SMS2-4: 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.

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…*
Represent and actively promote, protect and balance the UK's national interest at the highest international levels. Offer a visible and effective presence at times of crisis.	Overlook or misjudge opportunities and risks. Fail to ensure the UK presence is felt or view heard.
Build and maintain strong contact networks and relationships at the highest international levels. Facilitate rapid access to information and leverage through networks at home and internationally, including the UN, EU and other multilateral organisations	Only engage or succeed with a narrow range of contacts. Lack influence with contacts or be too cautious in using them to achieve outcomes. Fail to differentiate between UK and personal interests.
Quickly understand the global context and local sensitivities. Lead a culture which encourages others to develop this knowledge. When appropriate, can use a language/s to strengthen contacts and achieve UK interests. More widely promote the learning of languages.	Lack knowledge of key elements in the international landscape so impairing judgement and ability to influence. Where appropriate, be reluctant to develop appropriate language skills to increase impact. Fails to promote the learning of languages.
Read the situation in different countries and regions, cross referencing information to make good judgements, influence contacts and build tactical and strategic alliances. Anticipate actions and responses of countries and non-state actors.	Fail to understand the political climate in a country or fail to alert HMG to an issue. Unable to anticipate responses and calculate level of risk in complex situations.
Communicate and negotiate persuasively and confidently in a range of situations, tailoring messages to the international and local context. Aware of how their behaviour can be perceived by others in different international environments.	Appear unconvincing or insincere, overly dominant or diffident. Lack depth or impact or fail to tailor messages.
Lead and inspire multi-disciplinary and diverse teams in challenging and complex environments. Adapt and embed UK Government values balancing tensions between the global, UK and local context.	Unable to adapt management approach to manage very diverse teams. Fail to embed UK government values or manage tensions.

2. Demonstrating Resilience

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	Ineffective Behaviour *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Learn, innovate and adapt confidently in many different challenging environments around the world with high profile leadership of exceptionally complex issues.	Fail to recognise the wider requirements of the UK Government, while remaining focused only on their organisation or interests. Disengaged from wider support networks both professionally and personally.
Develop skills to deal with acute crises and setbacks in an international context. Prepare staff in advance where possible and inspire them to respond calmly and efficiently in demanding and stressful circumstances.	Fail to prepare staff for crises and setbacks in an international context and fail to inspire a calm and efficient response.
Acknowledge that individuals and teams have setbacks in international contexts. Show dependable leadership under pressure and demonstrate that part of leading a resilient culture is enabling and supporting staff to bounce back and rebuild their resilience and confidence.	Push teams or individuals beyond their limitations, not recognising or managing signs of overload. Fail to recognise the impact of setbacks or challenges or provide support.
Shape strategy on, actively lead, promote and demonstrate the desired culture of resilience in an international context. Be self-aware and aware of the impact of others.	Inflame rather than calm a situation; agitate others and fail to support or encourage them. Unaware of their, or others', personal impact in this regard.

3. Seeing the Big Picture

Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…	Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…
Develop an in-depth insight into the dynamics and issues surrounding the Department and Government, including political, economic, social, environmental and technological impacts	Focus on short term concerns, neglect long-term thinking about evolving and future issues and considerations for the Civil Service and Department
Clarify and shape the Department's role and purpose in delivering Civil Service priorities for the public and economic good	Show limited insight into Government expectations of the Department in generating value and growth in the UK
Understand where the Department sits within and aligns across the Civil Service	Focus on own immediate area of concern and not see interconnections across Civil Service
Articulate the Department's business model and help people see their role within it	Lack clarity about own role and that of staff in delivering the work of the Department
Create clear long-term strategies focused on adding value to the citizen and making real, lasting change beyond the Civil Service	Focus primarily on continuing historical activities based on short term priorities not linked to clear value and delivery for the citizen and the economy
Fully engage with and utilise Non Executive Directors wider experience and knowledge to support strategic decision making	Operate independently, without reference to the wider system of knowledge and experience around them

