Sheffield Hallam University
Knowledge Applied

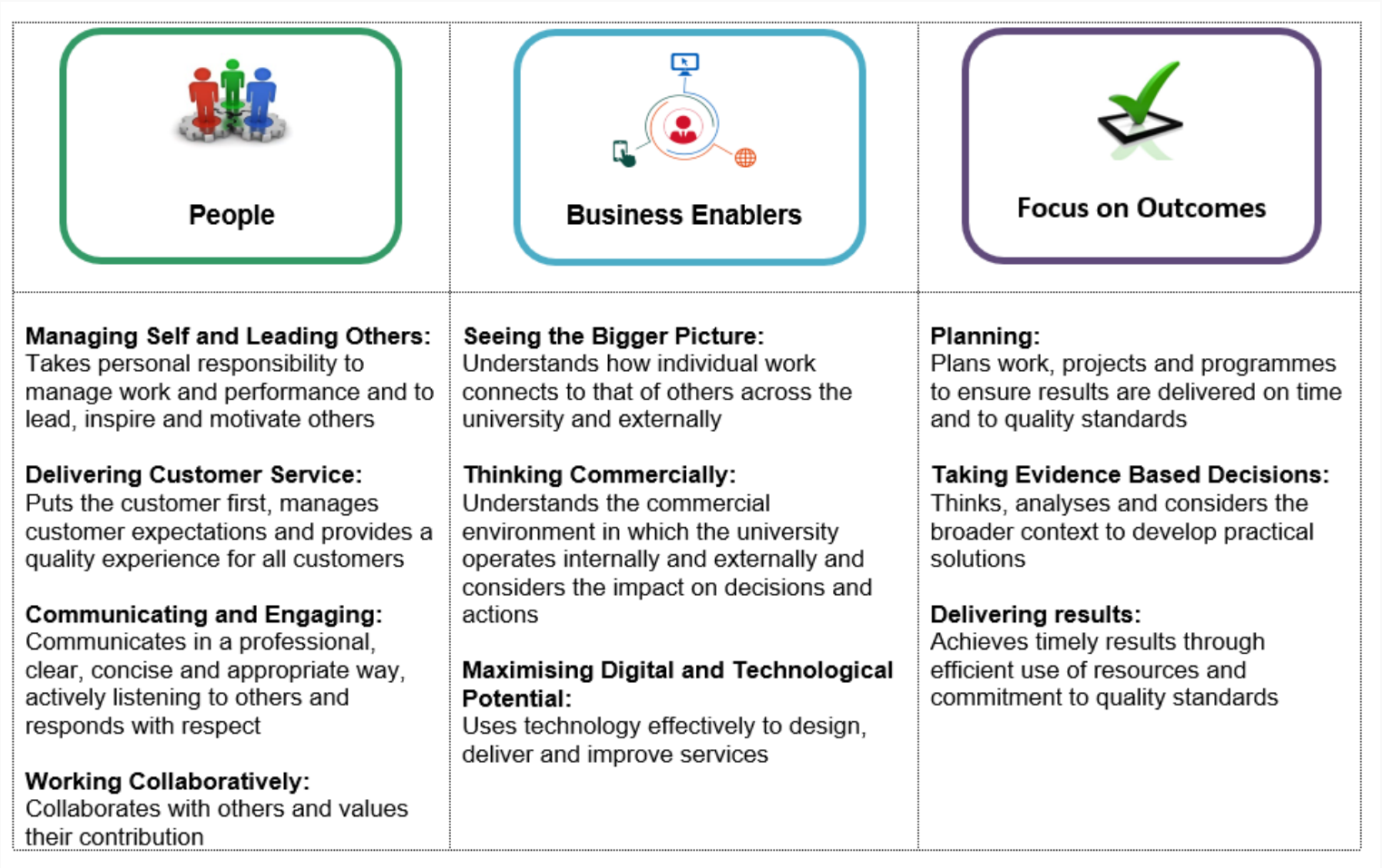
Professional Services Capability Framework

Capabilities overview

The Professional Services Capability Framework outlines 10 capabilities categorised into three core groups: People, Business Enablers, and Focus on Outcomes.

