Band A: 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 People who are effective are likely to…	Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…
Takes ownership of international issues for which responsible and gather relevant information from a range of sources to inform work.	Show little interest in their responsibilities, the country or region where they are working, or its people.
Develop useful contacts to help get the job done.	Show little interest in identifying and developing the right contacts.
Listen to others' views and express own views clearly and constructively.	Not listen to others and not explain things so others can easily understand.
Have a working knowledge of country context and local sensitivities. Be interested in learning languages.	Show little interest in the country, region, language (where appropriate) or its people.

2. Demonstrating Resilience

Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…	Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…
Have a high level of self-awareness and of the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others, their strengths and limitations and use this to ensure they act appropriately in the work environment.	Fail to acknowledge their personal impact or understand their limitations. This affects their ability to work and appropriate behaviours.
Consider how they manage themselves through challenges or setbacks in an international context, and develop as a result, bouncing back. Ask for support when needed.	Fail to support their team to develop and become more self-aware. Lack awareness of their impact on others.
Manage themselves well in challenging international scenarios and adapt to the different circumstances that arise.	Pay little attention to changing scenarios. Fail to adjust as required.

3. Seeing the Big Picture

Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…	Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…
Gather information from a range of relevant sources inside and outside their Department to inform own work	Take actions/decisions without regard to the bigger picture
Understand what is required of them in their role and how this contributes to team and Departmental priorities	Show little interest in the work of the Department, not appreciating they have a role in meeting priorities
Consider how their own job links with and impacts on colleagues and others in partner organisations	Work on own tasks in isolation showing little interest in the wider context and relevant developments outside their immediate area

4. Changing and Improving

Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…	Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…
Review working practices and come up with ideas to improve the way things are done	Remain attached to outdated procedures and technologies
Learn new procedures, seek to exploit new technologies and help colleagues to do the same	Adopt new processes without reporting difficulties that occur
Co-operate with and be open to the possibilities of change and consider ways to implement and adapt to change in own work role	Unwilling to consider how change could help in own role
Be constructive in raising issues with managers about implemented changes and the impact these are having on the service	Be resistant to listening to ideas or plans for change, showing little interest in the reasons for change and how they can adapt their behaviour to thrive in the new environment
Respond effectively to emergencies	Resistant to sudden changes to usual work routine

5. Making Effective Decisions

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	Ineffective Behaviour *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Make and record effective decisions following the appropriate decision making criteria, framework or guidance	Compromise the consistency and quality of decision making
Ask questions when unsure what to do	Fail to research or use relevant information or support to carry out tasks
Undertake appropriate analysis to support decisions or recommendations	Make decisions or recommendations without the evidence to back them up
Investigate and respond to gaps, errors and irregularities in information	Overlook anomalies in evidence presented
Speak up to clarify decisions and query these constructively	Miss opportunities to take part in constructive conversations about decisions made
Think through the implications of own decisions before confirming how to approach a problem/issue	Give limited consideration to the impact of their decisions

6. Leading and Communicating

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	Ineffective Behaviour *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Put forward their own views in a clear and constructive manner, choosing an appropriate communication method, e.g. email/ telephone/ face to face	Miss opportunities to contribute positively to discussions about the organisation or team
Act in a fair and respectful way in dealing with others	Show bias or a lack of respect and treat some groups more favourably than others
Write clearly in plain simple language and check work for spelling and grammar, learning from previous inaccuracies	Make little effort to ensure they express themselves in an effective manner that others can easily understand
Ask open questions to appreciate others' point of view	Withhold work information and refuse to share knowledge that would help others do a better job

7. Collaborating and Partnering

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	Ineffective Behaviour *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Proactively contribute to the work of the whole team	Focus on own objectives at the expense of supporting colleagues
Get to know fellow team members/colleagues and understand their viewpoints and preferences	Is overly critical and blaming of people who have different working styles or development needs
Seek help when needed in order to complete own work effectively	Miss opportunities to generate better outcomes for the customer through collaboration with others
Be open to taking on different roles	Assume specific, unvarying role responsibilities
Try to see issues from others' perspectives and check understanding	Look at issues from own viewpoint only
Listen to the views of others and show sensitivity towards others	Not treat all colleagues fairly, equitably or with respect

