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Professional Standard “Demographer”: From the Qualifications of Specialists to Effective Decisions in Demography



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Abstract. To resolve various strategic and tactical tasks in government and regional agencies, units of municipalities, analytical centers and other non-profit organizations, demographers with considerable expertise are required who can efficiently build and study analytic demographic databases, prepare resources for the development of demographic plans, identify demographic trends, conduct expert examinations of economic and socially significant programs. However, it has been difficult for a long time to assess professional qualifications of specialists in demography in order for them to perform their functions efficiently due to the insufficient number of such specialists and their mixed functionality. Departments and centers of demography opened in leading Russian universities helped resolve this issue. It was the appropriate moment to approve the professional standard “Demographer”, which clearly states knowledge, skills and abilities of a demographer at a certain qualification level and functions to perform. However, organizational and methodological issues related to assessing the quality of received training in demography to perform job functions, depending on the position and the organization in which the specialist works or plans to work, require particular attention, which determines the relevance of the studied topic. The aim of the research is to develop organizational and methodological aspects of the process of assessing professional qualifications of specialists in demography for the qualitative performance of their functions and solving issues of society. The article describes the process of assessment of professional qualifications of specialists in demography by the personnel of the Qualification Assessment Center by conducting an examination that allows assessing not only theoretical knowledge, but also skills and abilities of candidates for the qualification; the importance of using a competence approach as a base for assessing qualifications of demographers is substantiated. As part of the organizational and methodological support for the examination to assess professional qualifications of specialists in demography, recommendations are proposed for the document support of the examination, arrangement procedures of the examination, rules of conduct during the examination, requirements for examinees to pass the examination and obtain a certain qualification level as a demographer. It has been revealed that the increasing qualifications of demographic workers provide higher wages and demand for these specialists in the labor market; a demographer’s career chart has been constructed, showing the relationship between the qualification level, position, and wages. The methodological basis is represented by the fundamental provisions of the concept of managerial training. The prospects of the study are to improve the quality of training and assessment of professional qualifications of specialists in demography, which will further influence the effectiveness of creation and implementation of projects for the development of human potential in Russia.

Key words: demographer, professional standard, qualification, quality assessment.

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Introduction

Demographic issues such as a fertility decline, a depopulation of small towns, population aging, a decrease in the number of registered marriages, a transition to single-child families, and women postponing the birth of their first child to a later period are currently characteristic of many countries (Gokova, Kiseleva, 2016; Kabaikina, Sushchenko, 2016; Artamonova, Lipchanskaya, 2021).

However, it is in Russia that great importance is attached at the state level to the development of demographic policy to overcome the demographic challenge and resolve these issues.

The “National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation”, approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation in 2021, shows the importance of the “preservation of the people of Russia and the development of human potential”¹.

From 2019 to 2024, Russia was implementing the national project “Demography”, which includes a set of interrelated measures aimed at ensuring sustainable population growth in the country, increasing life expectancy and strengthening health of the nation. Starting in 2025, new national projects “Family”, “Long and Active Life”, “Youth and Children”, etc. will be launched in Russia. Highly qualified specialists in demography are required to effectively achieve the goals and objectives set out in new strategic documents, national projects and regional human development programs.

The importance of resolving demographic issues being emphasized by the state, the timely development of demographic national and federal projects, and the implementation of the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation indicate that in Russia people are the main resource of the country, and preserving the Russian nation is a chief concern of the state.

In regions of Russia where the demographic issue is particularly acute, authorities are developing regional measures (Korolenko, 2015; Popova, 2016; Rostovskaya, Rychikhina, 2024), such as fertility support (for example, payment of subsidies for families with children, known as maternity capital, by the region), comprehensive assistance

to multi-child families (for instance, free of charge kindergarten and a nursery, transport tax concessions, etc.), support for young spouses who become parents while studying at universities and colleges (for example, payment of subsidies for students, known as student capital, at the birth of a child), etc.

The personnel of such regional authorities require qualified demographers with the skills to identify specific demographic drivers of the region, interpret demographic information, design and justify scenarios and forecasts of the demographic development of regions, settlements, small and medium-sized towns, cities, etc.

Demographers who can research into socio-economic and demographic processes in society and provide information about them are also required in analytical centers that are currently widespread in Russia (Analytical Center for the Government of the Russian Federation, Institute of Economic and Social Research, NAFI analytical center, etc.)².