- The 'People' group encompasses the capabilities of 'Managing Self and Leading Others,' 'Delivering Customer Service,' 'Communicating and Engaging,' and 'Working Collaboratively.'
- The 'Business Enablers' group includes the capabilities of 'Seeing the Bigger Picture,' 'Thinking Commercially,' and 'Maximizing Digital and Technological Potential.'
- The 'Focus on Outcomes' group comprises the capabilities of 'Planning,' 'Taking Evidence-Based Decisions,' and 'Delivering Results.'

The three capability groups collectively provide an understanding of the knowledge, skills, experience, and behaviours required of Professional Services staff to deliver services and support our vision of becoming the world's leading applied university.



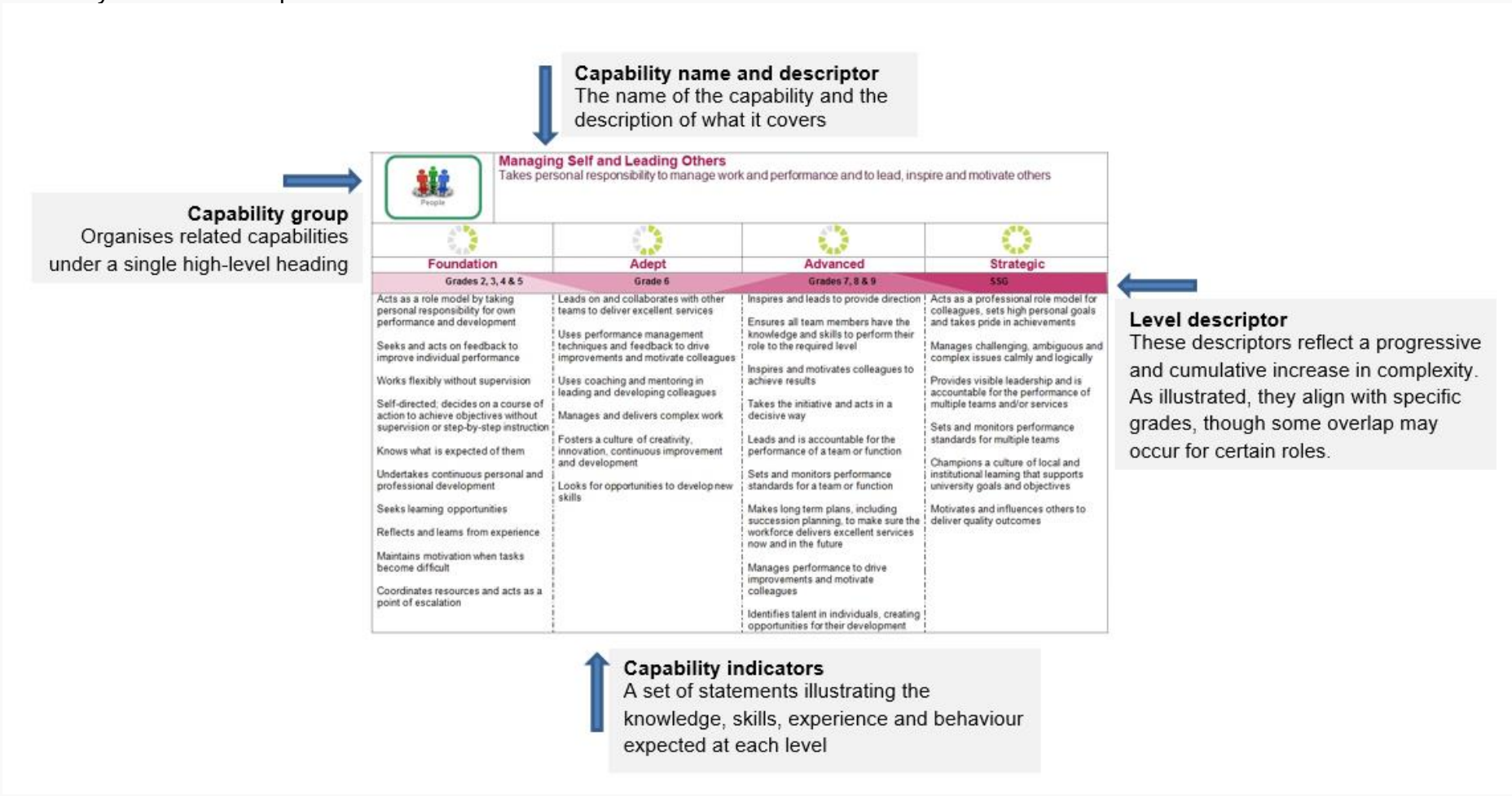
What are the capabilities used for?