8. Building Capability for All

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	Ineffective Behaviour *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Identify own skills, knowledge and behaviour gaps to inform own development plan and discuss these with the line manager	Take a passive approach to personal development, mostly relying on others to identify learning points or dismissing constructive feedback
Recognise and take time to achieve own learning and development objectives	Lack interest in personal development, decline all opportunities to learn e.g. through attending programmes or engaging in work-place learning
Find ways to learn and personally improve in the completion of day-to-day tasks	Maintain a rigid view of daily tasks, missing opportunities to learn or to improve how they do things
Improve own performance by taking on board feedback from colleagues from different backgrounds	Ignore or undervalue the contributions and views of others from different backgrounds
Share learning with team and colleagues; contribute to the team's shared learning and understanding	Keep knowledge and expertise to themselves rather than share for the benefit of the whole team
React constructively to developmental feedback and make changes as a result	Do little to follow through on constructive developmental feedback, ignore or dismiss its value

9. Achieving Commercial Outcomes

Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…	Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…
Understand the relevant terms and conditions, including deliverables of relevant contracts	Demonstrate little understanding of what suppliers are obliged to deliver, how or by when
Be aware of and comply with Departmental procurement processes and know when to access commercial expertise	Not recognise or understand Departmental procurement procedures
Check suppliers and partners are providing relevant and timely data to monitor contracts	Allow inaccurate or late records
Learn about customers and suppliers needs	Take no steps to learn who their suppliers and customers are or to understand their interests and concerns

10. Delivering Value for Money

Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…	Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…
Challenge others appropriately where they see wastage	Be careless or wasteful with resources or see where resources are being wasted but not raise this with team or manager
Be careful with all types of resource (e.g. money, time, materials, fuel, energy) that they use	Frequently choose convenience over cost effectiveness
Keep track of spend and make sure work is approved and signed off as necessary	Not follow appropriate control or authorisation processes for work, services or resource use
Handle numbers confidently, collate information ensuring accuracy of financial and performance data	Produce inaccurate financial and performance data with errors or omissions
Maintain recognised financial procedures and practices	Cut corners and not keep accurate financial records

11. Managing a Quality Service

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	**Ineffective Behaviour** *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Communicate in a way that meets and anticipates the customer's requirements and gives a favourable impression of the Civil Service	Communicate with customers in an unprepared way
Actively seek information from customers to understand their needs and expectations	Act without thinking through the necessary steps and disregard the customer's circumstances
Act to prevent problems, reporting issues where necessary	Allow service levels to drop or problems to occur before reporting
Gain the knowledge needed to follow the relevant legislation, policies, procedures and rules that apply to the job	Miss opportunities to learn or find out about relevant guidance and rules
Encourage customers to access relevant information or support that will help them understand and use services more effectively	Keep customers in the dark about relevant and useful information or partners
Take ownership of issues, focus on providing the right solution and keep customers and delivery partners up to date with progress	Treat people unfairly or make unrealistic commitments

12. Delivering at Pace

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	**Ineffective Behaviour** *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Work in an organised manner using own knowledge and expertise to deliver on time and to standard	Show little interest in own work or in getting the job done properly
Work with energy and pace to get the job done	Wait to be told what to do and rely on others to sort out problems
Take responsibility for the quality of own work and keep manager informed of how the work is progressing	Ignore own part in ensuring their team can deliver and avoid supporting colleagues to get the job done even when the need is clear
Remain focused on delivery	Be easily discouraged or distracted
Maintain consistent performance	Give up quickly when things do not go smoothly
Participate in quality assurance of products or services	Miss the opportunity to suggest improvements through quality assurance