



## LABOUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE PROGRAMME (LMIP)

---

# INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP ON THE ORGANISING FRAMEWORK FOR OCCUPATIONS (OFO)

**Date:** 20 October 2020 | **Time:** 10h00 – 13h00 | **Platform:** Zoom

### Attendees

- Approximately 150 participants attended from various government departments, SETAs, civil society and educational institutions.

### Objectives

- To introduce the OFO to social partners and key stakeholder organisations – focusing on the importance of an occupational classification system (including its limits), the genesis of the OFO, and its application in the context of Labour Market Intelligence.

### Expected Outcomes

- Stakeholders have a common understanding of the OFO.
- Stakeholders know of the processes to register new and emerging occupations on the OFO.

---

### 1 Welcome, Introduction, Apologies

Prof. H Bhorat (DPRU)

### 2 Rules for participation and engagement

Ms K Lilenstein (DPRU)

### 3 Rationale for the workshop

Ms M Khuluvhe (DHET)

- Form as input to the critical skills list;
- Identification of skills needs in the country;
- Common understanding of the OFO and the roles it plays in labour market intelligence
- Inform stakeholders of the process to register new and emerging occupations.
- Engage and find solutions of problems associated with the use of the OFO.

### 4 An overview of the OFO:

Dr P Ramsarup (Wits REAL)

- The genesis
- Link to ISCO (International Framework)
- Details of occupational information in the OFO (examples of 2-3 occupations)



- Dr. Ramsarup provided a rationale for an occupational classification system – the main three reasons are supporting statistical information collection, facilitate labour market analysis and enhance career planning and job searching.
- Two examples of international occupational classification systems – ONET and ISCO.
- The Organising Framework for Occupation is used as a method to capture jobs as occupations. Importantly, Dr. Ramsarup noted that OFO is a “system in development” and there are problems, however, this part and parcel of developing a system.
- She explained to participants how to read OFO codes and the two dimensions of skill levels, and
- Provided a link ([www.ofomapping.co.za](http://www.ofomapping.co.za)) to see the mapping of OFO codes.
- She indicated that if a job is not available in the system, users can send a message and DHET can check that job.
- The key achievement of the OFO is that it provides a link between education and work – a crucial element in the development of a national skills strategy.

#### Q&A:

- *Q1 (chat): May I also request that the OFO be designed the occupation of community education and training colleges please?*  
A1: Some of the most poorly represented occupations are the entry level ones and the OFO struggles to represent community orientated occupations because they [the occupations] are not represented on ISCO, which is a framework based on occupations most common in developed countries.
- *Q2 (chat + verbal): How can you link the OFO with underlying qualifications for occupations? How can the OFO be linked to CESM?*  
A2: Prof. Allais stated that we should not be “preoccupied” with linking all the types of systems such as OFO, NQF in a “neat way”, rather professionals should use their own judgement when linking two systems together. She indicated that people need to be cautious but attempt to do the linking. There are working groups attempting to link the OFO with CESM.
- *Q3: When it comes to classification into unit group, it is not easy to know what categories to select. Has the occupational mapping system made it easier to make the appropriate choice/judgement?*  
A3: It was indicated that the electronic tool gives possible options and helps the user to see the tasks associated with the occupation. It was indicated that it does make it easier but it is not perfect.
- *Q4: [Background: Prof. Bhorat made the point that in terms of comparability to other countries, SA researchers use ISCO because that is what other countries use for labour market statistics.] Is it possible to match the OFO to ISCO?*  
A4: It was indicated that there is no bridge between OFO and ISCO.
- *Comment: made by a participant that individuals in local government struggle to link job occupations to OFO codes as the OFO codes “reduce the list” of job occupations. The participant was grateful about the new electronic tool which linked job occupations to OFO codes as that would clear up the current confusion experienced by stakeholders.*

#### 5 Processes to update the OFO

Ms W Sikaka (DHET)

- Described the process on how the OFO is updated – it is an eight-step process (see slides for more details) and walked us through the OFO submission process.
- Ms. Sikaka described the OFO portal which will enable SETAs to submit applications through the system.

