

# What is Diplomatic Excellence?

Diplomatic Excellence is the FCO's reform and improvement agenda (2011-15) with the ambition of being the best Diplomatic Service in the world – and the best we can be.

The FCO launched the Diplomatic Excellence campaign in response to the Foreign Secretary's vision for the Department to be a strong, influential institution that gives leadership to the Government's international policy through its expert knowledge, its strong diplomatic skills and the power of its ideas.

>> *Diplomatic Excellence "is not turning the organisation upside down - but setting the Department free to do what it does best."* <<

**Rt Hon William Hague MP 08/09/11**

# Diplomatic Excellence 2015

## Our vision for what the FCO will look and feel like

### **By 2015 we are the best diplomatic service in the world.**

Highly ambitious, we are constantly striving for better outcomes despite the pressures and resource challenges. We are confident, secure about the future and proud of what we do.

Our **policy advice** is hard headed and focussed on action that advances the UK's national interests – our Prosperity, Security and Consular priorities.

We are highly rated for our policy analysis and for our bold, creative and action-oriented delivery.

Our **staff** are experts, sought after for our deep knowledge and understanding of languages, local affairs and culture and our core diplomatic skills in influencing and negotiation.

We attract and retain exceptional people.

We are proud of the **diversity** of our staff – who they are and how they think – and continually invest in them, enabling them to be the best they can be.

We recognise and reward great work that develops our organisational capability and advances our national interest.

Our **values** support a vibrant culture characterised by high energy and fun – where all staff take on stretching responsibilities, ideas thrive and orthodoxy can be fearlessly challenged. We work together effectively with all our partners to make a greater difference for the UK.

Our strong, agile global **network** serves all of HMG. Our modern efficient estate is supported by ICT and information, insight and wisdom in foreign affairs.

Our **reputation** as a well-led, well-run department, underpinned by sound financial management, is recognised across Whitehall.

# Diplomatic Excellence: Policy

## Policy

Establishes a vision including UK interests; takes full account of the long, medium and short term

Draws on expertise in the FCO, in Whitehall and outside; is open to and can withstand challenge

Offers credible options for Ministers; and establishes clear courses of action, which are adapted to circumstances

### Arms Trade Treaty:

The landmark UN Arms Trade Treaty was agreed in the UN General Assembly in April 2013 and was opened for signature on 3 June. As a co-author alongside six others, the UK was a lead nation in drafting and lobbying for a robust treaty. The UK has championed international regulation of the arms trade since the original resolution was tabled at the UN in 2006. Since then the UK government has worked determinedly with fellow co-authors, NGOs and industry to design a comprehensive framework to close the gaps that exist between the patchwork of national and regional arms trade regulations. The legally binding Treaty will internationalise common standards in support of international peace, stability and human rights.

### Normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo:

The legacy of conflict remains a key challenge in the Balkans, although the region has made great strides towards healing the wounds of the 1990s. In April 2013, the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue resulted in a landmark agreement on normalising the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo. Centred on the creation of an 'Association of Serb Municipalities', the agreement gives some autonomy to Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo, whilst reaffirming that neither Serbia nor Kosovo will block the other's path to EU membership.

Working with EU partners the UK played a vital role in the lead-up to this agreement and engagement by the Foreign Secretary was instrumental in setting up the EU Dialogue in 2011. We subsequently influenced the agenda for the final deal, working closely with key partners. The UK continues to insist on strict conditionality that Serbia and Kosovo meet their obligations under the agreement in order that both countries remain on the path to eventual EU membership.

# Diplomatic Excellence: People

## People

A workforce of the right size, shape and skills

Building workforce resilience, strengthening capabilities & skills, bringing on talent

Enabling staff to be the best they can be

### One Global Workforce:

This initiative will help us get the biggest possible contribution out of our staff by bringing greater consistency to our management practices around the world and reducing the amount of time and money spent on HR bureaucracy. It aims to give more value, voice and visibility to locally engaged staff, including through adoption of a unified grading structure and greater representation in corporate decision making bodies. It also promotes consistency, fairness and simplicity for UK-based staff through a simpler appraisal form more aligned with the rest of the UK Civil Service, the introduction of appraisal validation and streamlined promotion competitions. These changes should save significant time each year and will ensure that all staff are held to the same high standard.

