Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

MSL973007A Perform microscopic examination

Revision Number: 1

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Modification History

Not applicable.

Unit Descriptor

Unit descriptor	This unit of competency covers the ability to set up a light microscope for optimum resolution, to prepare routine samples and to observe, identify and report sample characteristics.

Application of the Unit

Application of the unit	This unit of competency is applicable to laboratory or technical assistants in all industry sectors. The unit of competency covers limited interpretation and analysis of results. Troubleshooting of equipment and procedures is not required. Industry representatives have provided case studies to illustrate the practical application of this unit of competency and to show its relevance in a workplace setting. These are found at the end of this unit of competency under the section 'This competency in practice'.

Licensing/Regulatory Information

Not applicable.

Pre-Requisites

Prerequisite units		

Prerequisite units		

Employability Skills Information

Employability skills	This unit contains employability skills.

Elements and Performance Criteria Pre-Content

Elements describe the essential outcomes of a unit of competency.	Performance criteria describe the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element. Where bold italicised text is used, further information is detailed in the required skills and knowledge section and the range statement. Assessment of performance is to be consistent with the evidence guide.

Elements and Performance Criteria

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
1. Interpret test requirements	1.1. Review test request to identify samples to be tested, test method and equipment involved 1.2. Identify hazards associated with the sample, preparation methods and equipment and implement enterprise control measures
2. Set up work area for preparation and examination of samples	2.1. Collect equipment and arrange the workspace so that equipment can be used safely and efficiently 2.2. Perform pre-use and safety checks to ensure equipment is fit for purpose and report faulty or unsafe equipment to appropriate personnel
3. Prepare samples for examination	3.1. Log and label samples according to enterprise procedures to ensure traceability 3.2. Check suitability of the original and prepared sample for the examination and report unsuitable samples to appropriate personnel 3.3. Prepare and store the sample for examination following enterprise methods
4. Set up and use a light microscope	4.1. Set up the light path to optimise resolution 4.2. Select the appropriate objectives and filter for the sample being examined 4.3. Ensure that the lenses are clean 4.4. Adjust settings and alignment of the light path to optimise performance 4.5. Place sample correctly on the stage
5. Observe, identify and report sample characteristics	5.1. Recognise and identify significant sample characteristics 5.2. Perform required calculations accurately 5.3. Prepare and view control samples and check that results are consistent with expected values 5.4. Identify and report out of specification or atypical results promptly to appropriate personnel 5.5. Record and report data in accordance with enterprise procedures
6. Maintain a safe work environment	6.1. Ensure safety and minimise cross-contamination through the use of personal protective clothing and safety equipment 6.2. Handle all samples and equipment in accordance with enterprise safety protocols 6.3. Clean up spills using appropriate techniques to

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
	protect personnel, work area and environment 6.4. Minimise generation of waste and environmental impacts 6.5. Collect and dispose of all wastes safely 6.6. Report hazards and incidents to designated personnel using enterprise procedures

Required Skills and Knowledge

REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

This section describes the skills and knowledge required for this unit.

Required skills

Required skills include:

- setting up the workbench and microscope ergonomically
- setting up, cleaning and using a light microscope to achieve optimum resolution of the specimen
- using personal protective clothing and other safety equipment correctly
- performing counts on samples
- performing basic measurements using grids
- logging and tracking samples through all steps from receiving a sample through to completion of a procedure and reporting
- interpreting and recording test results, including simple calculations
- correctly handling and storing samples and equipment

Required knowledge

Required knowledge includes:

- parts and functions of a light microscope
- importance and appropriate use of controls and certified reference materials
- hazards and risks in laboratories associated with performing microscopic examination
- enterprise and/or legal traceability requirements
- relevant health, safety and environment requirements

Specific industry

Additional knowledge requirements may apply for different industry sectors. For example:

Biological industry:

- basic structure and function of cells and organelles
- basic classes and classification of organisms of organisms, such as prokaryotes, eukaryotes, plants, animals, bacteria, viruses and prions
- cell physiology and processes, such as simple and facilitated diffusion, plasmolysis, osmosis, tonicity, active transport, energy production, mitosis, motility, phagocytosis and pinocystosis
- purposes and mechanisms of staining (e.g. Gram +ve and -ve)

