

**PAS 8671:2022**

# Built environment – Framework for competence of individual Principal Designers – Specification



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

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# Foreword

This PAS was sponsored by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Its development was facilitated by BSI Standards Limited and it was published under licence from The British Standards Institution. It came into effect on 31 July 2022.

Acknowledgement is given to Matt Thompson of Matt Thompson Communications, as the technical author, and the following organizations that were involved in the development of this PAS as members of the steering group:

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- Institution of Structural Engineers
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- L&Q group
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Acknowledgement is also given to the members of a wider review panel who were consulted in the development of this PAS.

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The PAS process enables a specification to be rapidly developed in order to fulfil an immediate need in industry. A PAS can be considered for further development as a British Standard, or constitute part of the UK input into the development of a European or International Standard.

## Relationship with other publications

This PAS is based upon the recommendations regarding competence (i.e. skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours) and assessment given in the report *Setting the bar: a new competence regime for building a safer future*<sup>1)</sup> [1] in light of events following the Grenfell Tower fire.

This PAS forms part of a comprehensive suite of documents relating to competence in the built environment. The suite comprises:

- BSI Flex 8670, *Built environment – Core criteria for building safety in competence frameworks – Code of practice*<sup>2)</sup>;
- PAS 8671, *Built environment – Framework for competence of individual Principal Designers – Specification*;
- PAS 8672, *Built environment – Framework for competence of individual Principal Contractors – Specification*; and
- PAS 8673, *Built environment – Competence requirements for the management of safety in residential buildings – Specification*.

## Information about this document

This PAS responds to the Building Safety Act 2022 (BSA) [2] and subsequent secondary legislation which requires a client to appoint a designer with control over the design work as the Principal Designer. Under secondary legislation, the client is also required to take all reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that their chosen Principal Designer is able to fulfil their legal duties and is adequately competent.

<sup>1)</sup> Recommendations were first set out in *Raising the bar: Interim report*, available at <https://www.cic.org.uk/news/construction-and-fire-industries-set-out-sweeping-proposals>.

<sup>2)</sup> Downloadable from <https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/industries-and-sectors/construction-and-the-built-environment/built-environment-competence-standards/>.

Where the person in the Principal Designer dutyholder role is an organization, it is required to designate an individual under the organization's control to manage its dutyholder functions as the Principal Designer. Otherwise, the Principal Designer is an individual responsible for undertaking both the dutyholder role and the dutyholder functions. In this PAS, the meaning of "Principal Designer" includes individuals of either kind.

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Where websites and webpages have been cited, they are provided for ease of reference and are correct at the time of publication. The location of a webpage or website, or its contents, cannot be guaranteed.

### Relationship of this PAS to domain-specific competence frameworks

This PAS sets the thresholds of competence that individuals operating as Principal Designers are expected to meet. It can inform the creation of domain-specific competence frameworks but is not one itself.

It is left to organizations developing domain-specific competence frameworks to agree the learning pathways, validation methods (including the required standards of evidence to support validation), and terms and conditions of certification and revalidation that are suitable for their particular cohorts.

For the purposes of demonstrating their competence to work as Principal Designers, individual designers are advised to consider obtaining a accredited independent assessment and certification that is aligned to this PAS to verify their competence.

### Relationship of this PAS to the Principal Designer dutyholder role under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

The PAS does not cover the duties of Principal Designers under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM) [3].

Whereas the primary objective of the Principal Designer under CDM [3] is to plan, manage, monitor and coordinate health and safety in the pre-construction phase by identifying, eliminating or controlling foreseeable risks, the primary objective of the Principal Designer under the BSA is to plan, manage, monitor and coordinate design work compliance (see **3.1.10**).

### Use of this document

It has been assumed in the preparation of this PAS that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

### Presentational conventions

The provisions of this PAS are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its requirements are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is "shall".

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", not "organisation").

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### Compliance with a PAS cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

Particular attention is drawn to the Building Safety Act 2022 (BSA) [2].

# 0 Introduction

## 0.1 Background

The focus of the Principal Designer dutyholder role is on design work compliance. It is part of a drive to secure the safety of people in and about buildings and to improve the standard of buildings. This drive was galvanized by the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017, which prompted a review of the system for regulating high-rise residential buildings. Led by Dame Judith Hackitt, the review concluded (among other findings) that the roles and responsibilities of those procuring, designing, constructing and maintaining all buildings (i.e. not just high-rise residential buildings) were unclear, and that competence across the system is variable.

The Government accepted the recommendations of Dame Judith's review, *Building a safer future, independent review of building regulations and fire safety: Final report* [4], and, after consultation and due parliamentary process, introduced the BSA [2].

This PAS addresses the competence thresholds that individuals are to meet when managing the dutyholder functions of the new Principal Designer dutyholder role introduced under secondary legislation related to the BSA [2]. The primary objective of introducing the Principal Designer dutyholder role is to improve design work compliance.

**NOTE 1** See Clause 3 for definitions of “design work compliance”, “dutyholder function” and “dutyholder role”.

**NOTE 2** The Principal Designer dutyholder role under the BSA [2] is not to be confused with the Principal Designer dutyholder role under the CDM [3], which in this PAS is referred to as the “CDM Principal Designer”. The PAS does not address competence thresholds for CDM Principal Designers.

## 0.2 About the Principal Designer dutyholder role

The person responsible for carrying out the Principal Designer dutyholder role can be a designer organization or an individual designer.

Where the person responsible is a designer organization, they are referred to in this PAS as an “Organization Principal Designer”. They are expected to

- a) have sufficient organizational capability to fulfil the dutyholder role; and
- b) designate a competent individual under their control to manage their dutyholder functions.