## Q&A:

- **Q1: Is there a way to deal with OFO change request through DHET besides through the SETAs?**  
A1: No – SETAs have the authority/responsibility to engage the sectors. So, if any engagement is done outside SETAs, the process will be chaotic.
- **Q2: Is there a template for submission of clear and substantive motivation for inclusion of an occupation in the OFO? What should it contain?**  
A2: There is no template. What is required is documented evidence to motivate the need for change. It was indicated that it can be a research report indicating where the need stems from.
- **Q3: In the current OFO framework, there are specialisations that are not linked to any occupations. Is that deliberate or are there plans to fix this?**  
A3: It was indicated that it is not supposed to be like that. All specialisations should be linked to an occupation. It was also acknowledged there are some anomalies in the OFO and the Department is currently on rectifying those anomalies.

## 6 The strengths and weaknesses of the OFO – what the OFO can and cannot do

Prof. S Allais (Wits REAL)

- Presentation started with a poll asking the participants two questions to be answered in the chat.
  - Have you used OFO?
  - If yes, what have you used it for?
- Prof. Allais then discussed current research through the LMIP – one example was that there is an international review of international occupation classification systems.
- She highlighted two main critiques of occupational classification systems: categories (do they need to be more detailed? Do additional groups need to be added?) and the measurement of skill levels as well as skills specialisation.
- She explained that when using a tool, we need to think about the purpose(s) of the tool, whether there any better tools to achieve our purpose and whether the tool can fulfil a range of other purposes as well.
- Prof. Allais says that currently OFO used for identifying priority and critical skills, qualification development and human resource development.
- She also explained design problems: great fragmentation between specialised titles and alternative jobs titles, multiple jobs that comprise an occupation, mapping of management occupations is complex – companies tend to use a “catch all” occupation for many job titles.
- She also further emphasised that the ability of the OFO to capture the “social character” of occupations is restricted – need to have links to the “social economy”, informal markets and identification of non-traditional occupations.
- In relation to the problem of hierarchy of skills, it is not always clear what makes a skill at one level and not at another level.
- Employers input information into the system in SA – this happens no-where else in the world (it’s carried out by researchers in other countries).
- OFO is used as qualification development tool in South Africa, however, this was not the purpose for which it was designed.

## Q&A:

- **Q1: What is the difference between Labour Force (LF) analysis and Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) Analysis?**  
A1: It was indicated that LF analysis is usually based on data from Labour Force Survey (LFS) specifically how the labour force is structured as well as track the changes over the years between sectors, occupations, levels of education of the employed and unemployed.  
Labour market analysis can look at a range of things, but is concerned with questions such as where do



labour markets seem to be growing and where is it likely there will be changes to the labour market in a specific region, assuming (for example), that the economy is growing.

Labour market analysis could also concern itself with questions such as how do employers view qualifications – is it viewed as an indicator of skill or used as screening devices?

- **Q2: What can be done to make the framework accommodate the wide need for qualification development?**  
A2: Currently, there is over-reliance on OFO as a tool for qualification development. Prof Allais. suggested “loosening” up the tool on how we use it.
- **Q3: Are you suggesting that DHET should not have adopted occupational qualifications? Should categories of qualifications be dropped?**  
A3: It was indicated that SA is the only country that uses occupational qualifications. It is not important whether we call them “vocational/technical qualifications” (as they are called in other countries) or occupational qualifications. Rather the main issues to consider are the following:
  - How do we decide which qualification to develop?
  - How broad/narrow they are?
  - How do we decide when to develop training for this qualification?
- **Comment (not related to a particular question): Learner management systems aren’t well integrated at the moment – SAQA doesn’t link to HEMIS etc nor are they updated regularly.**  
Prof. Allais was sceptical that greater integration of such systems would help solve SA’s youth unemployment problem.
- **Q4 (from chat): Which SETA is responsible for the Personnel Officer?**  
A4: Personnel Officers are not for a specific SETA – they are cross cutting.

