findingpotential

COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Finance and investment analysts and advisers

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. 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 Finance and investment analysts and advisers:** CFA Standard V (Investment Analysis, Recommendations, and Actions) requires diligence, reasonable basis, and clear communication of findings. The whole role is built on breaking down complex financial situations, drawing on diverse data sources, and making sound inferences. This is the core craft.

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):** ______

2. 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 Finance and investment analysts and advisers:** The CFA charter requires deep technical mastery; FCA SM&CR fitness/proper test requires ongoing competence. Modelling, regulatory knowledge, market awareness, sector expertise — the technical floor is high and continuous learning is non-negotiable.

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
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):** ________

3. Decision Making

Understands critical success factors and assesses a range of possible options before making a decision. Steps back and seeks alternative perspectives when faced with unfamiliar scenarios. Willing to make decisions without access to all the information. Considers the implications of their decisions beyond the immediate issue.

> **Why this matters for Finance and investment analysts and advisers:** CFA Standard III.C (Suitability) requires recommending appropriate investments under uncertainty. Advisers and analysts make, or support, consequential investment and financial decisions often with incomplete data. Structured assessment of options is fundamental.

Describe a situation where you had to assess a number of possible options prior to making a decision.

- What were the options? Which did you choose?

- What criteria did you use to make the decision?
- What were the pros and cons of the other options?
- What was the outcome?
- What was the business impact of the decision?

Tell me about a time when you felt it was necessary to seek alternative perspectives/refer a decision upwards before taking action.

- What was the context?
- Why did you choose to refer/seek other perspectives?
- What challenges did this add to the decision making process?
- How did this help you/impact the quality of the final decision?
- To what extent do you still seek support/refer in this area?

Tell me about a time where you feel you were too hasty with your decision making/failed to consider the knock on implications of your decision?

- What makes you say that?
- Why did you feel you needed to be hasty/fail to consider consequences?
- What would have been the implications if you had deferred/understood the impact?
- What lessons have you learned from this? How has this informed your approach?

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
Makes decisions without a clear understanding of critical success factors and without clear criteria against which to analyse particular courses of action		Ensures they have clarity on criteria and critical success factors prior to engaging in decision making
Is rather blinkered in decision making – fails to consider the full range of alternatives or to accept that there may be alternative options		Considers a range of alternatives/options when making decisions and objectively assesses the pros and cons of these
Makes decisions without a full understanding of the wider context and the knock on implications		Appreciates the business impact of decisions – understands the wider ramifications and implications
Goes it alone, failing to get support or alternative perspectives where this is required (e.g. in unfamiliar situations/where information is incomplete)		Understands where additional perspectives could support the decision making process and is prepared to seek support and guidance prior to making decision
Fails to apply and adapt learnings from previous experience or trust tacit knowledge when dealing with novel situations		Applies and adapts previous experience to novel situations
Fails to consider a range of angles or the implications of different courses of action. Focuses exclusively on hard facts/quantifiable information at the expense of the emotional/ people aspects of the situation		Considers issues from a range of angles (e.g. cost, risk, impact, benefit, short and long term opportunities, impact on people)
Rushes into decisions – is hasty and often makes decision on the basis of a superficial analysis		Willing to make decisions and take calculated risks on the basis of absent/incomplete information
Shies away from making difficult/contentious decisions. Abdicates responsibility or defers the judgement to others		Is prepared to make and stand by difficult decisions

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

4. Dependability

Conscientious and thorough in their approach to work, delivering what they promise to the necessary standard. Behaves in line with the organisation's values and ethical principles.

> **Why this matters for Finance and investment analysts and advisers:** FCA Conduct Rules 1-2 (act with integrity; act with due skill, care and diligence) and the CFA Standards I-VII overall plus the CISI Code of Conduct converge on personal accountability. Client trust is built on reliability, ethical conduct, and consistent delivery to regulatory and internal standards.

At times we all fail to deliver what's required or struggle to keep our motivation to see things through to completion. Describe a time when this has happened to you?

- Why were you unable to deliver/what caused you to lose motivation?
- How did you feel?
- What did you do to try to overcome the problem?
- What feedback did you receive? What did you learn?
- What have you done to prevent the same situation occurring?

Give an example of a time when you've had to compromise on quality in order to get a task completed on time?

- How did you feel about the compromise on quality?
- What were the issues that you anticipated as a result of this?
- What did you do to address these issues? Who did you consult/inform?
- Can you describe a time when you have not been prepared to compromise on quality/standards and have pulled out all of the stops to deliver to expectation?

Day-to-day, how do you monitor the quality/standard of your work?

- What measures are in place to allow you to do this?
- How useful is the information from the measures?
- How have you used the feedback to assist you in providing and maintaining high quality/standards in your work?

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
Lacks personal accountability – prepared to let things slip or leave issues unresolved where this would require additional/discretionary effort		Takes personal accountability for performance and shows tenacity and commitment in the pursuit of goals. Works hard to self-motivate and maintain motivation
Quickly loses focus/enthusiasm or energy for a project/ activity when the going gets tough		Shows determination to see things through to completion. Remains focused on the task in hand when the going gets tough
Is prepared to cut corners to meet deadlines (or lets deadlines slip in the pursuit of perfection) – no evidence of weighing up the needs by context/ circumstances		Appreciates the balance between delivering to time and delivering to quality standards and consciously works to get the balance between these right
May not deliver on commitments – may over promise or under deliver. Trivialises the importance of delivery and honouring commitments to others		Delivers what they commit to – can be relied upon to deliver on promises
Is focused on quantity rather than quality of output. Completes tasks to tick the box rather than to ensure that quality standards are adhered to		Is focused on standards and quality of output
No evidence of measuring/assessing the quality of outputs either via formal or informal measures		Keeps a check on the quality and standards of work via formal and informal checks and measures

Is prepared to stand by rather than challenge behaviour that is not in line with organisational values. In doing so pays lip service to the values		Is prepared to put self out and challenge behaviour that is not aligned to the values of the business. Takes the values seriously and can make the link between the values and the success of the business
Cannot articulate the organisations values or give examples of how they have role modelled the values through their own behaviour		Seeks to role model the organisations values in all that they do – can provide clear examples of how the values have driven decisions/behaviour

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 Finance and investment analysts and advisers:** CFA Standard III (Duties to Clients — loyalty, prudence, suitability) and the FCA Treating Customers Fairly principle centre the client interest. Whether the client is internal or external, understanding their real needs (often different from stated wants) and advising honestly is what distinguishes the trusted adviser from the technician.

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):** ________