The framework is integrated into all Professional Services roles, supporting recruitment, performance management, capability development, and the enhancement of skills and knowledge. It also enables managers and staff to identify opportunities for career development.

How to read the Capabilities Framework

The framework is organised into the three core capability groups: People, Business Enablers, and Focus on Outcomes. These groups consolidate related capabilities under a single high-level heading. Each capability has its own dedicated page, featuring the group name, the capability name, and a description of its scope.

Each page includes a table outlining the knowledge, skills, experience, and behaviours essential to the capability (known as capability indicators). The table presents different capability levels for various job roles, reflecting a progressive and cumulative increase in complexity. While these descriptors align with specific grades, there may be some overlap for certain roles.



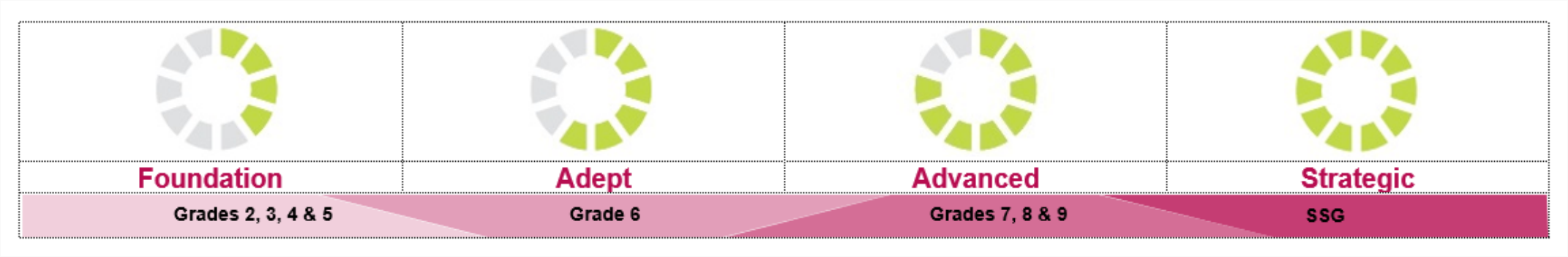
Understanding the levels

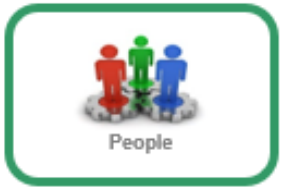
The knowledge, skills, experience, and behaviours required of Professional Services staff vary across different levels within the organisation. These capability levels are cumulative and help staff identify what is needed to develop and advance within Professional Services, across different roles and organisational levels.

There are four main levels:

1. Foundation Level: applicable to grades 2, 3, 4, & 5
2. Adept Level: applicable to grade 6
3. Advanced Level: applicable to grades 7, 8, & 9
4. Strategic Level: applicable to Senior Staff Grades (SSG)

A wheel is used within the framework to visually represents these cumulative and progressive levels, using a gradient light pink line to indicate gradual progression and merging of capabilities across grades.