## 7 Way forward

Prof. H Bhorat (DPRU)

- Prof Bhorat indicated that he would share the spreadsheet that maps SASCO with OFO at 4-digit level.
- There was a proposal that when dealing with short programmes not linked to qualifications, the SETAs should prioritise funding these programmes to assist with upskilling the employees.
- It was indicated that when you look at the tasks of occupations that are not linked to OFO, you will realise that these occupations are linked to other occupations that are in the OFO.
- There was another comment that usefulness of OFO varies per SETA and it was indicated that SETAs should ensure that scope and coverage should be accurate.
- There was a comment that developing occupations based on occupations is problematic. A proposal was made that there needs to be a further consultation between DHET and QCTO to clarify the matter.
- It was indicated that the reason why there are some specialisation with no OFO is because SETAs request deletion of an occupation without indicating what needs to happen to the specialisation. But the problem is being attended to as part of the OFO clean-up.

## 8 Vote of thanks

Mr Z Mvalo (DHET)

## Closure

Prof. H Bhorat (DPRU)

*Minutes compiled by Christopher Rooney & Edzani Netshifhefhe.*

# Overview of the OFO

---

Dr Presha Ramsarup

Centre for Researching Education and Labour  
University of the Witwatersrand

20<sup>th</sup> October 2020



# Centre for Researching Education and Labour

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



centre for researching  
education and labour

# In this presentation

---

## Background to the South African Organizing Framework for Occupations (OFO):

- History
- Link to international frameworks

## Overview of the OFO

- Structure
- What type of information does the OFO contain
- How is it primarily used by stakeholders – mapping job titles to occupations

# What is an occupational classification system

- Occupational classification systems are schemas for grouping jobs and job data
- Government agencies often use occupational classification systems to standardise the way job data is collected and how jobs are described.



# What role do occupational classification systems play

- **Support statistical information collection** - efficient response coding and assists in statistical planning and data collection
- **Facilitate labor market analysis** - labor statistics can be better captured and interpreted, helping to identify trends, guide policy design and support public and private employment services.
- **Enhance career planning and job searching** - classifications usually contain occupational requirements, competency levels, and very precise occupational characteristics that aid talent management professionals and job seekers in making better decisions (Government of Canada 2016).

# Some examples of international occupational classification systems

Two main systems:

- **ONET:** In addition to being a classification structure, ONET also provides descriptive data on over 900 occupations - such as knowledge, skills, abilities, work activities, and work context. The ONET classification system is by far one of the most comprehensive classification structures in the world.
- **ISCO:**

Main feature	Based on competency levels (Education) required to perform the occupation.	Based on tasks and activities performed by workers in an occupation.
Example	International Standard Classification of Occupations	Standard Occupational Classification
Latest version	2008	2018
Country	International	United States
Developer	International Labour Organization	Bureau of Labor Statistics
Number of occupations at the highest level of detail	436	867
Number of occupations at the highest aggregate level	10	23
There may be different levels of education for the same occupation	No	Yes
Hierarchical (the lower levels are components of the higher levels)	Yes	Yes
Includes non-profit work	Yes	No
Seeks to generate occupational-level statistical information	No	Yes
Years in which it has been updated	1968, 1988, 2008	2000, 2010, 2018

IADB, 2018

# The main purposes of ISCO-08 are to provide:

- A basis for the international reporting, comparison and exchange of statistical and administrative information about occupations;
- A model for the development of national and regional classifications of occupations;
- A system that can be used directly in countries that have not developed their own national classifications.

# ISCO 08

---

ISCO-08 is a four-level hierarchically structured classification that allows all jobs in the world to be classified into 436 unit groups. These groups form the most detailed level of the classification structure and are aggregated into 130 minor groups, 43 sub-major groups and 10 major groups, based on their similarity in terms of the skill level and skill specialization required for the jobs/

# History of South African OFO Framework

## SASCO

- South African Standard Classification of Occupations
- Developed from ISCO – while it was a powerful tool it did not provide the detail needed for skills planning

## ANZSCO

- Adopted by SA Department of Labour in 2005 – tool for identifying, reporting, monitoring scarce and critical skills
- Used as basis for OFO as it reflected the occupational environment