Evidence Guide

EVIDENCE GUIDE	
The Evidence Guide provides advice on assessment and must be read in conjunction with the performance criteria, required skills and knowledge, range statement and the Assessment Guidelines for the Training Package.	
Overview of assessment	
Critical aspects for assessment and evidence required to demonstrate competency in this unit	Assessors should ensure that candidates can: • follow enterprise standards, procedures and practices • prepare suitable samples • recognise, identify and document significant sample characteristics • set up a light microscope for optimal resolution • maintain personal safety and that of others • minimise cross-contamination and contamination of the laboratory and environment.
Context of and specific resources for assessment	This unit of competency is to be assessed in the workplace or simulated workplace environment. This unit of competency may be assessed with: • *MSL922001A Record and present data* • *MSL933002A Contribute to the achievement of quality objectives* • *MSL943002A Participate in laboratory/field workplace safety* • *MSL953001A Receive and prepare samples for testing*. Resources may include: • standard laboratory equipped with appropriate equipment, such as light microscopes and samples • enterprise procedures, standard methods and materials.
Method of assessment	The following assessment methods are suggested: • observation of the candidate performing microscopic examinations • review of data records prepared by the candidate, such as counts, observations and results • feedback from supervisors and peers about adherence to enterprise/technical procedures • questioning to assess underpinning knowledge.

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	In all cases, practical assessment should be supported by questions to assess underpinning knowledge and those aspects of competency which are difficult to assess directly. Where applicable, reasonable adjustment must be made to work environments and training situations to accommodate ethnicity, age, gender, demographics and disability. Access must be provided to appropriate learning and/or assessment support when required. The language, literacy and numeracy demands of assessment should not be greater than those required to undertake the unit of competency in a work like environment.
This competency in practice	Industry representatives have provided the case studies below to illustrate the practical application of this unit of competency and show its relevance in a workplace setting. **Construction materials testing** The supply of river sand is running out and quarries are accessing alternative sources of sand for use in concrete mixes in construction. The sand should not be an aggregate that is likely to break down into smaller particles. A technician in a quarry company is required to analyse samples of crushed rock using a light microscope. The technician looks for characteristics of the sample, such as angularities, roundness, sharpness, cracks, presence of organic matter, mineral structure and whether the particles are a conglomerate. If the sample does not meet the characteristics, the company will need to treat it to make it suitable for use in concrete mixes (for example by washing, crushing and sieving). **Food processing** A customer complaint is received about the baking properties of a flour delivery. The laboratory assistant at the flour mill is given the task of testing the starch content of the suspect flour. He/she prepares iodine stained samples of the returned flour and a range of baked and partially baked products prepared from it. First, the assistant makes up fresh iodine staining solution and then prepares slides of each sample for microscopic examination. He/she identifies the

EVIDENCE GUIDE	
	characteristic starch granules of the flour sample and records the degree of gelatinisation in the starch granules in the baked samples. He/she discusses the results with the supervisor and prepares a report for the customer. **Biomedical** A laboratory assistant works in the microbiology laboratory of a public hospital and is responsible for preparing and staining sputum smears from patients for micro and culture. The assistant puts on a clean gown and gloves before collecting the specimens from the reception area of the laboratory. The assistant prepares cultures of the sputum specimens on simple and selective media before preparing, fixing and staining smears for microscopic examination. The results are checked by the supervisor, entered into the laboratory information management system (LIMS) and sent to the appropriate section of the hospital. **Environmental** A laboratory assistant prepares media for plant tissue culture. There has been some contamination of Gram-positive bacteria in the last two batches and the supervisor has initiated an overhaul of the preparation and aliquotting procedure. The laboratory assistant has been asked to follow the new procedure exactly and to remove samples at each stage of ingredient addition for microscopic examination. The laboratory assistant records the exact addition amounts, batch numbers and brands of the reagents, the location of the addition (which biohazard cabinet), the equipment used and the pre-sterilisation records of all equipment. The laboratory assistant then prepares slides, fixes them and performs a Gram stain on each of the aliquots removed from the new preparation run. Microscopic analysis of each aliquot reveals nil contamination. The supervisor decides that there has been a breach in the old procedure and the laboratory assistant is asked to follow the new procedure and to perform a routine microscopic check on all batches for the next month.

Range Statement

RANGE STATEMENT	
The range statement relates to the unit of competency as a whole. It allows for different work environments and situations that may affect performance. Bold italicised wording, if used in the performance criteria, is detailed below. Essential operating conditions that may be present with training and assessment (depending on the work situation, needs of the candidate, accessibility of the item, and local industry and regional contexts) may also be included.	
Codes of practice	Where reference is made to industry codes of practice, and/or Australian/international standards, it is expected the latest version will be used

Standards, **codes**, **procedures and/or enterprise requirements**	Standards, codes, procedures and/or enterprise requirements may include:
	• Australian and international standards, such as:
	  • AS ISO 17025-2005 General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories
	  • AS/NZS ISO 9000 Set:2008 Quality management systems set
	  • AS/NZS 2243 Set:2006 Safety in laboratories set
	• principles of good laboratory practice (GLP)
	• Australian code of good manufacturing practice for medicinal products (GMP)
	• safety manuals
	• quality manuals and equipment and procedure manuals
	• standard operating procedures (SOPs)
	• material safety data sheets (MSDS)
	• enterprise recording and reporting procedures
	• production and laboratory schedules
	• material, production and product specifications