Rosstat needs statistician-demographers and demography analysts to create databases using demographic information. Non-profit organizations require demographers who are able to work with the most vulnerable and unprotected population groups. In order to regulate the situation in the labor market, employment centers need specialists who can analyze the impact of demographic processes on the future situation with jobs in the region. The Social Fund of Russia and the Medical Insurance Fund need demographic specialists whose qualifications allow them to carry out demographic analysis and forecasts in order to create programs and plans for the improvement of the healthcare system, social security and pension provision.

¹ On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation: Presidential Decree 400, dated July 2, 2021. Available at: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_389271/ (accessed: December 24, 2021).

² Kuznetsov A.V. (Ed.). (2021). *Atlas analiticheskikh tsentrov EAES: spravochnik* [Atlas of Analytical Centers of the Eurasian Economic Union: Handbook]. Moscow: INION RAN.

In scientific organizations and communities, scientists are developing a theory of demography and are expanding its methodology, taking into account current trends (Rostovskaya, Rychikhina, 2023). It should be emphasized that today it is the scientific organization, namely the Institute for Demographic Research of FCTAS RAS, that is actively working to create a system of human resources in the field of demography. In 2022, at the initiative of the Institute for Demographic Research of FCTAS RAS and with the support of the professional community, the Ministry of Labor of the Russian Federation approved the professional standard “Demographer”³. In 2023, a Coordination Center for the Development of Human Resources was established as part of FCTAS RAS⁴. In 2024, a Concept for the development of human resources in demography was created, which defines “... a fundamentally new approach to the development of human resources in demography: the aim, main tasks, principles, main directions, mechanisms for training, retraining and advanced training of demography specialists”⁵. The implementation of the Concept is based on a multi-level system of interaction between state and public-governmental structures involved in training demography specialists at the federal, regional and local (municipal) levels. The structure of the Coordination Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography is being strengthened:

³ On the approval of the professional standard “Demographer”: Order of the Ministry of Labor of the Russian Federation 346н, dated June 8, 2022 Available at: <https://mintrud.gov.ru/docs/mintrud/orders/2368?ysclid=17e9nglzmc73043482>

⁴ Order on the establishment of a Coordination Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography. Available at: <https://cloud.idrras.ru/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Приказ-о-создании-ЦК-28.02.2023-2.pdf> (accessed: November 20, 2024).

⁵ Concept for the development of human resources in demography. Available at: <https://cloud.idrras.ru/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Концепция-5.06.2024.-docx-1.pdf> (accessed: November 20, 2024).

– in 2023, the Ural Interregional Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography was opened, representing a joint project of the Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin and the Institute of Economics of the Ural Branch of RAS⁶;

– on April 5, 2024, the Regional Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography was opened on the basis of the Vologda Research Center of RAS and Cherepovets State University⁷;

– On September 20, 2024, the Baikal Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography was opened on the basis of Irkutsk State University and the Irkutsk Scientific Center of the Siberian Branch of RAS⁸;

– On December 19–20, 2024, the South Russian Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography was opened in the Rostov Region in Novocherkassk on the basis of Platov South-Russian State Polytechnic University⁹.

Having shown the demand for qualified demographers in organizations and institutions, we will proceed to study the stated issues, namely, the content of basic concepts in the field under consideration, qualification levels of demographers, and difficulties of training as a demographer in

⁶ Coordination Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography of the Institute for Demographic Research of FCTAS RAS initiated the creation of the Ural Interregional Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography. Available at: <https://idrras.ru/news/2023/6/razvitie-potenciala-v-oblasti-demografii.html> (accessed: November 20, 2024).

⁷ Regional Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography has been established in the Vologda Region. Available at: <https://idrras.ru/news/2024/4/reg-centr-razvitiya-kadrov-v-demografii.html> (accessed: November 20, 2024).

⁸ Baikal Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography. Available at: <https://idrras.ru/news/2024/9/otkrytie-baykalskogo-centra-razvitiya-kadrovogo-potenciala-v-oblasti-demografii.html> (accessed: November 20, 2024).

⁹ Opening of the South Russian Regional Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography in Novocherkassk. Available at: <https://idrras.ru/news/2024/12/otkrytie-yuzhno-ros-regcentr-razvitiya-kadr-potenciala.html>

higher education institutions. Let us elaborate on organizational and methodological aspects of the process of assessing professional qualifications of specialists in demography for the qualitative performance of their functions and resolving the issues of society.