## ISCO 08

- 2009 moved to DHET
- Decided to align with ISCO -08 – standardised framework that could enable international comparison

## OFO

- OFO 9 was born
- 2012/2013 inclusion of green occupations /critical green skills

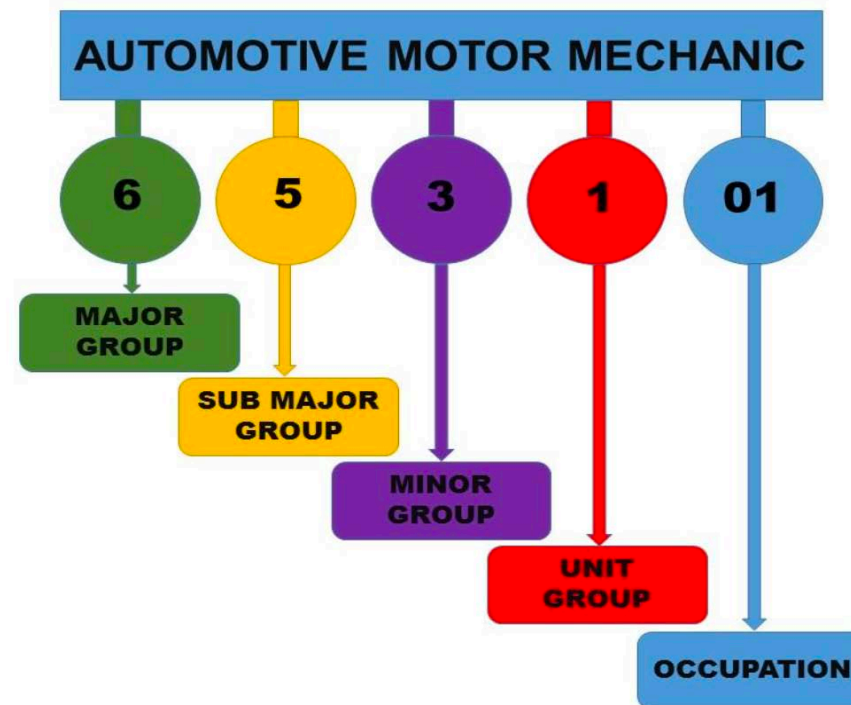
# Organising Framework for Occupations

---

- The Organizing Framework for Occupations is a coded occupational classification system.
- The OFO captures all jobs in the form of occupations and provides a framework for the identification, articulation, reporting and monitoring of skills demand and supply in the South African labour market;
  - *provides a common language when talking about occupations;*
  - *captures jobs in the form of occupations; and*
  - *groups occupations into successively broader categories and hierarchical levels based on similarity of tasks, skills and knowledge.*

# How do you read an OFO code?

- The first digit of the OFO code reflects the major group of the occupation=**8 Major Groups**
- Two digits in the OFO code reflect the sub-major group of the occupation=**39 Sub Major Groups**
- Three digits in the OFO code reflect the minor group of the occupation=**125 Minor Groups**
- Four digits in the OFO codes reflect the Unit Group=**440 Unit Groups**
- Six digits in the OFO code reflect the occupation=**1507 Occupations**



DHET,2017

## 213302 Environmental Scientist

<b>MAJOR GROUP</b>	2 Professionals	
<b>SUB-MAJOR GROUP</b>	21 Physical Mathematical and Engineering Science Professionals	
<b>MINOR GROUP</b>	213 Life Science Professionals	
<b>UNIT GROUP</b>	<p><b>2133 Environmental Protection Professionals</b></p> <p>Environmental protection professionals study and assess the effects on the environment of human activity such as air, water and noise pollution, soil contamination, climate change, toxic waste and depletion and degradation of natural resources. They develop plans and solutions to protect, conserve, restore, minimize and prevent further damage to the environment</p>	<p><b>Tasks include:</b></p> <p>Conducting research, performing tests, collecting samples, performing field and laboratory analysis to identify sources of environmental problems and recommending ways to prevent, control and remediate the impact of environmental problems;</p> <p>Assessing the likely impact that potential or proposed activities, projects and developments may have on the environment, and recommending whether such developments should proceed</p> <p>Developing and coordinating the implementation of environmental management systems to enable organizations to identify, monitor and control the impact of their activities, products and services on the environment;</p> <p>Conducting audits to evaluate environmental impact of existing activities, processes, wastes, noises and substances;</p> <p>Assessing an organization's compliance with government and internal environmental regulations and guidelines, identifying violations and determining appropriate remedial action;</p> <p>Providing technical advice and support services to organizations on how best to deal with environmental problems in order to reduce environmental damage and minimize financial loss;</p> <p>Developing conservation plans</p>

