NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) CONFERENCE:
Tried and tested, tools, templates

Workshop and Conference Programme
23rd – 26th February 2014
Kopanong Conference Centre | Johannesburg | South Africa
The WIO-COMPAS Programme: RPL in Action

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WIO-COMPAS

- Certification programme for professionals working on and for MPAs in the Western Indian Ocean
- International programme with headquarters in Zanzibar, and involving 10 WIO countries
- 3 levels: L1 - Marine Field Operations; L2 - Site Management; L3 - Strategy, Policy & Planning
- First programme of its type to be applied in the field of protected area management
- Developed out of a strong shared understanding of what was appropriate for the field and for the professionals working with MPAs
- Model which works in its own context, serves its own professionals and meets its own purposes
- Relevant to the MPA workplaces and at the higher levels of government and conservation organisations
RPL by Default (not design)

- Never articulated as RPL during the development and early implementation phases
- No engagement with the debates around assessment approaches and methodologies (or RPL)
- Focussed on developing a contextually appropriate professional competence assessment process
- Broad pragmatic approach to the understanding of professional and occupational competence and how to assess it, irrespective of how the competence was developed
Competences at its Heart

• Foundation on the real competences needed for effective functioning in the workplace
• Competences (initially for Level 2) developed by team with profound tacit knowledge of the field
• Clear linkages and progressions between competences at the three levels
• Competences broad enough to cover role requirements, specific enough to be assessed
• Competences further defined through ‘range statements’
• Combination of ‘understanding’ (knowledge) and ‘ability’ (skills) competences
• 41 competences at Level 1, 69 competences at Level 2, and 56 competences at Level 3
7 ‘Competence Areas’

CA1 - MPA Governance (including Policy, Strategy, Legislation and Compliance) – 8 Level 2 competences

CA2 - Marine Conservation: MPAs and other Approaches – 8 Level 2 competences

CA3 - Communication and Stakeholder Engagement (including networking, liaison, advocacy, negotiation) – 10 Level 2 competences

CA4 - Human and Financial Resources Mobilisation and Management – 5 Level 2 competences

CA5 - Management Implementation and Effectiveness – 21 Level 2 competences

CA6 - Biophysical and Socio-Economic Context – 13 Level 2 competences

CA7 - Leadership, Ethics and Innovation – 4 competences (all levels).
Levels of understanding; scoring and weighting

BASIC – general recognition (citing examples)
SOUND – detailed understanding and how to apply to their own place, context
THOROUGH – comprehensive understanding and how it can be applied in diverse contexts

Scoring: Essential to be able to ‘score’ evidence provided up to a maximum
Weighting - to differentiate importance of competence: All 4 or 2 (except for CA7 competences at level 2 weighted 8)
Opportunities to demonstrate competence (provide ‘evidence’)

Instruments used for scoring the competences must be appropriate for the field, for the nature of the competences being assessed, and for the level of assessment. There must also be a variety of instruments at each level.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPLICATION &amp; REVIEW PROCESS</strong></td>
<td>Matching Experience to Seven Competence Areas, Entrance Requirements, Motivation Statement, CV</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PORTFOLIO</strong></td>
<td>Hard Copy</td>
<td>Electronic Copy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CASES &amp; PRESENTATIONS</strong></td>
<td>Core Activities Document</td>
<td>Workplace Case Study</td>
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<td>Key Activity Document</td>
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<td><strong>FEEDBACK</strong></td>
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<td>One Hour With Assessor</td>
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<td><strong>TEST</strong></td>
<td>Beach And Boat Patrol Scenario; Quiz</td>
<td>Written Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERVIEW</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-Face Interview With An Assessor</td>
<td>Panel Interview With All Assessors</td>
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Language of assessment is the language in which the candidates conduct the majority of their work

- **Level 1** – English, official language of the country concerned, or relevant local language;
- **Level 2** – English, or official language of the country concerned;
- **Level 3** – English (as international language of discourse on marine conservation)

Also provides motivation to develop language skills to support career development.
Assessors

Team of assessors with a ‘lead assessor’ with guidance and moderation function

Assessors all with tacit knowledge of the field, plus moderator with professional assessment expertise

Levels 1 and 2, each assessor is assigned up to 4 candidates

Level 3, working with candidates at the top of their profession, assessors act together, and all work with all candidates, as a panel

Rigorous training, shadowing and mentoring programme for would-be assessors (all now selected from among MPA-PROs)
Assessment Process

Initial technical screening of application forms by the Secretariat
Then assigned to assessors for full review
Applicants accepted become ‘candidates’
(Those not accepted receive professional development advice and encouraged to reapply after some time. – ‘door never closed’)
Candidates attend ‘Certification Event’ (L1 and L2 at an MPA), take part in all activities (including professional development sessions), providing evidence of competence through the various instruments
Scoring system is accumulative
Certification

Score of 70% or more overall, with 60% or more in each competence area

60-70% overall and/or 50-60% in just 2 competence areas – ‘Pending’, requiring further evidence within agreed timeframe

Below 60% overall or in 3 or more competence areas, advised to undergo professional development and/or gain necessary experience, and reapply in 2 years – ‘door never closed’

ALL candidates, successful or not, receive professional development advice

Re-certification after 5 years
Rigour of Process

Candidates are often surprised by the levels of rigour with which all instruments are used, and the pressure they feel to provide evidence. In their post-assessment evaluations the majority of candidates consider the rigour to be ‘just right’. A few claim it is ‘too rigorous’, but none suggest that it is ‘not rigorous enough’.

