

Band D: 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.

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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.

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 the UK's interests and policies.	Miss or misjudge opportunities to advance UK interests.
Build and maintain useful and wide ranging networks of contacts at institution, country or regional level. Use their network professionally and sensitively to the benefit of the UK.	Fail to develop an effective range of contacts or use them to achieve wider objectives. Fail to differentiate between UK and personal interests.
Quickly understand regional / country context and local sensitivities and encourage their team, to develop this knowledge. When appropriate, can use a language/s with a high level of proficiency to strengthen contacts and achieve UK interests.	Be unable to anticipate changes due to lack of knowledge about the international environment. Where appropriate, be reluctant to develop appropriate language skills to increase impact.
Negotiate effectively, combining coherent thinking, flexible negotiating techniques, interpersonal sensitivity and creativity to achieve agreement. Aware of how their behaviour can be perceived by others in different international environments.	Rely on one style of negotiation missing opportunity to use logic, charm and empathy flexibly. Misread signals.
Manage diverse teams to deliver in the country or regional context, embedding UK Government values and managing tensions between the global, UK and local context.	Not appreciate the greater diversity in international teams and therefore does not reap benefits. Fail to promote 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>
Manage and lead, role modelling a culture of self-awareness in their country or region where individuals work to their own and others' strengths.	Fail to act as a credible role model. Disregards the importance of personal reflection or awareness of strengths and limitations with potential risk to health or wellbeing.
Be aware if individuals in their teams are under pressure, sensitively questioning and supporting them. Help colleagues to bounce back from challenges / setbacks in an international context and rebuild their resilience and confidence.	Fail to show sensitivity to the pressures people face and to provide support. Individuals are not helped to bounce back, leaving them feeling isolated / marginalised.
Take ownership for continuous high levels of awareness for themselves and others. Apply this in a wide variety of challenging international contexts to manage themselves and support others.	Find any complex scenario difficult to manage. Unable to respond appropriately and demonstrate a positive or pragmatic reflection on the context.
Understand their individual impact on those around them, managing any difficulties as they arise and developing from this experience.	Have little awareness of their impact on those around themselves.
Demonstrate an ability to learn, adapt and change behaviours to strive for continuous improvement across their country or regional area and the wider UK Government	Rely on limited responses and an inflexible personal style regardless of the changing country or regional 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>
Anticipate economic, social, political, environmental and technological developments to keep activity relevant and targeted	Demonstrate lack of knowledge and insight into wider issues, developments and impacts related to own business area
Identify implications of Departmental and political priorities and strategy on own area to ensure plans and activities reflect these	Operate within own area without sufficient regard to how it creates value and supports the delivery of Departmental goals
Create policies, plans and service provision to meet citizens' diverse needs based on an up-to-date knowledge of needs, issues and relevant good practice	Continue to apply outdated practices which are unable to meet the diverse needs of citizens
Ensures relevant issues relating to their activity/policy area are effectively fed into strategy and big picture considerations	Miss opportunities to ensure important issues are considered by senior staff, raises small details as big picture issues
Adopt a Government-wide perspective to ensure alignment of activity and policy	Only consider the context of own business area and not those of others or of the organisation as a whole
Bring together views and perspectives of stakeholders to gain a wider picture of the landscape surrounding activities and policies	Lack clarity of or interest in gaining wider stakeholder perspectives

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>
Understand and identify the role of technology in public service delivery and policy implementation	Ignore developments in technology that could benefit public service delivery and policy implementation
Encourage a culture of innovation focused on adding value – give people space to think creatively	Take a narrow and risk averse approach to proposed new approaches by not taking or following up on ideas seriously
Effectively capture, utilise and share customer insight and views from a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure better policy and delivery	Fail to effectively capture, utilise and share customer insight appropriately in the development of policies and services
Spot warning signs of things going wrong and provide a decisive response to significant delivery challenges	Remain wedded to the course that they have set and unresponsive to the changing demands of the situation
Provide constructive challenge to senior management on change proposals which will affect own business area	Spend limited time on engaging experts and relevant individuals in developing and testing proposals, failing to pass on relevant staff feedback
Consider the cumulative impact on own business area of implementing change (culture, structure, service and morale)	Give limited time to acknowledging anxieties and overcoming cynicism

