



How to complete competency statements

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Preparation.....	2
3. Completing the application form.....	3
4. Writing competency statements	3
5. How competency statements will be assessed	6
6. If your application is unsuccessful.....	6
7. If you are invited to interview.....	6
8. Hints and tips.	6
9. Checking your competency statement	7
10. A-Z of Active Verbs	8

1. Introduction

This guide can help you to write your competency statements when applying for a job.

Competencies are short statements, up to a maximum of 250 words, defining the behaviour and actions needed to perform well in a particular job.

If you apply for a job in the MMO you will be asked to provide competency examples from the MMO Competency Framework and if you apply for a job in another Government organisation it is very likely that you will be asked for competence examples from the new Civil Service Competency Framework, on which the MMO Framework is based.

If you are applying for a job which uses different competences e.g. outside the civil service, the tips and advice here will still help, you just need to be clear exactly what competences are being asked for and choose your examples accordingly.

Getting your competency statements right is essential as sift and interview panels will use them to assess your suitability for the job and to compare you against the other applicants.

There are some general guidelines for preparing competency statements. Your examples should be:

- truthful and based on fact

- grammatically correct
- spelled correctly

2. Preparation

The specific competencies you need to write about will be detailed in the job advert.

Before writing anything, you should read all the information in the job advert paying particular attention to the **competences** required. Make sure you have a **full** copy of the relevant Competency Framework. There should be a link included in the job advert.

You should also look closely at all the information in the **Job Description**, so you can take this into account when writing your competency statement.

Think about everything you have done and achieved over the last five years or so which relate to the competency being asked for.

The more recent your examples the better, but you don't necessarily have to make all your examples work related. You may be able to include achievements from outside work, for example in a voluntary capacity.

You must choose examples that enable you to describe specific things **you** did, not what your team did or what your work area did.

Think of examples that:

- clearly demonstrate the competency or behaviour
- will allow you to explain in some detail what you personally did
- had positive results, although less successful examples can be used if you can demonstrate the lessons learned and how errors would be avoided in future
- impacted on more than a few people, as these are likely to be more powerful
- allow you to demonstrate other key skills or knowledge mentioned in the job vacancy, if possible.

Stronger examples tend to:	Weaker examples tend to:
Fully demonstrate the competency or behaviour being asked for.	Only partly demonstrate the competency being asked about.
Impact on customers, groups of people, or the organisation as a whole.	Impact on only a few people or a small team.
Support key organisational objectives and priorities such as the MMO vision, business strategy and strategic outcomes.	Have little or no direct link to anything at a strategic or organisational level.
Include evidence of a quantifiable improvement backed up by some data.	Contain little firm evidence or data demonstrating positive outcomes and impact.

You don't always need to start from scratch

You probably already have a good idea of the more successful things you have done, but some good places to find examples include:

- previous job applications
- your appraisal documentation
- any times you were singled out for specific praise or recognition
- referring to your diary
- reading through positive feedback you received
- talking to your line manager.

Only you will be able to come up with these, but of course your line manager or other people who know you well will be able to help.

3. Completing the application form

When completing the form you are asked to describe a particular situation or situations from the past where you displayed all or most of the activities making up a particular competency. You can use up to a maximum of 250 words to describe what you did, how you did it, why you did it and the affect this had to you show the assessors who will be marking the form that you understand what is required and that you are capable of doing it.

By quoting examples of why and how you demonstrated the skills, knowledge and other qualities in the past you show that you have the potential to apply them in a new job in the future.

It is not sufficient to say that you have had relevant experience, you must show evidence of making a success of that experience by describing how you acted in particular situations and what the effect of those actions was.

An application form that requires you to describe the way that you behaved in certain situations and the effect that this had allows the assessors to judge the extent to which you are capable of applying the same behaviours in a new job.

4. Writing competency statements

Using STAR

We strongly recommend using STAR to help you structure your statements. It will also help you to break down the writing of a 250 word example into four manageable chunks.

Most of your 250 words need to go on the **A** and the **R** parts of your example, as this is where most sift points will be available.

Situation:

- This sets up your example for the sifter and provides the context for the actions you

are going to describe.

