses a wide range of roles, including installers, trades, managers, construction professionals, financial administration, procurement specialists, commissioners, regulators and manufacturing disciplines.

In the context of this part of BS 8670, for an individual to be deemed competent means that they need to have the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience, combined with appropriate behaviours, and an understanding of the limits of their own competence, to be able to fulfil their defined role, function or activity and carry out appropriate tasks. This is sometimes referred to by the abbreviation SKEB.

Behavioural competence, when combined with existing skills, knowledge and experience, helps to engender a sense of individual responsibility and accountability as part of an effective and strong safety culture.

An assessment of skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours explores whether an individual demonstrates general competences designed to anticipate the broad demands of particular roles, functions, activities or tasks. Assessment cannot predict future circumstances and complexities or give complete assurance that an individual in the same role will always respond in the same way.

### 0.3.3 Validation and revalidation

Validation is the process by which an individual is assessed as being competent to fulfil a specific role. This might give access to qualification registration, a licence to practise or the ability to work in a given role, and typically follows a period of monitored and supervised development.

Revalidation is a periodic reassessment or re-evaluation of competence which provides assurance that the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours have been maintained or developed such that the individual remains competent to fulfil the specified role. The process for revalidation needs to be proportionate, reasonable, effective and robust. While validation and revalidation add cost and take time, individual competency adds value for both the individual and their business.

The time period between revalidations varies, depending on a number of factors, including:

- a) an assessment of risk relating to the role – the higher the risks, the more frequently revalidation might need to be undertaken;
- b) the adequacy or otherwise of measures available to sustain and maintain competence; and
- c) the rate of change of skills and knowledge relevant to the role – where good practice, contextual risks (including technology), regulatory requirements or duties are changing quickly, more frequent revalidation might be necessary.

Revalidation processes might also use a wider range of experiential evidence, including but not limited to training, learning and development activities undertaken in the intervening period.

### 0.3.4 Maintaining and developing competence

Competence can become out of date over time and requires positive action to maintain.

This includes building on and refreshing skills, knowledge and understanding, identifying specific requirements relevant to work being undertaken, and keeping abreast of changes in context, such as regulation or technology.

Maintaining competence through continuing professional development (CPD) includes informal and formal activities. This can include activities such as training and refresher courses, toolbox talks, mentoring or supervision, and formal learning.

Improving competence through the development of new skills is equally important in relation to new or changing building knowledge, technology or practices, particularly where this can impact on building safety or consumer protection.

CPD is best undertaken as part of a planned programme of activity or recorded personal development plan relevant to the individual's responsibility and career path. It is good practice for employers to adopt a framework for assessing the effectiveness of CPD undertaken by their employees and contracted individuals.

To aid in consistency, it is beneficial for competence frameworks to set out expectations for maintaining competence for the different roles, functions, activities and tasks to which they apply. This includes not only the type, scale and complexity of the work being undertaken when measured against established skills, knowledge and experience, but also any new context or expected standards of conduct affecting behavioural requirements.

### 0.3.5 Limits of competence

It is vital that people do not act beyond the limits of their competence, to avoid exposing themselves and potentially other people to a wide range of risks. This includes risk of death or injury, litigation, prosecution and breach of contract (among others).

It is important that competence frameworks and training and development regimes establish the right conditions so that individuals can take reasonable steps to manage their limits of competence. This might include:

- a) making provision so that people are aware of how to manage the limits of their own competence, and in particular that they are able to identify when they have been tasked with or are about to undertake something that exceeds their ability to do so safely;
- b) enabling a culture where it is seen as the right thing to do to flag concerns about limits of competence, and where individuals have the necessary authority to act to mitigate risks;
- c) managing limits of competence of self and others under their direct supervision, including taking mitigating actions (such as providing additional training) or managing risks (e.g. by reallocating work to suitably competent people); and
- d) being aware of when and how to check that third parties who are procured, appointed or contracted to undertake work are themselves competent to manage the limits of their own competence and those working under their supervision, and that they have appropriate tools and resources to do so.

A positive culture of both disclosure and trust is required such that people and organizations are willing to acknowledge and manage the limits of their competence. It is important that individuals within organizations are able to speak freely, openly and truthfully in order to support safe outcomes.