Subject area analysis

The issues of assessing the qualification level of specialists were studied by A.M. Karyakin (Karyakin, Yunikova, 2016), A.O. Minkina (Minkina, 2020), E.V. Pakhomova (Pakhomova, 2013), V.K. Potemkin (Potemkin, 2020), Yu.A. Filyasova (Filyasova, 2021), V.A. Chiker (Chiker, 2017) and other scientists. Currently, when assessing the qualification level of a specialist, a competence approach is of importance, because it allows evaluating knowledge, skills, and performance of employees and determining whether their qualifications correspond to their position (Beisbekova, 2015; Bavykina, Milyaeva, 2016; Radko, 2021). E.E. Symanyuk, L.Yu. Shemyatikhina and M.G. Sinyakova describe the features of using a competence approach in training specialists (Symanyuk et al., 2009). O.L. Chulanova and N.S. Borisenko consider the methodology for implementing this approach during periodic personnel assessment and certification (Chulanova, Borisenko, 2015). As it can be seen, the

issue of assessing qualifications of employees using the competence approach is currently very relevant. However, the issues of assessing professional qualifications of demographers using this approach have not been sufficiently researched and require in-depth study.

The variety of functional tasks of demographers (from research and analysis to management) led to the need to create a professional standard “Demographer”¹⁰ and approve levels and sub-levels of demographer’s qualifications, clearly prescribing the employee’s knowledge in the field of demography and required skills for the position.

The demographer’s qualification is a degree and type of professional training of an employee, i.e. knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for this person to do a certain work and occupy a certain position (Sizikova, Anikeeva, 2016).

In accordance with the professional standard “Demographer”, depending on the knowledge in the field of demography, the skills of the employee and the work done, the sixth and seventh qualification levels of a demographer and six sublevels which define generalized labor functions that a given employee can perform within the framework of his or her professional activity (*Tab. 1*). The higher the qualification level of demographers, the

Table 1. Demographer’s qualification levels and sublevels

Qualification level	Description	Description	Qualification sublevel (code)
6	Monitoring of demographic processes in society	Creation of demographic databases by using modern digital technologies	6 (A/01.6)
		Identification of demographic trends at different levels	6 (A/02.6)
7	Forecasting of demographic processes in society	Modeling of demographic processes in society	7 (B/01.7)
		Project the development of demographic processes in society	7 (B/02.7)
	Demographic expert examination and consulting	Demographic expert examination of projects and works	7 (C/01.7)
		Information and analytical support for the implementation of programs and projects for the demographic development of society	7 (C/02.7)

Source: own compilation.

¹⁰ On the approval of the professional standard “Demographer”: Order of the Ministry of Labor of the Russian Federation 346n, dated June 8, 2022 Available at: <https://mintrud.gov.ru/docs/mintrud/orders/2368?ysclid=17e9nglzmzmc73043482>

more knowledge, skills and abilities they possess and the more difficult tasks management can set for them. A demographer of the sixth qualification level professionally builds demographic databases and evaluates the demographic situation. If such employees undergo advanced training, they can cope with more complex tasks – project the development of demographic processes in society, and later, after completing training and confirming their qualification level, conduct expert examinations of projects.

Despite the fact that demography as an independent discipline is being introduced into various program tracks, currently at the national level there is no unified education information system that provides access to high-quality education and professional growth as a demographer; the sought-after major “Demography” has not been opened. In this regard, the creation of Federal State Education Standards and higher education programs aimed at training demographers, which is provided by the Education Methodology Council “Demography” as part of the Federal Education Methodology Association “Sociology and Social Work”¹¹ and the Coordination Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography of FCTAS RAS, is relevant. This work is supported by representatives of legislative and executive authorities at the federal and regional levels¹².

¹¹ Creation of the Education Methodology Council “Demography”. Available at: <https://idrras.ru/news/2023/6/sozdan-ums-po-demografii.html> (accessed: November 20, 2024).

¹² The Ministry of Education and Science supported the proposal of United Russia for systematic training of demographers. Available at: <https://er.ru/activity/news/minobrnauki-podderzhalo-predlozhenie-edinoj-rossii-o-sistemnoj-podgotovke-specialistov-demografov> (accessed: November 20, 2024); The Russian Ministry of Education and Science supported the training of demographers at universities. Available at: <https://idrras.ru/news/2024/7/minobz-podderzhal-podgotovku-demografov.html> (accessed: November 20, 2024); T.K. Rostovskaya at the interregional forum on strengthening traditional family, spiritual and moral values. Available at: <https://idrras.ru/news/2024/11/semyanova-mira.html> (accessed: November 20, 2024).

