our competency framework

A competency describes “an ability based on behaviour” that leads to good performance. So our competency framework describes the behaviours we need from people in doing their job.

This framework applies across the ombudsman. It supports our aims and guiding principles – our service is for everyone and we aim to deal with everyone fairly, reasonably, quickly and informally.

There are ten competencies in all, though not all are relevant to all roles here. You’ll see that each competency has a definition. And each competency has up to five levels – the higher the level, the more developed the competency. Some competencies have just three or four levels.

We’ve expanded the definition of each competency to explain what each level of the competency means. And we show how each level builds on the levels below, so you can see what you need to do to move from eg level two “adaptability” to level three.

In this way, this framework will help you and your manager to identify your areas of strength as well as the opportunities for your future development.

We’ve also described ineffective behaviours within each competency, to help you and your manager identify development areas, which can be fed into development planning.
the competencies – descriptions and levels

adaptable
Is flexible and able to adapt to changing circumstances, situations and working practices. Innovates and looks for new ways of doing things. Stays resilient under pressure.


2. Identifies and initiates change and introduces new working practices to meet the needs of the organisation. Encourages others to accept change. Views change as an opportunity.

3. Thinks laterally to identify new approaches. Generates enthusiasm. Models behaviour and supports organisational change. Helps others understand the drivers and benefits of change. Contributes ideas and resources to help achieve desired change.

4. Creates a climate that encourages new ideas and continuous improvement. Projects an innovative style and attitude towards risk-taking, but with a common sense approach. Champions change to achieve desired result. Constructively confronts opposition to change. Role models desired behaviour associated with the change.

ineffective behaviours
Resists change, inflexible. Unable to adapt to new ways of doing things or changing priorities. Doesn’t look to improve. Accepts the way things are.

problem solving and decision making
Gathers and analyses information. Uses thinking skills to break problems down to component parts. Develops solutions to problems or situations. Makes decisions based on sound judgement with lasting positive impact.

1. Conducts simple analysis of straightforward problems. Recognises problems, gathers information, asks questions to check assumptions and weighs up alternative options to make reasoned judgement. Approaches problems in a practical way. Makes decisions within well defined parameters. Knows when to escalate problems.

2. Analyses and evaluates information from a variety of sources. Shows understanding and sensitivity to issues outside immediate area of responsibility. Identifies patterns, trends and issues to be addressed. Makes decisions on available information even when not 100% complete. Assesses the benefits and consequences of actions on others.

3. Able to draw conclusions from complex or ambiguous information. Demonstrates strong analysis skills. Identifies root causes of problem. Considers pros and cons of commercial, financial and other organisational factors when analysing issues and coming to a conclusion. Makes well judged decisions and reassess decisions as appropriate. Accepts responsibility for decision and explains reasons behind it.

4. Uses external benchmarking across industry and organisation. Uses financial and non-financial information in decision making. Able to create a new perspective to take the organisation forward. Makes bold, significant decisions which have measurable and far reaching impact on the organisation. Manages difficult or unpopular decisions honestly, firmly and objectively. Takes decisive action in a crisis and is able to deal with conflict and challenge. Makes decisions consistent with the long-term vision and strategic plan.
### ineffective behaviours

Focuses on problems rather than solutions. Gets bogged down in detail and is unable to see main points. Doesn’t analyse information. Doesn’t apply knowledge gained from previous situations. Shows poor judgement. Fails to consider wider implications of decisions. Makes snap decisions without obtaining relevant information. Shies away from difficult decisions.

### leadership

Provides vision. Inspires and motivates others to achieve peak performance in support of organisational goals. Manages resources. Willing to challenge. Takes ownership of actions.

1. Provides clear direction. Monitors and reviews staff performance. Coaches and provides development opportunities for staff. Takes action to address performance and conduct issues. Delegates challenging and interesting work.

2. Understands the vision of the organisation. Considers implications of actions beyond own area of responsibility. Able to develop strategy for function and turn into tangible deliverables. Uses full range of leadership styles to maintain focus, have goals achieved, and address individuals' development needs. Mentors and coaches staff, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own development. Takes informed calculated risks. Takes personal accountability. Secures and manages necessary resources for team. Creates a clear future for their own team within the vision of the organisation, translating organisational language into language which works for their specific teams.

3. Creates the vision for the organisation. Inspires passion, ownership and commitment to the organisation’s values and objectives. Takes a broad overview and focuses on wider aspects, ie political context, commercial reality. Uses breadth of business knowledge to move organisation forward. Able to manage performance across boundaries – setting clear, challenging targets, allocating responsibility and authority. Encourages others to seek responsibility and ownership. Negotiates for, and manages, the using of resources across a range of areas, which may have conflicting priorities.