<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<p><b>213302 Environmental Scientist</b></p> <p>Studies and develops policies and plans for the control of factors which may produce pollution, imbalance or degradation of the environment.</p>	<p><b>Alternative Titles and Specialisations:</b></p> <p>Environmental Advisor  Environmental Auditor  Environmental Consultant  Environmental Officer  Environmental Research Scientist  Environmental Waste Officer  Environmentalist</p>
-------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

What information does the OFO give us for the occupation of an Environmental Scientist?



# Some definitions

---

A **job** is a set of tasks and duties carried out or meant to be carried out, by one person for a particular employer, including self-employment,

An **occupation** is a set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity,

**Alternative Titles** - have the same meaning as the principal titles but may be less commonly used,

**Specialisation** can be regarded as the process of focusing an occupational concentration on a specific area of expertise, e.g. Eye Surgeon. It involves the performance of specialised tasks rather than the broader range of tasks usually performed in the occupation.

**Descriptor** – is a lead statement that provides concise description of the nature of the occupation by summarizing the main activities.

# UNDERSTANDING SKILL LEVELS

NSDS	NQF Level	Skill Level	OFO Major Groups
HIGH	10 ↑ 7	4	2 Professionals
	INTERMEDIATE	6	3
5		2	4 Clerical Support Workers
4			
ENTRY	3	1	5 Service and Sales Workers
	2		6 Skilled Agricultural, Forestry, Fishery, Craft & Related Trades Workers
	1	8 Elementary Occupations	
			7 Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers

# So how do stakeholders use the OFO

---

## Mapping Job Titles to Occupations to the OFO

The accuracy with which organisations articulate and relate their structure to the occupations on the framework is vital for the successful management of skills development within a specific sector.

Mapping job to occupation involves examining:

- Its descriptor
- Where it appears in the OFO (unit group, minor, sub-major and major groups)
- Tasks which are described at unit group level
- Similarity in terms of knowledge base
- Alternate titles and specialisations linked to it

# Mapping job to occupation: An example

A senior surveyor, junior surveyor and assistant surveyor all could relate to the occupation 216502 – Surveyor. Ultimately you need to have a table that links every post to an OFO code to be able to report in your WSP on race, gender and age related to the occupations in your organisation.

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Generic Job Title</b>	<b>OFO Occupation</b>	<b>OFO Code</b>
Senior Surveyor	Mine Surveyor	Surveyor	216502
Junior Surveyor	Mine Surveyor	Surveyor	216502
Surveyor Assistant	Geological Survey Field Assistant	Surveyor's Assistant	831310

DHET,2017

---

## Mapping Job Titles to Occupations to the OFO

The accuracy with which organisations articulate and relate their structure to the occupations on the framework is vital for the successful management of skills development within a specific sector.

<https://www.ofomapping.co.za>

# OFO Mapping Tool

---

- Inconsiderate and inconsistent mapping from to job to occupation on the Organizing Framework for Occupations (OFO) identified by SETAs over the years. Leads to incorrect interpretations of demand.
- This application is designed to assist employers, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and any other stakeholders with mapping their jobs to occupations.
- The ultimate purpose of the application is to make it simpler and easier for employers to find their occupations on the OFO.
- This will ensure that more accurate occupational data is provided to the SETAs.
- By providing more accurate data regarding occupations to the relevant SETA the right skills can be provided to employers at the right time.

# Why does the OFO matter?

---

Mechanism to articulate occupational demand.