The Coordination Center for the Development of Human Resources in Demography also contributes to coordinating activities for the formation and improvement of a system of advanced training and professional retraining programs for central and local government employees, managers and specialists of bodies and organizations operating in all areas of socio-demographic development. In a rapidly changing external environment, it is important for demographers to know all current trends in the development of society and to improve their skills in a timely manner.

At the same time, it is also necessary to confirm one’s knowledge, skills and abilities at the Qualification Assessment Center (hereinafter referred to as QAC), which comprehensively and professionally conducts an independent assessment of specialists in demography in accordance with requirements of the professional standard “Demographer”.

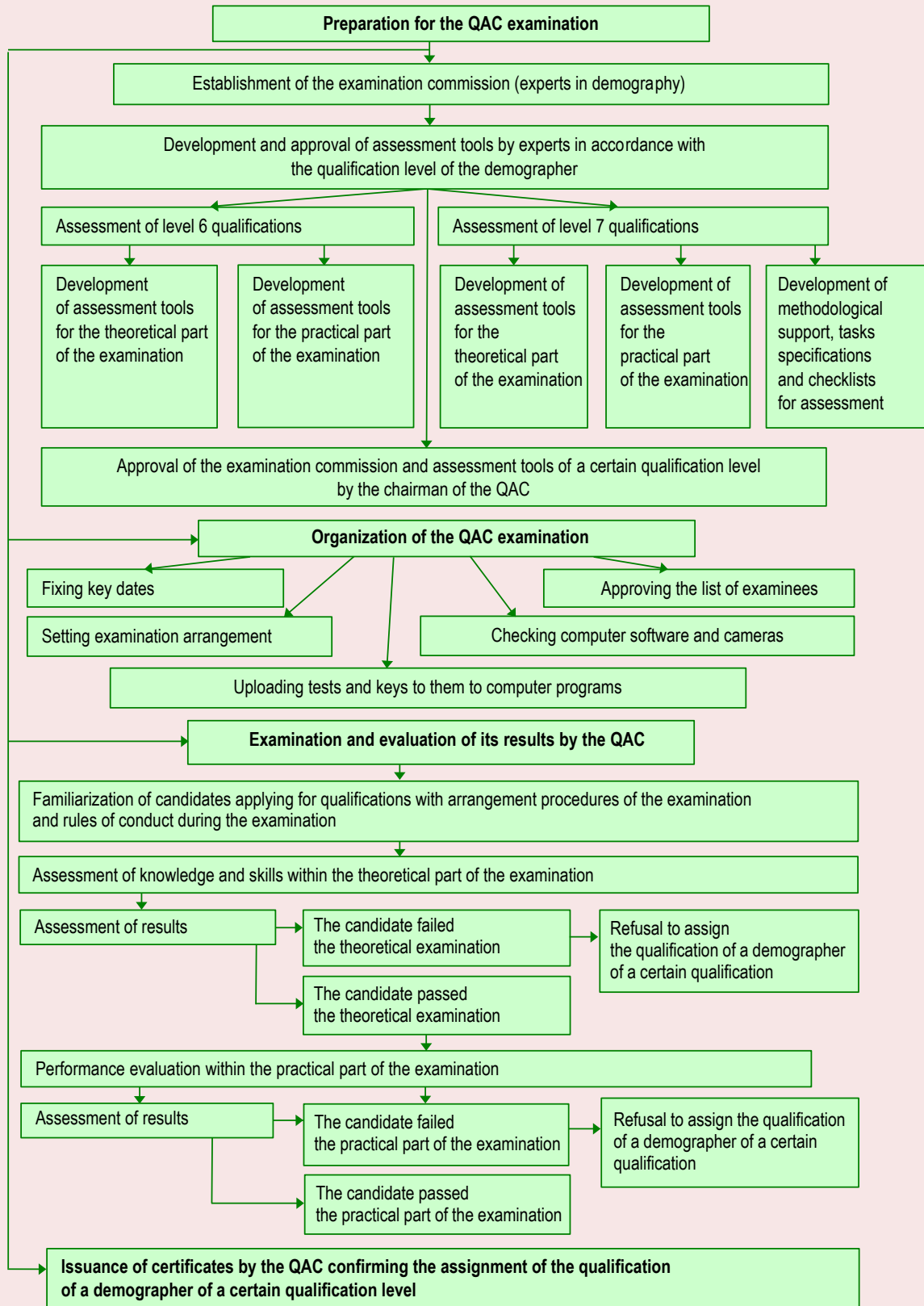
The training of QAC experts in line with the professional standard “Demographer” has been conducted since 2022 by the Council for Professional Qualifications in Occupational Safety, Social Protection and Employment as part of an additional professional advanced training program (program leader – Chairman of the Council Yu.V. Gertsii). It should be emphasized that the authors are the first graduates of this program, which allows them to work as demography experts.

