Guidance in relation to the use of The Personal Qualities Framework (PQF) for Job Applications

Background

SOCA has developed its own competency framework, based upon the National Integrated Competency Framework, but specifically designed to meet the requirements of SOCA - the Personal Qualities Framework (PQF). The competencies within the PQF are supported with a behavioural framework that defines the expected performance standards at each SOCA grade.

The PQF comprises four overarching Personal Qualities; Working with Others, Achieving Results, Leadership and Making a Difference. These qualities are made up of a number of behaviours, of which there are ten.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Quality</th>
<th>Behavioural Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working with Others</td>
<td>Communication, Teamwork &amp; Partnership, Respect for Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving Results</td>
<td>Problem Solving, Personal Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Strategic Thinking, People Management, Negotiating &amp; Influencing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a Difference</td>
<td>Innovation, Change</td>
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</table>

Each behaviour has four levels (A to D) with each level representing a greater degree of complexity and/or responsibility. The level at which each behaviour must be displayed is defined for each SOCA Grade.

Job Applications

As part of SOCA’s recruitment process, when applying for a new post (either on lateral transfer, or on promotion) you will be required to complete an application form; part of which will include demonstrating how you meet the behavioural requirements of the post, as outlined on the role profile.

How do I demonstrate that I meet the behavioural requirements of the post?

There are high-level definition of each of the four personal qualities and the ten behaviours. This will provide you with a general understanding of the types of activities that each behaviour is intended to encompass.

As previously mentioned, each behaviour has a total of four levels (with the exception of Respect for Others, which is set at Level A for all SOCA Grades). In the appendices of the PQF document, you will find lists of positive behavioural indicators for each level of each behaviour. These indicators are not an exhaustive list, but are designed to give a flavour of the types of activities/actions that would typically be expected at each level.

Throughout selection applicants would be expected to demonstrate evidence as to how they demonstrate the behavioural competence required.

Competency based questions will sometimes be used and these too are seeking evidence of skills that are used in the job and often start with "Describe a situation where you had to ......" or "Give an example of when you ....".

It's not enough to just say what you can offer. Just like a jury in court a selector will need convincing. You do this by giving evidence.
Selectors are less interested in what you've done but how you've done it.

For example, when have you planned and organised an event, taken the initiative or lead a team. What specifically did you do? The actions, tasks and considerations that YOU undertook. How do you cope with failure? Do you give up, or keep trying until you succeed. Or perhaps try an alternative route to your goal. It is useful to keep a log of what you consider key examples of your achievements (for internal applicants this can and should be done within the SOCA Personal Development Scheme) so you can remember any evidence you can use. Think about the examples that you have and try and identify for yourself what behaviour you think this evidences against the competency that is being tested.

Hints and tips

When applying........

- Be very clear about what behavioural competence you are being required to evidence – read and re-read the application instructions.
- The main body of the application should be used to give examples that demonstrate that you have the required competencies and are suitable for the post.
- Selectors will only be able to assess and score the evidence contained within the application. They cannot bring their personal knowledge of candidates or particular situations to add weight to the evidence. It is only what you have written that will be assessed.
- The behavioural competence for the job will be contained within the Role Profile. There will normally be between four and six competencies (this can vary), depending on the level of the job. The attributes required by the competencies listed can be viewed on the Personal Qualities Framework. For each of the competencies, you need to choose ideally one (or at the most, two) specific, relevant example(s) of a particular situation that helps you to tell us where you have demonstrated that particular competency.
- The example you choose will depend upon the kind of the job for which you are applying, but try to use examples that are as closely related as possible to the job for which you are applying. Your examples should be work-based examples where possible although you might find suitable examples from other areas of your life, particularly if you have not worked for a while or if this is your first job.
- You might find it helpful to ask colleagues or friends for good examples. Other people can often remember better than ourselves when we have done something particularly well, but you must use examples about you and the application form should be completed in your own words.
- It is important that you are specific when writing about what you have done – do not describe what you do or have done in general terms. Try to choose an actual event, project or achievement. These may include, for example, setting up a department or team, re-organising a filing system, developing and implementing a policy, managing a particular change within the team, dealing with a difficult issue or complaint, solving a day-to-day problem.
- In each example you need to show clearly what your personal contribution was. You should avoid using “we” and describe what you did. You will need to tell us clearly:
  - What was the SITUATION OR ISSUE?
  - What did YOU PERSONALLY do, what actions did you take and how did you do it?
  - What was the OUTCOME – What difference did your actions make?
- At short listing, each application will be considered specifically against the competence requirements for the role applied for. Make sure your evidence does not just show how good you are at your current role, but how this demonstrates your competence for the post applied for.
Using STAR

"Give an example of a situation where you solved a problem in a creative way"

**Situation** During my time at University I undertook a 6 week placement working as a holiday rep in Spain.

**Task** I was responsible for organising the evening entertainment; normally I would hire a local band and provide a BBQ.

