

User Guide: The Government Statistician Group (GSG) Competency Framework

Introduction

This short user guide gives an overview of the GSG Statistician Competency Framework, its relationship with other frameworks and when and how to use it.



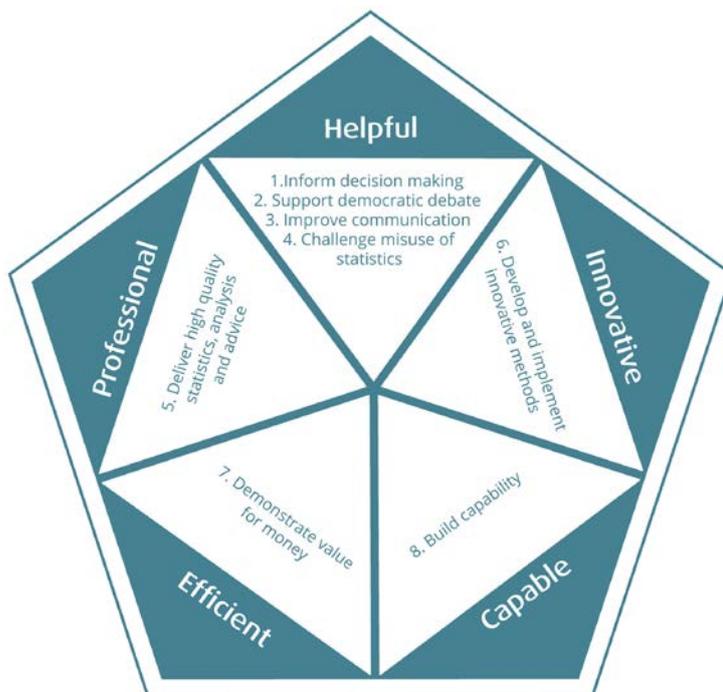
Our new competency framework sets out what members of the statistical profession are expected to achieve in addition to the competencies set out in the [Civil Service Competency Framework \(CSCF\)](#). Competencies are the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to successful performance.

It can be used in performance management discussions and objective setting at the start of each performance year or when moving posts.

The framework will also be used for recruitment purposes, where interview questions can draw out examples to demonstrate accomplishment of relevant statistical competence from across the statistical strands and pillars. Guidance for how to use the competency framework for recruitment and/or GSG badging, can be found in the separate Recruitment Guidance.

The Framework

The introduction to the framework explains the background and how it has been designed to align with the UK Statistics Authority strategy, "[Better Statistics Better Decisions - Strategy for 2015 to 2020](#)".



The Pillars versus the Statistical Strands

The five **pillars** describe *how* we are delivering our strategy:

Helpful – Innovative – Capable – Efficient – Professional

The four **statistical strands** and associated competencies (that are embedded through each pillar and level) demonstrate *what* we will do to deliver our strategic objectives:

- **Acquiring data/Understanding customer needs**
- **Data analysis**
- **Presenting and disseminating data effectively**
- **Working with credibility**

The Levels

The Framework is currently split into 3 levels:

- **Level 1 – Statistical Officer (StO), Statistical Data Scientist (SDS), or equivalent**
- **Level 2 – Higher StO/Higher SDS, Senior StO*/Senior SDS*, Assistant Statistician***
- **Level 3 – Grade 7/Grade 6* – Principal Statistician/ Principal Statistical Data Scientist**

* Higher level competencies are indicated throughout the framework, in blue italics, where applicable

Matrix views by Level

As well as the full framework, matrix views by level are available for download. These views bring all pillars and statistical strands for one level into one place for ease of use. For example:

	Helpful – Influences decision making; is customer focussed	Innovative – Drives innovation; is innovative	Capable – Deploys capability; builds capability of self and others	Efficient – Extracts value from existing data and analysis; works efficiently; enables efficiency to happen	Professional – Adheres to statistical frameworks/Codes; quality assures work; builds trust
Acquiring data/Understanding customer needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares knowledge and suitability of data sources with customer (administrative, survey or census). • Proactively engages customer with own ideas for relevant data sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses most relevant technology to gather contextual data from internal and external sources, to meet customer needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to identify and obtain most appropriate data source(s) to meet customer needs. • Understands the strengths and limitations of data source(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is aware of data sources available in own area and makes best use of existing data. • Readily shares knowledge of data sources with colleagues and others enabling others to work efficiently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses the principles of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics to deliver appropriate results and standards with respect to user needs. • Demonstrates a high level of professional integrity when working with customers and data users, building trust.
Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is able to identify or translate questions into appropriate hypotheses for the customer. • Undertakes appropriate data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps abreast of new and evolving technologies, tools and analytical techniques to deliver results effectively, whether this is employing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can describe the main theoretical and practical features, assumptions and limitations of the analytical techniques and software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has breadth of view across a statistical field, and is able to make decisions about the most appropriate methods and tools for the task, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes personal responsibility for the delivery of high quality statistical advice and data analysis.

