



Checklist: guidance on selecting a learning strategy for SMEs

For SMEs it is important to develop the competences within their company. In this Leonardo da Vinci project “e-Assessment of Learning Needs in SMEs” we have developed an online tool which supports SMEs in assessing skills and competences within their organisation. The name of the tool is OSCAT: “Online Skills & Competence Analysis Tool”. The online tool can be used by both managers of SMEs, organisations who support the business development of SMEs and as a self-assessment by employees.

If you are a manager in an SME, training provider or business advisor/assessor and are interested in using the tool you should be aware that you are not only assessing competences but also starting a process of competence development. Depending on the results of the skills and competence assessment, you may want to improve the skills and competences of your employees by developing a learning strategy which will lead to competence development. Competence development is an ongoing, dynamic learning process between employers and employees. To support the process of competence development we have developed a checklist of questions in which several aspects of the process of competence management are highlighted and which will help guide you to select an appropriate learning strategy for your organisation. The checklist can be used to gain some insight into the various aspects of the learning process and development in an SME. The checklist will ask questions to what extent your organisation is already involved, or wants to invest, in competence development. The second aim of the checklist is to offer inspiration and possibilities to develop competences within your organisation.



Are you a company that wishes to consider developing its employees for further training?

The checklist consists of 4 areas:

Company level questions:

1. Does an SME have a policy and plans for competence development within their organisation?

Training structure questions:

2. Does an SME have standards for competences within their organisation?

Assessment practice questions:

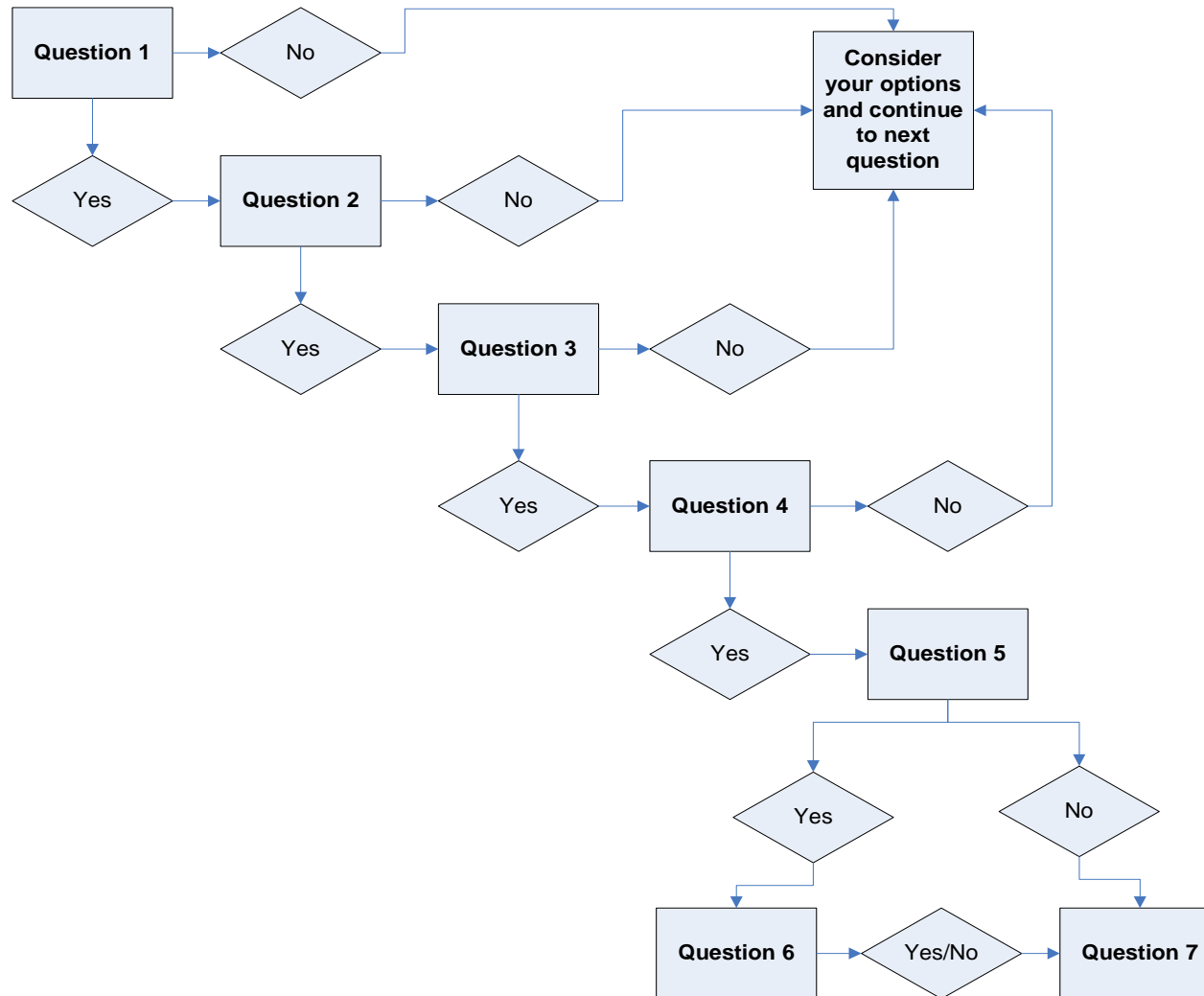
3. Does an SME have methods to assess competences within their organisation?