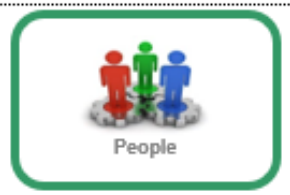




Managing Self and Leading Others

Takes personal responsibility to manage work and performance and to lead, inspire and motivate others

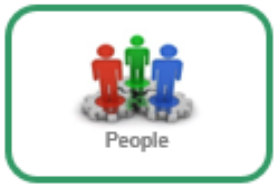
Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Acts as a role model by taking personal responsibility for own performance and development Seeks and acts on feedback to improve individual performance Works flexibly without supervision Self-directed; decides on a course of action to achieve objectives without supervision or step-by-step instruction Knows what is expected of them Undertakes continuous personal and professional development Seeks learning opportunities Reflects and learns from experience Maintains motivation when tasks become difficult Coordinates resources and acts as a point of escalation	Leads on and collaborates with other teams to deliver excellent services Uses performance management techniques and feedback to drive improvements and motivate colleagues Uses coaching and mentoring in leading and developing colleagues Manages and delivers complex work Fosters a culture of creativity, innovation, continuous improvement and development Looks for opportunities to develop new skills	Inspires and leads to provide direction Ensures all team members have the knowledge and skills to perform their role to the required level Inspires and motivates colleagues to achieve results Takes the initiative and acts in a decisive way Leads and is accountable for the performance of a team or function Sets and monitors performance standards for a team or function Makes long term plans, including succession planning, to make sure the workforce delivers excellent services now and in the future Manages performance to drive improvements and motivate colleagues Identifies talent in individuals, creating opportunities for their development	Acts as a professional role model for colleagues, sets high personal goals and takes pride in achievements Manages challenging, ambiguous and complex issues calmly and logically Provides visible leadership and is accountable for the performance of multiple teams and/or services Sets and monitors performance standards for multiple teams Champions a culture of local and institutional learning that supports university goals and objectives Motivates and influences others to deliver quality outcomes



Delivering Customer Service

Puts the customer first, manages customer expectations and provides a quality experience for all customers

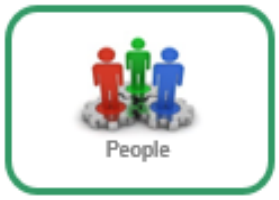
Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Ensures customer service excellence, resolving problems quickly and in a professional manner Resolves queries efficiently, offering support and advice and escalates where appropriate Helps customers understand the services that are available Manages customer expectations and understands their experience Develops customer insight and ensures service satisfaction Takes ownership of queries ensuring they reach resolution Develops and uses knowledge across different areas to serve customers Engages with customers in a friendly and appropriate way Records queries and interactions promptly on relevant systems	Identifies, understands and responds to complex customer needs and recognises when to escalate an issue Contributes to quality assurance in customer service Develops ideas to improve customer satisfaction Provides advice and guidance to customers and colleagues Seeks the help of others to get a positive outcome and follows through on actions Finds opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and stakeholders to improve outcomes for customers Knows when to include other services to resolve complex queries Actively seeks feedback and suggestions to improve customer service	Leads colleagues in continuously improving the customer experience Promotes a culture of quality customer service Is accountable and takes decisions for the delivery of high standards of customer service Encourages strong customer focus and builds understanding of customer demographics and needs Ensures systems, processes and policies respond to customer needs Incorporates customer needs into business process design Monitors service performance to identify common issues Creates and monitors service level agreements Monitors customer feedback, recognises achievement and identifies actions to improve services or address issues	Creates a culture which embraces high quality customer service across the university Ensures management processes and systems drive service delivery outcomes Ensures customer needs are central to university strategic planning processes Understands the level of service that is needed by customers (at all levels) and ensures these are priority Instigates, influences and manages key strategic relationships Sets overall performance standards for service delivery and understands and applies external professional standards Anticipates customer needs and identifies the key strategic issues Looks externally to learn from exemplars of customer service



Communicating and Engaging

Communicates in a professional, clear, concise and appropriate way, actively listening to others and responds with respect

Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Actively listens; pays close attention, asks clarifying questions, and rephrases response to ensure understanding Provides clear verbal communication e.g. sharing ideas with others, contributing to meetings and delivering presentations Produces accurate and professional written communications Demonstrates effective interpersonal skills, including non-verbal communications (body language, eye contact, gestures, tone of voice) Uses a variety of media Encourages two-way communication and allows others time to speak Presents a clear and well-argued case when communicating with others	Conveys complex messages clearly so others understand Identifies the correct communication channel to achieve the most engagement Presents ideas professionally to colleagues, either verbally or in writing (e.g. reports) in order to inform, influence and negotiate Is open to questions and challenge and responds effectively Inspires and motivates others through communication Creates opportunities for others to be heard Actively listens to others and seeks feedback Tailors communication to the needs of the audience considering different perspectives Monitors the effectiveness of individual and team communication and actively manages this	Translates the university strategy to staff at all levels to enable them to understand and engage with the strategy Influences and negotiates with internal and external stakeholders Conveys complex information internally and externally Builds and participates in networks and works collaboratively Develops and presents reports to committees and boards to gain feedback and decisions Influences and engages. Establishes feedback mechanisms and takes action Proactively shares information and encourages others to do so Actively listens and encourages others to contribute	Articulates complex concepts and puts forward compelling arguments and rationales to all levels and types of audience Obtains, understands and responds to the views of all internal and external stakeholders; influences and challenges views appropriately Develops and implements effective communication channels and activities and responds to changing needs Ensures effective horizontal and vertical communication Is a vocal advocate and promotes the reputation of SHU with authority and credibility to the external environment Engages with diverse audiences; influencing others to participate and contribute Writes fluently in a range of styles and formats Communicates a compelling vision



Working Collaboratively

Collaborates with others and values their contribution

Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Works as a supportive and co-operative team member Responds to others who need clarification or guidance on the job Steps in willingly to help others when workloads are high Shares information and learning across the team Contributes to team tasks Supports and implements team decisions Sees colleagues and other teams/ departments as customers and follows through on queries and requests Contributes as an active member to communities of practice Works flexibly to support the changing needs of the business across professional services	Co-ordinates activity to support internal and external relationships Develops collaborative ways of working with internal and external stakeholders and partners Builds co-operation and overcomes barriers to information sharing and communication across teams Shares lessons learned across teams Identifies opportunities to work collaboratively with other teams to solve issues and develop better processes and approaches to work Encourages others to participate in communities of practice	Builds a culture of respect and understanding across the organisation Recognises outcomes which result from effective collaboration Moves people from team to team to build better and more productive teams Provides resources to support other university teams, services and/or objectives Leads, and looks for ways to develop multi-disciplinary teams Contributes to cross university groups and project teams Leads communities of practice Successfully manages and resolves conflicting views Empower and motivate colleagues across organisational boundaries	Publicly celebrates the successful outcomes of collaboration Identifies and overcomes barriers to collaboration with internal and external stakeholders Operates in a number of different teams and groups across the university Builds a strong network of collaborative relationships in higher education and beyond to help achieve university objectives Values different skills, expertise and opinions and seeks to utilise them to deliver better services Identifies and creates opportunities for communities of practice internally and externally Creates a collaborative working culture which develops the different strengths and skills of individuals and teams to achieve improved outcomes



Seeing the Bigger Picture

Understands how individual work connects to that of others across the university and externally

Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Sees how individual work contributes to the university's objectives Shares information, ideas and good practice Contributes positively as part of a team Understands and values equality, diversity and inclusion Understands how services are organised to help achieve results Knows where to go to resolve queries Promotes an inclusive environment in which individuals are respected and unacceptable behaviours challenged	Understands the strategy and uses this to make decisions which best supports the university's strategic aims Seeks best practice through research, analysis and benchmarking Acts as a subject matter expert and point of reference for colleagues Builds and maintains internal and external networks Ensures individual work and that of the team contributes to the university strategy Understands the regulatory and political environment and the implications Encourages teams and individuals to collaborate Draws on own and others expertise and thinks creatively to solve problems	Looks to the future in analysis, thought and action Takes the broadest possible view of a problem or issue Uses strategic understanding in decision making and business development Helps others understand how they support organisational objectives Develops, manages and influences key relationships with internal and external stakeholders to maximise benefit to the organisation Identifies opportunities for, and leads on, cross-organisation working to achieve shared goals Challenges the status quo where necessary	Acts as an ambassador for the university both internally and externally Actively seeks to further the university strategy through research, teaching, academic citizenship or professional practice Embeds environmental sustainability and equality, diversity and inclusion both internally and externally Represents professional services internally and externally Develops in-depth insight into dynamics and issues surrounding the university and develops plans to respond to them Shapes and influences understanding of wider issues, assessing the implications and taking action



