

Solicitors

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 Solicitors: SRA Statement of Solicitor Competence Section B 'Technical legal practice' covers legal research, drafting documents, advocacy, and applying legal expertise. Technical Capability captures depth of legal knowledge, mastery of practice areas, and staying current with developments in the law.

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. 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 Solicitors: SRA Section B also requires solicitors to obtain relevant facts, undertake legal research, and develop and advise on options. Analytical Skills captures the ability to break down complex legal problems, draw on diverse sources, and make reasoned inferences from incomplete information.

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): _____

3. Personal Leadership

Takes responsibility for their own actions. Proactively takes on additional responsibilities and drives their own performance. Lives their own values, actively acknowledges and seeks feedback from others.

Why this matters for Solicitors: SRA Section A — 'Ethics, professionalism and judgement' — is listed first and starts with 'Act honestly and with integrity, in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements and the SRA Standards'. Personal Leadership captures this self-driven integrity and ethical accountability. Without it, technical competence is undermined by professional misconduct risk.

Give me an example of a time when you have been required to justify an action/decision that you had taken.

- Why were you required to do this?
- How did you feel about this?
- What approach did you take?
- What lessons did you learn from this experience?

Tell me about a time when you acted over and above what was expected of you in your day to day role/took on additional tasks and responsibilities.

- What made you take this on? What was it about you?
- How did you manage to deliver this on top of your day job?
- How did you keep yourself motivated/driven?
- What support did you need/get? How did you enlist this?
- What was the outcome? What feedback did you get?

What would you say are your core personal values?

- How are these manifest in the way that you work?
- Have you ever had a situation where your values/principles felt crossed or compromised? Tell me about it? How did you respond?
- With hindsight how would you approach this situation differently?
- How do your values support you at work/help you to perform? (strengths)
- How might these values get in the way/hinder you? (development needs)

NEGATIVE INDICATORS	1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5	POSITIVE INDICATORS
Does not hold self personally accountable for actions/decision/performance. May make excuses for mistakes or blame others/systems/processes		Takes personal responsibility for performance and actions
Quickly backs down when decisions/actions are challenged or becomes overly defensive about chosen path. Fails to appreciate the opportunity for learning		Has the confidence to defend decisions/actions – does this without getting defensive. Can provide a clear rationale for actions but can see alternative views
Does as much as is necessary. Shies away from taking on additional tasks or responsibility		Proactively takes on additional responsibilities/ is prepared to go “beyond the call of duty” for the greater good
Is unable to clearly articulate their drives and core values – does not appreciate what is important to them and how this might positively or negatively influence their behaviour and performance		Is self-aware – understands their motives, values and drivers and how these influence their behaviour in situations (both positively and negatively)
Behaves in a manner that is less consistent with their core values or responds in a less constructive way when faced with situations where these feel compromised/crossed		Behaves in a manner that is consistent with their core values – is prepared to take a stand/responds constructively when these feel compromised
Fails to articulate or is not prepared to admit areas of strength and areas in need of development		Able to openly and clearly articulate strengths and areas for development
Fails to proactively seek feedback on their behaviour/performance/effectiveness. Waits for feedback to be given to them and in the absence of this carries on regardless		Actively seek feedbacks from others on their performance and the impact of their behaviour/style
Disregards feedback from others. Explains feedback away and justifies rather than using it to improve their performance/approach		Responds positively to feedback from others – acknowledges and responds by making the necessary modifications to style and approach

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

4. 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 Solicitors: Section B requires effective advocacy and negotiation. Section C requires the solicitor to communicate persuasively with clients and across the legal process. Influencing & Persuading captures the ability to present compelling messages, change emphasis to address resistance, and negotiate effective outcomes.

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): _____

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 Solicitors: SRA Section C — Working with other people — emphasises establishing and maintaining client relationships, responding to concerns, informing clients of progress and risks. Customer Focus captures understanding what clients actually need (often beyond what they ask for) and managing the relationship over the matter's life.

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):** _____