### Foreign Languages:

We have opened a new in-house language centre which will train 1,000 full and part-time students a year in up to 80 different languages. 74% of UK-based staff now have a registered language skill which we are trying to increase further with the training above. Our aim is that at least half of all UK-based staff in non-English language speaking Posts should have the language skills at the *highest* levels that will enable them to better deliver HMG's policy objectives overseas

*>> We have launched the biggest drive to enhance the cutting edge abilities and diplomatic skills of the Foreign Office that the Department has ever seen; skills in negotiation, analysis, difficult languages, economics and policy making. <<*

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# Diplomatic Excellence: Network

## Network

An agile and innovative network with the right people in the right places

A strong global network which reflects our policy priorities and extends our influence

An effective, flexible and efficient network to release funds for front line activity

### Consular Services:

We are reforming our Consular services to make them more efficient, flexible and, wherever possible, digital. We want to provide more assistance to those British nationals who need our help most. We are establishing a network of three global contact centres (in Malaga, Hong Kong and Ottawa) to take all consular calls and only escalate where necessary to frontline staff (experience shows this is less than 17%). By March 2014 we should be able to handle all consular first contact by telephone and digital means through these three centres. We are closing down our overseas passport operation and from April 2014 all applications will be processed in the UK (by the Home Office). The Consular Skills Programme underpins Diplomatic Excellence in Consular Directorate giving staff the support they need to continually develop and promoting the benefits of knowledge-sharing and creativity in the workplace.

### A strong global workforce:

We are strengthening our network of Embassies, Consulates, trade offices and other posts while saving money overall. We have opened or upgraded fourteen diplomatic posts since 2011 and plan to open a post in Chandigarh early next year. We are making best use of our estate overseas through consolidation of HMG's presence and through co-location and estates cooperation with Commonwealth and EU partners, (eg with New Zealand in Bridgetown, in Vientiane with Australia, in Rangoon with Canada, in Quito with Germany and in Freetown with France). Co-location allows us to share corporate services and office space, giving us a wider reach while making best use of our existing overseas estate.

*>> Where we are increasing the numbers of FCO staff and consulates, we are able to build deeper diplomatic relationships and do more for British business and British citizens.<<*

**Rt Hon William Hague MP 08/09/11**

# Diplomatic Excellence 2015

## Diplomatic Excellence values

We encourage and expect all of our staff to demonstrate the following values and behaviours in their work

Taking responsibility	Encouraging innovation	Working together
<p><b><i>This is about:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● clarity of roles and responsibilities with everyone taking personal ownership and responsibility for delivering excellent work</li><li>● leaders/managers devolving decision-making as far as possible and giving staff the permission, tools, skills and support to get on with the job</li><li>● staff taking the initiative without being hampered by unnecessary bureaucracy</li><li>● recognising and rewarding good work</li></ul>	<p><b><i>This is about:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● creativity in developing and delivering policy and services</li><li>● constructively challenging orthodoxy and actively encouraging new ways of thinking</li><li>● managing information and using collaboration tools to generate fresh insights, inspire new solutions and influence more effectively</li><li>● being open-minded, agile, flexible and confident in taking well judged risks</li></ul>	<p><b><i>This is about:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● working together collaboratively to achieve common goals and share knowledge and best practice</li><li>● valuing the expertise and contribution of all colleagues. Forming strong partnerships and strategic alliances that enable us to build networks of influence</li><li>● building on and consolidating the principles of 'one team', extending across Whitehall and other external partners and opinion formers</li></ul>

# Measuring Diplomatic Excellence

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## Developing the framework

In setting an ambition to be the best Diplomatic Service in the world and the best we can be, we had to determine how to measure progress towards our goal.

We carried out an extensive testing and engagement programme and developed a measuring framework with input from the Office for National Statistics' *Methodology Advisory Service* (MAS), and has been quality assured in 2013 by the MAS.

The framework is in two parts:

## An internal performance measuring process

- » To assess progress both quantitatively and qualitatively on our published policy priorities and the outcomes we want to achieve.