Thinking Commercially

Understands the commercial environment in which the university operates internally and externally and considers the impact on decisions and actions

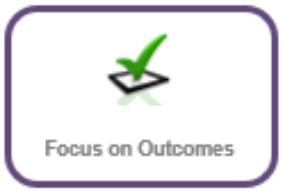
Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Develops an awareness of the commercial aspects of the organisation Thinks about value for money in the way work is completed Understands core policies and processes Uses resources wisely Works within allocated budget and resources Understands their individual contribution to the success of the university	Understands the financial, commercial, political and regulatory environment, and takes account of this when making decisions Demonstrates skills in managing budgets, resources, contracts and/or procurement Ensures non value-adding activities are removed from processes, procedures and working practices Continuously reforecasts and reprioritises budget and resources to meet changing needs	Develops strategies for effective use of budgets and resources Develops strategic plans to help ensure sustainability Reduces costs, increases income or improves services Identifies and develops opportunities that add value Responds to political, regulatory and financial changes in a pro-active manner Manages budgets, plans and resources Leads by example and considers the value for money of activities Builds business cases for new services and/or resources Uses financial and management information to assess viability of new approaches	Analyses plans and resources to ensure services are delivered efficiently within budgets Anticipates changes within the higher education sector Develops strategy which delivers and demands consistent improvement in terms of quality, output and cost Demonstrates an understanding of internal and external factors affecting the university's commercial position and outlook Identifies income generating opportunities and obtains buy in Gains and retains the confidence of external stakeholders Seeks out and introduces new business models, systems and approaches to deliver improved commercial outcomes Organises services efficiently, identifies opportunities to reduce costs and implement change to deliver



Maximising Digital and Technological Potential

Uses technology effectively to design, deliver and improve services

Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Understands and is confident in the use of key digital systems Uses digital systems and demonstrates digital skills necessary to complete work efficiently Adapts to changes in digital systems Seeks support and updates digital skills where necessary Develops an awareness of all core digital systems in use across the organisation and identifies opportunities to further digitise Understands data protection regulation and the impact on information retention and communication Understands the need for cyber security protocols and recognises risks	Develops and manages systems and processes to better meet customer need and improve customer service Champions the use of digital systems Demonstrates fluency in a range of programming language Identifies improvements to digital systems to contribute to customer service improvement Acts as a point of reference for colleagues on key systems and processes, where applicable Provides training to team members where appropriate Compares different scenarios to assess the viability of information found Applies licences and copyrights	Identifies ways to leverage the value of technology to achieve outcomes Embeds digital systems as part of normal ways of working and continuous improvement Leads key digital strategies to enhance service delivery Assesses risks, implements controls and ensures compliance Plans and manages current and future digital resources to ensure we are best placed to deliver services in line with our digital strategy as an institution Champions the use of existing technology and the deployment of new technology	Produces or modifies complex content in different formats using a variety of platforms, tools and environments Understands the physical and psychological health risks associated with the use of digital technology and acts to support staff Seeks out and introduces new digital technological solutions to deliver continuously improving customer services Ensures risk management and compliance is embedded in all digital systems and procedures; provides assurance



Planning

Plans work, projects and programmes to ensure results are delivered on time and to quality standards

Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Takes ownership of and uses initiative to manage tasks and processes Organises self to meet priorities and deadlines Reprioritises own work regularly to achieve set goals Simplifies processes to achieve better outcomes Manages workload to achieve results Deals with competing demands and deadlines Knows when to escalate Responds flexibly to changing circumstances	Breaks down projects into objectives and goals and accurately scopes length and difficulty of tasks Manages projects Ensures time and resources are used effectively to maximise efficiency Checks and reports on progress on achievements against plans Knows when to escalate issues or risks Plans efficiently for medium and long term Organises resources for short and medium term and reprioritises as necessary Allocates and manages resources to ensure that projects and programmes align to key strategic aims and are future-focused	Takes accountability for the successful delivery of key projects and/or programmes Manages risks and ensures benefits of projects and programmes are maximised Organises the team to deliver work as required Provides clear and accurate reporting against progress and performance Highlights risks to key deliverables Plans and resources multi-service activity with other service users Oversees end to end processes and co-ordinates actions to improve services Liaises outside immediate team Reviews and reprioritises activity to meet changing needs	Sets targets and performance goals Sets a sense of direction Empowers individuals and delegates decision making Holds individuals and teams to account for delivery of projects and/or programmes Agrees scope of projects and deliverable outcomes Identifies dependencies, risks and opportunities Oversees planning and resourcing for multiple teams/functions ensuring resources are deployed effectively and efficiently Contributes to the development of strategy and plans; influences strategic priorities and outcomes for corporate responsibilities



Taking Evidence Based Decisions

Thinks, analyses and considers the broader context to develop practical solutions

Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Understands information and uses it appropriately, following agreed standards Reads and uses data from a variety of sources and extracts the necessary information from it Ensures system data entry is accurate Works according to data protection principles and regulatory frameworks Acts consistently in dealing with challenges: analyses the issue and uses knowledge to identify solutions Makes decisions in a timely manner when options and consequences are clear Uses facts, knowledge and experience to support recommendations	Integrates, analyses and interprets information from a range of systems/sources, and provides evidence-based advice and solutions Uses information to benchmark our performance against targets and standards and make improvements Analyses situations from all angles using both quantitative and qualitative data to identify solutions Seeks feedback and evaluates the success of decisions to ensure lessons are learned Seeks new ways of presenting information and reporting outcomes Considers consequences and risk in order to assess the timing of a decision	Evaluates performance to improve services Analyses and interprets information in order to evaluate options and make appropriate decisions Uses and shares information appropriately to inform long term strategic planning Horizon scanning, using external sources of information and benchmarking nationally and internationally Identifies sources of information to support business decisions and development Includes others in the decision making process	Deals with ambiguity and makes decisions in a timely manner Takes charge and sets direction when necessary to facilitate action or a decision Makes decisions taking into account and assessing institutional risk Takes complex/difficult decisions affecting a range of stakeholders or users Communicates the rationale for complex or difficult decisions so that others understand/accept Reprioritises work and redeploys resource to meet changing needs Analyses competing and conflicting information, making sound judgements on priority and direction Collates and brings together relevant management information from a variety of sources to inform strategic decisions



Delivering results

Achieves timely results through efficient use of resources and commitment to quality standards

Foundation	Adept	Advanced	Strategic
Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5	Grade 6	Grades 7, 8 & 9	SSG
Knows, understands and consistently achieves the quality standards and/or service level agreements expected of the job Completes work to a high level of accuracy Maintains records and data accurately Applies policies and procedures consistently and fairly Contributes to the achievement of targets within their area of responsibility Applies relevant job knowledge, skills and expertise to do the job well Plans ahead to achieve results Contributes to identifying and implementing process improvements	Draws on own and others experience and expertise to resolve problems Ensures consistency and integrity in service delivery Thinks creatively Develops and enhances policy, process and procedures Makes sure colleagues understand expected goals and acknowledges the success of the individual(s)	Oversees quality assurance activity and ensures consistency in service delivery Develops new products/services to meet needs Uses specialist knowledge to inform approaches to problem solving Focuses on improving services and outcomes Makes sure others understand that 'on time and on budget' results are required and how overall success is defined Considers wider organisational objectives when making decisions Monitors performance against targets Identifies actions to recognise individual or team achievement Seeks and uses the expertise of key individuals to achieve organisational outcomes	Establishes systems to ensure all staff can identify the direct connection between organisational outcomes and individual work Sets targets and performance goals Establishes quality standards and provides assurance that they are being met Ensures wider organisational objectives are taken into account in setting targets and performance goals Takes action to reprioritise if performance standards drop Evaluates the impact of the service or function or team Ensures individual and team achievements are publicly recognised and celebrated Influences others to take responsibility and achieve results