- It can include your job role, the circumstances, the resources available, the context, and your responsibilities.
- It needs to be fairly short, but does need to allow the sifter to assess the complexity of the task, your role and responsibilities, resources you had available and any challenges you faced.

Task:

- This is where you describe the task you needed to do to meet the objectives.

Action:

- This is where you will describe what you actually did in response to the situation and task.
- This is the most important part, as it is where most of sift points are awarded.
- Most of your 250 words should be used here.

Result:

- At the end of the statement you will need to explain what the outcome of your actions was and why they were successful. If it wasn't successful as it could have been you can explain what lessons you learned and what you could have done to make it more so.

Replacing passive verbs and sentences with active ones

The statement needs to be about you and what you did therefore you should include lots of "I" statements and less **we** did this, the **team** did that etc.

Read through your statement, amending anything that talks about what anyone else did.

You also need to replace any passive verbs or sentences with active ones. Active verbs provide additional impact and include words like planned, developed, researched, recommended etc.

Examples:

Don't say	Say this instead
A spreadsheet was set up to show where delays were occurring.	I devised a spreadsheet and compiled data so I could identify where delays were occurring.
The spreadsheet showed that delays were occurring at the same times each week, so we discussed this during a problem solve.	After collecting and analysing the data, I identified a pattern of delays. I carefully considered who was affected and invited representatives from across the processing areas to a problem solve.

<p>I took a lead role in the problem solve and we brought up lots of possible problems. Because the right people had been invited, we were able to come up with solutions for most of them quite easily.</p>	<p>I took a lead role by managing the timings and ensuring everyone had the opportunity to contribute. Because I had identified the key stakeholders, all problems were documented and realistic solutions were identified.</p>
<p>After the problem solve, we recorded the outcomes and made some recommendations for change. There was one area that we couldn't resolve, so we escalated it up the management chain.</p>	<p>I ensured the outcomes were collected and after careful analysis, I made some recommendations to our team leader. I recognised that one of the solutions proposed needed to be discussed further, so I escalated this to the management team along with my analysis of the risks involved and my recommended solution.</p>

The wording in the right hand column is more powerful. It not only clearly says what **you** did, but also some of the reasons behind what you did. You **must** be honest about what you did and **never** include anything that is untrue. If something was completed in partnership with others, you need to highlight your role and not theirs. You can recognise other people's achievements in feedback, thanks, after action reviews, team meetings etc.

See the [A to Z of active verbs](#) is included at the end of this guide.

Making examples more strategic

There are lots of things you can do to demonstrate the competency and show you understood **how** what you did contributed to meeting organisational objectives and values too.

It's important to have an awareness of what's important to MMO, where our priorities lie and how you could incorporate this into your example, if appropriate.

There are many ways you can do this, including:

- keeping an eye on the Marine Management Organisation – GOV.UK website
- looking at the objectives in the Corporate Plan
- familiarising yourself with the MMO's Vision
- familiarising yourself with the organisations Strategies and what this means in your area of work.

If you can show in your statements that you have understood how your actions align with Business or Organisational objectives, you demonstrate that you know **why** doing what

you did was important to the MMO.

This could make your statement stronger than someone else's and help you to be more successful in the sift or interview.

5. How competency statements will be assessed

Most of the marks will be awarded for the description of what you did. The assessor will award marks for those activities that meet the broad descriptors of each competency. You do not have to describe activities which meet each and every one of the bullet points under the descriptors. **Avoid describing activities that are not relevant.**

You will not be awarded any points for describing what others did, although you should describe how your actions affected other relevant people such as other team members, customers etc. where this will reinforce the evidence for the effectiveness of your actions.

You should use your own words: simply using the description of the competencies will not score you points.

6. If your application is unsuccessful

Try not to be too disappointed if you are unsuccessful as there is often a lot of competition for jobs.

You should always ask for feedback which will be provided in writing. You can do this by contacting the MMO HR Team.

Vacancy managers and sifters can also provide verbal feedback, if requested, however this may not always be possible, for example in a large recruitment exercise.