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>
Push decision making to the right level within their teams, not allow unnecessary bureaucracy and structure to suppress innovation and delivery	Involve only those in their peer group or direct reporting line in decision making
Weigh up data from various sources, recognising when to bring in experts/researchers to add to available information	Underestimate the work required to consider all the evidence needed and do not involve experts sufficiently early
Analyse and evaluate pros and cons and identify risks in order to make decisions that take account of the wider context, including diversity and sustainability	Take decisions without regard for the context, organisation risk, alignment with wider agendas or impacts (economic, social and environmental)
Draw together and present reasonable conclusions from a wide range of incomplete and complex evidence and data – able to act or decide even when details are not clear	Get confused by complexity and ambiguity and consider only simple or straightforward evidence
Identify the main issues in complex problems, clarify understanding or stakeholder expectations, to seek best option	Rely too heavily on gut instinct and provide unclear, incoherent or illogical analysis of core issues
Make difficult decisions by pragmatically weighing the complexities involved against the need to act	Make expedient decisions that offer less resistance or risk to themselves rather than decisions that are best for the business

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>
Be visible to staff and stakeholders and regularly undertake activities to engage and build trust with people involved in area of work	Only speak to staff and stakeholders in a face-to-face environment when pressured to do so
Clarify strategies and plans, giving clear sense of direction and purpose for self and team	Leave team unclear about vision and goals of their immediate business area
Stand by, promote or defend own and team's actions and decisions where needed	Leave team members to cope alone in difficult situations – provide little support for their teams
Confidently engage with stakeholders and colleagues at all levels to generate commitment to goals	Miss opportunities to transform the team, wait for others to take the lead
Lead by example, role modelling ethics, integrity, impartiality and the elimination of bias by building diverse teams and promoting a working environment that supports the Civil Service values and code	Act in ways that are at odds with their expressed beliefs
Be open and inviting of the views of others and respond despite pressure to ignore, revert or concede	Set out a course of action and apply it without listening to others or adapting where relevant

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>
Actively build and maintain a network of colleagues and contacts to achieve progress on objectives and shared interests	Only seek to build contacts in immediate work group, neglect to create a wider network beyond this
Demonstrate genuine care for staff and others – build strong interpersonal relationships	Neglect to maintain relationships during difficult times
Encourage contributions and involvement from a broad and diverse range of staff by being visible and accessible	Operate within a narrow frame of reference and avoid adopting a fuller perspective with associated complexity
Effectively manage team dynamics when working across Departmental and other boundaries	Be overly protective of own initiatives and miss opportunities to network across boundaries
Actively involve partners to deliver a business outcome through collaboration that achieves better results for citizens	Struggle to manage, or actively ignore other parties' agendas
Seek constructive outcomes in discussions, challenge assumptions but remain willing to compromise when it is beneficial to progress	Push forward initiatives on basis of personal agenda or advantage and refuse to compromise; stay wedded to one outcome

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>
Ensure that individual and organisational learning and talent development opportunities are fully exploited in order to enhance organisational capability	Ignore emerging learning and development opportunities and the sharing of that learning to benefit the organisation
Role model work-place based learning and encourage development, talent and career management for all staff	Not follow up on learning to ensure colleagues practise and apply new learning to the benefit of the organisation
Coach and support colleagues to take responsibility for their own development (through giving accountability, varied assignments and on-going feedback)	Make token efforts to coach and develop people, allow staff to de-prioritise own development
Establish and drive intra and inter team discussions to learn from experience and adapt organisational processes and plans	Stay ignorant of the experience of colleagues and take little notice of the potential learning available
Identify capability requirements needed to deliver future team objectives and manage team resources to meet these needs	Allow team capability needs to go unaddressed and fail to use development opportunities and effective performance management to maximise team capability
Prioritise and role model continuous self learning and development, including leadership, management and people skills	Place low priority on people management and development, seldom seek feedback or challenge, and prioritise professional expertise over leadership, management and people skills