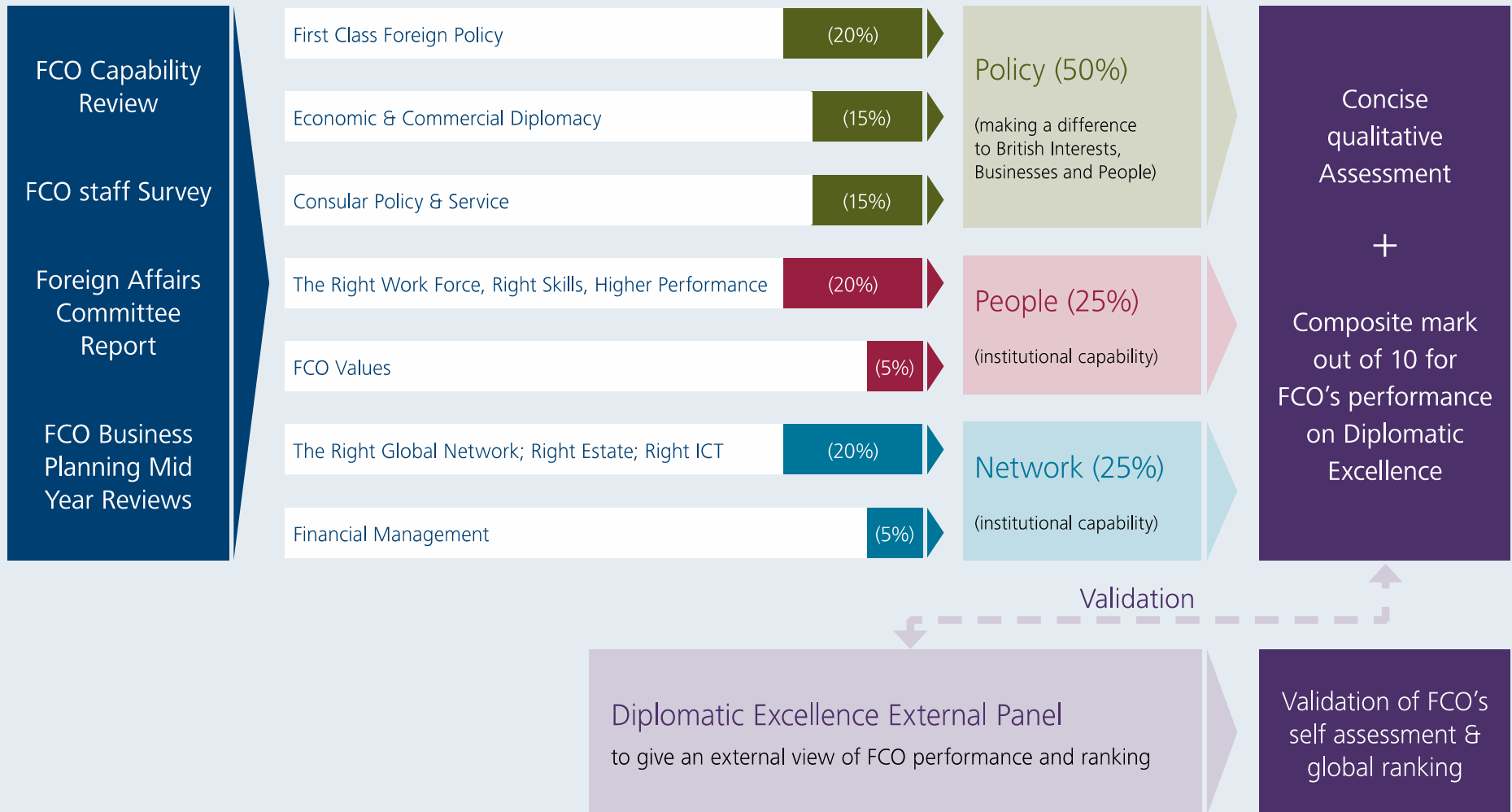
## A Diplomatic Excellence External Panel

- » To give an external view of our performance as perceived by important senior partners and opinion formers for the FCO.

# Measuring Diplomatic Excellence

Internal assessment: measuring framework developed with input from the Office for National Statistics

Diplomatic Excellence Programme Strands with Metrics  
 Figures in brackets denote weights in overall metric.





# Measuring Diplomatic Excellence

## External assessment: Diplomatic Excellence External Panel

- » **The Diplomatic Excellence External Panel** was set up to provide the FCO with informed external challenge in assessing our performance.

### Who is on the Panel?

It is made up of a representative group of people including officials, Parliamentarians, business leaders, academics, think tanks, media, NGOs, international organisations.

In addition to the Panel we seek views of our peers in Ministries of Foreign Affairs on our performance.

### What does it do?

We give the Panel regular updates during the year and give our own evaluation of performance annually. We ask them for their perceptions, to score and rank us against our peers and to give feedback on how we can improve.

The Panel meets annually with the Permanent Under Secretary and other senior FCO staff to discuss their feedback. The views of the External Panel are reviewed alongside internal measurement to provide a final assessment.