Where the person responsible is an individual, they are referred to in this PAS as an “Individual Principal Designer”. They are expected to be competent to fulfil the dutyholder role and manage the dutyholder functions.

In this PAS, the individual managing the dutyholder functions (i.e. either a designated individual or an Individual Principal Designer) is referred to as a Principal Designer.

## 0.3 Competences for Principal Designers

Acceptable levels of Principal Designer competence are modulated by two factors.

- a) The organizational capability of the Organization Principal Designer: if the Organization Principal Designer is, for example, large and encompasses many designer disciplines, its designated individual might be able to work on a wider range of projects than an Individual Principal Designer, even though the two individuals' competences are equivalent. This is because, in managing the dutyholder functions, the designated individual might have more organizational capability to call on than the Individual Principal Designer.

- b) The specific demands of a project: some projects might require a higher level of competence than others because of their size, type, scope and/or complexity.

Regardless of organizational capability or the specific demands of a project, Principal Designers are nonetheless expected to have reached a minimum threshold of competence for all projects and, since higher-risk buildings (HRBs) are subject to a more stringent regulatory regime, a threshold that accounts for the additional competences needed to work on HRBs.

**NOTE** *Competence can be developed and managed through formal and/or experiential learning, and/or by adhering to the terms and conditions of ongoing Principal Designer competence certification of any awarding body, certification body or register aligned to this PAS.*

## 0.4 The Building Safety Act 2022

The BSA [2] sets out how the Government intends to deliver the principles and recommendations of Dame Judith Hackitt's report [4]. It aims for greater accountability and responsibility for safety issues throughout the life cycle of buildings. It establishes a new regulatory regime for building safety and introduces more stringent building control requirements for HRBs. It also sets the scene for instituting a culture change and motivating compliance in the industry.

## 0.5 Dutyholders and the Building Regulations 2010

The BSA's strategy for driving change includes, through secondary legislation, the creation of new dutyholder roles to improve compliance with building regulations, including that of Principal Designer.

The expected duties of and the competence requirements for the Principal Designer dutyholder role are to be set out in secondary legislation under the BSA.

## 0.6 New competence system and BSI FLEX 8670

Complementary work by the Competence Steering Group for Building a Safer Future (CSG) explored the competences needed for safety-critical disciplines working on HRBs. The final report, *Setting the bar* [1], recommended that, as one of the critical roles with oversight of building safety at each stage of a building's lifecycle, the Principal Designer dutyholder role would require enhanced competences, in addition to any discipline-specific competence. The CSG noted that individuals in the role need an overarching understanding of all aspects of building safety and the competence to appraise design, challenge bad practice, identify safety risks, and mitigate the safety risks to occupiers of the completed asset.

*Setting the bar* paved the way for a new system for harmonizing and standardizing the competences needed to determine compliant building safety outcomes in the UK's built environment industry as a whole, not just in HRBs.

The new system of competences is underpinned by BSI Flex 8670 which establishes the overarching framework for behavioural and functional competences needed to improve both building safety outcomes and the dominant culture at work in the built environment sector. It also defines the scope and common terms of reference that domain-specific (i.e. sector-, discipline- or role-specific) competence frameworks can conform to, aiming for consistency, reliability, and comparability regardless of the domains involved.

**NOTE** *This PAS 8671 is aligned to BSI Flex 8670.*

*Setting the bar* also reported on the production of three new PASs, including this PAS 8671, setting out the "enhanced competence requirements" that market providers can use to assess individuals. The report describes this work as "a bridge" enabling independent assessment and third-party accreditation of individual schemes offered by qualifying bodies and industry associations, recommending that the PAS ought not to be used for self-certification of competence by individuals.

# 1 Scope

This PAS specifies competence thresholds that individuals are expected to meet when delivering or managing the dutyholder functions of the Principal Designer dutyholder role in alignment with BSI Flex 8670.

This PAS specifies the Principal Designer dutyholder's areas of competence as:

- a) behavioural competence;
- b) legislative and regulatory framework for compliance;
- c) management of design work compliance; and
- d) technical framework for compliance.

This PAS also specifies:

- 1) the minimum competence thresholds needed by Principal Designers to manage Principal Designer dutyholder functions; and
- 2) the additional competence thresholds needed to work on HRBs.

This PAS is for use by anyone interested in understanding the competence thresholds for managing the dutyholder functions of the Principal Designer dutyholder role. This includes people in the UK's legislatures with devolved powers and, indeed, in countries outside of the UK.

This PAS is for use by persons assessing Principal Designer competence, including awarding bodies, professional institutions, education and training providers, and certification bodies. It is intended to help them to create or adapt relevant domain-specific (i.e. sector-, discipline- or role-specific) competence frameworks in a way that matches the needs of their particular cohort.

This PAS can also be used by built environment designer organizations to evaluate staff members and by individual designers to understand their own competence to work as a Principal Designer.

This PAS can also be used by those connected to the delivery and governance of the built environment, including clients and other dutyholders, the Building Safety Regulator and other enforcing authorities, relevant accreditation bodies, relevant government departments, and insurers.

Annex A includes information and guidance for competence assessors and awarding bodies, and for reviewing existing competence.

Annex B sets out how the PAS maps to BSI Flex 8670.

This PAS does not cover:

- i) guidance about how to comply with or interpret legislation related to the Principal Designer dutyholder role;
- ii) the competence thresholds for the CDM Principal Designer dutyholder role;
- iii) requirements for the organizational capability that allows Organization Principal Designers to fulfil the Principal Designer dutyholder role;
- iv) learning pathways for individuals to meet the minimum competence thresholds;
- v) systems for assessing competence; or
- vi) individuals' required prior learning, or eligibility criteria in the form of qualifications.