Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

MSL973012A Assist with geotechnical site investigations

Revision Number: 1

MSL973012A Assist with geotechnical site investigations

Modification History

Not applicable.

Unit Descriptor

Unit descriptor	This unit of competency covers the ability to prepare for and assist with site activities such as excavations, sampling and testing as part of a geotechnical investigation team. Personnel are expected to identify common site problems and seek advice to deal with situations beyond their own technical competence.

Application of the Unit

Application of the unit	This unit of competency is applicable to laboratory assistants working under the close supervision of a senior technician in the construction, mining and drilling industry sectors. 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. Prepare for on-site operations	1.1. Confirm details of the job, location, work instructions, appropriate sampling/test procedures and safety requirements with supervisor 1.2. Identify likely site hazards, personal protective equipment and safety procedures that are specified for the job and materials used 1.3. Collect, check, and stow all tools, equipment and materials required at the site 1.4. Confirm site access requirements such as entry permits and participate in safety induction as required
2. Assist with excavation of boreholes, test pits and/or trenches	2.1. Confirm specified sampling/testing locations with supervisor 2.2. Excavate to the specified sampling/testing depth, minimising disturbance and potential contamination of the site 2.3. Ensure materials from different strata are kept separate 2.4. Recognise materials and record changes of strata, test results
3. Assist with site sampling	3.1. Prepare and check sampling equipment and materials 3.2. Take disturbed and undisturbed samples as directed and in accordance with enterprise methods/procedures 3.3. Label samples and record samples/site conditions in accordance with enterprise methods/procedures
4. Assist with site testing	4.1. Conduct pre-use checks of test equipment 4.2. Perform basic tests as directed and in accordance with test methods or enterprise procedures 4.3. Record data in accordance with test methods or enterprise procedures 4.4. Recognise obvious errors or atypical data and seek advice
5. Assist with finalising site operations	5.1. Reinstate the site in accordance with instructions 5.2. Clean all equipment (and vehicle as necessary) avoiding environmental damage, stormwater contamination or spread of pests 5.3. Check all equipment/materials prior to re-stowing them for safe transport 5.4. Handle and transport samples in accordance with

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
	enterprise procedures 5.5. Notify appropriate site personnel on completion of tasks and prior to leaving site (if unsupervised) 5.6. On return to base, check serviceability of test equipment before storage
6. Assist with maintaining records	6.1. Complete relevant parts of site safety plans, equipment logs and test reports in accordance with enterprise procedures 6.2. Maintain confidentiality of enterprise information
7. Maintain a safe work environment	7.1. Use safe work procedures and protective equipment to ensure personal safety and that of others 7.2. Minimise environmental impacts of testing/sampling and generation of waste 7.3. Collect and/or dispose of all waste in accordance with 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:

- interpreting maps, site plans and drawings
- recognising site services, sampling and testing sites
- setting up, checking, using and cleaning/maintaining tools and equipment
- taking representative samples, handling and transporting samples
- recognising soil, rock and fill materials
- recognising site features and geotechnical conditions
- performing basic insitu tests and site measurements (e.g. location and depth)
- maintaining accurate and compete records
- communicating problems to appropriate personnel
- driving safely on and off-road
- working safely on construction sites around heavy equipment and earthmoving plant

Required knowledge

Required knowledge includes:

- the basic concepts, purposes and principles of geotechnical site investigation
- site safety and management rules (safety induction, risk assessments, controlledentry/exit to site and required protective equipment and clothing)
- simple methods for identifying and classifying materials
- basic engineering properties of soil and rock materials and their use in engineering and construction
- basic principles of representative sampling and testing
- basic insitu testing methods
- relevant occupational health, safety (OHS) and environment requirements

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: • prepare for site operations and perform geotechnical sampling, testing and site reinstatement under direction • work safely at geotechnical investigation sites • follow instructions and work as part of a small team.
Context of and specific resources for assessment	This unit of competency is to be assessed in the workplace or simulated workplace environment through observation over time. The timeframe must allow for adequate assessment of operation under all normal and a range of abnormal conditions. Where this is not practical, additional assessment techniques must be used. This unit of competency may be assessed with: • *MSL952002A Handle and transport samples or equipment* • *MSL952001A Collectroutine site samples* • *MSL973001A Perform basic tests*. Resources may include: • access to geotechnical sites, tools, equipment • enterprise procedures, sampling plans, test methods and equipment manuals.
Method of assessment	The following assessment methods are suggested: • review of work outputs over a period of time to ensure accurate and consistent work is obtained within required timelines • examples of completed workplace documentation • feedback from peers and supervisors • oral or written questioning. 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.

