

Band C: Civil Service Competency Framework and International Competences



About this framework

We are introducing a new competency framework to support the Civil Service Reform Plan and the new performance management system. The competency framework sets out how we want people in the Civil Service to work. It puts the Civil Service values of honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity at the heart of everything we do and it aligns to the three high level leadership behaviours that every civil servant needs to model: Set Direction; Engage People and Deliver Results. Civil servants work in a huge range of jobs across the country and overseas but one thing we have in common is that we are here to support the elected Government, providing advice to help shape its policies and ensuring seamless and practical implementation in line with those policies.

Competences are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance. The framework outlines ten CSCF and two international competences, which are grouped into four clusters as set out above. For each competency there is a description of what it means in practice and some examples of effective and ineffective behaviours at all levels. The competences are intended to be discrete and cumulative, with each level building on the levels below i.e. a person demonstrating a competency at level 3 should be demonstrating levels 1 and 2 as a matter of course. These indicators of behaviour are not designed to be comprehensive, but provide a clear sense of and greater understanding and consistency about what is expected from individuals in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

What does it mean for me?

The framework will be used for recruitment, performance management and development discussions and for decisions about progression. Some Departments introduced the CSCF in April 2012 with the rest of Government doing so from April 2013. In these new arrangements your business objectives will set out “what” you need to achieve over the year and this competency framework will set out “how” you need to work to achieve those objectives.

Most of you will need to focus on a number of competences, usually around six, identified with your manager as being essential to your role. You are encouraged to discuss the framework with your line manager to identify the competences that apply most to your job role.

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This framework has been developed in partnership with Civil Service professions. If you work as part of a profession with a separate framework this will complement your professional framework and should be used alongside it.

The FCO Competency framework consists of twelve competences. Below is a list of all the competences with a high-level summary of each one.

International Cluster

1. Engaging Internationally

Effectiveness in this area is about leading internationally, engaging our staff, contacts and international partners to help deliver UK Government objectives. For all staff it's about understanding UK Government aims in the wider UK and international context and developing productive relationships with those external contacts and partners to help deliver UK objectives. All staff are aware of cultural sensitivities in their area of responsibility. Staff build up negotiating expertise through the grades and champion and use language skills where appropriate to deepen impact. Senior leaders use the same behaviours but operate at higher levels of sensitivity and complexity. Managers have to lead and inspire teams in an international context. Staff adapt their approach to reflect the very diverse teams they manage while still promoting UK values.

2. Demonstrating Resilience

This is about helping our people to build resilience in international roles, supporting their ability to adapt to working in difficult and varied international environments; and to bounce back from crises and setbacks in these contexts. Individuals need to be aware of the impact they have on themselves and on others, and show support for others with a pragmatic attitude, perseverance and resolve. Individuals should be able to manage in a wide variety of circumstances and locations and, with appropriate support, to recover from challenges and setbacks. For leadership roles this competence would also include leading a culture of support, while promoting a proper regard for employee safety, health and well-being.

Strategic Cluster – Setting Direction

3. Seeing the Big Picture

Seeing the big picture is about having an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how your role fits with and supports organisational objectives and the wider public needs. For all staff, it is about focusing your contribution on the activities which will meet Civil Service goals and deliver the greatest value. At senior levels, it is about scanning the political context and taking account of wider impacts to develop long term implementation strategies that maximise opportunities to add value to the citizen and support economic, sustainable growth.

4. Changing and Improving

People who are effective in this area are responsive, innovative and seek out opportunities to create effective change. For all staff, it's about being open to change, suggesting ideas for improvements to the way things are done, and working in 'smarter', more focused ways. At senior levels, this is about creating and contributing to a culture of innovation and allowing people to consider and take managed risks. Doing this well means continuously seeking out ways to improve policy implementation and build a leaner, more flexible and responsive Civil Service. It also means making use of alternative delivery models including digital and shared service approaches wherever possible.

5. Making Effective Decisions

Effectiveness in this area is about being objective; using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to provide accurate, expert and professional advice. For all staff, it means showing clarity of thought, setting priorities, analysing and using evidence to evaluate options before arriving at well reasoned justifiable decisions. At senior levels, leaders will be creating evidence based strategies, evaluating options, impacts, risks and solutions. They will aim to maximise return while minimising risk and balancing social, political, financial, economic and environmental considerations to provide sustainable outcomes.

