

Higher education lecturers

General competency framework · Professional level · 5 competencies · approx. 75 minutes

How to use this guide

- Focus on these 5 competencies — the behaviours that matter most for this role — not a chronological career history.
- Ask every candidate the same core questions, then probe. Allow around 15 minutes per competency.
- Ask for real examples and use STAR — the Situation, the Task, the Action they took, and the Result.
- Stay neutral, capture what they say, and judge later. Gather evidence on one competency at a time.
- Rate each competency 1–5 against the positive and negative indicators, and note the evidence.

5 Outstanding **4** Good **3** Acceptable **2** Marginal **1** Poor

1. Technical Capability

Has the necessary knowledge, skills and proficiency to conduct their role. Demonstrates mastery in their area of technical capability. Stays up to date with advances in their field and commits to their continuous development.

Why this matters for Higher education lecturers: The PSF 2023 (Advance HE) places subject mastery and scholarship-informed practice at the foundation of HE teaching. Technical Capability captures depth of disciplinary knowledge, mastery of pedagogical content, and staying current with research developments — the entry ticket to the role.

What have you done to develop your knowledge, skills and abilities to help you achieve in your role?

- In what ways would you say you have developed?
- What opportunities have you taken/created?
- What improvements have resulted? How have these helped you?
- Talk to me about your development plan? How are you building your technical capability? What will doing these things give you?
- What is the next step for you in your career? How will you get there?

What do you do to ensure that you have all of the information you require to perform effectively in your role?

- Where do you get the information from?
- How does this assist you in your role?
- How do you keep up to date with developments in/outside the business?
- Why is it important to do this?
- What do you see as the key challenges/changes in the industry over the next 5 years?

What aspects of your technical capability are you particularly proud of?

- Why are you proud of these aspects?
- How do they help you perform your role?
- What have you done to create these strengths?
- Which aspects of your technical capability need the biggest improvement?
- What are doing to improve them?

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
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Fails to identify development needs in technical capability or does so superficially		Can clearly articulate strengths and development needs in technical capability
Identifies needs but waits for these to be addressed – does not proactively create or seize opportunities to build technical capability		Acts on development needs – creates and seizes opportunities for continuous professional development
Is guarded about own development needs		Is open about own development needs
Is focused on development in the here and now. Is unable to articulate a development plan to support longer term career goals		Considers development for both current role but also future career aspirations
No evidence of really understanding the nature of the industry, the market and the competition		Understand the industry, the market and the competition
Fails to keep self up to date with the necessary knowledge to perform in role		Stays abreast of trends/changes in the market place and applies these to their role
Cannot articulate the key challenges/changes facing the business/industry		Demonstrates a sound appreciation of the medium/ long term challenges facing the business
No strong profile/network/reputation in their field or in the industry – has not capitalised on wider networking opportunities		Has built a strong network and profile in the industry – seen as a thought leader
Lacks essential knowledge of subject area for effective performance in the role		Possesses the knowledge necessary to carry out the role. Demonstrates mastery of their subject areas.
Lacks some of the necessary skills/proficiency for success in the role		Skilled and proficient in their area

Summary of evidence: _____ Rating (1–5): _____

2. Influencing and Persuading

Presents simple, impactful messages in a compelling manner. Changes their emphasis and approach to address resistance, focusing on the value their ideas will bring different stakeholders. Confidently negotiates effective outcomes.

Why this matters for Higher education lecturers: Lecturing is fundamentally an act of influence: making complex ideas accessible, building reasoned argument, persuading students to engage critically. Influencing & Persuading captures the ability to present ideas in compelling ways and adapt approach to address different learners.

Describe a situation where you had to explain something to somebody who did not share your level of understanding on the subject.

- How did you make the message meaningful/accessible?
- What were the main challenges with this communication?
- How did you deal with these? What approach did you take?
- How did you gauge the effectiveness of your communication?

There are times where no one is prepared to listen or it is hard to keep the attention of others. Give me an example of a time when this has happened to you.

- What were the main objections/issues/barriers to others listening?
- How did you overcome these?
- What insight did you get into your audience? How did you get this?
- How did you use this insight to inform your style of communication?

- How did you present your message? What worked well? Less well?
- What was the outcome of the communication?

Describe a situation where you persuaded someone to do something (e.g. accept your point of view/get on board with an idea/commit to buying a product or service).

- How did your opinion contrast with their initial position?
- What was the main point of contention? How did you win them round?
- What was the outcome? What agreement was reached?
- What were the key things you did that made you successful?
- Has there been an occasion when you have been unable to persuade?

