

# National Home Inspector Certification Council

## Item Development Report/Procedures

An **occupational analysis** is a consultation process that is undertaken to obtain the most comprehensive representation possible of the practice of an occupation. This involves describing the job characteristics that are most useful in determining and specifying the competencies required to practice the given occupation. These include responsibilities (duties), roles, tasks and operations, along with the enablers (knowledge, skills and abilities), and where other applicable requirements are petitioned.

In early 2013 the National Home Inspector Certification Council announced a project specifically targeted at updating the outdated version of the 2008 National Occupational Standards for Home & Property Inspectors 2. The National Home Inspector Certification Council secured the services of a DACUM Facilitator and developed a team to help review and update a job/occupational analysis for Canadian home inspectors. The NOS DACUM was completed and released in November of 2014.

The DACUM process was utilized through a modified multi-day process and with specific procedures focused on analyzing the duties and tasks performed by a wide range of subject matter experts in the occupation, as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform those tasks.

In addition, the DACUM process is also traditionally used by secondary and postsecondary educators, test developers, business, industry, government, and military trainers to help identify core knowledge areas, critical work functions, and skills that are common across a representative sampling of current practitioners.

An occupational analysis is a foundational requirement of any valid credentialing program; it helps define the core knowledge areas, critical work functions, and skills that are common across a representative sampling of current practitioners or job incumbent workers. Empirical results from the occupational analysis provides examinees and the public with the basis of a valid, reliable, fair, and realistic assessment that reflects the KSAs (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) required for competent job performance. For existing credentials, a job analysis should be performed periodically to maintain the validity of the content on the exam.

The DACUM Philosophy states:

1. Practitioners can describe and define their jobs more accurately than anyone else.
2. One of the most effective ways to define a job is to describe the duties and tasks practitioners perform.
3. All jobs can be effectively and sufficiently described in terms of the duties and tasks successful workers perform.
4. All duties and tasks, to be performed correctly, demand certain knowledge, skills, abilities, attributes, and tools.

The first home inspector workshop was conducted face-to-face in a 10 hour session on November 5th, 2013 in London Ontario. This consisted of an overview presentation of the DACUM process that included brainstorming and delineation of the occupations duties and tasks.

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The facilitator provided the SME (Subject Matter Experts) panel with duty and task statement definitions. A duty reflects a large area of work for a specific profession; tasks describe how to perform each duty. The workshop then shifted to a discussion about home inspectors, more specifically the “who, how, what, and why” of the profession. Primarily “what do home inspectors do”? The SME panellists provided this information. It was captured in a comprehensive list to identify the key home inspector job responsibilities.

The next step identifies the duty (or domain) areas. Once the SME panellists reached consensus on the duty areas, they delineated each duty by identifying the required tasks that typically accompany that duty.

The SME panel identified duty areas, and the facilitator wrote the duty areas on large index cards and placed them on a wall for the whole group to see. Once panellists reached consensus on the duty areas, they delineated each duty by identifying the required tasks. After all the tasks were identified, they were ordered sequentially and entered onto a spreadsheet.

The facilitator provided spreadsheets that contained the previously identified duty areas and corresponding task statements from earlier occupational analysis. This was used to reassure a self-check of the previous work and also to provide a point of comparison of what changes may have evolved in the previous 2001 and 2008 occupational reviews. Additionally a pre-2000 spreadsheet of the SAIT (Southern Alberta Institute of Technology) 3 DACUM was referenced to ensure an all-inclusive review and coordination with this analysis.

At the conclusion of the initial home inspector workshop most of the duties had been delineated. The “panel” was assigned with reviewing the duties and tasks that were not completed, more specifically related to the SAIT DACUM. The facilitator and panel agreed upon periodic meetings by webinar and email in order to complete this phase of the analysis. The follow-up communications provided the SME panel with an opportunity for feedback.

The document also provides the sub-tasks (or steps) – actions that describe the elements involved in carrying out a task. These would typically answer the client’s question of what further steps are required. The SMEs were also asked to list the steps under each task and to identify the knowledge, skills, abilities, and tools needed to complete each task.

Weighting was incorporated as a qualitative tool. The weighting is based on statistical calculations derived from review of each of the tasks within the duties and an analysis of the relative significance of each of those tasks would be when performed on the job. The panel rated each duty and task on a frequency, criticality and overall importance scale weighting in a follow-up electronic survey. The results of the occupational task analysis will be used to develop the examination content outline for the credential. The process involves first summing the weights for all competencies to define the exam total weight.

This process was repeated for each duty, thus defining a total weight. Dividing the weight per duty by the exam total weight provides a proportion for each and may be interpreted as the expected weighting of each duty on the exam as a whole. The same process can be repeated for General Competencies or any level that is an aggregate of individual competencies.

Defining the final weighting (key performance indicators) allowed for more questions from duties with tasks that were rated the highest. Minor adjustments to the final examination blueprint weighting will be made through a consensus process with the advisory panel. This includes

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adjustments to accommodate mandatory licensing requirements for the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta in the areas of Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics. This is partly identified in the new Duty area in Table 1 – 4 specifically labeled as Ethics. The ability to navigate the ethical complexities of the role and to execute the related ethical tasks associated with services provided to clients and the impact on other inspector members is of increasing importance in professional practice today.

It is also important to be aware that ISO 17024 Section 4.3.5 states that “Certification shall not be restricted on the grounds of undue financial or other limiting conditions...”. To meet accreditation standards, all eligibility requirements must have a justification for why they were selected and demonstrate how they relate to the overall knowledge and skills required for the home inspector certification credential.

Since there's a past history to the development of the National Occupational Standards for the occupation, to expedite this process, the project team developed a draft DACUM chart and facilitated a review with selected subject matter experts. The team relied on its own subject matter expertise and referred to previously published reports and other source as a secondary resource during the development of the draft DACUM chart. The creation of this updated version was based on consensus from the SME's.

One of the truly unique differences from the previously created versions, this SME panel provided a wider representation of home inspectors, from a broader range of membership in different Canadian home inspection associations. Ultimately this offers a greater range of input and feedback lacking in previous versions.

## History

Focus groups were previously held in 2001, 2006, and 2008 and in 2011. Focus groups in 2001 and 2008 dealt with the National Occupational Standards, while the 2006 focus group developed the Test Inspection with Peer Review. The purpose of the focus group meetings in 2011 was to review the existing (TIPR) Test Inspection with Peer Review process and investigate opportunities for the development of a new upfront National Exam.

Additionally subject matter experts as well as invited National Home Inspectors that attended were questioned on the fairness and rigor required to provide sustainability of the exam process. The most significant concern focused on the discussion of regional variations in construction practices due to weather related or geographical restrictions, or in some instances, differences in technical terminology.

One of the most significant areas of concern noted by the statistics gathered in the Test Inspection with Peer Review process is evidence pointing at weak or poor communication skills, and/or the issue of failure in compliance reporting to meet the Standards of Practice. This was recognized as the area causing the higher number of failures – aka: unsuccessful TIPR's.

Seminars have been developed to assist in this area. They are free and offered online at the NHICC National Exam Coursesite. The course breaks down in simpler terms the vital importance of understanding and assuring compliance to meet the Standards of Practice.