4. Changing and Improving

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to...*	Ineffective Behaviour *People who are less effective are likely to...*
Challenge bureaucratic decision making, resourcing structures and processes across the Department and Civil Service to create a lean, flat and effective organisation.	Create/tolerate bureaucracies and inefficient ways of working which hinder effectiveness
Seek out opportunities for innovation and have the courage to take risks and make step changes to how things are done	Argue to retain the status quo, support current approaches, activities and processes without challenge, avoiding innovations and risks
Rethink systems and partnership approaches to simplify the Department and Civil Service	Continue with ineffective systems and partnership approaches
Create a culture of flexibility and responsiveness, mobilising the Department to respond swiftly to changing priorities	Tolerate colleagues operating in rigid, bureaucratic ways
Challenge the status quo and accepted assumptions at the highest levels across the Civil Service	Support incremental improvements within isolated areas rather than any fundamental shifts in approach
Consider fully the impact of change on organisation culture, wider Government structures and economic growth	Adopt a piecemeal approach to change management, focusing on tasks at the expense of culture and morale

5. Making Effective Decisions	
Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	**Ineffective Behaviour** *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Navigate and balance a range of political, national and international pressures to shape the Department's strategy and priorities	Omit consideration of sustainable long-term development in strategy and give limited consideration to social, environmental or economic factors in analysis
Swiftly analyse complex and ambiguous data to provide clarity of thinking to the Department	Lack confidence in making decisions when the situation is unclear and constantly call for more information
Involve the right stakeholders and partners in making recommendations or decisions early on and continue to engage them	Provide recommendations or decisions without full and proper consultation
Identify and evaluate risks and options and develop Department wide strategies to manage and mitigate	Provide advice without full evaluation of risk, scenarios and options
Make unpopular decisions and defend them at the highest level when required	Constantly change decisions based on new opinions, information or challenge
Give unbiased advice to Ministers based on robust analysis, not just what is welcomed	Opt to give advice which the Minister/stakeholder wants to hear and ignore contrary evidence

6. Leading and Communicating

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	Ineffective Behaviour *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Actively develop and protect the reputation of the Department and the Civil Service – create a sense of pride	Overlook opportunities to champion achievements of employees in the Department and the Civil Service
Shape, promote and exemplify desired Departmental and the Civil Service values and culture	Act in ways which are at odds with desired culture and values – damages the Civil Service leadership reputation internally and externally
Be highly articulate and credible at the most senior levels across and outside the Civil Service, consistently delivering inspiring, engaging and meaningful messages about the future direction	Lack confidence or impact at high levels, struggle with media spotlight, miss opportunities to communicate messages or give a confused or uninspiring narrative about what's important
Engage positively in debate and seek to resolve issues with peers across the Civil Service	Operate independently, rarely asking for input from senior colleagues and communicating infrequently
Demonstrate insight into the link between the moral and business case for equality and diversity and achieving organisational priorities	Disregard the link between the moral and business case for diverse and sustainable outcomes
Negotiate with and influence external partners, stakeholders and customers successfully at the highest levels	Lack insight into the different motivations and agendas of the variety of stakeholders

7. Collaborating and Partnering

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	Ineffective Behaviour *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Build a strong network of collaborative relationships and partnerships across the Civil Service, at the highest levels in Government and beyond (UK, EU and globally) to help Departmental and wider Civil Service objectives	Restrict collaboration to existing relationships, give limited attention to the importance of building networks
Be a full partner on the Board and act for the wider good of the Civil Service	Encourage own Department to focus on its pressures and agenda at the expense of wider collaboration
Drive a diverse and collaborative working culture which encourages transparency and open communication	Create and allow cliques and narrow ways of working within and across functions, promoting a 'knowledge is power' culture
Confront issues and challenge assumptions at the highest levels with delivery partners, stakeholders and clients in an assertive yet constructive way	Not involve partners and stakeholders early on in the development of policies, services and delivery options
Work effectively with Non Executive Directors to bring together political and official leadership to improve governance at board level	Fail to utilise the experience and input offered by Non Executive Directors

8. Building Capability for All

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	Ineffective Behaviour *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Champion the strategic importance of people, talent management and development issues, building a strong culture of continuous learning and knowledge sharing	Allow organisational learning to be lost and fail to create a climate where colleagues can apply new learning relevant to the business
Operate with an acute awareness of inclusiveness, equality and diversity and build capability strategies to support careers for all employees	Show little ability or commitment to enabling equal opportunities for people to realise their aspirations
Develop and maintain organisational commitment to problem solving, empowering people to experiment and achieve organisational results together	Allow a sense that problem solving is only for a few individuals and only at certain times
Be renowned as an effective coach and sounding board for senior people	Invest little personal time to develop talent and future leaders
Take a strategic perspective to identifying the capability needs of the Department and identifying and nurturing future leaders	Adopt a short term perspective to people and talent management issues – struggle to assess long-term and evolving people requirements for the Department
Role model continuous learning and self development, evaluating own effectiveness and growth and planning next learning steps accordingly	Be resistant to or dismissive of personal feedback and see personal growth as not relevant at their level

