

## **2008 OCCU-Find in the ASVAB Career Exploration Program**

A new methodology for generating skill importance ratings was developed, tested and validated for the 2008 ASVAB Career Exploration Program OCCU-Find.

### **Development of the New Methodology for Deriving Skill Importance Ratings**

The 2002 OCCU-Find Skill Importance Ratings originally were derived from the knowledge, skills and ability (KSAs) ratings in the O\*NET™ 3.1 database. In revising and updating these ratings, it seemed natural to turn to the O\*NET™ database, which itself had gone through a continuing process of development and revision. This seemed to be the natural place to begin the OCCU-Find revision process. Unfortunately, because of the changing nature of the O\*NET, reliance on the KSAs seemed inadvisable for three reasons.

First, the nature of the KSA ratings in O\*NET™ have changed over the last several years in ways that make them less suitable for the purposes of the ASVAB Program. Since the release of the first complete database in 2002 (O\*NET™ 4.0), the O\*NET™ database has been updated eight times. Due in part to the large number of occupations, the database has been updated in phases, with each phase providing updates to a subset of occupations. Relying on the KSAs under this circumstance would mean that only some of the occupations in the OCCU-Find would be updated at any time. As such, some of the KSAs would be based on more current information than other ratings, and that would lead to unpredictable skill importance ratings that could not form the strong foundation needed to support high quality career exploration. Moreover, while the initial O\*NET™ KSA ratings were generated by occupational analysts, subsequent ratings have been provided by both occupational analysts and job incumbents. These differential sources of KSA ratings for the updated occupations are not equivalent to the analyst ratings of the non-updated occupations.

Second, while O\*NET™ does include military occupations that have strong civilian counterparts (*e.g.*, dental hygienists, clerks, bookkeepers, psychologists), it does not include military-specific occupations (*e.g.*, tank crew chief, weapons officer). Because of this, DMDC had independent analysts rate the 15 military-specific occupations in the 2002 OCCU-Find. Comparing military occupational information with the definitions of the Verbal, Math, and Science/Technical skills composites accomplished this task. This process, both costly and time-consuming, may also potentially lead to unpredictable skill importance ratings since the analysts could not apply the exact same criteria to these occupations as did the O\*NET™ analysts in their ratings of the civilian occupations. As Brown (2007) has pointed out, not including military-specific occupations in adolescent career exploration hampers exploration by giving adolescents an incomplete picture of their potential occupational opportunities.

Finally, the KSAs were not developed specifically for career exploration purposes. While they can be used to support adolescent career exploration under very defined and specific conditions, there may be more suitable and useful kinds of ratings that can be used in this regard. For example, the 2002 Verbal Skills Composite focused solely on reading comprehension and written communication skills. High school students, in reviewing the skill requirements of occupations, are likely to consider Verbal Skills in a broader context. As such, the O\*NET™ - derived OCCU-Find ratings may not satisfactorily address the career exploration purposes of the ASVAB Career Exploration Program.