Using a competency-based approach to work-integrated education

What are competencies?

Competencies are the **knowledge, skills and attributes** that are used at work, school and in other environments. They can involve expertise that individuals already have but don't know how to describe. They can be described in ways that are observable, measurable, transferable and based on performance.

Using a competency-based approach **helps individuals understand their strengths**, **plan their learning**, **relate academic and workplace experiences** and **showcase their abilities** as they apply for jobs and make career decisions.

What type of competencies does UVic Co-op and Career use?

UVic Co-op and Career has identified:

+ **10 core competencies** that are valued across all sectors
+ **4 intercultural competencies** that can be applied in any workplace
+ **program-specific competencies** that students can expect to develop through their academic programs
+ **professional competencies** valued by the professional bodies related to various professions

Learn more about the core and intercultural competencies on the next page. Detailed descriptions of all types of competencies can be found at **uvic.ca/coopandcareer/buildskills**.

How does UVic Co-op and Career use competencies?

UVic's Co-op Program uses a unique competency assessment process to measure student experiences on the work term.

All co-op students who engage in work terms **set learning objectives** related to 10 core competencies at the beginning of these experiences: Students and their workplace supervisors then **assess students' competency development at the start, middle and end of the work terms**, according to the following scale:

🟥 EXEMPLARY	🟨 DEVELOPING	🟧 NO DEMONSTRATED ACHIEVEMENT
🟦 ACCOMPLISHED	🟦 BEGINNING	

Students also have the opportunity to assess their intercultural, program-specific and professional competencies during their work terms.

10 CORE COMPETENCIES

Co-op and Career's 10 core competencies are closely aligned with the University's 10 primary Learning Outcomes:

CORE COMPETENCIES	ALIGNMENT WITH UVIC LEARNING OUTCOMES
1 PERSONAL MANAGEMENT	Ethical and professional reasoning and action / Intercultural knowledge and sensitivity
2 COMMUNICATION	Effective written, visual and oral communication / Intercultural knowledge and sensitivity
3 MANAGING INFORMATION	Critical evaluation of qualitative and quantitative information / Critical management of information, including in digital environments / Numerical literacy
4 RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS	Critical, innovative and creative thinking / Critical evaluation of qualitative and quantitative information / Inquiry, analysis and problem solving
5 PROJECT AND TASK MANAGEMENT	Inquiry, analysis and problem solving / Critical, innovative and creative thinking / Critical management of information, including in digital environments / Ethical and professional reasoning and action
6 TEAMWORK	Collaboration and the ability to work in teams / Ethical and professional reasoning and action / Intercultural knowledge and sensitivity
7 COMMITMENT TO QUALITY	Ethical and professional reasoning and action
8 PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR	Ethical and professional reasoning and action / Informed civic engagement and understanding (from local to global)
9 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	Informed civic engagement and understanding (from local to global) / Ethical and professional reasoning and action / Intercultural knowledge and sensitivity
10 CONTINUOUS LEARNING	Life-long learning

Co-op students' ability to demonstrate the development of the 10 core competencies in workplace settings, and employers' third party validation of these students' skills, speaks to the impact and quality of UVic programs, as well as to employability outcomes.

FOUR INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES

One of UVic's Learning Outcomes does not correlate with Co-op and Career's core competencies, but aligns directly with the unit's set of intercultural competencies. UVic identifies Intercultural Knowledge and Sensitivity as a key Learning Outcome, while Co-op and Career divides this into:

+ Intercultural motivation
+ Intercultural knowledge

+ Strategic thinking
+ Appropriate behaviour

UVic strives to develop global-ready graduates who can contribute to local, national and international communities. International co-op work terms, as well as work terms in culturally diverse workplaces here in Canada, help students become strong global citizens, as described in UVic's 2012 Strategic Plan.