EVIDENCE GUIDE	
	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 study below to illustrate the practical application of this unit of competency and to show its relevance in a workplace setting. **Construction materials** A geotechnical consultancy company is carrying out the investigation for the construction of an industrial complex involving building pads and roadways. A contract drilling company has been hired to carry out auger drilling for the building pad foundations. The drill rig will be used to perform standard penetration tests in some boreholes to determine bearing capacities. Undisturbed sample tubes will be pushed to obtain samples for consolidation testing in the laboratory. A senior technician is in charge of site activities and arranges for the drill rig to be on-site. She/he plans a program of drilling, sampling and testing and a laboratory assistant is assigned to assist with drilling, testing and sampling operations at the site. The senior technician has a marked-up plan of the site showing borehole locations to help him/her direct where to drill. The drilling contractor operates the drill rig, takes tube samples, performs the standard penetration tests and cases the hole if required, as directed by the senior technician. The assistant assists with recording and sampling the soil profile, sealing the sample tubes with wax and labeling them. He/she also records the SPT readings and bags and labels the material from the split-spoon sampler. Each borehole is capped to prevent access by unauthorised persons so that the assistant can record the standing water level 24 hours after the hole has been drilled. The assistant wears a helmet, work boots and earmuffs while working near the rig. He/she

EVIDENCE GUIDE	
	covers up and wears sunscreen while working in the sun and drinks large quantities of water. The assistant also excavates hand auger holes to a depth of 1 m at regular intervals in the proposed roadways to obtain samples for California Bearing Ratio (CBR) tests. Adjacent to each, he/she performs a dynamic cone penetrometer test to 2 m to assess the insitu material. He/she records the logs of the auger holes and the test results on the company's standard data sheets and backfills each auger hole immediately after sampling.

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 1000-1998 The international system of units (SI) and its application
	  • AS ISO 17025-2005 General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories
	  • AS/NZS ISO 14000 Set:2005 Environmental management standards set
	  • AS/NZS ISO 9000 Set:2008 Quality management systems set
	• calibration and maintenance schedules
	• enterprise recording and reporting procedures
	• environmental legislation and regulations
	• equipment manuals
	• equipment startup, operation and shutdown procedures
	• industry codes of practice
	• material, production and product specifications
	• National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) documents regarding construction materials testing
	• OHS national standards and codes of practice
	• production and laboratory schedules
	• quality manuals
	• standard operating procedures (SOPs)

Site hazards	Site hazards may include: • solar radiation, dust and noise

RANGE STATEMENT	
	• manual handling of heavy materials and equipment • working in/on trenches, confined spaces, wet and uneven surfaces, heights and slopes • vehicular and pedestrian traffic • underground services such as gas and electricity
Safety procedures	Safety procedures may include: • location of site services before investigations commence • use of material safety data sheets (MSDS) • use of personal protective equipment, such as hard hats, hearing protection, sunscreen, gloves, masks, goggles, coveralls and safety boots • handling and storage of (hazardous) materials and equipment in accordance with labels, MSDS, manufacturer's instructions, and enterprise procedures and regulations • regular cleaning of equipment and vehicles • machinery guards • signage, barriers, flashing lights and traffic control
Tools and equipment	Tools and equipment may include: • hand tools, including shovels, crowbars, scoops, spanners, wrenches and tape measure • consumables, including sample bags, labels, sample tubes and wax • documentation, including maps, plans and worksheets • field test equipment, including dynamic cone penetration (DCP) testing, standard penetration testing (SPT), shear vane, pocket penetrometers and water level indicator • safety clothing and equipment, including helmets, boots, gloves, earmuffs and glasses • excavation equipment, including hand and power augers, powered excavators, generators and jack hammers
Common site problems	Common site problems may include: • caving in of excavation walls

RANGE STATEMENT	
	• drilling difficulties • sample loss during retrieval • knowing when to stop a hole, or what and when to test and sample • misidentification of samples and sampling locations • equipment breakdown and breakage • environmental impacts of construction activities on wildlife, vegetation, waterways and inclement weather • working close to earth moving equipment, trucks and overhead loads
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		