9. Achieving Commercial Outcomes

Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	**Ineffective Behaviour** *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Role model strong leadership, influence and accountability for the achievement of commercial outcomes relevant to organisational goals	Show little evidence of leadership and accountability for delivering commercial outcomes
Draw on insights about the current and future dynamics in the economy to seize opportunities to stimulate economic growth	Pay little regard to social needs or protecting and enhancing the resources required to sustain economic growth
Seek out and facilitate the introduction of innovative business models, systems and approaches to deliver greater commerciality and sustainability	Allow ineffective business models or systems to continue, leading to a clear waste of money or resource
Commission strategic commercial relationships with delivery partners using strong influencing skills	Pay little attention to the delivery of outcomes and benefits from strategic commercial relationships
Ensure that all staff have appropriate levels of commercial awareness while creating and embedding an organisational culture that supports this	Do little to ensure that staff are equipped to consider commercial issues in shaping and developing policy and/or operational services
Ensure that commercial considerations and risks are fully considered in policy and implementation decision making, formation and delivery	Show little evidence of commercial understanding when shaping policies with senior stakeholders

10. Delivering Value for Money

Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…	Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…
Drive and deliver a culture that emphasises continuous improvement, efficiency and value for money	Sign off spending with insufficient challenge or scrutiny
Maintain a clear focus on maximising resource efficiency, continually questioning the value of activities against strategic priorities	Allow non-core activities to divert funds and make decisions not in the best long-term financial interest of the Department
Be fluent at interpreting a wide range of financial and performance information and use this to determine policy and strategy delivery	Develop policy or strategy with insufficient exploration and consideration of financial or management information
Maintain good financial and budgetary discipline by ensuring accountability for financial controls and systems	Fail to deliver outcomes or strategy by significantly under or over-spending against agreed plans
Demonstrate transparency both in terms of decisions made around financial choices and money spent	Fail to demonstrate a full consideration of the financial aspects of a business decision and ignore the need for transparency and audit

11. Managing a Quality Service

Effective Behaviour People who are effective are likely to…	Ineffective Behaviour People who are less effective are likely to…
Ensure an in-depth and evolving understanding of the broad range of customer requirements is embedded in the Department	Allow the Department to operate with only superficial understanding of the customer/end user requirements
Determine and drive customer service outcomes at a broad strategic level and work across Government to deliver best quality service to customers	Give little attention to defining the customer requirement in setting strategic priorities
Ensure all parts of the delivery chain fully understand the required outcomes for the customer and articulate the impact of poor service on the Department's reputation to all involved	Give insufficient clarity around customer needs to the delivery partners and lose sight of which partner is responsible for delivery
Create a culture of working with and through delivery partners to achieve outcomes, establish and negotiate service levels and deliverables	Not give sufficient attention to managing customer expectations and outcomes at the highest levels
Define and integrate clear structures, systems and resources required across the Department to promote efficient service delivery	Establish unrealistic or confusing priorities and strategies at the highest level, leading to inefficiencies in service delivery

12. Delivering at Pace	
Effective Behaviour *People who are effective are likely to…*	**Ineffective Behaviour** *People who are less effective are likely to…*
Set, maintain and ensure a clear direction for the Department, with highly focused priorities and project outcomes	Display imprecision and lack of purpose about direction and focus of the Department
Retain accountability for achieving strategic priorities and outcomes	Allow the Department's focus to drift away from critical priorities and do not measure performance against them
Swiftly re-focus the Department on new priorities as changing situations dictate	Stick to strategy even when it is superseded by events which necessitate a change
Drive a performance culture across the Department and achieve results through others, resolutely holding them accountable for outcomes	Allow the Department to get away with poor results and inaction
Encourage, support and coach individuals and teams across the Department to energise delivery	Expect people to perform with enthusiasm without giving support and encouragement
Enable the organisation to remain focussed on core priorities irrespective of external challenges	Readily allow problems or external challenges to distract the Department from its core priorities

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