

Hints and tips for Assistant Statisticians

The following suggestions come from existing members of the GSS and also from discussions the GSS Professional Support Team had with new recruits and their managers. These suggestions are consistent with the AS Handbook, only framed in a more user-friendly way.

When you join the GSS

- Meet with other ASs and StOs in your department as soon as possible. Discuss their experiences of joining the department and what they found useful.
- Ask someone to put you in touch with the statistician representatives on the Fast Stream Forum – either another AS in your department or someone in the GSS Professional Support Team should have their details. This will ensure you receive the fortnightly newsletter.
- Wherever possible, you will normally meet your Countersigning Officer and your Director/Head of Profession when you join. If this is not possible, seek your line manager's help in arranging a meeting shortly afterwards.
- Ask about staff appraisal arrangements in your department and the use of personal development plans. Also ask about probation.
- Find out about the role of statisticians, the GSS, how it operates and its history. Find out from your line manager what current issues are affecting the GSS.
- If you haven't been invited on to the fast stream induction course, contact the GSS Professional Support Team.
- Contact your departmental Fast Stream support section if you do not hear from them. You will need to find out if there are any compulsory training requirements for fast streamers.
- Ask questions. Question how and why things are done and develop quickly an understanding of your work area and of statistics within your department.
- Register on the GSS website and check it regularly. If your line manager is not a Statistician, introduce them to the GSS website too.

Development opportunities in general

- Discuss your learning and development with your line manager and produce a Personal Development Plan. Make sure that learning activities are transferred to your *CPD Log Book* and endorsed by your line manager/mentor.
- Meet with other specialist groups in your department. Learn how they develop themselves and their jobs.
- Discuss your work with a range of other ASs and fast streamers to develop your network and build relationships.

- If your line manager is not a Statistician, make sure that you have access to a statistical mentor, especially when reviewing and evaluating statistical development.

Development off the job

- Be proactive. Seek out development opportunities outside your main work area that give you added experiences.
- Discuss with your line manager and GSS Professional Support Team, how you can take advantage of development opportunities that exist outside of your main work area.
- Attend departmental meetings of ASs and StOs (if they are held) and the statisticians' conference.
- Look at the statistics knowledge you have. Fill any gaps through reading or, if necessary, attend appropriate courses. Use the CPD process to do this.
- Take an interest in developments in statistics and join the RSS, attending meetings whenever possible. Find out more about Chartered Statistician status from the RSS.
- Think about the possibility of undertaking pro bono work which might offer additional development opportunities for you.

Learning and development

- Depending on your developmental needs, look at the details of courses available to you and recommended by GSS Professional Support Team and discuss with your line manager what would be appropriate for you to attend in the next year.
- Register yourself with Civil Service Learning and look at the *Framework of Statistical Learning and Development* on the GSS website.
- Consider enrolling for an MSc in official statistics – this will give you a very useful technical background in preparation for progression to senior statistical grades.
- Find out who holds the training budget and keep them informed of your training needs and plans for each financial year. Most departments will have a Learning and Development Plan; use that to stake out your needs. Encourage your line manager to make sure that sufficient resources are available for you to attend the training courses you need.
- Talk to more experienced statisticians about the courses they found particularly useful and at what stage in their career they went on them.
- Before going on a course, think carefully about why you are going and what you want to learn and achieve. Discuss this with your line manager. All training should be evaluated. On return, discuss the course content with your line manager and how you are going to implement and review what you have learnt.
- Don't forget to look for opportunities to broaden your knowledge in other career groupings (see Civil Service Competency Framework).
- GSS HoPs have a responsibility to champion and support CPD within their teams – find out what your department's approach is.
- Record your continuing professional development activity in your CPD Log Book and get it endorsed by your line manager.

- Be ready to show your endorsed CPD Log Book to GSS Selection Board Panels.

Measuring your progress

- Talk to your line manager about what you must do in order to pass probation.
- Ask for regular feedback from all your work colleagues (not just your line-manager) on your standard of performance and how to overcome your weaknesses.
- Make sure that your Countersigning Officer regularly sees a selection of your work. Discuss with him/her on a regular basis what he/she expects from you and how they can also help with your development.

Your career

- Agree with your line manager how long you should stay in the post early on and review this at regular intervals.
- Find out how moves are managed in your department.
- Start thinking about future moves well in advance. Think carefully about what you need from your next post. Discuss your development needs with your line managers and explain these to everyone involved in deciding your next posting. If you are unsure about your move seek advice.
- Discuss the possibility of a posting outside the GSS with your line managers and the GSS Professional Support Team. This could be in a policy area or perhaps on a short-term training secondment or an interchange opportunity in the private sector. GSS Professional Support Team can offer you advice on these.
- Look out for jobs on the GSS website and well as in the fortnightly AS newsletter.
- Make sure you are familiar with the required competences for operating at G7 Statistician level. Try and map out where you would like to be in five years' time and target your longer term development to that plan.

The GSS website

The GSS website (<https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/>) is managed by the GSS Professional Support Team and provides lots of useful information for the GSS community. Make sure you sign up, create a profile and use the website to share information that might be of interest to the rest of the GSS. You can network with other GSS members, read about upcoming courses and conferences, share best practice information, find guides and policies and learn about GSS jobs across government.

The Fast Stream Forum

The FSF exists to represent Fast Streamers and to provide them with networking and development opportunities. All Fast Streamers are members and there are no membership fees. The Forum is the voice of the fast stream on cross-cutting issues and engages with high-level stakeholders. There are



two Fast Stream Statistician representatives on the Forum. They circulate a fortnightly newsletter which includes fast stream news, GSS news, opportunities and current AS vacancies. This is a must-read.