

LESSON 4

What Is a Competency-Based Application Form?

60 minutes

Strand 2.2: Engaging with the Workplace

Participating

Outcome LCW.M2.S2.APP.3

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Many Irish employers use competency-based application forms because they require proof of skills through real examples rather than unverified claims. You will annotate sections of a specimen form, draft first-line evidence answers for the competency questions, and pinpoint where your evidence is weakest.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
LCW.M2.S2.APP.3	demonstrate an understanding of a competency-based application form, identifying competencies that reflect their chosen career and/or job role.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Explain why employers use competency-based forms
- Annotate each section of a form for what it really asks
- Draft section notes and first-line evidence answers for the competency questions, and name your weakest evidence area

KEY TERMS

Term	What it means here	For example
Competency-based form	An application form that asks you to prove a skill with a real example rather than claim it in a list. Employers use them because a CV claim cannot be checked; a specific story can.	A retail school-leaver form that asks 'Describe a time you worked with others to finish a task' instead of 'Are you a team player?'
Evidence	A concrete occasion that shows the skill in action: who was there, what you did, and what changed because of it. Adjectives alone are not evidence.	I reorganised the Saturday rota when two staff called in sick so the café still opened on time
Person specification	The employer's list of the skills, qualities and experience the successful applicant needs. A competency form is built to test the person specification, section by section.	Working with others; customer focus; organises own work; reliable timekeeping (as listed for a retail school-leaver programme, mapping onto D1-D3)

BEFORE THE BELL

- Ensure students can open a blank Competency Form Annotation document in their Strand 2.2 Digital Portfolio folder.
- Confirm the document annotator loads on class devices.
- Optional paper fallback only if devices fail; the live activity is digital.
- On screen this lesson: document annotator.

What Is a Competency-Based Application Form?

HOW THE LESSON RUNS		
5 min	introduction	Getting Started
5 min	content	Key Terms
35 min	activity	Annotate the Competency Form
10 min	content	Think About It
5 min	summary	What you covered

STEP BY STEP

5 min Getting Started

Open with a quick show of hands: who has filled an online application that asked for examples, not just yes/no boxes? Name that this lesson is about reading those forms before writing long answers.

Keep the hook tight: CVs claim; competency forms demand evidence. A brief nod to PAS-style public-service questions and large retail school-leaver forms is enough real-world anchor; do not turn it into a careers talk.

5 min Key Terms

Spend under a minute on the table. Stress that **evidence** is the word shortlisters use, and that a first-line answer without a named occasion will not survive shortlisting. Point at the person-specification example so students can see how D1-D3 map onto listed skills when a question feels vague.

35 min Annotate the Competency Form On screen: document annotator

SUGGESTED TIMING

- 0-12 mins: students annotate the form on the interactive; circulate and push them past surface reading
- 12-18 mins: reveal the model on the board; pause on the two sections most of the room mis-tagged
- 18-35 mins: each student writes the section-by-section notes in their portfolio document (A/B/E screening notes and fill-ins; C task lines; D1-D3 first-line occasions; weakest-evidence line)

TEACHING TIPS

Watch for first-line answers on D1-D3 that are still adjectives ("I am reliable"). Send them back for a named day, task or person. A good first line is one sentence a shortlisters could check.

Do not let students invent "occasions" for Section A contact details, Section B subject lists, or Section E referee names. Those rows need screening notes and concrete fill-ins only.

The weakest-evidence note at the end is not failure; it is the most useful line in the document. Name that to the class before they write it. Keep it focused on D1-D3 (or C if relevant).

LOOK-FORS

- Annotations distinguish "asking for" from "weak pattern" rather than restating the question
- D1-D3 first-line answers name a real occasion from school, sport, part-time work, volunteering or home
- A/B/E rows have screening notes and sensible fill-ins, not forced stories
- Every student has named a weakest evidence section among the D questions (or C)

10 min Think About It

Keep this as paired talk for most of the ten minutes. Ask two pairs to name their weakest section aloud; the room usually splits between customer focus and organising work, which is useful for the next lessons on evidence banks.

Do not turn this into a second written task on the page. The portfolio note is optional and happens in their own document. If time is short, trim this talk rather than the Competency Form Annotation write-up.

5 min What you covered

Confirm every student has a Competency Form Annotation document saved before they leave. Spot-check that the weakest-section line is filled; that line drives the evidence work in the next two lessons. Do not send the core annotation home unfinished.

ANSWERS AND LOOK-FORS

- "Competency answers must use a real example from school, work..." - What it is really asking for - The form states the rule up front: one real example, not a personality list. Every D-section answer is judged against this sentence.
- "Do not list personal qualities" - What a weak answer looks like - This is the weak pattern named outright. 'I am a team player and hard-working' is exactly what they have already banned.
- "Incomplete contact details will stop your application before it is..." - What it is really asking for - Section A is not a formality. Wrong phone or email means they never reach your competency answers.
- "any other awards or short courses (for example a first-aid..." - What it is really asking for - They want proof of learning beyond school subjects. A short course is evidence; 'I am always learning' is not.
- "two or three lines on what you actually did day to day" - What it is really asking for - Section C is scored on tasks, not job titles. 'Shop assistant' alone tells them nothing; stocking, till work and returns do.
- "Gaps are fine; empty claims are not" - What a weak answer looks like - Padding a blank month with vague duties is worse than leaving it empty. Honesty here is read as reliability.
- "What was your role in the group, what did you personally do, and what..." - What it is really asking for - D1 wants three things: your role, your actions, the result. An answer that only praises the team fails the middle part.
- "Describe a time when you helped someone who was confused, frustrated..." - What it is really asking for - Customer focus here is not 'I like people'. It is one named moment with a person in difficulty and what you did.
- "How did you decide what to do first, and did you finish what mattered..." - What it is really asking for - D3 is testing judgement under load, not busyness. The decision rule is the competency; the to-do list is only the setting.
- "At least one should know you outside your family" - What it is really asking for - A parent as both referees will not clear this bar. A coach, supervisor or teacher is what they are scoring for.

TEACHING MOVES

- Model the annotation of the first section with the whole class.
- Circulate during the activity to prompt specific examples on D1-D3 and to stop forced "stories" on A, B and E.
- Keep Think About It as paired discussion for most of the time.
- Reveal the model answers after students complete their interactive annotations.
- Name the person-specification link to D1-D3 once so the term is usable, not decorative.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Providing general claims instead of specific occasions on D-sections; prompt for who was involved and the outcome.
- Inventing occasion-style answers for personal details, education lists or referees; redirect to screening notes and concrete fill-ins.
- Overlooking the person specification link; refer to the Key Terms example.
- Failing to name the weakest section; check that all students complete this step before they leave.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: Give sentence starters for drafting first-line D-section answers.
- Extension: Ask students to expand one D-section first line with an extra detail on outcome.
- Support: Allow paired work for discussing evidence ideas.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE LEFT WITH

- Competency Form Annotation: section-by-section asks plus your first-line answers