When assessing and assigning a qualification level, QAC experts should be guided by a competence approach based on the knowledge, skills of the employee (applying for the qualification level) and the functions that have to be performed.

Expert assessment of the quality of professional qualifications of specialists in demography is carried out in four stages (*Fig. 1*).

1. Preparation for the examination within qualification assessment. It includes establishment of the assessment commission, creation and approval of assessment tools, methodological

Figure 1. The process of assessing the quality of professional qualifications of specialists in demography



Source: own compilation.

support for the examination (approval of tasks specifications and checklists for assessment). At this stage, demography experts working at the Qualification Assessment Center are creating assessment tools for each demographer's qualification level. In accordance with the decision of the Professional Qualifications Council in the field of Labor Safety, Social Protection and Employment, for testing the knowledge, skills and actions of a demographer it is recommended to create assessment tools of two types: assessment tools for the theoretical part of the examination and assessment tools for the practical part of the examination.

2. Organization of the examination. At this stage, examination dates are fixed, arrangement procedures of the examination and lists of examinees are approved, computer software is checked, and tests and performance evaluation tasks are loaded into the computer program. The assessment of a demography specialist's qualifications includes the examination which takes place in two parts, which allows an objective assessment of the knowledge, skills, abilities and potential of each demographer. In the first part, an assessment of the theoretical knowledge and skills of a specialist in demography is carried out in line with the qualification level. The second part is practical and includes an assessment of performance according to the qualification requirements of the sixth and seventh levels of specialists in demography.

3. Examination and evaluation of the results.

4. Issuance of certificates confirming the qualification of a demographer of a certain qualification level.

Next, we will consider the specifics of each stage organization by the QAC, so that the assessment of professional qualifications of specialists in demography is carried out qualitatively.

Stage 1. In order to conduct the examination, the commission consisting of at least three leading demography experts must be approved in advance (two weeks before the start). Three qualified specialists may not always be available in the region, so it is recommended to invite demography experts from other regions of Russia to administer the examination.

To assess theoretical knowledge of candidates, assessment tools and answers (keys to tasks) should be created for each knowledge and skill in accordance with the professional standard "Demographer". For each job function (knowledge, skills and actions) of a specialist in demography, a test question should be prepared that reveals whether the person's knowledge and skills meet qualification requirements. The test should contain different types of tasks, namely multiple-choice questions, multiple response questions, open questions, and matching. For each task, there should be correct answers (keys). The test should check the competencies given in the professional standard "Demographer".

It is recommended to create 100 similar test questions of various types. It is important to set a point scale by assigning a certain number of points to each correct answer. It can be of any kind and is established by the expert commission. For example, a one-point scale for assessing the answer to a multiple-choice question: correct – 1 point, wrong – 0 points, or a two-point scale that is used for multiple response questions: correct – 2 points, partially correct – 1 point, wrong – 0 points.

Based on the created tasks, the Center's experts should provide methodological support for the examination: tasks specifications and checklists. Tasks specifications for the theoretical part of the professional examination should consider knowledge and skills in line with requirements of the professional standard for qualifications, type and No of the task, description of the task, key to the task, and criteria for assessing the task.

Table 2. Example of tasks specifications for the theoretical part of the professional examination

Knowledge and skills fixed in qualification requirements and examined during the qualification assessment	Task assessment criteria	Type and No of the task	Task	Key to the task
Diagnosis of demographic trends at various levels	Correct – 1 point, wrong – 0 points	Multiple-choice question: No 25; No 26	No 25: The population as an object of demographic research is: A) human resources; B) independent members of human society; C) the whole population living in a certain area; D) members of human society of pre-working and working age; No 26: What indicator is a conditional value reflecting the overall population in a period of time? A) at the beginning of the year; B) at the end of the year; C) average; D) over three years	C C
Source: own compilation.				

