

Experience and qualifications to demonstrate competence in different EIA roles



The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 state:

“(5) In order to ensure the completeness and quality of the environmental statement –

- (a) The developer must ensure that the environmental statement is prepared by competent experts; and*
- (b) The environmental statement must be accompanied by a statement from the developer outlining the relevant expertise or qualifications of such experts.”*

In 2018, the IES ran a workshop where members experienced in EIA discussed how competence in EIA could be demonstrated. The outcomes were captured in a discussion paper, which was followed by a consultation exercise within the wider membership.

One of the agreed outcomes of the workshop and consultation was that – to support its members in developing and demonstrating their own competence – the IES would publish guidance, based on the collective opinions of consulted members, on the experience and qualifications necessary to demonstrate competence in a range of different EIA roles.

EIA roles

The engagements of IES members with EIAs is too complex and diverse for any one definition of competence, or any registration/certification system, to adequately reflect the understanding and experience required to competently undertake these activities.

Our research suggests that no single definition of a ‘competent expert’ exists. Furthermore, given the complexity of the EIA process, the successful development and industry-wide acceptance of such a definition is unlikely.

To address this complexity, this guidance outlines what levels of experience we consider necessary for an individual to be deemed competent to undertake EIA work in a range of different roles.

“...a one-size-fits-all solution will not work. The engagements of IES members with EIAs is too complex and diverse for any one definition of competence, or any registration/certification system”

All EIA professionals need to have a balanced skillset and broad cross-disciplinary knowledge. The relevance of an individual’s experience is the key component key to their competence to undertake work on a given project. Active engagement in CPD activities is essential for maintaining this knowledge.

The roles described here refer to the individuals in charge of the relevant function. Less experienced members will be involved in the preparation of the EIA and should be mentored by the more senior staff in order to achieve the threshold of experience required.

“the IES is committed to solutions which do not exclude any EIA participants either on the basis of role, complexity, or expense”

Terminology

Across companies and individuals engaged in EIA, there are a range of different ways in which the ‘EIA roles’ are defined and act. Differences in definitions and terminology across organisations made comparative discussion difficult. Therefore, each role section begins with our definition of what this role is likely to involve. You may need to cross reference against your own roles internally. The IES believes it is desirable for the industry to coalesce around a common terminology, so suggest that this document is used as a resource when creating job descriptions.

Other professionals who interact with EIA, such as Local Authority Officers or Regulators, can fit into one of these roles for example, Topic Specialist (statutory consultee) or EIA Reviewer (Local Authority).

Key for skills radar charts

We identified four competence categories required for working in EIA:

1. Understanding of and ability to manage/review EIA process (including scoping and screening);
2. Understanding of legislation and relevant regulations;
3. Technical understanding (environmental, engineering and scientific); and
4. Communication skills, or the ability to effectively convey information.

The different EIA roles require different weightings of these skills. For each role we have created spider graphs (where 5 = extremely significant, and 0 = not significant).

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EIA Reviewer/Project Lead

Typical activities & responsibilities – Ensures:

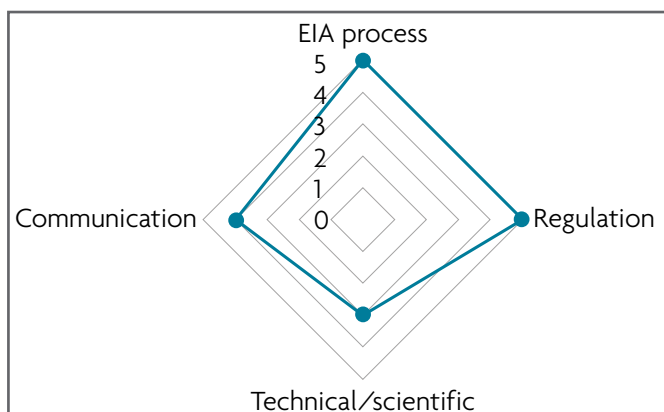
- overall quality of the EIA Report/ Environmental Statement;
- compliance with relevant EIA regulation including the regulatory processes and procedures;
- leadership of the environment team within their organisation;
- project management of the EIA project, including delivery to programme and budget;
- a consistent approach across technical chapters; and
- best practice and appropriate methodology are used across chapters.

Typical qualifications

- Degree in science or engineering subject or in environmental management or planning; and
- Membership of a relevant professional body (IES or equivalent) + Chartership (e.g. CEnv + CSci).