People Cluster - Engaging People

6. Leading and Communicating

At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about leading from the front and communicating with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm. It's about supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all and a dedication to a diverse range of citizens. At senior levels, it is about establishing a strong direction and a persuasive future vision; managing and engaging with people with honesty and integrity, and upholding the reputation of the Department and the Civil Service.

7. Collaborating and Partnering

People skilled in this area create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the Civil Service to help get business done. At all levels, it requires working collaboratively, sharing information and building supportive, responsive relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions. At senior levels, it's about delivering business objectives through creating an inclusive environment, encouraging collaboration and building effective partnerships including relationships with Ministers.

8. Building Capability for All

Effectiveness in this area is having a strong focus on continuous learning for oneself, others and the organisation. For all staff, it's being open to learning, about keeping one's own knowledge and skill set current and evolving. At senior levels, it's about talent management and ensuring a diverse blend of capability and skills is identified and developed to meet current and future business needs. It's also about creating a learning and knowledge culture across the organisation to inform future plans and transformational change.

Performance Cluster - Delivering Results

9. Achieving Commercial Outcomes

Being effective in this area is about maintaining an economic, long-term focus in all activities. For all, it's about having a commercial, financial and sustainable mindset to ensure all activities and services are delivering added value and working to stimulate economic growth. At senior levels, it's about identifying economic, market and customer issues and using these to promote innovative business models, commercial partnerships and agreements to deliver greatest value; and ensuring tight commercial controls of finances, resources and contracts to meet strategic priorities.

10. Delivering Value for Money

Delivering value for money involves the efficient, effective and economic use of taxpayers' money in the delivery of public services. For all staff, it means seeking out and implementing solutions which achieve the best mix of quality and effectiveness for the least outlay. People who do this well base their decisions on evidenced information and follow agreed processes and policies, challenging these appropriately where they appear to prevent good value for money. At senior levels, effective people embed a culture of value for money within their area/function. They work collaboratively across boundaries to ensure that the Civil Service maximises its strategic outcomes within the resources available.

11. Managing a Quality Service

Effectiveness in this area is about being organised to deliver service objectives and striving to improve the quality of service, taking account of diverse customer needs and requirements. People who are effective plan, organise and manage their time and activities to deliver a high quality and efficient service, applying programme and project management approaches to support service delivery. At senior levels, it is about creating an environment to deliver operational excellence and creating the most appropriate and cost effective delivery models for public services.

12. Delivering at Pace

Effectiveness in this area means focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. For all staff, it's about working to agreed goals and activities and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way. At senior levels, it is about building a performance culture to deliver outcomes with a firm focus on prioritisation and addressing performance issues resolutely, fairly and promptly. It is also about leaders providing the focus and energy to drive activities forward through others and encourage staff to perform effectively during challenging and changing times.

1. Engaging Internationally	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Represent and advance UK interests and policies. Use knowledge of UK governance, political culture and HMG context to add to credibility.	Lose credibility and ability to influence due to lack of knowledge of UK agenda and context.
Build and maintain cooperative and productive relationships with an effective range of external contacts. Use the network professionally and sensitively to the benefit of the UK.	Be passive in identifying and engaging effective wider stakeholder groups and therefore lacks influence and the wider UK perspective.
Have a working knowledge of country context and local sensitivities and encourage staff to develop this knowledge. When appropriate, can speak and use a language/s with a high level of proficiency.	Not take account of and weigh up changes which may impact on their role and staff. Be reluctant to develop appropriate language skills to increase impact.
Negotiate effectively combining logic and reason with interpersonal sensitivity. Seek to create solutions offering mutual benefits. Anticipate problems and be able to respond to the unexpected.	Unconvincing in negotiation or when challenged. Overly dominant or diffident in discussions.
Set a good example by working positively in diverse teams and living up to UK Government values.	Not model a positive approach in a very diverse environment. Ignore UK Government values.

2. Demonstrating Resilience	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Ensure they manage their people to play to their strengths and have high awareness of their own and others' impact.	Fail to realise the full impact of work on their individual team members, leading to them feeling unsupported.
Coach others within the team to think about how they manage through challenges or setbacks in an international context, and develop as a result, bouncing back.	Inactive in supporting their team to develop and become more self-aware. Unaware of their impact on others.
Have well developed awareness of own strengths and limitations and the impact of this on their work and their colleagues. Manage this in various challenging or ambiguous international scenarios and across their department and more widely.	Lack awareness of their limitations, leading to poor judgement and sub-optimal decisions.
Demonstrate an ability to learn, adapt and change behaviours, striving for continuous improvement across their department and more widely.	Rely on limited responses and an inflexible personal style regardless of the changing environment.