If the PSET system does not understand the nature and extent of demand it cannot provide **the right skills to the right people at the right time.**

There is a need to improve the quality of mapping to the OFO (which the tool aims to contribute to) and to think about what a future OFO might look like.

OFO links (at a basic yet critical level) the worlds of education and work.

# THANK YOU

---





# The OFO: strengths & weaknesses

---

Professor Stephanie Allais

Centre for Researching Education and Labour  
University of the Witwatersrand

20<sup>th</sup> October 2020

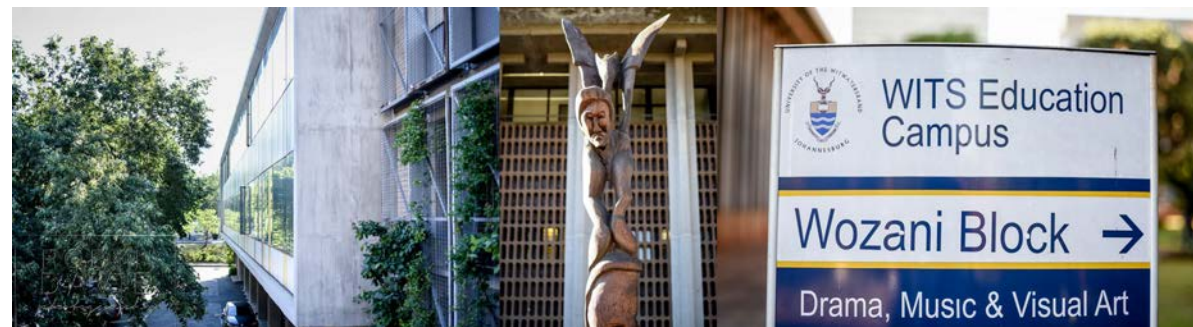
# Centre for Researching Education and Labour



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WITWATERSRAND,  
JOHANNESBURG



centre for researching  
education and labour



# In this presentation

---

1. Research underway through the LMIP project on aspects of the OFO
2. Some critiques of similar policies internationally
3. Fitness for purpose?
4. Design issues?
5. Use of the OFO for qualification development

# 1. Research underway through the LMIP project

Looking at relationship between jobs, occupations and qualifications.

Mapping of job titles (from workplaces) to occupations – gathering job descriptions from around 500 jobs, mapped them to the OFO to understand the dynamics of moving from job to occupation.

- Studying occupational classification systems and the occupational qualification systems of a range of countries to understand the dynamics of their systems – Are they using ISCO? How are they adapting it? What purposes does it serve? Who is managing it? How do they apply classify occupations? Idea of hierarchy?

# 1. Research underway through the LMIP project



Also exploring how the occupational classification system is related to the qualification development system:

- Is it used for signaling? How? Curriculum design? How? What aspects? Curriculum and assessment? Identification of priority occupations? For funding or for providing? How do they make decisions on what new qualifications to develop?

## 2. Some critiques of similar systems internationally

---

***Issues with the categories***

***Problems with the notion of skill level***

### 3. Is it fit for purpose? Official purposes

---

***Internationally, primarily used for labour force analysis—  
less for labour market intelligence, less for qualification  
development***

### 3. Is it fit for purpose? Official purposes in SA

Captures all jobs in the form of occupations; provides a framework for the identification, articulation, reporting and monitoring of skills demand and supply in the South African labour market.

Adds value to skills development planning and implementation:

- provides a common language when talking about occupations;
- captures jobs in the form of occupations; and
- groups occupations into successively broader categories and hierarchical levels based on similarity of tasks, skills and knowledge.