Helpful – Innovative – Capable – Efficient – Professional

Overview of the five Pillars

At the start of each pillar there is a summary description, and these are reproduced here. The links between each pillar and the objectives from the 'Better Statistics Better Decisions' Strategy are also drawn out below.

Helpful



- Objective 1: Inform decision making
- Objective 2: Support democratic debate
- Objective 3: Improve communication
- Objective 4: Challenge misuse of statistics

Sound decision making must be driven by evidence, supported by robust analysis and insight. Similarly, democratic debate thrives when it is based on a common understanding of an evidence base that is believed to be trustworthy by all involved. By effectively communicating our professional knowledge, and using our specialist analytical skills alongside other professionals, our independent analysis will drive and influence decision making across society, making statisticians an integral part of cross-disciplinary delivery teams.

Innovative



- Objective 6: Develop and implement innovative methods

Innovation plays a vital role in government and is a key driver in the growth and development of a modern-day society. Every day new challenges are faced and it is how these challenges are embraced that determines how we, as statisticians, can shape a bright technological future. In a world which is rapidly evolving with new technologies, it is our desire for the statistician to be at the forefront of innovation and with the use of specialist statistical skills, it is our vision for us to become inquisitive and curious, casting a fresh eye over existing methods to create a culture which drives insight.

Capable



- Objective 8: Build capability

We are a learning profession, continually building on the already strong skills and capabilities of our people, so that we remain experts; resilient and ready for change. This is key to our advice and support remaining relevant and to our being able to tackle current and future challenges with innovative solutions. We aim to empower our statisticians to develop strong leadership and management skills now and to become the leaders of the future at the most influential levels.

Efficient



Objective 7:
Demonstrate
value for money

We must deliver high quality evidence and analysis in an efficient and transparent manner. We will strive to improve approaches to analysis and dissemination of data and extract more value from existing data and analysis. We will maximise the impact of our work by identifying and focusing on priorities.

Professional



Objective 5:
Deliver high
quality statistics,
analysis and
advice

Our professional support must be valued and used with trust and confidence. Similarly we must have the confidence of the individuals and organisations whose data we use. We will continue to develop this trust through effective communication and delivering consistently high quality statistics, analysis and advice, challenging the misuse of statistics and supporting our analytical work with robust and properly governed analytical assurance processes. We will meet the diverse needs of our customers, using approaches that are aligned with sound professional standards, through applying and navigating the Code of Practice in Official Statistics in a constructive way.

Links with the Civil Service Competency Framework

This framework has also been designed to complement the CSCF, and some of the key elements considered pertinent to statisticians have been drawn out at the start of each pillar/level. For example:

Helpful – **Innovative** – Capable – Efficient – Professional

Level 2 links to CSCF – professional competencies build on certain aspects of the **Changing and Improving** element of the CSCF. In particular, Statisticians are expected to find innovative ways to improve and streamline processes, and to involve the team and stakeholders to inform ideas. At this level, Statisticians are also expected to support others who are faced with the challenges of improving processes and systems, and to ensure that the team is prepared for change.

Helpful – Innovative – Capable – Efficient – Professional

Using the framework

Flexibility is key here. Given that the framework has been designed to cover the huge range of government statistician roles, ***no one will be expected to satisfy all of the competencies within a given pillar/level.*** Rather, the competencies that you are required to demonstrate will depend on your post, and these will have been initially established at the recruitment stage, at the start of the performance year, or if anything has changed.