### ineffective behaviours

Doesn’t explain vision. Doesn’t set objectives. Leaves staff unclear about expectations and role in the organisation. Doesn’t give enough guidance and direction to team. Is negative about organisation’s aims. Reluctant to share information or explain decisions. Doesn’t role model the organisation’s values. Creates a climate of fear or mistrust in team. Doesn’t coach. Fails to support staff development. Doesn’t secure adequate resources. Fails to control budgets. Doesn’t manage conflict.

### communication

Able to clearly deliver a message. Communicates effectively in informal and formal settings. Makes effective presentations and composes clear, concise written communication.

1. Communicates clearly and confidently verbally and in writing. Listens and shares information.

2. Anticipates information needs of others. Clarifies what people say and hear to ensure understanding. Able to alter style to suit needs of audience. Consults with colleagues about new issues and ideas. Sees things from different perspectives and is able to communicate and empathise with different view points. Actively listens to input of others.

3. Promotes communication from others. Sensitive to others’ communication needs. Visible and approachable. Makes clear, concise, effective presentations. Runs effective meetings. Anticipates possible reactions to own communications and plans to manage these. Comfortable with a variety of communication approaches depending on the audience and the situation.
4. Fosters an environment that encourages open, effective expression of ideas and opinions. Makes presentations externally. Manages communication processes to ensure others have access to timely, high quality information. Presents complex issues clearly. Makes a strong and positive impression on others, acting as an ambassador for the organisation.

ineffective behaviours
Communication style difficult to understand or too detailed. Uses too much jargon. Doesn’t listen. Hides behind email to avoid talking. Lacks presence when presenting. Doesn’t prepare for meetings. Allows meetings to run in unstructured way.

customer focus and quality
Understands, anticipates and recognises different customer needs both internal and external. Responds effectively and delivers excellent customer service consistently. Looks for opportunities to improve customer experience and maintains high quality in all interactions with customers

1. Takes personal responsibility for listening to internal and external customers’ needs and ensuring customers are responded to promptly, courteously and professionally. Produces high quality work. Reacts openly to feedback. Handles angry or upset customers calmly.

2. Puts in extra effort to identify and address customers’ needs. Passes on good practice to others. Uses feedback to improve customer service. Encourages others to produce high quality work.

3. Sets, communicates and delivers high quality standards across all aspects of quality – ie customer service, professional standards and administration. Demands high quality from others. Looks for ways to continuously improve quality and customer service standards. Provides outstanding service to internal and external customers.

4. Can explain clearly why quality is core to the organisation and why quality is multi-faceted. Champions the design and delivery of initiatives to improve the organisation’s service levels, efficiency and productivity. Monitors the success of these. Proactively anticipates customer needs, improving the organisation’s reputation for excellent customer service. Instils a culture that exceeds customer expectations. Builds relationships with external organisations, to consider service provision from all users’ perspectives.

ineffective behaviours
Doesn’t take time to understand customer issues. Doesn’t follow up on actions to resolve complaints – eg calling back customers as agreed. Is unhelpful with customers. Handles conflict negatively. Conveys disappointing news insensitively. Doesn’t recognise different customer needs. Resists flexing approach to meet non-standard needs. Gives inconsistent quality of service to customers.

impact and influence
Persuades, convinces and influences others to achieve desired outcome. Is aware of own impact on others and adapts to different circumstances.

1. Uses information/facts available presenting them in a way which aids understanding. Gives and receives constructive feedback.

2. Uses a range of tactics to persuade others. Able to adapt style in response to immediate feedback or to reflect situation or individuals. Gains buy-in from individuals to be persuaded. Challenges inappropriate behaviour.

3. Plans ahead to gain an understanding of the interests/concerns/needs of the people to be persuaded or influenced; uses this to select or identify the most appropriate tactics to achieve the objectives. Aligns people and teams towards a common goal. Builds and uses network
contacts/relationships with key stakeholders effectively. Works towards answers that are best for all.

4. Develops influencing strategies which incorporate the perspective of others without losing sight of own objectives. Conveys arguments in a compelling way. Able to negotiate answers that work for all, in seemingly impossible situations. Seen internally and externally as clearly representing the best of the ombudsman service.

ineffective behaviours
Face to face communication is one way, unclear or non-persuasive. Communication fails to influence. Isn’t able to adapt approach in response to others’ input. Isn’t aware of impact of own behaviour on others. Doesn’t adapt approach in different situations. Doesn’t accept feedback from others. Doesn’t network.

planning and organisation
Works in an orderly and methodical fashion. Able to organise and prioritise tasks effectively. Uses planning skills to accomplish goals.