3. Seeing the Big Picture	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Be alert to emerging issues and trends which might impact or benefit own and team's work	Ignore changes in the external environment that have implications for Departmental policy and considerations
Develop an understanding of own area's strategy and how this contributes to Departmental priorities	Shows limited interest in or understanding of Departmental priorities and what they mean for activities in their area
Ensure own area/team activities are aligned to Departmental priorities	Be overly focused on team and individual activities without due regard for how they meet the demands of the Department as a whole
Actively seek out and share experience to develop understanding and knowledge of own work and of team's business area	Take actions which conflict with or mis-align to other activities
Seek to understand how the services, activities and strategies in the area work together to create value for the customer/end user	Commit to actions without consideration of the impact on the diverse needs of customers/end users – apply a "one size fits all" approach

4. Changing and Improving	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Find ways to improve systems and structures to deliver with more streamlined resources	Retain resource intensive systems and structures that are considered too difficult to change
Regularly review procedures or systems with teams to identify improvements and simplify processes and decision making	Repeat mistakes and overlook lessons learned from changes that have been less effective in the past
Be prepared to take managed risks, ensuring these are planned and their impact assessed	Have ideas that are unfocused and have little connection to the realities of the business or customer needs
Actively encourage ideas from a wide range of sources and stakeholders and use these to inform own thinking	Not listen to suggested changes and not give reasons as to why the suggestion is not feasible
Be willing to meet the challenges of difficult or complex changes, encouraging and supporting others to do the same	Resist changing own approach in response to the new demands - adopting a position of 'always done things like this'
Prepare for and respond appropriately to the range of possible effects that change may have on own role/team	Take little responsibility for suggesting or progressing changes due to perceived lack of control of processes

5. Making Effective Decisions	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Make decisions when they are needed, even if they prove difficult or unpopular	Miss opportunities or deadlines by delaying decisions
Identify a range of relevant and credible information sources and recognise the need to collect new data when necessary from internal and external sources	Only use evidence sources that support arguments or are easily accessible
Recognise patterns and trends in a wide range of evidence/data and draw key conclusions	Come to conclusions that are not supported by evidence
Explore different options outlining costs, benefits, risks and potential responses to each	Give little consideration to the people and resources impacted by decisions
Recognise scope of own authority for decision making and empower team members to make decisions	Create confusion by omitting to inform relevant people of amendments or decisions causing delays in implementation
Invite challenge and where appropriate involve others in decision making to help build engagement and present robust recommendations	Consistently make decisions in isolation or with a select group

6. Leading and Communicating	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Take opportunities to regularly communicate and interact with staff, helping to clarify goals and activities and the links between these and Departmental strategy	Be rarely available to staff and others, communicate infrequently
Recognise, respect and reward the contribution and achievements of others	Take the credit for others' achievements
Communicate in a succinct, engaging manner and stand ground when needed	Give in readily when challenged
Communicate using appropriate styles, methods and timing, including digital channels, to maximise understanding and impact	Communicate in a set way with little variation, without tailoring messages, style and timing to the needs of the target audience
Promote the work of the Department and play an active part in supporting the Civil Service values and culture	Be ignorant of and/or dismissive of broader organisational values and goals, such as equality and diversity
Convey enthusiasm and energy about their work and encourage others to do the same	Communicate information without consideration for the audience or with limited/low levels of enthusiasm and effort

7. Collaborating and Partnering	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Establish relationships with a range of stakeholders to support delivery of business outcomes	Devote little or no time to networking or engaging with immediate stakeholders, preferring to work in isolation
Invest time to generate a common focus and genuine team spirit	Demonstrate limited capability to get the best from people and create barriers or negative feelings between and within teams
Actively seek input from a diverse range of people	Display little appreciation of the value of different contributions and perspectives
Readily share resources to support higher priority work, showing pragmatism and support for the shared goals of the organisation	Create reasons why resources and support cannot be shared
Deal with conflict in a prompt, calm and constructive manner	Show a lack of concern for others' perspectives
Encourage collaborative team working within own team and across the Department	Support individual or silo ways of working