We recommend that at the start of the performance year, you assess the competencies from the Statistician Competency Framework that are pertinent to your post and agree these with your line manager. Start by looking at the appropriate statistical strands (i.e. Acquiring data/Understanding customer needs; Data analysis; Presenting and disseminating data effectively; Working with credibility), and then across the pillars. Once you have identified the competencies that apply in your role, you can use them in these following ways:

1. At the start of the performance year, use the competencies to identify the knowledge, skills and behaviours that you need to demonstrate throughout the year. Where possible (i.e. if your departmental systems allow), ensure that these are reflected within your performance agreement.
2. At the start of the performance year, use the competencies to identify your strengths and development areas. Determine your learning needs and incorporate these into your Personal Development Plan. Get the support from your manager to get the training that you need and log all learning in your CPD Log Book.
3. When preparing for mid-year and end of year reviews, use the competencies to help chart your progress, and to help evidence that your development is on track.
4. When seeking promotion, use the competencies from the higher level to ensure that you are developing in the areas required at the higher grade.
5. Use the 'statistical strands' and most relevant competencies to define your current role – this should provide a 'job profile' and can be kept in readiness for recruitment purposes (i.e. for filling your current post).

Useful Links

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-competency-framework>

Better Statistics, Better Decisions Strategy (https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-betterstatisticsbetterdecisionsstrategyfor2015to202_tcm97-44175-5.pdf).

<https://civilservicelearning.civilservice.gov.uk/competency-framework/how-use-competency-framework> You will need to be registered with Civil Service Learning to access this site.

FAQ

1. ***What is fundamentally different to the old framework?***

The new framework aligns with the new GSS Strategy and Civil Service Competency Framework that wasn't in place when the previous version was compiled. It is also designed to cover a wider variety of roles than the previous framework, reflecting an increased diversity in the work of government statisticians.

2. ***When is it going to be re-written?***

At the time of writing (March 2016), there are no plans in place to revise the CSCF. The Better Statistics, Better Decisions strategy covers 2015 to 2020; The Code of Practice for Official Statistics is under review but should not require the Statistician Competency Framework to be re-written.

3. ***Why has List A been removed?***

List A was designed to be a list of the core analytical techniques that statisticians would need to use. However, it could never be a complete list, representative of the skills that all statisticians need. Therefore, it had become, especially in light of increasing diversity in the jobs that statisticians do, arbitrary and incomplete. Instead, the focus is now on confidence in using and communicating a range of analytical techniques that are relevant to your role, so that you can choose the most appropriate, regardless of what these are.

4. ***Will I be asked at interview about statistical techniques now that List A has been removed?***

It will depend on the role that you are applying for and the competencies required for the post. For promotion to any grade, assessors will test for statistical/methodological/data science knowledge through applying the relevant parts of the Competency Framework that are relevant to the post being advertised.

5. ***I am applying for a Level 3 post on promotion; will I be expected to demonstrate Level 2 competencies?***

This is unlikely. You will be required to demonstrate the competencies for the advertised post at the given level.

6. ***I am not a badged statistician, but I am a member of the GSS, does the framework still apply to me?***

Non-badged statisticians or staff who work with statistics on a daily basis across government may find the Statistician Competency Framework a useful guide to determine the competencies required within a statistical post, and may wish to use it to inform objective setting and performance discussions.

7. ***I am preparing for a badging board; do I need to be able to provide examples against every single competence?***

You will not be required to provide examples from across every pillar, but assessors will seek evidence from across the statistical strands:

- Acquiring data/Understanding customer needs;
- Data analysis; and
- Presenting and disseminating data effectively.

Please refer to the Recruitment Guidance for more information.

8. How should I use the GSG Competency Framework when filling a post?

Posts will need to be defined by Managers against the most relevant of the statistical strands (i.e. Acquiring data/Understanding customer needs; Data analysis; Presenting and disseminating data effectively; Working with credibility) as well as against core competencies from the CSCF. The Civil Service jobs portal template will be adapted to accept the new statistical competencies.

Please refer to the Recruitment Guidance for more information.

9. How should the GSG Competency Framework be used to determine my Learning and Development?

Performance discussions should identify any learning needs that you have in line with your performance objectives. Soft skills development (linked to the CSCF) can be found on the [Civil Service Learning portal](#). Professional L&D is provided via the [GSS Learning Curriculum](#).

10. How can I provide feedback on the GSG Competency Framework?

A formal evaluation period will take place during Nov/Dec 2016 to engage the profession and to seek feedback on whether the new framework is fit for purpose.

Informal channels will also be established at the time of launch (April 2016) and staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the framework immediately via:

Email: gss.capability@ons.gsi.gov.uk

GSS website: [Statistician Competency Framework Feedback Group](#)