

RCSLT Dysphagia Training & Competency Framework – FAQs

Q: Who is the framework for?

A: The framework is for all speech and language therapists, speech and language therapy students and assistant practitioners working with people with eating, drinking or swallowing disorders (dysphagia).

Q: I'm a student; how should I start using the framework?

A: You should use the document throughout your pre-registration training to record the knowledge and skills you develop during your course and placements. You should begin at Level A and work your way through – your lecturers should direct you to key pieces of reading that are relevant to each section of the framework.

It is your responsibility to populate the competency framework as you progress through your course. By the end of your pre-registration training you should have completed the 'knowledge' sections of Levels A and B. The skills you have completed will vary depending on your clinical placements.

Q: Do I have to complete the specific activities listed in the framework?

A: There are many different ways to demonstrate competencies - the examples provided are simply suggestions of the typical work that may be used to demonstrate that a particular competency has been reached.

Q: What counts as evidence? And how much evidence do I need to get a competency signed off?

A: Evidence can be provided in a variety of ways –examples of evidence include:

- Writing a case study
- Discussing with colleagues
- Reading a journal article
- Attending a course/conference
- Being observed

The amount of evidence needed will be determined between you and your supervisor – evidence should be supplied and discussed during supervision.

At the end of Levels A and B, we suggest that the supervisee completes a case report – again, this is a suggestion and an alternative approach may be agreed between the supervisor and supervisee.

Q: Who can sign off my competencies?

A: Your competencies should be signed off by a supervisor with significant knowledge, skills and experience in the field of dysphagia, within the particular clinical area being supervised.

Ideally a supervisor would be signed off at Level C - however, we recognise that many supervisors will have achieved their competence before the framework is implemented.

At Level D, supervision will be provided by peers who are likely to be from outside of your department.

Q: How can I demonstrate my competency in different clinical areas?

A: It is recognised that there are significantly different clinical areas in which SLTs may practise in dysphagia assessment and management, for example, adult neurology, head and neck cancers, acute paediatrics, specialist paediatrics, community paediatrics (including schools services), adult learning disability and mental health.

The competency framework is a tool to ensure competency within each caseload. Some of the competencies will be generic to all clinical areas; however, for some it would be important for these to be detailed for the specific client group. Further supervised practice may be required for additional client groups.

Q: How do I access supervision if there aren't any specialist SLTs in my Trust?

A: It is essential that at every level, and throughout their entire career, the SLT working with patients/clients who have dysphagia receive regular, dedicated supervision. If there is no suitable supervisor within the employing organisation, employers may arrange for a supervisor from another organisation. Employers have a responsibility to ensure that the supervisor has adequate skills to provide supervision and teaching in this area and that this is clearly detailed in their job description.

Q: What level do I need to be at to practice independently?

A: Speech and language therapists who are independently assessing, planning and providing intervention for patients/ clients with dysphagia should have been signed off at Level C (emerging specialist).