## 0.4 Mapping against this part of BS 8670

There are many existing competence frameworks which have been developed prior to this part of BS 8670.

Compliance with this part of BS 8670 can be demonstrated through a process of mapping rather than through direct adoption of its structure and terminology. Mapping can also be used in the development of new sector-specific competence frameworks to help achieve alignment with the recommendations of this part of BS 8670.

The recommended approach to undertake mapping against this part of BS 8670 involves:

- a) clearly identifying the scope of the sector-specific framework, including the roles, functions, activities, tasks, sector and context;
- b) creating a mapping template listing the recommendations set out in [Clause 4](#), [Clause 5](#) and [Clause 6](#); and
- c) reviewing the sector-specific framework to:
  - 1) verify conformity to the core competence criteria described in [Clause 4](#), [Clause 5](#) and [Clause 6](#), taking into account scope where relevant;
  - 2) record how and where this evidence of conformity is set out in the sector-specific framework;
  - 3) analyse any areas where the sector-specific framework does not address the core criteria of this part of BS 8670; and either:
    - i) amend the framework as necessary to demonstrate conformity; or
    - ii) clearly justify and record in a mapping document any non-conformity or divergence from the recommendations, taking into account the context, roles and functions covered by the sector-specific framework while recognizing the overall objective of improving standards of competence.

In undertaking this comparison process, consideration is to be given to how each sector-specific framework interacts with other individuals, organizations, roles, functions, activities and tasks in any way which could affect safety or quality. This is fundamental to breaking down siloed competence and to help sector-specific frameworks cover collaborative competence where roles or activities interface and support inter-disciplinary working.

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## 1 Scope

This part of BS 8670 gives recommendations for core criteria for building safety to promote high standards of protection for people in and around buildings. It is applicable to buildings of all types and scales. It is intended to have wide application and relevance in modern construction and property markets throughout the UK and beyond.

Building safety in the context of this part of BS 8670 relates to the physical conditions created by new or existing buildings, their immediate surroundings and how these impact on the safety of occupants (including residents) throughout the building life cycle. This standard is not intended to address workplace health and safety during construction<sup>3)</sup>. This part of BS 8670 does not cover other matters which might affect safety, such as policing or crime.

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<sup>3)</sup> For example the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (as amended) [1].

This part of BS 8670 is intended for use by persons or organizations with responsibility for the development, maintenance or application of sector-specific competence frameworks for roles, functions, activities or tasks undertaken by individuals where these are critical to and directly influence safety in and around buildings. This includes competence frameworks for technical and non-technical roles, and for individuals working under their own authority as well as under the supervision of other competent individuals.

This part of BS 8670 is also relevant to clients' understanding of expectations of relevant parties that they might appoint or instruct to undertake work on their behalf.

This part of BS 8670 might also be relevant to regulated, duty-holding or statutory roles, including:

- Principal Designers;
- Principal Contractors;
- designers;
- contractors;
- building control professionals; and
- persons responsible for buildings in occupation.

*NOTE* Responsibility for keeping sector-specific frameworks up to date rests with framework owners, given that the scope of regulation and duty-holding roles is likely to change over time.

Persons with accountability for building safety or acting as clients for building work might also find the recommendations of this part of BS 8670 of use.

This part of BS 8670 is not intended to replace existing professional, technical or vocational training or competence frameworks which continue to reflect the full range of competences required for particular disciplines, roles, functions, activities or tasks.

This part of BS 8670 does not provide recommendations for inclusion of organizational and team competence in competence frameworks.

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## 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.<sup>4)</sup>

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## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

### 3.1 behaviour

observable things that an individual does or does not do

### 3.2 building safety

matter relevant to protecting the safety of people from harm in and around buildings (including but not limited to fire safety, structural safety, public health and public safety) and pertaining to the specification, design, manufacture, procurement, construction, inspection, assessment, management, operation, maintenance, refurbishment and demolition of buildings

*NOTE* "Building safety" might be defined differently in national legislation.

### 3.3 building system

assembly of construction products

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<sup>4)</sup> Documents that are referred to solely in an informative manner are listed in the Bibliography.