

Education Technical Competency Framework

Section One

1. About the FCDO Advisory Cadres

World-leading technical and analytical capability is central to FCDO’s mission. FCDO Advisers embody these capabilities, playing a key role in the delivery of the UK’s international objectives and development impact in particular.

Advisers have a central role in the design, implementation, appraisal, and evaluation of international development programmes; in the development and implementation of foreign and development policy; and in diplomacy and international partnerships. They play an expert role in inter-disciplinary thinking and thought leadership, linking programmes and bringing deep expertise to maximise impact. They have strong links with specialist networks, research organisations, and professional bodies in the UK and globally.

Advisers are accredited to one or more of thirteen Advisory Cadres. These are professional bodies within FCDO and cover: Climate and Environment, Conflict, Economics, Education, Evaluation, Governance, Health, Humanitarian, Infrastructure, Food and Agriculture, Private Sector Development, Social Development, and Statistics. The Economics, Statistics, and Evaluation Cadres are linked to government-wide advisory services. Each Cadre has a Head of Profession (HoP), who is responsible for ensuring that professional standards are maintained both within the Cadre and for those wishing to join. The HoP provides thought leadership, quality assurance, and supports continuous professional development.

Adviser Capabilities

Advisers have certain capabilities in common. These include but are not limited to the following:

- **Expertise and thought leadership** in international policy and investment, applicable across a range of themes and geographies, and with a focus on development impact
- **Use of evidence** to inform policy and programming including the use of political economy analysis
- **Knowledge of data** relevant to operating sector and context, and application of professional expertise in interpretation and analysis of this in support of intended outcomes
- **Policy and programme delivery**, from design through to implementation and appraisal
- **International influence and diplomacy**, thinking and working politically and cooperatively, and through appropriate challenge, to shape norms and approaches
- **Brokering partnerships** with governments, civil society, the private sector, multilaterals, research organisations and professional bodies in the UK and globally
- **Delivering value for money** by applying key economic and commercial concepts
- **Safeguarding** to ensure the UK does-no-harm by integrating gender equality, child protection, disability inclusion, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment

- **Tackling climate change and restoring nature**, ensuring that programmes are aligned with the Paris agreement on climate change and UK commitments on nature
- **Contextual differences** such as fragility and conflict affected states, policy contexts, economic development and responding appropriately
- **Innovation and digital development**, proactive in exploring and validating innovative approaches, technology solutions and creative ways to address the world’s challenges.
- **Systems thinking**, recognising inter-linkages, real-world dynamics, and complexity to help design effective policies and interventions.
- **Embodying Civil Service behaviours** in applying, communicating, influencing, and leading technical and evidence-informed processes and engagement

Section Two

2. About Education Advisers (EAs)

Education Advisers provide technical expertise to help the FCDO deliver against [Integrated Review](#) and [International Development Strategy](#) education objectives, including championing 12 years of quality education for all girls, and delivery of two girls’ education Global Objectives: an additional 40 million girls in school and 20 million more girls reading by the age of ten in low and lower middle-income countries by 2026. The UK’s [Education Policy](#), [Disability and Inclusion Strategy](#) and [Girls’ Education Action Plan](#) (GEAP) set out how we will work with the international community and national governments to achieve the UK’s education objectives; and were boosted in December 2022 by a new [Position Paper](#) focussed on addressing the climate, environment and biodiversity crises in and through girls’ education.

Education Advisers provide evidence-based expert advice to inform and develop FCDO and wider UK Government (HMG) policy positions, diplomacy, and the design, costing and delivery of FCDO programmes. They work at headquarters, regional and country level in a range of different contexts, including Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS) to ensure crisis-affected children and youth access quality education. They advise on policy and programme engagement tailored to the context - whether the response is host-Government or international agency-led. Education Advisers also provide cross cutting support within FCDO interdisciplinary teams and collaborate with Other Government Departments (OGDs) to ensure a coherent approach to the UK Government’s support to education in low- and lower-middle income countries.