# critical skills) Qualification development development



---

HRD

Skills in high demand (priority and critical skills)

Qualification development development

## 4. Design problems?

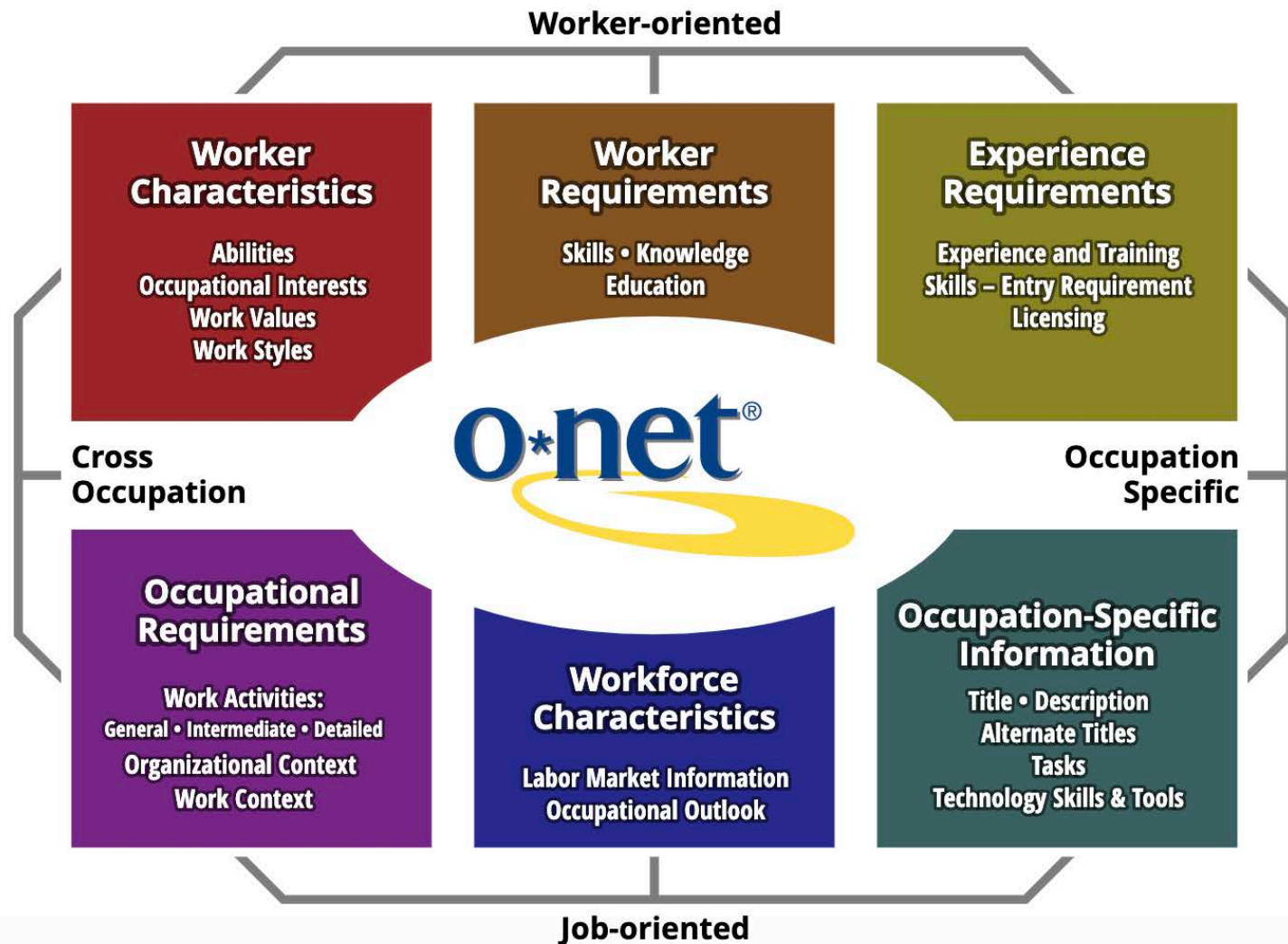
---

Issue of hierarchy of skills

Tension between general versus specialized

Updating processes

# O\*Net Content Model



# 5. Problems in terms of qualifications development

---

Seems to assume one-to-one correspondence

We suggest that the idea of vocational streams, based on clusters of occupations/jobs, is more useful than the current approach. Outside of occupational labour markets, the link between qualifications and the jobs and occupations associated with those qualifications is weak.

Discontinuities in educational pathways are reflected in the deep segmentation in the labour market and gaps in occupational pathways, particularly for mid-level occupations.

# THANK YOU

---