Development practice questions:

4. Does an SME have methods to develop competences within their organisation?



Flowchart outlining the sequence in which the questions should be answered:



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Area 1 POLICIES, PLANS FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE SME ORGANISATION:

Question 1: Does your company keep a watching brief on:	<i>Now?</i>	<i>Soon?</i>	<i>Later?</i>
a. new and emerging initiatives which influence learning?			
b. relevant policy documents and initiatives relating to learning?			
c. related events and presentations to ensure they are up-to-date with learning issues? NO YES?			
Question 2: Does your company:			
d. know where to find additional funding and support to enhance learning provision?			

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	<i>Now?</i>	<i>Soon?</i>	<i>Later?</i>
e. have a training plan for staff development?			
f. work with a training budget to increase access to learning opportunities?			
g. identify the learning needs of individual staff?			
NO YES?			

Area 2 STANDARDS FOR COMPETENCES WITHIN THE SME ORGANISATION:

Question 3: Does your company already:	<i>Now?</i>	<i>Soon?</i>	<i>Later?</i>
h. know what competences are relevant for the company?			
i. use job descriptions for various functions?			
j. specify competences for different roles or processes?			

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<p>k. identify different levels within a specific competence?</p> <p>l. work with European or industry qualifications as standards for your organisation?</p> <p>m. use personal development planning (PDP) or careers guidance?</p> <p>NO YES?</p>			
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Question 4: Does your company already:	<i>Now?</i>	<i>Soon?</i>	<i>Later?</i>
n. design training strategies to meet gaps in learning provision?			
o. design training programmes to meet gaps in learning provision?			
p. monitor implementation & effectiveness of the learning strategy?			
NO YES?			



Area 3 METHODS TO ASSESS COMPETENCES WITHIN THE SME ORGANISATION:

Question 5: Does your company already use the following assessment methods? (tick all used)	<i>Now?</i>	<i>Soon?</i>	<i>Later?</i>
q. self-evaluation?			
r. 360° Feedback?			
s. STAR interviews?			
t. Simulations?			
u. ICT tools?			
NO (go on to question 7).. YES?			

Question 6: When using assessments, do you:	<i>Now?</i>	<i>Soon?</i>	<i>Later?</i>
v. compare or cross validate various assessment methods?			
w. benchmark assessment results against industry standards?			



x. access external support to interpret results? NO YES?			
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Area 4 METHODS TO DEVELOP COMPETENCES WITHIN THE SME ORGANISATION:

Question 7: Does your company identify competence development opportunities in your organisation? (tick all used)	<i>Now?</i>	<i>Soon?</i>	<i>Later?</i>
y. in real-life workplace situations?			
z. at department or unit level?			
aa. for individual staff?			
bb. via Personal Development Planning, guidance or similar?			
cc. for specific or sets of competences? NO YES?			