Accredited Advisers fulfil this role by:

1. **Supplying high quality technical expertise** to support and guide FCDO’s education ambitions including through assessments and the design of strategies, plans, policies, programmes, rules, and guidance.
2. **Being a strong partner to the Girls’ Education Department** in delivering the UK’s international education ambitions.
3. **Drawing on the best available evidence** (and commissioning research where necessary), consulting with other specialisms or sources of knowledge.

4. **Tailoring education interventions** to the development aspirations of ODA-recipient countries in ways that are consistent with UK and international commitments and ambitions.
5. **Integrating education** issues across FCDO/HMG's work at all levels and in all sectors, as relevant, advising on possible risks, opportunities and solutions within policies and programmes.
6. **Promoting and championing education achievements**, learning and development and professional excellence.
7. Ensuring our skillset remains relevant through **continual learning and professional development**.
8. **Developing strong partnerships and relationships** with partner governments and bilateral and multilateral partners to deliver coherence and establish trust and reliability.
9. Using all **available UK levers**: design, delivery, and appraisal of development policy and ODA programme interventions; design and implementation of trade and diplomacy measures; maximising use of diplomatic networks and relationships; influencing across HMG; facilitating bilateral, regional, and multilateral agreements and negotiations

Section Three

3. Education Technical Competencies

To be an FCDO Adviser and join an Advisory Cadre, individuals are assessed for their knowledge and expertise against a set of technical competencies. Each Cadre maintains a Technical Competency Framework (TCF) setting out the competencies of relevance to FCDO's work in these sectors.

For the Education Cadre, these technical competencies are outlined below. Each competency is described in terms of *knowledge (identification and analysis)* and *practice areas (experience in delivery)*. The competency descriptions list issues of relevance and importance but are non-exhaustive. Advisers are not expected to have knowledge and practice experience in all issues but are expected to provide evidence across all 5 knowledge and practice areas.

COMPETENCY 1: EDUCATION POLICY

Knowledge and practice areas:

Design and implementation of education policy reforms to improve access and learning outcomes domestically, globally and in partner governments.

The role and contribution of education to inclusive growth, human capital, and building stability and resilient and shock responsive systems in a national or global context.

Evidence-based policies across all sub-areas including, but not limited to, foundational learning for all, inclusive education, teacher effectiveness, student assessment, curriculum reform, safe schools, and school leadership.

The role of different digital technologies in improving the reach, quality and value for money of education interventions.

Policy approaches to building more resilient and inclusive education systems to mitigate the impact of climate and environmental change on education; as well as the role of education in driving resilience and adaptation to climate and environmental change and mitigating future impacts.

The impact of public sector reforms on the education sector, including in the areas of privatisation, decentralisation, and human resource management.

Different modalities of finance for education, including results-based financing and other innovative financing approaches e.g. DIBs; and the optimal mix of financing instruments for UKAid education programming based on the context and mix of development partners.

Approaches to influencing education reform through a combination of evidence and political economy analysis to inform how, when, and where to engage.

Contemporary and historical evidence across UK education policy reform and implementation; and how UK policy is situated in wider education policy internationally.

COMPETENCY 2: EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Knowledge and practice areas:

The education systems strengthening evidence base and approaches to designing education investments and influencing strategies to leverage systemic reform to improve access and learning outcomes in a variety of country contexts (FCAS, LICS, MICS).

Contextualisation of education systems strengthening approaches, including from the UK, to inform new programmes and investments in a different country context and to inform UK development and diplomacy policy in education.

Use of budget information, financial modelling and VFM analysis to maximise impact of education inputs on outcomes.

National and global education management information systems, including mechanisms for analysing and communicating education data, digital for decision-making and to demonstrate results and value for money.

The political, economic and social implications of differing contexts along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the impact these have on education systems.

Use of evidence in programme and decision making to contribute to fairer power structures and minimise potential harm.

What works to align teaching with student learning levels in different contexts, including remedial instruction and “teaching at the right level”.

Design and implementation of diagnose, test, learn, and adapt to scale programmes with an appropriate focus on sustainability.

How power, politics and incentives influence decisions within the education system and programme design and delivery, including the contribution of political economy and conflict analysis.