8. Building Capability for All	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Identify and address team or individual capability requirements and gaps to deliver current and future work	Manage others in a weak or ineffective manner, allowing capability gaps to persist
Identify and develop all talented team members to support succession planning, devoting time to coach, mentor and develop others	Choose to only develop team members who reflect own capabilities, styles and strengths
Value and respond to different personal needs in the team using these to develop others and promote inclusiveness	Be insensitive to and unaware of the diverse aspirations and capability of all members of the team
Proactively manage own career and identify own learning needs with line manager, plan and carry out work-place learning opportunities	Passively expect others to identify and manage their learning needs
Continually seek and act on feedback to evaluate and improve their own and team's performance	Make no attempt to learn from or apply lessons of feedback

9. Achieving Commercial Outcomes	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Consider, in consultation with commercial experts, alternative ways of working with partners and contractors to identify more efficient outcomes, balancing cost, quality and turn around times	Overlook opportunities for continuous improvement in service delivery
Work with commercial experts in engaging effectively and intelligently with delivery partners in order to define and /or improve service delivery	Lack impact when engaging with commercial experts and delivery partners through misunderstanding commercial issues
Gather and use evidence to assess the costs, benefits and risks of a wide range of delivery options when making commercial decisions	Take a narrow view of options and focus only on cost, rather than long term value and impact
Identify and understand relevant legal and commercial terms, concepts, policies and processes (including project approvals and assurance procedures) to deliver agreed outcomes	Show a lack of understanding about relevant commercial concepts processes and systems

10. Delivering Value for Money	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Recommend actions to achieve value for money and efficiency	Ignore financial experts – not ask for advice or seek advice at the right time
Cultivate and encourage an awareness of cost, using clear simple examples of benefits and how to measure outcomes	Reserve resources for own team without considering wider business priorities or the organisation's financial environment
Work confidently with performance management and financial data to prepare forecasts and manage and monitor budget against agreed plans	Misinterpret or over-estimate performance and financial data used to forecast and monitor budgets and plans
Follow appropriate financial procedures to monitor contracts to ensure deliverables are achieved	Ignore the organisation's financial procedures or break rules for the sake of expediency
Monitor the use of resources in line with organisational procedures and plans and hold team to account	Be unable to justify own and their teams' use of resources

11. Managing a Quality Service	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Make effective use of project management skills and techniques to deliver outcomes, including identifying risks and mitigating actions	Has minimal understanding of what could go wrong or needs to be resolved as a priority
Develop, implement, maintain and review systems and service standards to provide quality, efficiency and value for money	Focus on delivering the task to the exclusion of meeting customer/end user requirements and needs
Work with team to set priorities, goals, objectives and timescales	Allocate or delegate work without clarifying deadlines or priorities
Establish mechanisms to seek out and respond to feedback from customers about service provided	Be unable to explain common customer problems or needs and how these are evolving
Promote a culture that tackles fraud and deception, keeping others informed of outcomes	Not give sufficient priority and attention to ensuring that fraud and deception is being tackled.
Develop proposals to improve the quality of service with involvement from a diverse range of staff, stakeholders or delivery partners	Generate limited proposals to create service improvements and do so with little involvement of staff

12. Delivering at Pace	
Effective Behaviour <i>People who are effective are likely to...</i>	Ineffective Behaviour <i>People who are less effective are likely to...</i>
Successfully manage, support and stretch self and team to deliver agreed goals and objectives	Give people work to do without supporting them to develop the skills and knowledge they need for the job
Show a positive approach in keeping their own and the team's efforts focused on the goals that really matter	Allow work flow to lose momentum or drift away from priorities
Take responsibility for delivering expected outcomes on time and to standard, giving credit to teams and individuals as appropriate	Give little or no support to others in managing poor performance, allow others' problems and obstacles to hamper progress
Plan ahead but reassess workloads and priorities if situations change or people are facing conflicting demands	Show no consideration for diversity-related needs of the team when organising the workload
Regularly monitor own and team's work against milestones or targets and act promptly to keep work on track and maintain performance	Allow poor performance to go unchallenged, causing workload issues for other team members
Coach and support others to set and achieve challenging goals for themselves	Allow organisational and other obstacles, including a lack of support, to stand in the way of own and others' aspirations