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
Fails to convey information in a simple and accessible manner. Uses unnecessary jargon or fails to appreciate the baseline level of understanding of the audience		Aware of the need to keep messages simple and impactful – avoids using jargon and tailors message to the base level understanding of the audience
Presents information without consideration of the needs/ style/preferences of the audience. As such message may lack impact/be less compelling		Considers the style and needs of the audience when communicating. Adjusts style/tone/content to ensure the message is compelling and resonates
Highly logical/rational/factual in approach – no passion or enthusiasm displayed in tone/pace/body language/words when communicating with others		Displays passion and enthusiasm when interacting with others
Fails to emphasise the value that their ideas will bring to each individual stakeholder. Does not sell on an individual/emotive level		Considers the benefits to individual stakeholders and sells on the basis of these. Presents the information of value to them rather than losing this in all of the facts/detail
Loses credibility by presenting imbalanced arguments (e.g. focusing on the pros and disregarding the cons)		Presents a balanced view of pros and cons rather than an overly rosy picture
Fails to pick up on cues from audience (e.g. resistance/ apathy/opposition) or picks up on these but chooses to ignore them and presses on with message regardless		Tuned into the audience and able to pick up cues of disinterest/apathy/opposition/resistance. Confidently surfaces and deals with these
Becomes overly apologetic or deferential when faced with objections/resistance. Lacks conviction.		Handles objections convincingly – displays confidence and conviction when faced with opposition
No evidence on changing emphasis/approach/tone based on insights gained/responses from the audience. Is firmly on transmit rather than receive when communicating		Prepared to change emphasis/tone of communication in the moment in response to insights gained about the audience
No evidence of proactively seeking feedback on effectiveness of communication		Seeks feedback to gauge the effectiveness of communication and applies learning to new situations
No evidence of checking understanding of audience to ensure that messages are landing effectively		Seeks to clarify understanding to ensure that communication has landed effectively
Is less confident in situations requiring negotiation		Confidently negotiates successful outcomes
Enters negotiations without clarity on where concessions can be made and with limited understanding on items of high perceived value to the other party.		Prepares well for negotiation. Understands where concessions can be made and appreciates and uses items of high perceived value.

Summary of evidence: _____ Rating (1–5): _____

3. Analytical Skills

Breaks a problem down into its core elements. Draws on different data sources to inform their thinking, identifying the most pertinent issues within this. Incorporates the emotive elements of a situation into their thinking, before making sound inferences based on the available information.

Why this matters for Higher education lecturers: PSF 2023 emphasises evidence-informed approaches and the use of research and scholarship to enhance practice. Analytical Skills captures the ability to break down disciplinary problems, draw on diverse evidence, and make sound inferences — both in research-active practice and in teaching.

Describe a time when you were faced with a complex problem to solve/the last time you had to analyse a lot of information or data.

- What made the problem complex?
- How did you go about analysing the situation/data?
- What information did you need? Where did the information come from?
- What kind of information is easiest for you to work with/most difficult?
- What were the key issues/angles that needed consideration?
- What information was most relevant?
- How did you ascertain what was relevant?
- What did you learn from the analysis?

Tell me about a time when your analysis into a situation revealed something unexpected or surprising.

- Why was this unexpected/surprising?
- What did you do to uncover it?
- What did you do with this revelation?
- How did it change your response to the situation?
- What lessons did you learn from the process?

Can you tell me about a time where you feel you took the wrong approach to problem solving?

- What led you to take this approach?
- With hindsight, what would have been the better approach?
- What was the outcome?
- What key lessons have you learned about problem solving?

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
Gets overwhelmed by complexity – sees the problem as a whole rather than being able to break it down into component parts		Identifies the core elements/components of a problem. Breaks down complex issues/problems into smaller parts
Takes a rather unstructured approach to analysis – lacks logical and sequential steps		Takes a logical and systematic approach to analysis
Manages the symptoms of the issue rather than seeking to understand the root cause (superficial analysis)		Insightful – able to get to the root cause of issues and tackle these rather than deal with the symptoms
Gets lost in the detail and is unable to identify the pertinent information		Identifies relevant/pertinent information rather than getting lost in the detail
Is narrow in approach – fails to consider a range of angles or draw on different sources of data		Draws on different sources of data to inform their thinking – views issues from a broad range of angles

Fails to integrate data from different sources and spot themes, trends and patterns. Views different pieces of data in isolation		Integrates data from different sources, spotting themes, trends and patterns
Does not move beyond analysis to making interpretations and drawing conclusions from the data		Looks beyond analysing to interpreting the information they are presented with – e.g. identifying implications and causal links
Misinterprets or draws inappropriate conclusions from data		Makes sound inferences based on the information available
Fails to appreciate the people/emotive aspects of a situation. Focuses exclusively on the hard facts		Incorporates how people think feel and behave into their considerations – considers not just the facts but the people/emotive aspects of a given situation

Summary of evidence: _____ Rating (1–5): _____

4. Personal Development

Takes responsibility for their own development, setting clear goals in the process. Seeks out new development opportunities, learning from their successes and failures. Proactively asks others for feedback.

Why this matters for Higher education lecturers: PSF Core Knowledge K5 explicitly requires engagement in CPD and reflection on teaching practice. The role itself sits within a profession where research and teaching are continuously updated. Personal Development captures the proactive approach to learning, feedback-seeking, and adaptation that distinguishes effective HE practice.