One Tanzanian Candidate wrote: ‘This thing can kill you!’
Assessment ‘Events’ to date

August 2008 – L201 (First ever assessment event) Malindi, Kenya
June 2009 – Nairobi, Training of Assessors
July 2009 – L202, Antananarivo, Madagascar
November 2009 – 1 Yr evaluation L201.

“Significant improvements to Marine Protected Area (MPA) professionals’ careers and their organization’s practices as a result of them achieving certification.”

July 2010 - L101. First Level 1 Event in Tsitskamma National Park, South Africa
September 2010 - L102 in Mombasa, Kenya
April 2011 – Commissioning of assessment experts ‘Qualanet’ to review WIO-COMPAS assessment processes

June 2011 - L203 – Mombasa, Kenya
August 2011 - L103 – Mafia Island Tanzania

February 2012 – Assessor training by assessment experts ‘Qualanet’
May 2012 - L301, Johannesburg, South Africa
November 2012 – L104, Mafia Island, Tanzania
March 2013 – L105, Toliara, Madagascar
February 2014 – L106, de Hoop, South Africa
WIO-COMPAS and its role in personal and professional development

WIO-COMPAS assessors as facilitators of professional development

Professional development sessions with guest presenters feature in all certification events

Professional development advice given to all (applicants and candidates – including successful ones)

Gradation from one level to another essential measure of professional development

Professional development benchmarks set by competences

Competences used to inform and shape training in the region

‘Door never closed’
### MPA-PROs' impressions of the impact of WIO-COMPAS certification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>% L1 MPA PROs</th>
<th>% L2 MPA PROs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved success rate with job applications</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming more confident in execution of duties</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved MPA management capabilities</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being promoted or assigned greater responsibilities</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved ability to network</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greatly</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being useful in defining career path</td>
<td>Quite useful</td>
<td>Very useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very useful</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The value of setting of standards for professionals</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Quite useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite useful</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very useful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing specific goals to achieve</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>Greatly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>21</td>
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Impact on the Sector

• To the question: ‘Do you feel that the WIO-COMPAS certification programme has impacted on the conservation of marine biodiversity and on the social issues and complexities of conservation in your area of operation?’ 89% of Level 1 PROs and 93% of Level 2 PROs claimed that it had impacted, to some extent or greatly... the indication is that the great majority of MPA PROs believe that the programme has had a positive impact on marine conservation.
Position in relation to Original Concept and Vision:

• Improve management of the region’s MPAs - ??
• Assess and recognise the competence of MPA professionals against industry-based standards - YES
• Enhance the professionalism of the MPA management field, and promote recognition of this professionalism – YES?
• Encourage and support continuing professional development - YES
• Encourage and support networking between MPA professionals - YES
• Promote the retention of MPA professionals within that field - NO
• Develop a coherent career path for MPA professionals - YES?
Main Achievements

• Fully credible, tested and proven certification programme
• Set the standard for similar programmes
• Established standards of professional capacity
• The basis for similar programmes
• Enhanced the professional standing of 40 MPA professionals
• Strengthened and extended professional networks
• Endorsements from a number of highly regarded organisations
• Recognised at a global level
• Strengthened the collaboration between all partner organisations
Credibility

High Levels:
Within the ranks of the MPA PROs – and with (almost) everyone with direct experience of assessment events
Within most organisations who have MPA PROs
Within the WIO-COMPAS team itself, including WIOMSA Board and members, the CRC, and the key partner organisations.
As an assessment process (with Qalanet assessment specialists)
Within the global conservation field

Not so High:
At senior levels within most managing agencies
In a profound sense within the global conservation community
Conclusion

• Developed reflexively and iteratively into a sound, rigorous and respected RPL model for MPA professionals
• Incorporates all the essential features of an RPL process, with its greatest strength being its foundation on the real competences needed for effective functioning in the workplace
• Tacit knowledge of the field held by all assessors, and their deep understanding of the realities of MPA management in the WIO region
• Developing a cohort of highly motivated professionals
• WIO-COMPAS can claim with considerable justification that it truly illustrates RPL that works
The Ones Who Really Count