Recommended skills & experience

- Good communication skills, able to communicate both internally with project team and with external parties (clients and stakeholders);
- full understanding of EIA process and regulation;
- a good understanding, and ideally practitioner experience, across a range of topics and specialisms; leadership skills;
- experience of undertaking complex, large-scale, or nationally significant infrastructure projects; and
- typically, 10-years' experience in the EIA sector.



EIA Co-ordinator

Typical activities & responsibilities

- Project management;
- preparation of the environmental statement;
- liaison with wider project team, including engineering design team, client, statutory and non-statutory consultees and other stakeholders;

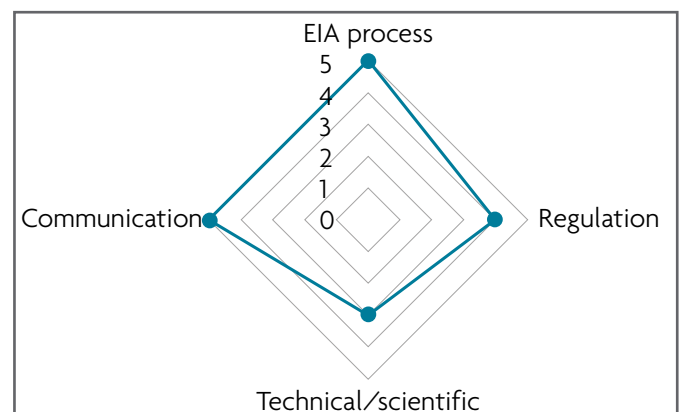
- provides guidance on overall methodology, terminology and approach to the EIA report;
- ensures the accuracy of project information provided to technical specialists;
- provides technical specialists with design and engineering information required to undertake their specialist studies;
- ensures project programme is met and the EIA is delivered within programme requirements;
- edits specialist chapters;
- lead author of methodology chapters; and
- day-to-day EIA project management and coordination.

Typical qualifications

- Membership of a relevant professional body (IES, IEMA or RTPI).

Recommended skills & experience

- Project management skills;
- organisational skills;
- communication skills;
- broad knowledge across the range of disciplines included in an EIA, with a strong level of technical understanding;
- understanding of survey, monitoring and investigation requirements of technical specialists, including seasonal constraints and programming;
- excellent understanding of the EIA process and regulations; and
- mid-level experienced in completing EIA chapters for infrastructure projects.



Topic Specialists/Chapter Leads

Typical activities & responsibilities

- Authors or co-authors EIA report chapters;
- collates desk-based information/data gathering;
- undertakes specialist baseline environmental surveys, monitoring, investigations or modelling;
- prepares technical topic specific reports; and

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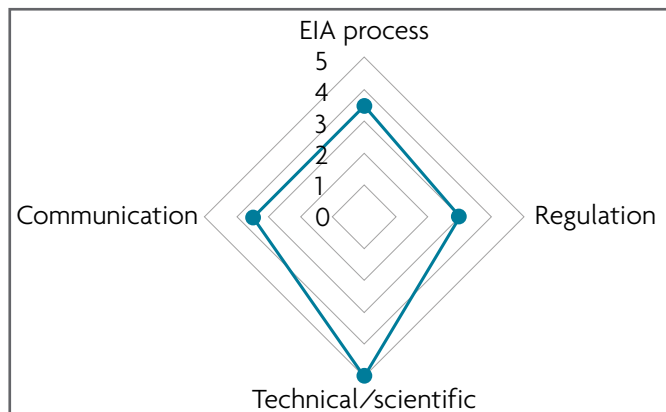
- responsible for measures to avoid impacts in relation to their own discipline, the identification of potential impacts, their mitigation or offsetting.

Typical qualifications

- An academic qualification in the specialism, or equivalent professional experience;
- membership of the appropriate specialist professional body is essential (e.g. IAQM, IES, IoA, IES, CIEEM, etc); and
- relevant professional qualification to Chartered Level (e.g. CEnv, CSci).

Recommended skills & experience

- Demonstrate EIA-specific experience and the ability to work appropriately within this framework;
- understand survey and methodology required to complete the EIA;
- knowledge of up to date methodology, best practice and guidance in relation their discipline, demonstrated by relevant CPD training; and
- mid to senior level-experienced in completing EIA chapters for infrastructure projects.



About the Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES)

The IES is a visionary organisation leading debate, dissemination and promotion of environmental science and sustainability. We promote an evidence-based approach to decision and policy making.

We are devoted to championing the crucial role of environmental science in ensuring the well-being of humanity now and in the future.

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The information in this document is intended to provide guidance for those seeking to demonstrate their competence in EIA roles. The document is a summary of the opinions of the individuals and organisations consulted. It does not constitute legal advice.

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