7. If you are invited to interview

Congratulations, but you do now need to start thinking about how you are going to talk about your examples at an interview and you may well be asked to provide some additional examples to further demonstrate your competence

A competency based interview may be quite different to any interview you have had in the past.

8. Hints and tips.

Tips for reducing the word count

In many cases, you will find that you have too many words in your competency statement.

You will probably be reluctant to remove anything, as you have spent so long getting everything right and don't feel you can reduce it without losing something important.

The bottom line is you will need to edit it, as the maximum word count is strictly enforced.

If you have only a few words to lose, this shouldn't be too much of a problem and you can read through your example, identifying where you have used more words than are actually needed.

For example

Don't say	Say this instead
According to the records	The records show
A large number of	Many or most
As a consequence of	Because

You can often remove the word "that" without altering the meaning of the sentence.

If you have lots of words to lose this can be more difficult as you will probably need to lose something that you have written that you really want to include.

First of all try and take a break from doing your application for a couple of hours. When you come back to your statement, you can often be able to see instantly where it can be improved and reduced.

Then make sure you look at **all** the elements of your statement before you consider what you are going to have to sacrifice. However, don't make the mistake of removing something that means your example is no longer relevant to the competency or behaviour asked for.

Using the word count function in MS Word

Writing your examples in MS Word will not only spell check them but will automatically keep count of the number of words you have used.

- To do this, simply highlight the text you need to count.
- On the **Tools** menu, click **Word Count**

9. Checking your competency statement

Check your example against the following and don't be afraid to ask your manager or colleague for some feedback on the content, grammar and spelling.

Are your examples relevant to the competency levels or behaviour asked for?	√
Are your examples relevant to the Job Description, wherever possible?	√
Have you used your strongest and most relevant examples?	√
Have you written your statement using the STAR model?	√
Have you explained what you did, not what anyone else did?	√
Have you replaced passive words and sentences with active ones?	√
Have you linked into something strategic if possible?	√
Have you adhered to the maximum 250 word count?	√

10. A-Z of Active Verbs

A	Distributed	Improved	Modified	Q
Accomplished	Devised	Incorporated	Monitored	Qualified
Achieved	Delivered	Incorporated	Motivated	Questioned
Administered	Documented	Increased	N	R
Addressed	Drafted	Informed	Navigated	Realigned
Advised	E	Inspected	Negotiated	Realised
Advocated	Evaluated	Inspired	O	Recognised
Analysed	Explained	Instilled	Opened	Recorded
Answered	Examined	Integrated	Organised	Reconciled
Applied	Edited	Interacted	Outlined	Referred
Arranged	Eliminated	Interviewed	Originated	Reported
Assessed	Emphasised	Introduced	Outsourced	Researched
Authorised	Encouraged	Involved	Overcame	Responded
B	Enhanced	Issued	Overhauled	Reviewed
Balanced	Established	J	Oversaw	S
Boosted	Expanded	Joined	Obtained	Searched
Briefed	Explored	Judged	Operated	Selected
Budgeted	F	Justified	P	Shared
Built	Familiarised	K	Planned	Solved
C	Filed	Kept	Promoted	Streamlined
Calculated	Finalised	L	Presented	Summarised
Centralised	Fixed	Liaised	Persuaded	T
Classified	Focused	Launched	Participated	Targeted
Coached	Formulated	Learned	Performed	Taught
Communicated	Found	Led	Piloted	Tracked
Completed	G	Listened	Planned	Trained
Condensed	Gained	Lifted	Placed	Transformed
Conducted	Gathered	Logged	Predicted	U
Controlled	Generated	Located	Prepared	Undertook
Convinced	Governed	M	Prescribed	Updated
Co-ordinated	Guided	Managed	Prevented	Utilised
Contributed	H	Moderated	Produced	V
Created	Handled	Maintained	Projected	Validated
Customised	Headed	Mapped	Promoted	Verified
	Heightened	Maximised	Proofread	Volunteered
D	Helped	Measured	Proposed	W
Designed	Hosted	Mediated	Provided	Weighed
Developed	I	Mentored	Publicised	Worked
Diagnosed	Identified	Merged	Purchased	Wrote