

## UA Competency Initiative FAQs

What is the UA Competency Initiative?

The UA Competency Initiative is an expansion of the online position description process that will allow for the identification of competencies that more clearly describe behaviors necessary to perform at optimum levels. Once identified, competency data will be visible in the online position description system.

What is a competency?

Competencies are **observable and measurable** abilities, skills, knowledge, motivations or traits defined in terms of the behaviors needed for successful or outstanding job performance. Definitions of competencies have been developed to ensure a common understanding of competencies across campus and organizational units within the University.

How will competencies be used at UA?

Competencies are the foundation for Human Resource management systems. Competencies will be used in Hiring and Selection, Performance Feedback and Management, Training and Development, Career Development and Succession Management processes.

How are competencies determined?

A facilitator certified in competency modeling will work with a focus group of subject matter experts to determine the critical competencies necessary for employees to be exceptional performers in a particular job family/classification. This process is referred to as competency mapping.

What is a focus group?

A focus group is made up of incumbents from a particular job/classification or job family. These individuals are considered to be subject matter experts and are highly knowledgeable about the duties, responsibilities and requirements of the position being mapped for competencies. For classifications or job families with a large number of incumbents, a select number of top performing individuals will be chosen to ensure representation from various departments/colleges/divisions. The target focus group size includes 5 to 7 participating individuals. The group may include others who work closely with the position incumbents or who can provide information on future changes or expectations that might impact the position.

Who facilitates a focus group?

UA Human Resources has a number of professionals who have been certified in Competency Modeling. The HR facilitator guides focus groups in their discussions which result in the identification of critical competencies.

What is my role as a focus group participant?

As a focus group participant you will take part in discussions that establish the key/essential roles and responsibilities of the classification or job family; define examples of challenges faced when carrying out the duties/responsibilities of the position; define characteristics required for outstanding job performance; and will help to develop a set of critical competencies necessary of incumbents to perform at optimal levels.

How can I prepare for a competency mapping session?

As a focus group participant, you will receive general information from the facilitator prior to the mapping session. Your review of the information is critical. You will be asked to identify the key/essential duties and responsibilities of the classification or job family, as well as, identify challenges and critical behaviors needed for successful performance. It is highly encouraged that members of the focus group discuss these items among themselves prior to the mapping session.

How can I use competencies?

Competencies will help you understand what is expected of you, what you can do to develop your strengths, and what elements of your job you should focus on in order to succeed. Competencies will also provide you with information for your development toward higher level positions or in changing careers.

How can competencies be used by management?

Managers will use competencies to hire individuals who have high potential to succeed; to ensure employees receive the training and development necessary to realize their potential and to excel; and to provide a performance management system that gives the feedback and coaching that employees need to perform well.

What happens after completion of the competency mapping session?

The results of the mapping session are documented and returned to those who participated. The core competencies and the additional functional competencies will be added to the position descriptions for all within the classification or job family.

What is a core competency?

A core competency is fundamental knowledge, ability, or expertise in specific subject areas or skill sets required of all employees. The core competencies of UA include Adaptability/Flexibility, Collaboration/Building Relationships, Ethics/Integrity, Self Development, and Student/Customer Focused.

Where can I find a list of UA competencies and their definitions?

You can find a list of all UA competencies, including core competencies, in the UA Competency Dictionary located on the HR website. The Competency Dictionary includes the competency title, definition, and descriptors of expected behaviors at various proficiency levels.

What if there are other competencies that are relevant for my job but are not included on the position description?

The competencies in the position description are global competencies required for all employees in a specific classification. The position description will not describe every competency relevant to a job. If there are other competencies important to your specific job/role, you should discuss them with your supervisor and determine the best approach for incorporating them into your overall career development plan.

What positions will be included in the Competency Initiative?

During Phase I of the initiative roll-out, the focus will be on exempt, professional staff positions. Mapping of non-exempt, staff positions will begin once Phase I is completed.

Will my position title or grade change as a result of this initiative?

No

Who determines the competencies for my position?

Focus groups of subject matter experts are used to determine the functional competencies for specific classifications or groups of classifications.

What is the UA competency dictionary?

The UA competency dictionary is a compilation of competency definitions and examples of behaviors that demonstrate expected actions for competencies at varying proficiency levels.

What is a proficiency level?

The proficiency level establishes the expected level of ability an individual must demonstrate in a particular competency. There are four proficiency levels for UA competencies; Limited, Fundamental, Proficient and Mastery. Each level has behavioral descriptors to help identify if an employee is performing at the expected proficiency level.