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>
Work effectively with different organisations such as private sector and voluntary groups (in tandem with commercial experts) to commission and source solutions to achieve policy and organisational goals	Take a narrow view on options for delivering policy and business goals
Understand the commercial drivers that will influence a private or third sector organisation and the levers that can be used in negotiating/influencing contractual arrangements	Show little or no understanding or appreciation of the economic or commercial drivers that will influence the behaviour of suppliers
Be able to recognise and understand the commercial tools such as pricing models, open book accounting, supply chain management that commercial experts can deploy to extract value from contracts	Has little or no knowledge or understanding of the commercial tools used to extract value from contracts
Interact confidently and effectively as an intelligent and highly credible customer with counterparts from the commercial delivery organisations and commercial experts	Demonstrate low levels of knowledge or commercial understanding, and lose respect from suppliers or other commercial counterparts
Question and challenge the value being delivered through commercial arrangements with delivery partners	Overlook or ignore the detail or shortcomings in contract delivery
Motivate improved performance by suppliers, challenge any gaps between contractual commitments and actual delivery through joint working with commercial /procurement experts	Take it for granted that suppliers are delivering what is needed

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>
Understand impacts of financial position in own area and that of the organisation and use insight to curtail or support business and investment activities	Overlook the impact of decisions on the whole organisation and make recommendations without awareness of the wider financial position
Achieve the best return on investment and deliver more for less on specific budgets by managing resources and maximising the use of assets	Deliberately spend money up to the level of the available budget, ignoring the effectiveness of committing the expenditure
Balance policy aspiration and delivery, outline risk and benefits of different options to achieve value for money ensuring all submissions contain appropriate financial information	Be overly focused on minimising expenditure rather than ensuring it is well spent and will provide lasting added value
Weigh up priority and benefits of different actions and activities to consider how to achieve cost effective outcomes	Omit financial information from decision making and business planning
Work with financial processes and tools to evaluate options and ensure financial and management information are accurately reflected in business plans	Present business plans and cases that are not supported by robust or accurate financial and management information

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>
Exemplify positive customer service behaviours and promote a culture focused on ensuring customer needs are met	Take little action when customer needs are not being met
Establish how the business area compares to customer service expectations and industry best practice and identify necessary improvements in plans	Ignore external trends that impact on the business area
Make clear, pragmatic and manageable plans for service delivery using programme and project management disciplines	Allow programmes or service delivery to lose momentum and focus and have no contingencies in place
Create regular opportunities for staff and customers to help improve service quality and demonstrate a visible involvement	Make changes to service delivery with minimal involvement from others
Ensure the service offer thoroughly considers customers' needs and a broad range of available methods to meet this, including new technology where relevant	Maintain a limited or out-dated view of how to respond to customers' needs
Ensure adherence to legal and regulatory requirements in service delivery and build diversity and equality considerations into plans	Disregard non-compliance with policies, rules and legal requirements and allow unfair or discriminatory practices

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>
Get the best out of people by giving enthusiastic and encouraging messages about priorities, objectives and expectations	Lose focus, giving a confusing sense of what is important
Clarify business priorities, roles and responsibilities and secure individual and team ownership	Take the credit for delivery of outcomes without acknowledging the contribution of their teams
Adopt clear processes and standards for managing performance at all levels	Fail to set standards for timeliness and quality of monitoring in their own area of responsibility
Act as a role model in supporting and energising teams to build confidence in their ability to deliver outcomes	Overly focus on task delivery at expense of motivating and building capability to perform
Maintain effective performance in difficult and challenging circumstances, encouraging others to do the same	Fail to take a constructive approach to adversity, resorting quickly to blaming others for shortcomings
Review, challenge and adjust performance levels to ensure quality outcomes are delivered on time, rewarding success	Allow performance to drop without challenging quickly and responsively - continually focus on the negatives