

2020 Evaluator Competencies Assessment Tool (ECAT)

About This Tool

The Evaluator Competencies Assessment Tool (ECAT) was developed as an instrument for evaluators to assess their competence in critical areas of evaluation practice based on the competencies adopted by the American Evaluation Association (AEA) in 2018. This tool builds upon previous work to develop evaluation competencies by the AEA Evaluator Competencies Task Force, and numerous scholars and practitioners in the evaluation community. The competencies include the domains of professional practice, methodology, context, planning and management, and interpersonal.

The items are derived from the [AEA Evaluator Competencies](#) which were developed by the AEA Evaluator Competencies Task Force and officially adopted in 2018. The rating scale was developed by the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (2018) and used with permission.¹ Competencies were adapted into survey items according to the principles described by Don Dillman (2002) in the book *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. Structural, convergent, and divergent validity of the tool were examined by a team at Claremont Graduate University - Minji Cho, Ann Marie Castleman, Haley Umans, and Mike Osiemo Mwirigi. The paper in which this tool was examined for properties of validity is currently under review.² The order of domains in this tool have been changed to reflect the order of the AEA competencies.³

The purpose of this tool is to facilitate self-reflection and identify areas of professional development. Your results should be used to guide your professional development. Additionally, we think the tool can be used to support research on evaluation efforts (as a whole measure or a measure of individual domains).

We are looking for feedback to improve the tool to ensure it is useful for evaluation practitioners and researchers. Please direct feedback to Minji Cho at Minji.cho@cgu.edu.

How to Use the Tool

You will be asked to rate your level of competency in each of the five domains. Before you begin, please review the scale below to understand the distinctions among the categories of entry/novice, proficient/skilled, and mastery/expert evaluator. Responding with a 0 indicates that you have no knowledge or experience with a topic; responding with a 6 indicates you are an expert. After each domain, space is provided for you to sum the scores for the domain, calculate an average, and reflect on your scores.⁴

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Entry / Novice</i>		<i>Proficient / Skilled</i>			<i>Mastery / Expert</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing awareness / building knowledge• Limited repertoire• Limited experience• Unaware of potential problems• Unaware of questions to ask		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applying knowledge routinely• Basic repertoire• Moderate amount of experience• Solves problems as they arise• Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using knowledge fluently and effectively• Advanced repertoire• Extensive experience• Anticipates problems before they arise• Poses questions to the field• Sought out for input	

¹ Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute. (2018). *2018 AEA Evaluator Competencies Self-Assessment*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

² Cho, M., Castleman, A. M., Umans, H., Mwirigi, M. O. (2020). *Measuring Evaluator Competencies: Developing and Validating the Evaluator Competencies Assessment Tool (ECAT)*. [Manuscript submitted for publication].

³ The order of the domains in the original research tool is: methodology, interpersonal, professional practice, context, planning and management.

⁴ The written space for reflection was not included in the research efforts to empirically validate the tool.

Please keep in mind that no one evaluator can be skilled in every single competency and that evaluators often work in teams for this very reason. Additionally, we acknowledge evaluators have varying approaches. Your approach may not include all the activities discussed. Because this is a self-assessment, the judgment for each competency rating is up to you. There is no right or wrong answer.

You may find some items to possibly mean multiple things. They have been intentionally designed to be inclusive of the diverse practice of evaluators. These items are meant to be interpreted based on how they may apply to your work in evaluation. Finally, items were created to stay as true as possible to the competencies adopted by AEA. Some changes have been made to create clear survey questions.

To Cite This Tool

Cho, M., Castleman, A. M., Umans, H., Mwirigi, M. O. (2020). *The ECAT: 2020 Evaluator Competencies Assessment Tool*. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University.