Tell me about the last time you identified and proactively pursued a learning and development opportunity?

- How did you identify the opportunity?
- What did you have to do to pursue it?
- What obstacles did you face? How did you overcome these?
- What did you learn? How have you applied this to your work?
- What is next for you in terms of your personal/professional development?
- How does this fit with your broader career/life goals?

Describe what you see as your key strengths and areas for development

- How does your view compare with how others might experience you?
- How do you know? What feedback have you sought from others?
- What are you doing to leverage these strengths?
- How are you planning to address the development needs?
- What will this give you?

Describe a situation where you received negative/ constructive feedback.

- How did it make you feel?
- How have you modified your behaviour in the light of the feedback?
- Can you think of a situation where you have taken feedback personally?
- Why was this? What did you do in this situation?

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
Fails to identify own development needs or does so superficially		Identifies own development needs
Identifies needs but waits for these to be addressed – does not proactively create or seize opportunities		Acts on development needs – creates and seizes opportunities

Lacks the passion and commitment to overcome barriers to personal development		Is passionate about personal development and overcomes barriers to pursuing development opportunities
Is guarded about own strengths and development needs		Is open and able to clearly articulate strengths and development needs
Recognises that there are opportunities for personal development but fails to translate these into clear development goals and plans		Sets self clear development goals
Is focused on development in the here and now. Is unable to articulate a development plan to support longer term career goals		Considers development for both current role but also future career aspirations
Does not seek or is not open to developmental feedback from others		Open to feedback on performance from others
Fails to act on or respond to feedback – rather repeats the same behaviour		Uses feedback to modify or change behaviour to improve performance
Tends to take feedback personally rather than view it as an opportunity to improve and grow		Sees feedback as an opportunity to improve and grow and proactively seeks this from others
Fails to review and rationalise mistakes and use these as opportunities for learning – sees mistakes as negative		Learns from mistakes – uses these as opportunities to learn

Summary of evidence: _____ **Rating (1–5):** _____

5. Customer Focus

Builds effective customer relationships to ensure needs and expectations are understood. Understands the importance of the customer to the business, seeking regular feedback whilst being prepared to say no when needed.

Why this matters for Higher education lecturers: PSF 2023 strengthened its emphasis on inclusion, supporting diverse learners, and equity of opportunity to succeed. Customer Focus captures understanding learner needs, adapting practice to meet them, and seeking feedback — central to the post-2023 direction of UK HE teaching standards.

Give me an example of a time when you provided excellent customer service/went the extra mile for a customer.

- What did you do differently in this situation? Why did you do this?
- What makes this situation stand out for you?
- How does your approach compare to that of your peers?
- What was the outcome? How did you know the customer was satisfied?

At times we all fail to deliver what a customer requires. Can you think of a time when this has happened to you?

- Why were you unable to meet the needs of the customer?
- How did you feel about this? What feedback did you receive?
- How did you respond to the customer's subsequent requests?
- What have you done to prevent the same situation occurring?
- What feedback mechanisms have you put in place to ensure customer satisfaction?

Sometimes customers don't really understand what they want or present requests that will not meet their real need. Tell me about a time when you had to ask questions/listen carefully to clarify the exact nature of the customer's need.

- How did you get to the root of the issue/help the customer articulate their real need?
- How did the customer respond?
- What would have been the impact of you not acting in this way?

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
Is less focused on providing excellent service to customers. Sees customers as a means to an end rather than an end in itself		Provides a friendly, efficient, professional and courteous service to customers
Lacks accountability/responsibility for customer issues. Fails to show personal commitment for resolving customer issues		Takes personal responsibility for customers, prioritising customer satisfaction highly
Fails to see/articulate the link between the customer and the organisation/business. Fails to appreciate the commercial impact of positive/negative PR		Understands the importance of the customer to the organisation/business. Clearly articulates the link between customer satisfaction and business performance
Presents customers with solutions that are based on wants rather than real needs. Is not always honest in dealings with customers		Is honest and authentic in dealings with customers – provides clear recommendations based on insights from the customer
Does not seek to truly understand and ascertain customer needs. Operates more on a "here is my solution, what is your need" basis or focuses more on customer wants rather than needs		Demonstrates a genuine curiosity and interest in the customer. Asks the right questions and listens carefully to the customer to build trust in the relationship and get to the real need
Fails to demonstrate empathy or an appreciation of the impact of their message on the customer. Could do more to put themselves in the shoes of the customer		Demonstrates empathy with customers. Show sensitivity and considers the impact of their message on the customer
Focuses on completing a transaction rather than developing a relationship with the customer		Focuses on developing a customer relationship rather than on completing a transaction
Is not proactive in seeking regular feedback from customers		Seeks regular feedback from customers
May over promise and under-deliver when customers are unrealistic with demands or when requests are not commercially viable. Needs to be able to say no (with integrity) to customers		Will not promise what cannot be delivered and ensures that work with customers is commercially viable. Prepared to say no to customers

Summary of evidence: _____ **Rating (1–5):** _____