1. Plans and organises own work, paying attention to meeting deadlines. Maintains composure under pressure.

2. Creates plans to manage parallel activities. Juggles resources to meet changing priorities. Keeps challenging tasks in perspective.

3. Uses initiative to act without direction. Develops and uses plans for self and others, clearly showing what has to be done. Manages and prioritises multiple tasks. Keeps informed about new developments and uses information to aid planning. Uses project management techniques.


5. Creates strategic business plans in line with the organisation’s vision and values. Balances short term objectives against longer-term strategic goals. Adapts plans to manage business risk. Creates contingency plans. Fosters an environment where robust planning is encouraged.

ineffective behaviours

professional expertise
Demonstrates strong technical expertise and professional standards. Manages own behaviour and performance through self-awareness and high personal standards. Maintains resilience under pressure. Open to feedback. Displays integrity and actively demonstrates the organisation’s values.

1. Demonstrates professional competence in specialist area. Actively seeks to develop skills in area of expertise. Learns quickly. Shares knowledge and expertise willingly. Solicits feedback and acts on it. Demonstrates high level of personal integrity. Provides mentoring/technical support to peers and new staff.

2. Regarded as specialist and advises in specialist areas. Stays up to date with major trends and developments in field of expertise. Willing to be challenged, and to challenge others, to allow robust debate. Applies professional understanding to organise and prioritise tasks. Promotes
ethical values, integrity, respect and accountability.

3. Develops professional mastery in specialist area. Develops policy and provides expert input and direction for specialist area. Understands impact of own area of expertise on organisation as a whole. Demonstrates tenacity in the face of resistance and is prepared to remove necessary obstacles preventing the achievement of excellence.

4. Creates policy and builds on external research in specialist area. Looks broadly for best practice and new opportunities in the field to inform new approaches and to develop fresh ideas.

**ineffective behaviours**

Doesn’t keep up to date with own specialism. Makes little attempt to keep abreast of issues affecting area of work. Doesn’t recognise own limitations. Doesn’t share knowledge. Acts in a way that does not reflect organisation’s values. Is indiscreet and negative about organisation to staff/external parties. Doesn’t cope with pressure. Is disinterested in new learning. Fails to see need to develop.

**results focus**

Inner drive to do things better, meet and exceed goals and keep improving things. Works with energy and enthusiasm to deliver high quality results. Pays attention to detail.

1. Works to meet objectives set for self and/or team, and delivers results. Responds to changes to priorities. Doesn’t accept substandard work. Pays attention to detail.


3. Identifies and achieves significant improvement in the performance of own business area. Keeps others focused despite competing issues and distractions – eg creates action plans to ensure implementation and delivers.

4. Identifies and achieves significant improvement in the performance of the organisation.

**ineffective behaviours**

Shows little concern for quality of work. Doesn’t balance need for quantity, quality and consistency. Requires close supervision. Gives up easily. Happy to leave things the way they are. Doesn’t pay attention to detail. Doesn’t share best practice. Isn’t motivated to achieve results.

**building relationships**

Works cooperatively, respectfully and in an integrated way with colleagues, other departments and external parties. Able to build and maintain networks of contacts inside and outside the organisation.

1. Responds positively to requests for cooperation/assistance from colleagues/customers. Uses established contacts and networks. Demonstrates commitment to team goals and targets. Provides support to peers and new staff on processes and systems.

2. Encourages team cooperation by personally taking action (regardless of position in team) to understand roles, concerns, workloads of all involved in team, and to build on and improve team cooperation, efficiency and effectiveness. Develops a range of contacts useful in achieving work related goals.

3. Fosters team working in others. Acts as a role model. Coaches and mentors and encourages others to do so. Works to create strong relationships with colleagues in and outside own area of responsibility, to support delivery of business goals. Encourages interaction, involvement and knowledge sharing across team, organisation and wider context.
4. Creates networks and cross-functional teams to share information, improve effectiveness and achieve results which add value beyond immediate responsibilities. Develops a network of business contacts across all key areas and levels. Manages complex customer and stakeholder issues sensitively.

**ineffective behaviours**

Doesn’t network or proactively build relationships. Doesn’t cooperate or share information with other team members. Criticises rather than helps colleagues. Has an insular approach and avoids contributing to own or wider teams. Sees asking for help as sign of weakness. Doesn’t treat colleagues/external contacts with respect and courtesy.