PART I: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE DOMAIN

This focuses on what makes evaluators distinct as practicing professionals. Items will focus on ethics, approaches, values, and AEA's foundational documents (AEA, 2018).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Entry / Novice</i>		<i>Proficient / Skilled</i>		<i>Mastery / Expert</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing awareness / building knowledge Limited repertoire Limited experience Unaware of potential problems Unaware of questions to ask 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying knowledge routinely Basic repertoire Moderate amount of experience Solves problems as they arise Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using knowledge fluently and effectively Advanced repertoire Extensive experience Anticipates problems before they arise Poses questions to the field Sought out for input 		

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

	Entry/Novice		Proficient/Skilled		Mastery/Expert		
1) Identify personal areas of professional competence.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2) Identify personal areas of need for professional growth.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3) Pursue ongoing professional development to deepen reflective practice.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4) Pursue ongoing professional development to stay current on relevant practices.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5) Pursue ongoing professional development to build connections.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6) Act ethically through evaluation practice that demonstrates integrity.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7) Act ethically through evaluation practice that respects people from different cultural backgrounds.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8) Act ethically through evaluation practice that respects people from indigenous groups.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Entry / Novice</i>		<i>Proficient / Skilled</i>		<i>Mastery / Expert</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing awareness / building knowledge Limited repertoire Limited experience Unaware of potential problems Unaware of questions to ask 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying knowledge routinely Basic repertoire Moderate amount of experience Solves problems as they arise Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using knowledge fluently and effectively Advanced repertoire Extensive experience Anticipates problems before they arise Poses questions to the field Sought out for input 		

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

	Entry/Novice		Proficient/Skilled			Mastery/Expert	
9) Apply the AEA Guiding Principles.*	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10) Apply the AEA Statement on Cultural Competence.*	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11) Apply the Program Evaluation Standards developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Education Evaluation.*	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12) Select evaluation approaches (including theories) appropriately.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13) Use systematic evidence to make evaluative judgements.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14) Reflect on evaluation formally to improve practice.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15) Reflect on evaluation informally to improve practice.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16) Identify how evaluation practice can promote public good.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17) Identify how evaluation practice can promote social justice.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
18) Advocate for the field of evaluation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Step 1: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE SUM OF SCORES			Step 2: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AVERAGE (DIVIDE SUM BY 18)				

*Note. In research efforts to validate the ECAT, three questions preceded Q51 – Q53 that asked individuals “Are you familiar with the AEA Guiding Principles?”, “Are you familiar with the AEA Statement on Cultural Competence?”, and “Are you familiar with the Program Evaluation Standards developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Education Evaluation?”. The response options included Yes, No, and Maybe. If respondents selected “No” to one of the questions, they were not shown the corresponding question asking about applying the document.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE DOMAIN REFLECTIONS

PART II: METHODOLOGY DOMAIN

The following set of questions asks you about technical aspects of evidence-based, systematic inquiry for values purposes. Methodology includes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed designs for learning, understanding, decision making, and judging (AEA, 2018).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Entry / Novice</i>		<i>Proficient / Skilled</i>			<i>Mastery / Expert</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness / building knowledge • Limited repertoire • Limited experience • Unaware of potential problems • Unaware of questions to ask 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying knowledge routinely • Basic repertoire • Moderate amount of experience • Solves problems as they arise • Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using knowledge fluently and effectively • Advanced repertoire • Extensive experience • Anticipates problems before they arise • Poses questions to the field • Sought out for input 	

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

	Entry/Novice		Proficient/Skilled		Mastery/Expert		
19) Identify evaluation purposes.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
20) Identify evaluation needs.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
21) Determine evaluation questions.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
22) Use program theory, including program logic.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
23) Identify assumptions that underlie program theory, including program logic.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
24) Design credible evaluations that address identified <i>purposes</i> .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
25) Design feasible evaluations that address identified <i>purposes</i> .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
26) Design credible evaluations that address identified <i>questions</i> .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
27) Design feasible evaluations that address identified <i>questions</i> .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Entry / Novice</i>		<i>Proficient / Skilled</i>			<i>Mastery / Expert</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness / building knowledge • Limited repertoire • Limited experience • Unaware of potential problems • Unaware of questions to ask 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying knowledge routinely • Basic repertoire • Moderate amount of experience • Solves problems as they arise • Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using knowledge fluently and effectively • Advanced repertoire • Extensive experience • Anticipates problems before they arise • Poses questions to the field • Sought out for input 	

