

Supervision Guidelines for Electrical Work - Final Draft Submission.

Determining the appropriate level of supervision for apprentices.

Chris Lehmann 18th March 2022

Introduction

Master Electricians Australia (MEA) is the trade association representing electrical contractors recognised by industry, government and the community as the electrical industry's leading business partner, knowledge source and advocate. Our website is www.masterelectricians.com.au

Supervision Levels and Competency Assessments

MEA is supportive of clear guidelines for supervision of workers in the electrical industry. MEA believe though that a greater emphasis should be given to competency assessments of apprentices to determine levels of supervision rather than a rigid proscription in a table. The levels of competency between individuals can vary widely, the competence and experience of a school leaver is going to be quite different to an adult apprentice of 24 or 25 years who has completed trade assistant duties and prevocational education, and different again to a trainee who may of already completed another trade qualification.

In the draft document under 3.2 in the first dot point on page 4 talks about the role of the supervisor

“being present at the site of the electrical work to the extent necessary to ensure that the work is being carried out safely and effectively”. And further down -

“assessing the capability of the person they are supervising to carry out the task they are to perform”

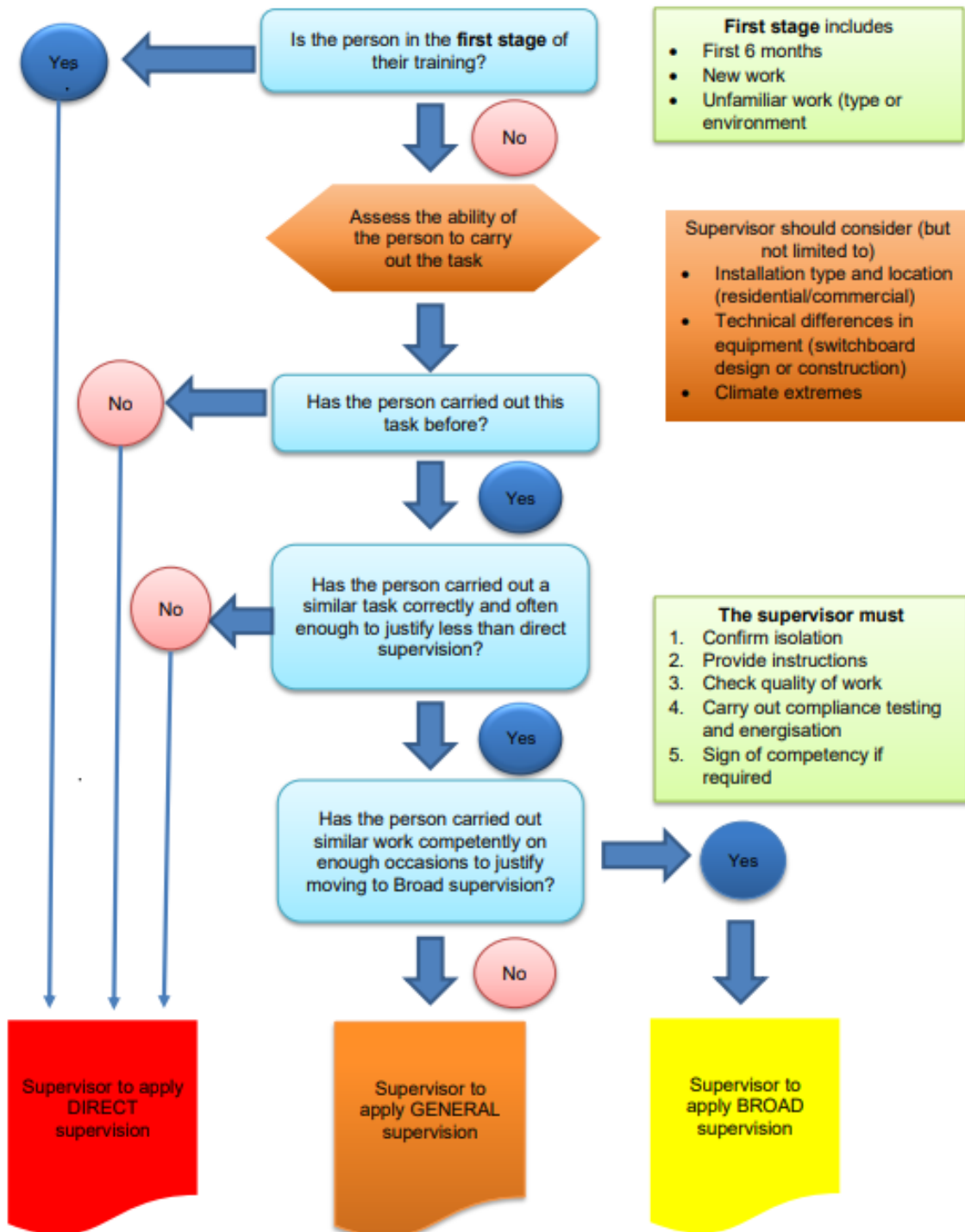
MEA believe that these are good guiding principles from which to approach the question of supervision guidelines. In line with good risk assessment procedures and current obligations under workplace health and safety legislation, assessment of the apprentice's capabilities should be the primary tool to assess supervision levels. Under “knowledge and skills of the person” on page 7 of the document -

“The supervisor must assess the technical knowledge and practical skills of the person to determine the level of supervision required. The assessment must be undertaken on the supervisor's direct knowledge of the skills level of the apprentice or trade assistant and not based on the assessment by other people for tasks that require direct supervision”

This puts a clear duty on the supervisor to consider the competence of the trainee and to assess it based on their direct knowledge.

Except for “live work” “live testing” where the expectation is that all trainees under 1 year of experience should be under direct supervision, MEA's position is that the table on pages 13 and 14 is maybe too proscriptive in all circumstances and should be used as a minimum standard. Considering the changes on the demographic of those commencing an apprenticeship, the flow chart on page 18 could be a tool to provide guidance to a supervisor as to the most appropriate level of supervision that ensures the safety of the trainee and the productivity of the task and consider a worker with a higher level of competence. To ensure that

this judgement is appropriately documented, MEA propose that a *written assessment* should be undertaken if the supervisor is deviating from the minimum standard guidance of the table.



Conclusion

MEA is supportive of the intent of the Supervision Guidelines to give clarity to the industry and employers in NSW as to the appropriate level of supervision for apprentices, and to bring this broadly in line with other Commonwealth jurisdictions.

We submit that the proposed supervision table be used as minimum guideline for supervisors. MEA believes there is a case for a competency assessment to be conducted by the supervisor in line with the principles of the flowchart. This assessment should only be for apprentices outside of the first stage of their training and be in a written form and documented.

MEA are eager to be involved in discussions around this issue and others pertaining to safety and standards in the industry going forward.