Preparation of samples	Preparation of samples may include: • aseptic transfer of specimen • centrifugation • cooling • drying • filling a counting chamber in one continuous flow without bubbles or overflow • filtration

RANGE STATEMENT	
	• fixing of films to minimise cell damage and the production of artefacts • labelling • mounting of stained films, sections and whole mounts to ensure long term preservation • permanent labels for smears, films and sections for presentation, storage and retrieval • physical or chemical separation • selection of diluent to preserve or enhance visibility of the cells to be counted • selection, filling and cover slipping of a clean, dry counting chamber to ensure even distribution of cells during filling • serial dilution to enable individual cells to be reliably counted • staining of fixed material to illustrate required characteristics • sub-sampling • thin film or smear on a slide
Checking sample condition	Checking sample condition may include: • labelling • spillage • spoilage due to incorrect storage and transport conditions • temperature control • suitability for the examination
Pre-use checks	Pre-use checks may include: • calibration • cleaning/checking use by dates of reagents • routine maintenance
Equipment	Equipment may include: • glass slides • counting chambers (e.g. haemocytometer) • optical graticules and stage micrometers • tissue culture flasks
Light microscopes	Light microscopes may include: • bright field illumination microscopic examination up to 1000x magnification • stereomicroscopes and dissection microscopes

RANGE STATEMENT	
	• compound microscopes • phase contrast microscopes • inverted microscopes
Biological samples	Biological samples may include: • smears, impression smears, sections, squashes, films and whole mounts • a monolayer of cells in smears and films • fixed smears for demonstration of bacteria by the methylene blue and Gram staining techniques • blood films stained by a Romanowsky technique to clearly show differentiation of granulocytes • stained sections of animal tissues using regressive haematoxylin and eosin to differentiate cytoplasmic and nuclear detail • differentially stained monocotyledon and dicotyledon stem sections to demonstrate the structure of vascular bundles (xylem, phloem and cambium) • stained whole mounts of helminths • whole mounts, such as liver flukes, planaria and samples of animal faeces to demonstrate ova, cysts and larvae • pond water organisms • onion root tip squash • midstream sample of urine
Physical samples	Physical samples may include: • sand • asbestos fibres • coal samples • construction testing materials • geological specimens
Checking prepared samples	Checking prepared samples may include looking for: • clean and scratch-free microscope slides to reduce artefacts • preparation according to SOPs • a homogeneous suspension of sample • films and smears that have been fixed rapidly

RANGE STATEMENT	
	• thin films with a monolayer of cells • appropriate whole mounts for intact organisms • correct sample identification during and after processing
Sample characteristics	Sample characteristics are restricted to what can be viewed by bright light microscopy and may include: • shape and size of particles • presence of contamination • colour • consistency and variability • number of cells (e.g. cells in blood or other particulate samples, such as a yeast suspension or pollen grains) • type of cells, percentage of atypical cells, presence/absence of cells, size of cells, viable and non-viable cells and trajectory • presence of stained material, such as starch • colour/staining and morphology • motility
Calculations	Calculations may include: • dilutions • percentage viability • number of cells in original sample after dilution • calculation of cells/ml in a number of squares of a counting chamber
Hazards	Hazards may include: • micro-organisms and agents associated with soil, air, water, blood and blood products and human or animal tissue and fluids • chemicals and stains • sharps and broken glassware • aerosols
Safety practices and personal protective equipment	Safety practices and personal protective equipment may include: • use of MSDS • use of personal protective equipment, such as safety glasses, gloves and coveralls

RANGE STATEMENT	
	• use of biohazard containers and laminar flow cabinet • correct labelling of reagents and hazardous materials • handling and storing hazardous materials and equipment in accordance with labels, MSDS and manufacturer's instructions • ergonomic layout, correct illumination and organisation of workbench • regular cleaning and/or decontamination of equipment and work areas
Occupational health and safety (OHS) and environmental management requirements	OHS and environmental management requirements: • all operations must comply with enterprise OHS and environmental management requirements, which may be imposed through state/territory or federal legislation - these requirements must not be compromised at any time • all operations assume the potentially hazardous nature of samples and require standard precautions to be applied • where relevant, users should access and apply current industry understanding of infection control issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and State and Territory Departments of Health

Unit Sector(s)

Unit sector	Testing

Competency field

Competency field	

Co-requisite units

Co-requisite units		