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

	Entry/Novice	Proficient/Skilled	Mastery/Expert				
28) Determine which methods (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) are appropriate to answer the evaluation questions.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
29) Justify which methods (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) are appropriate to answer the evaluation questions.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
30) Identify assumptions that underlie methodologies.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
31) Conduct reviews of the literature.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
32) Identify relevant sources of evidence.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
33) Identify relevant sampling procedures.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
34) Involve stakeholders in implementing evaluations.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
35) Involve stakeholders in interpreting evaluations.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
36) Involve stakeholders in reporting evaluation results.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
37) Collect data using credible procedures.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
38) Collect data using feasible procedures.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
39) Collect data using culturally appropriate procedures.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Entry / Novice</i>		<i>Proficient / Skilled</i>			<i>Mastery / Expert</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness / building knowledge • Limited repertoire • Limited experience • Unaware of potential problems • Unaware of questions to ask 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying knowledge routinely • Basic repertoire • Moderate amount of experience • Solves problems as they arise • Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using knowledge fluently and effectively • Advanced repertoire • Extensive experience • Anticipates problems before they arise • Poses questions to the field • Sought out for input 	

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Entry/Novice		Proficient/Skilled			Mastery/Expert	
40) Analyze data using credible procedures.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
41) Analyze data using feasible procedures.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
42) Analyze data using culturally appropriate procedures.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
43) Identify the strengths of the evaluation design.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
44) Identify the limitations of the evaluation design.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
45) Identify the strengths of the evaluation methods.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
46) Identify the limitations of the evaluation methods.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
47) Interpret findings in context.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
48) Use evidence to draw conclusions.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
49) Use evidence to make judgements.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
50) Use evidence to make recommendations.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Step 1: METHODOLOGY SUM OF SCORES				Step 2: METHODOLOGY AVERAGE (DIVIDE SUM BY 32)			

PART III: CONTEXT DOMAIN

This focuses on understanding the unique circumstances, multiple perspectives, and changing settings of evaluations and their users/stakeholders. Context may involve site/location/environment, participants/stakeholders, organization/structure, culture/diversity, history/traditions, values/beliefs, politics/economics, power/privilege, and other characteristics (AEA, 2018).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Entry / Novice</i>		<i>Proficient / Skilled</i>			<i>Mastery / Expert</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness / building knowledge • Limited repertoire • Limited experience • Unaware of potential problems • Unaware of questions to ask 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying knowledge routinely • Basic repertoire • Moderate amount of experience • Solves problems as they arise • Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using knowledge fluently and effectively • Advanced repertoire • Extensive experience • Anticipates problems before they arise • Poses questions to the field • Sought out for input 	

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

		Entry/Novice	Proficient/Skilled	Mastery/Expert			
51) Describe the program including its basic purpose, components, and its functioning in broader contexts and systems.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
52) Respond respectfully to the uniqueness of the evaluation context.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
53) Engage a diverse range of stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
54) Attend to systems issues within the context.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
55) Facilitate shared understanding of the program with stakeholders.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
56) Facilitate shared understanding of the evaluation with stakeholders.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
57) Clarify diverse stakeholder perspectives.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
58) Clarify stakeholder interests.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
59) Clarify cultural assumptions.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Entry / Novice</i>		<i>Proficient / Skilled</i>			<i>Mastery / Expert</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness / building knowledge • Limited repertoire • Limited experience • Unaware of potential problems • Unaware of questions to ask 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying knowledge routinely • Basic repertoire • Moderate amount of experience • Solves problems as they arise • Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using knowledge fluently and effectively • Advanced repertoire • Extensive experience • Anticipates problems before they arise • Poses questions to the field • Sought out for input 	

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

	Entry/Novice		Proficient/Skilled			Mastery/Expert	
60) Communicate evaluation processes in timely ways .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
61) Communicate evaluation processes effectively .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
62) Communicate evaluation results in timely ways .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
63) Communicate evaluation results effectively .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
64) Promote evaluation use in context.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Step 1: CONTEXT SUM OF SCORES				Step 2: CONTEXT AVERAGE (DIVIDE SUM BY 14)			

CONTEXT DOMAIN REFLECTIONS

PART IV: PLANNING & MANAGEMENT DOMAIN

This focuses on determining and monitoring work plans, timelines, resources, and other components needed to complete and deliver an evaluation study. Planning and Management includes networking, developing proposals, contracting, determining work assignments, monitoring progress, and fostering use (AEA, 2018).

