Assessing Master's Level Equivalence in the Competence Report

Chartered Scientist applicants must have a master's level qualification or equivalent learning and achievement. (Level 7 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Level 11 in Scotland).

As part of a new way to demonstrate equivalence for Chartered Scientist applications we are trialling a new approach. Instead of writing a separate equivalence report, we are asking applicants to instead demonstrate master's level *thinking/understanding/learning* in their competency report. This will save duplicating examples in a separate report.

Below are some tips to help you recognise master's level equivalence when assessing the competence report, and should be read alongside the general guidance for assessing a competence report.

1. Look for depth, not just activity

Master's level work is not just about what was **done**, but **how** and **why.** Look for:

- Evidence of critical thinking
- Reflection on decisions and outcomes
- Justifications of choices using knowledge or data

2. Expect autonomy and responsibility

The applicant should show they took initiative, led decisions, and were accountable for outcomes (not just following instructions).

3. Check for complexity and uncertainty

Assess whether the applicant handled unpredictable or challenging situations. Did they demonstrate sound judgement when there were unknown risks or conflicts.

4. Identify methodical approaches to problem solving

Assess whether the applicant applies structured thinking when making decisions. This could look like:

- Referencing models, tools, professional frameworks
- Applying reasoning, risk assessment or cost benefit analysis
- Demonstrating methodical planning or prioritisation

5. **Evaluate use of evidence and justification**

   Applicants should support their actions and decisions with:

   - Scientific principles
   - Standards or regulations
   - Data and/or feedback

6. **Look for reflective insight**

Evidence of reflection could look like:

- Evaluating their own performance
- Identifying lessons learned
- Showing how they improved or made changes as a result

7. **Impact not just outputs**

Consider whether the applicant has shown evidence of their actions making a difference:

- Did they influence practice, people, policy or outcomes?
- Is the result measurable or meaningful?

8. **Gauge breadth of communication**

Applicants should show they can communicate with a range of audiences, such as:

- Technical peers
- Non specialist colleagues/stakeholders

9. **Be aware of repetition or gaps**

- Has the applicant only provided surface-level descriptions?
- Ensure examples are tailored to each competency, not reused verbatim