The role and effectiveness of different types of education delivery (public, private and CSOs) and of different accountability and regulatory mechanisms.

Data requirements for monitoring and evaluation of education systems (including use of digital) and their role and effectiveness in measuring progress in improving access and learning outcomes at a national level.

Evaluation of economy, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and equity issues in education budgeting and financing.

Education coordination and alignment mechanisms in country and/or globally.

COMPETENCY 3: THE GLOBAL EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

Knowledge and practice areas:

The processes, institutions and organisations that shape the international development context in which FCDO operates, particularly the structures, policies and approaches of key multilaterals and global funds, including the WB, UN, GPE and ECW.

The priorities, operating principles and drivers of relevant non-traditional donors, key foundations, academic institutions, CSOs and private sector actors.

The priorities and programmes of other UK government departments, including DfE, OFQUAL, OFSTED, DIT, BEIS, MoD and the British Council, and how these relate to international education and can be most effectively aligned and leveraged to deliver HMG education objectives globally.

Approaches to working effectively with, and influencing, partners internationally and at Post to ensure the complementarity and coherence of multilateral, bilateral and Centrally Managed Programmes in delivering the UK’s education priorities.

Approaches to creating, maintaining, and strengthening strategic external partnerships to provide expertise and evidence to partner countries and international organisations to ensure FCDO funding to education is greater than the sum of its parts.

Application of cutting-edge evidence and UK education expertise to influence the global dialogue on education.

COMPETENCY 4: EDUCATION, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Knowledge and practice areas:

Approaches to influencing policy and developing and implementing education interventions at national and global level to improve access and learning at scale for the most marginalised children, particularly girls, children with disability and children in fragile and conflict-affected regions, including refugee and IDP communities.

Strategies to strengthen pro-poor and equitable policy, financing, and implementation based on analysis of socio-cultural contexts and power imbalances between different groups and their effect within education systems.

System, school, community, family and individual barriers to inclusive, quality education and how these intersect; and effective system and programme approaches to overcoming these to deliver inclusive and gender-transformative education

Safeguarding minimum standards for education programme design and delivery, and design and delivery of programmes that are sensitive to safeguarding risks.

Development and use of sex-and age-disaggregated data and appropriate gender indicators in FCDO education policies and country programmes to ensure no child is left behind.

The evidence-base on the demand and supply factors that impact on learning and cause children to be excluded from education as well as what works to address these.

Working strategically and politically with a range of partners (multilaterals, bilaterals, OGDs, private sector, civil society and men and boys) in support of inclusive education.

COMPETENCY 5: EVIDENCE, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Knowledge and Practice areas:

Quality, relevance and application of key sources of published research, systematic reviews, and other evidence on education issues (national/international), including both the established evidence base and new developments such as the “Smart Buys” analysis of the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel.

Use of evidence and learning from programme and project monitoring and evaluation to influence education policy and systems.

Approaches to assessing the quality and robustness of available research and evidence in comparative and international education and how it applies to context and scale.

Design and management of rigorous research and evaluations of projects and programmes, including building impact evaluations into programme design where appropriate.

Identification of research gaps and how best to contribute strategically to national and international evidence bases through responsive and timely interventions.

Capacity building of researchers and research institutions in partner countries to strengthen Southern research networks.

Section Four

4. Assessing Capability

Assessments will focus on the extent of knowledge and practice across all five areas, with depth and breadth of knowledge and practice determining the level of capability at which to accredit.

Assessments will be based around a review of evidence that describes the extent of knowledge and expertise applicants hold in the relevant competencies, and also against capability levels from the FCDO Capability Framework: Awareness, Foundation, Practitioner, and Expert (within Expert the HoPs Group differentiate between Expert and Senior Expert). Note that particularly for Senior Expert level, consideration will be given to candidates' ability to give high quality demonstration of technical leadership and an ability to communicate and influence in their evidence

Practitioner:

- Strong and confident day-to-day application of capability in common or standard situations but may need to seek expert support on more complex issues.
- Holds several years of relevant experience* and may be augmented by a formal qualification of direct relevance such as a Master's in International Education (or similar qualification) or significant self-directed study.
- Successful Technical Assessment dependent on fulfilling all stated criteria in the TCF

Expert:

- Recognised for specialist or technical knowledge and/or skill, underpinned by experience applying it in practice on complex issues.
- Holds several years of relevant experience* and may be augmented by a formal qualification of direct relevance such as a Master's in International Education (or similar qualification) or significant self-directed study.
- The education systems competency should be based on several years of relevant experience in a LIC or LMIC.
- Successful Technical Assessment dependent on fulfilling all stated criteria in the TCF.