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**our values**

**1. we do the right thing**

- we’re brave and have the confidence to make difficult decisions
- we have no vested interests
- we behave fairly, ethically, openly and with integrity
- where things are wrong, we put them right

**you demonstrate this value when you …**

Escalate problems including sensitive issues or those that impact others. Act impartially in your day to day work. Share information and work experience freely with others. Tackle mistakes positively and volunteer to share lessons learned from mistakes. Challenge inappropriate behaviour you see or hear. Make difficult decisions when you have to.

**as a manager you’ll also be able to show that …**

You accept responsibility for difficult decisions and explain the reasons behind them. You encourage open honest dialogue as normal practice with your team and colleagues. You challenge unfair practices in your area of work and find ways to redress them.

**as a senior manager you’ll also be able to demonstrate this value by …**

Honest, firm and objective management of difficult or unpopular decisions. Developing relationships of trust with external stakeholders. Taking action promptly to address issues escalated to you. Challenging unfair practices within the organisation and finding ways to change them.

**strongly related competencies**

Problem solving and decision making
Results focus

**behaviours that don’t support this value**

Keeping knowledge to yourself. Ignoring difficult situations that need you to act or contribute to their resolution. Not being prepared to openly discuss issues or mistakes that need to be resolved. Avoiding making difficult or unpopular decisions. Demonstrating a lack of integrity. Not taking a balanced fair approach.

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2. we treat our customers well and respect their needs

- we recognise and handle sensitively the impact we can have on businesses, consumers and colleagues
- we’re driven by people not process
- we make ourselves easy to use and accessible
you demonstrate this value when you ...
Make a positive effort to be accessible to your colleagues. Show that you're aware of the impact of your behaviour on others. Adjust to different people and situations – eg presenting information honestly and sensitively. Find ways to make processes or systems easier to use. Encourage others to focus on customer service.

as a manager you'll also be able to show that ...
You support your team when they're managing sensitive situations – eg upset or angry customers. You address issues with your team if their behaviour isn't aligned with our values.

as a senior manager you'll have the opportunity to demonstrate this value when you ...
Manage complex customer and stakeholder issues sensitively. Encourage the development of new ways to improve service to customers and stakeholders. Champion ideas from your teams.

strongly related competencies
Customer service and quality

behaviours that don't support this value
Not making an effort to understand your impact on others. Focusing on process alone, without considering customers and/or colleagues. Not addressing issues relating to behaviour in your team. Not volunteering your time to be available to colleagues. Avoiding customer contact.

3. we do what we say we'll do
- we use each other's skills and work together for common goals
- we take real pride in what we do
- we take individual responsibility for sorting issues

you demonstrate this value when you ...
Are willing to work with others to achieve goals. Keep promises you make on delivery of work. Find ways to fix problems to meet agreed quality standards and timelines. Volunteer to resolve issues. Flag issues in time to find a solution. Accept responsibility for your work.

as a manager you’ll also be able show that ...
You encourage others to seek responsibility and ownership for their work. Align people and teams towards a common goal. Take accountability for your team. You are open about delays or change so people know what is happening.

as a senior manager you'll also be able to demonstrate this value by ...
Encouraging interaction, involvement and knowledge sharing across teams, the organisation and externally. Actively taking responsibility for decisions and actions. Supporting your colleagues publicly. Acting and being recognised as a positive advocate of the ombudsman service internally and externally.

strongly related competencies
Building relationships
Influence and impact
Leadership

behaviours that don't support this value
Allowing substandard work. Not cooperating with your colleagues. Being indiscrete and/or negative about the organisation to staff or external parties. Not meeting deadlines. Not following up on
promises to colleagues/customers.

### 4. we're inquisitive and build everyone’s knowledge

- we get to the heart of the issue
- we use our individual judgement but our collective knowledge
- we grow our knowledge and share it with others

**you demonstrate this value when you …**

Share information and knowledge with others. Find ways to increase your own knowledge. Take the time to find out root causes of issues before taking action. Encourage others to share and develop knowledge.

**as a manager you’ll also be able show that …**

Your own team share their knowledge and you encourage sharing across teams. You hold team surgeries or their equivalent to support knowledge sharing. You plan time to actively share your knowledge and experience with others. You find ways to improve our knowledge sharing processes. You develop your team’s ability to assess root causes of issues.

**as a senior manager you’ll also be able to demonstrate this value by …**

Encouraging an environment of expertise, knowledge development and sharing. Championing ideas to develop knowledge sharing.

**strongly related competencies**

Professional expertise

**behaviours that don’t support this value**

A reluctance to share expertise or knowledge. Not making time to share knowledge. Not taking interest in your personal development. Not keeping up to date with new information and updates.