

Human resources and industrial relations officers

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. Collaborative Working

Looks to understand others' perspectives and objectives. Respects different styles/approaches, whilst adapting their own style to enable them to work effectively with others.

Why this matters for Human resources and industrial relations officers: CIPD Profession Map names Valuing people and Working inclusively as core behaviours. HR sits in the middle of every organisational relationship. Understanding diverse perspectives and adapting style to different stakeholders is the daily practice.

Tell me about a time when you proactively sought the views of/engaged others to resolve a business issue.

- How did you ensure that the right people were engaged?
- How did you demonstrate that you had understood their views?
- How did their input inform and shape the final decision?
- What feedback did you receive?
- With hindsight, what might you do differently next time?

Describe a situation where your personal views/objectives were at odds with the team/key people around you?

- How did you react?
- How did you demonstrate you understood/respected their perspective whilst being clear about your own?
- What was the outcome?
- What did you learn about how best to engage with others?

Describe a situation where you have had to work hard to really understand the perspective of another person?

- What was the reason for the lack of understanding?
- What made it difficult to gain this understanding/get under the skin?
- How did you manage this?
- How have you applied the learning from this situation to enhance your interactions with others?

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
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Fails to engage and seek the views of others. Is more directive in approach and therefore may gain compliance rather than commitment to action/ideas		Proactively seeks the views and opinions of others when dealing with business issues – adopts a more collaborative/democratic approach to problem solving
Seeks to be seen to engage rather than actually demonstrating that they have heard the views and ideas of others (e.g. by adjusting their path or shifting their perspective in the light of the information gleaned)		Listens carefully to the thoughts and ideas of others and demonstrates that they have listened to and heard their views (e.g. by shifting own perspective in the light of the information given)
Adopts a “my way or the highway approach” – has strong views and may be less respectful of counter views or arguments		Shares own ideas/opinions willingly whilst recognising and respecting the views and opinions of others
Fails to manage conflict/divergent views or styles and approaches		Effectively manages conflict and potentially divergent views to get positive outcomes for all parties. Appreciates the need to work with others with different styles and approaches to their own
Seeks to be understood rather than truly understand the needs/objectives and perspectives of others. Transmits own views rather than questions to better understand		Takes steps to really understand the goals and objectives of others
Adopts a one style fits all approach. No evidence of adjusting/adapting style based on the needs of the situation and audience		Adapts style effectively based on understanding of the needs and objectives of others
No evidence of reflecting on the impact of their own style or of considering how they might be contributing to the breakdown of working relationships		Aware of the impact of own style on others and the need to check out assumptions they make about others and their style of working/needs/preferences

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

2. 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 Human resources and industrial relations officers: CIPD Profession Map names Ethical practice as the first core behaviour. Employment law compliance, confidentiality, grievance handling — HR work is trust-based and ethically weighty. Reliability and integrity are foundational.

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): _____

3. 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 Human resources and industrial relations officers: CIPD Profession Map names Professional courage & influence as a core behaviour — explicitly the ability to challenge, hold difficult conversations, and shape decisions without formal authority. Policy changes, culture work, restructuring — HR officers influence under significant resistance. This is central.

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):** _____

4. 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 Human resources and industrial relations officers: CIPD core knowledge areas include Analytics & creating value, Evidence-based practice, and People analytics. Case patterns, workforce data, employee survey themes — modern HR depends on reading the data and identifying real issues beneath symptoms.

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): _____

5. Resilience

Remains calm and maintains a positive attitude when faced with difficult circumstances. Thrives under pressure, remaining focused despite distractions. Quickly recovers from setbacks.

Why this matters for Human resources and industrial relations officers: Holding confidential information, being a lightning rod for organisational tension, sustained difficult conversations (performance, grievances, restructuring) — the role demands emotional steadiness over time. CIPD's Passion for learning and Insights focused behaviours both implicitly require this baseline.

Describe a situation where you felt that the demands being placed on you were unreasonable/excessive

- What did you do to help manage the pressure of the demands?
- How successful were you? How do you know (feedback)?
- What was the impact on your performance?
- How did you minimise any negative impact on your performance?
- With hindsight what have you done differently when faced with demanding/pressurised situations?

Tell me about a crisis (at work) you have handled recently.

- What caused it?
- What did you need to do to resolve it?
- How were you feeling at the time?
- How did you manage your emotions? How effective were you?

Give me an example of a significant setback that you have experienced in your role/career to date.

- How did this come about?
- What did you do? Why?
- To what extent were others aware of your feelings?
- How do you feel about the situation now?
- What would have helped you to pick yourself up more quickly?

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
Becomes ruffled or emotional when under pressure – loses control when under stress		Remains calm and collected in difficult circumstances. Keeps control in stressful situations
Takes eye off the ball and can become distracted/ preoccupied when under pressure to the detriment of performance		Maintains performance under pressure. Indeed thrives in pressurised situations
Uses a limited range of coping strategies or maladaptive coping strategies when under pressure (e.g. poor diet and little exercise)		Adopts a range of effective coping strategies to deal with pressure (e.g. manages symptoms, re-frames, tackles the source)
Fails to consider or spot signs of pressure in self		Recognises signs of stress/pressure in self
Gives up easily – does not show tenacity when faced with setbacks		Persists with a course of action despite setbacks – shows tenacity in the pursuit of goals
Tends to dwell on disappointments or setbacks which can interfere with focus and performance		Remains a positive outlook in the face of setbacks and disappointments – sees them as an inevitable part of the process. Learns and moves on
Loses focus when under pressure		Maintains focus when under pressure
Focuses on the wrong things – gets caught up in distractions and loses focus/attention		Manages distractions in the working environment and keeps self focused on performance goals

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