0 <i>Entry / Novice</i>	3 <i>Proficient / Skilled</i>	5 <i>Mastery / Expert</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness / building knowledge • Limited repertoire • Limited experience • Unaware of potential problems • Unaware of questions to ask 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying knowledge routinely • Basic repertoire • Moderate amount of experience • Solves problems as they arise • Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using knowledge fluently and effectively • Advanced repertoire • Extensive experience • Anticipates problems before they arise • Poses questions to the field • Sought out for input

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<i>Entry/Novice</i>			<i>Proficient/Skilled</i>		<i>Mastery/Expert</i>	
65) Negotiate a feasible evaluation plan including budget, resources, and timeline.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
66) Manage a feasible evaluation plan including budget, resources, and timeline.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
67) Address aspects of culture in evaluation planning .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
68) Address aspects of culture in evaluation management .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
69) Team with others when appropriate.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
70) Plan for evaluation use.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
71) Coordinate evaluation processes .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
72) Supervise evaluation processes .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
73) Document evaluation processes .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
74) Coordinate evaluation products .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
75) Supervise evaluation products .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
76) Document evaluation products .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Entry / Novice</i>		<i>Proficient / Skilled</i>			<i>Mastery / Expert</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing awareness / building knowledge • Limited repertoire • Limited experience • Unaware of potential problems • Unaware of questions to ask 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying knowledge routinely • Basic repertoire • Moderate amount of experience • Solves problems as they arise • Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using knowledge fluently and effectively • Advanced repertoire • Extensive experience • Anticipates problems before they arise • Poses questions to the field • Sought out for input 	

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Entry/Novice			Proficient/Skilled		Mastery/Expert	
77) Monitor evaluation progress .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
78) Monitor evaluation quality .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
79) Make adjustments to the evaluation when needed.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
80) Work with stakeholders to build evaluation capacity when appropriate.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
81) Use technology to manage the evaluation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
82) Manage evaluation data.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
83) Safeguard evaluation data.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Step 1: PLANNING & MANAGEMENT SUM OF SCORES				Step 2: PLANNING & MANAGEMENT AVERAGE (DIVIDE SUM BY 19)			

PLANNING & MANAGEMENT DOMAIN REFLECTIONS

PART V: INTERPERSONAL DOMAIN

The following set of questions include items on cultural competence, communication, facilitation, and conflict resolution. This focuses on human relations and social interactions that ground evaluator effectiveness for professional practice. (AEA, 2018).

0 <i>Entry / Novice</i>	3 <i>Proficient / Skilled</i>	6 <i>Mastery / Expert</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing awareness / building knowledge Limited repertoire Limited experience Unaware of potential problems Unaware of questions to ask 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying knowledge routinely Basic repertoire Moderate amount of experience Solves problems as they arise Aware of questions to ask and able to access resources to answer the questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using knowledge fluently and effectively Advanced repertoire Extensive experience Anticipates problems before they arise Poses questions to the field Sought out for input

From novice to expert, how would you rate your ability to...

	Entry/Novice	1	2	3	4	5	6
84) Foster positive relationships for professional practice .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
85) Foster positive relationships for evaluation use .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
86) Listen in order to understand different perspectives.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
87) Manage conflict constructively.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
88) Facilitate shared decision making for evaluation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
89) Facilitate constructive interaction throughout the evaluation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
90) Facilitate culturally responsive interaction throughout the evaluation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
91) Communicate in ways that enhance evaluation effectiveness.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
92) Build trust throughout the evaluation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
93) Attend to the ways power and privilege affect evaluation practice.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Step 1: INTERPERSONAL SUM OF SCORES				Step 2: INTERPERSONAL AVERAGE (DIVIDE SUM BY 10)			

ECAT Scoring and Reflection

For each domain, please transfer your score from above to the table below. Based on the averages, please review each domain and you can identify strengths in your practice and areas that you would like to further develop. These scores are meant to guide reflection to support on-going learning and professional development.

Domain	Averages
Professional Practice Domain	
Methodology Domain	
Context Domain	
Planning & Management Domain	
Interpersonal Domain	

To support reflection and ongoing learning, please consider the following guiding questions as you reflect on your competency scores in each domain.

- ❖ How do you feel reviewing your scores? Are you surprised or do these align with what you expected?
- ❖ Which competencies or competency domain(s) do you identify as a strength? Why?
- ❖ Which competencies or competency domain(s) do you identify as an area to further develop? Why?
- ❖ Which competencies or competency domain(s) will you prioritize to further develop? Are some competencies more urgent to develop more than others?
- ❖ What specific actions will you take to enhance your skills or knowledge in specific competencies?

GENERAL REFLECTIONS