Senior Expert:

- Recognised for deep specialist or technical knowledge and/or skill, underpinned by extensive experience applying it in practice on complex issues.
- Holds significant years of relevant experience* and may be augmented by one or more formal qualifications of direct relevance such as a Master's in International Education (or similar qualification) or significant self-directed study.
- The education systems competency should be based on extensive experience in a LIC or LMIC
- Evidence of applying specialist knowledge and skill as well as displaying leadership qualities in a range of contexts.

- Successful Technical Assessment dependent on fulfilling all stated criteria in the TCF and assessment score of at least 4 against 2 Civil Service Behaviours: Leadership and Communicating and Influencing.
- Experience in providing effective thought leadership

* *Relevant experience* is defined as work experience in one or more sectors of direct relevance to the competencies.

A range of sources of evidence can be used by applicants to support their applications for accreditation and to demonstrate their technical skills. Examples of sources of evidence include:

- A CV
- Examples of technical skills being used in Situation, Task, Action, Result format
- Work-based training including 10% cadre contribution
- Qualifications
- Self-directed study
- Professional development record or learning log
- Project report
- Published or peer-Reviewed papers/dissertation
- Membership of a relevant professional body

Accreditation assessments will take into account the entire academic and professional history of a candidate and not rely solely on their most recent post.

Assessment Framework

The table below sets out the framework for how capability will be assessed at the competency level. The framework is based around the standard 1-7 scoring system used for Civil Service recruitments

Sift: During an accreditation round, the sift panel will agree a pass mark for all competencies. This could be, for example, 4. A sift will score all competencies at or above the pass mark for an applicant to pass from sift to interview. If a candidate applies for a level and does not pass, the sift panel can at their discretion agree whether they might still pass at a lower level. For example, an applicant might apply at Expert level. During the sift the panel might not pass them on all competencies, but after discussion agree to progress them to interview at Practitioner level.

Interview: Prior to interviews, the interview panel will again set a pass mark for all elements of the assessment. An interviewee must score higher than the pass mark in all areas to be considered for accreditation. If a candidate applies for a level and does not pass, the interview panel can at their discretion accredit the candidate at a lower level. Candidates who pass at a particular level cannot be considered for accreditation at a higher level, regardless of their scores. They must re-apply for accreditation at a higher level in a future accreditation round. The full set of accreditation requirements are specified in Section 5.

Standard scoring for assessment
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Score	Classification	Definition
7	Outstanding Demonstration	The evidence provided wholly exceeds expectation at this level
6	Strong Demonstration	Substantial positive evidence; includes some evidence of exceeding expectations at this level
5	Good Demonstration	Substantial positive evidence of the competency or behaviour
4	Acceptable Demonstration	Adequate positive evidence and any negative evidence would not cause concern
3	Moderate Demonstration	Moderate positive evidence but some negative evidence demonstrated
2	Minimal Demonstration	Limited positive evidence and/or mainly negative evidence demonstrated
1	Not Demonstrated	No positive evidence and/or substantial negative evidence demonstrated

Section Five

5. Requirement for Accreditation

Demonstration that knowledge and practice meet the standard for Senior Expert, Expert or Practitioner in **all** 5 technical competencies.

Assessments will focus on the extent of knowledge and practice across all five areas, with depth of knowledge and practice determining the level of capability at which to accredit. Advisers are not expected to have equal knowledge and practice experience in all competencies but are expected to provide evidence of knowledge and demonstrate either direct or transferable practice and experience across all five competencies.