An example of tasks specifications for the theoretical part of the professional examination is presented in *Table 2*.

Preparation for the practical part of the examination should include creation of a task to assess performance of job functions and actions of a demographic employee in real or simulated conditions. To prepare for this part of the examination at the planning stage, experts should determine a job function (job action), create a task, describe a solution to the task, propose assessment criteria, determine time to complete the task, and make a checklist for the examiner to assess the performance of the practical task.

It is important to develop criteria for assessing the task, which may include:

- 1) the correct choice of the calculation methodology for the indicator in question;
- 2) calculation of the indicator;
- 3) whether or not the result is correct;
- 4) interpretation of the result.

At the end of the examination, the expert should fill out a checklist to assess performance of the practical task. *Table 3* shows an example of a

checklist in the situation when the practical part of the examination is failed (the candidate is not prepared for the qualitative performance of a given function), in *Table 4* – if it is passed (the candidate is prepared for the qualitative performance of a given function).

It is recommended to create a similar practical task for each job function. A practical task is considered completed if all the assessment criteria are met and the time limit is not exceeded.

Stage 2. Organization of the examination:

- the list of examinees should be approved by a special order, as well as the expert examination commission,
- dates are fixed and invitations to the examination are issued,
- examination arrangement procedures are established (120 minutes for the test part (the average time for completing each task is 3 minutes),
- tests are uploaded to the program;
- cameras are installed to monitor the progress of the examination;
- requirements for passing the examination are approved.

Table 4. Checklist for assessing performance of the practical task No 1 (practical part of the examination is passed; the candidate is prepared for the qualitative performance of a given function)

No	Function name	Criterion	Fact Yes/ No	Note
1.				
1.1.	Choice of the methodology for calculating the indicator in question	The right choice of formula	yes	-
1.2.	The very calculation of the indicator	Correct data substitution in the formula	yes	-
1.3.	Getting the result of calculating the indicator in question	The correct calculation result	yes	-
1.4.	Interpretation of the result	A competent conclusion about changes in infant mortality	yes	-
Source: own compilation.				

Table 3. Checklist for assessing performance of the practical task No 1 (practical part of the examination is failed; the candidate is not prepared for the qualitative performance of a given function)

No	Function name	Criterion	Fact Yes/No	Note
1.				
1.1.	Choice of the methodology for calculating the indicator in question	The right choice of formula	yes	-
1.2.	Calculation of the indicator	Correct data substitution in the formula	yes	-
1.3.	Getting the result of calculating the indicator in question	The correct calculation result	no	Calculation error
1.4.	Interpretation of the result	A competent conclusion about changes in infant mortality	no	The result was interpreted incorrectly due to an arithmetic error in calculations
Source: own compilation.				

The requirements for passing the examination include criteria for passing it and obtaining the appropriate qualifications. For example, the minimum threshold for passing the theoretical part is 30 points (the examinee answered 75% of the questions correctly); for passing the practical part – 50 points (the examinee completed 75% of the practical tasks correctly). Based on this, the following requirements for passing the examination can be established:

- the examination is considered passed if the candidate scored, for example, 30 points or more in the theoretical part of the examination, was admitted to the second part and scored at least 50 points in the practical part of the examination;

- the examination is considered failed if the candidate scored, for example, 30 points or more in the theoretical part of the examination, was admitted to the second part – the practical one, and scored less than 50 points in the practical part of the examination);

- the examination is considered failed if the candidate scored, for example, less than 30 points in the theoretical part of the examination and was not allowed to the next part;

- the examination is considered failed if the candidate violated the rules of conduct during the examination (for example, by using the phone during the examination, violating the discipline during the examination).

Stage 3. Examination and evaluation of the results. It is important to familiarize examinees with the rules of conduct during the examination at the Qualification Assessment Center:

- 1) the examinee must be on time for the examination,
- 2) the examinee must show a piece of identification (national identity document) before the examination,
- 3) the examinee cannot talk during the examination,
- 4) the examinee cannot use the phone during the examination,
- 5) the examinee must take care of technical equipment.

The examinee must also be informed of the arrangement procedures of the examination.

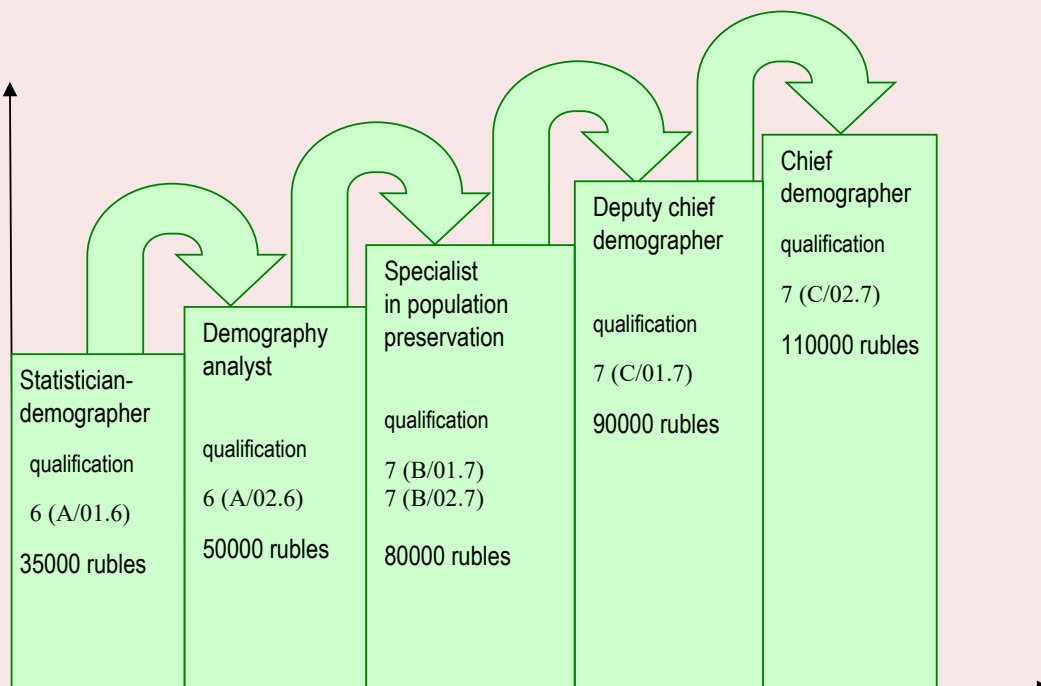
For a qualitative assessment of an employee’s knowledge and skills, it is very important that during the examination each examinee sits at a separate computer and is evaluated under

the guidance of an observer from the expert commission. According to the results of the examination, a certificate is issued confirming that the specialist has been qualified as a demographer of a certain level.

Implementation of the rules above at each stage will help to make the qualitative assessment of the qualifications of employees.

In the future, employees with a certificate of advanced training will be in greater demand in the labor market. Also, they may be promoted or placed in the personnel reserve for further promotion. Wages of employees will depend on the level of qualifications and position held. *Figure 2* demonstrates a demographer’s career chart showing the relationship between skill level, position, and wages. Building such career programs for employees allows them motivating themselves to increase their qualification level in order to climb the corporate ladder and perform their job functions efficiently (Rychikhina, Evdokimova, 2021).

Figure 2. Demographer’s career chart



Conclusion

As we can see, in order to preserve people, expand reproduction and improve quality of life throughout Russia (in regions, small towns and settlements), specialists are required who can build and study analytic demographic databases, prepare resources for the development of demographic plans, identify positive and alarming demographic trends, conduct expert examinations of economic and socially significant programs and projects. The quality of training and assessment of professional qualifications of specialists in demography will further influence the effectiveness of creation and implementation of projects to preserve the population and develop human potential of Russia. In this regard, resolution of this issue is currently of great importance (Cheng Xiumin et al., 2024; Shabunova et al., 2024).

Compliance with the organizational and methodological provisions proposed by the authors regarding the process of assessing professional qualifications of specialists in demography, as well as the rules and procedures within organizational and methodological support for the examination at each stage of employees' qualifications assessment will make it qualitative and will guarantee that leaders of the profession will come to work at government agencies and organizations. Only qualified demographers will be able, by analyzing demographic processes in various population groups, to develop a set of measures aimed at strengthening the institution of a multigenerational family, to create motivation in society to have many children; to propose effective measures aimed at increasing life expectancy and reducing mortality (Symanyuk et al., 2009).

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