**Action** On this particular occasion the band were taken ill, leaving 60 guests waiting to be entertained.

**Result** As it was my responsibility to keep the guests entertained, I explained that there had been a change of plan and there would be a disco instead. I used my i-pod and the PA system to play music; I also invited the guests to play music from their own i-pods, the evening turned out to be a great success.

The focus should always be on you even if the situation involved a group, interviewers will want to know what was your specific role in achieving the desired result.

We would suggest that you do not “signpost” – Context, Action, Situation, Task etc as this will take up unnecessary space, but just use these as a model to design your answer around.

**Try to give quantifiable results** if possible.

- "during my time as chair of the group, membership rose by 20"
- "we raised £200 for charity"
- "my performance improved from 55% to 65%"

You can't always do this, but it gives a much better impression of your achievement.

- If the result was negative, then say what you learned from the experience and what you would do differently next time.
- The examples you give can be from work, study or personal life – though you should take care to review the application to see whether particular experience has been asked for. For example, “ideally examples should be work related and within the last 3 years”. A good starting point is to "brainstorm" everything you've done in your life in the past few years. You may be surprised! But make sure you concentrate on the relevance of the example and the evidence to the question of competency requirement.
- Don't go into too much background detail - keep to the point! Remember the assessor is looking at what you actually did and you will not receive a high assessment for an example which contains a vast amount of description about a situation or all the people in attendance at a meeting and very little about your contribution. Often there isn't enough room to use the CAR approach, but it's still worth keeping in mind when you prepare your draft answer.
- Think of the most relevant examples, rather than the most "impressive". If you are asked to describe a time when you had to give a presentation in front of the public, a seminar paper which involved research and planning will carry more weight than "presenting a bouquet to the Queen when I was four years old"!

We hope that helps a little and GOOD LUCK!
### PQF: High level definitions

#### Working with Others

Involves co-operating and collaborating effectively with colleagues and partners. This will be achieved through effective communication, a flexible approach and mutual respect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability to communicate information and ideas appropriately using a variety of methods available. Uses Language and style of communication appropriate to the situation and audience. Displays listening, comprehension and understanding skills.</td>
<td>Works collaboratively with partners, colleagues and customers. Develops strong working relationships with internal and external stakeholders to achieve common goals. Breaks down barriers between groups and involves others in decisions as appropriate.</td>
<td>Considers the opinions, circumstances and feelings of others, promotes equality, good relations and positive attitude towards others. Treats everyone with fairness and respect and adheres to the principles of Inclusion, Diversity and Equality.</td>
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#### Achieving Results

Involves turning strategy into action through planning and prioritising activities, monitoring progress and identifying improvements. It includes taking responsibility for resolving problems in an honest, logical and decisive manner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Problem Solving</th>
<th>5. Personal Accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gathers and analyses information from a variety of sources, identifies issues and proposes appropriate solutions.</td>
<td>Demonstrates accountability for overall service delivery, displays commitment and perseverance Acts with a high degree of integrity.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Leadership

Describes consistently taking a broader perspective, inspires others by acting as role model, communicates goals, creates a shared vision for the future, provides direction, motivates achievement, champions the development of others, persuades and influences to achieve outcomes satisfactory to all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Takes a broad perspective and considers impact and consequences to achieve advantage.</td>
<td>Actively encourages and supports the development of others. Sets goals and ensures others perform to their full potential and meet required standards, motivates others to achieve.</td>
<td>Persuades and influences key stakeholders using logic and reason. Sells the benefits of proposals and negotiates to find acceptable solutions.</td>
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### Making a Difference

Involves taking positive action to further SOCA’s capability through building knowledge, developing and using new techniques, recognising and responding to the need for change and focusing on activities that contribute to organisational aims.

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies and implements new ways of working to benefit SOCA. Encourages creativity and actively seeks the ideas and input of others.</td>
<td>Recognises and responds to the need for change to improve organisational efficiency and support SOCA’s aims.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## PQF Grade Matrix

The following table below provides a summary of PQF behaviours by SOCA grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PQF - BEHAVIOURS</th>
<th>DD</th>
<th>SG1</th>
<th>SG2</th>
<th>SG3</th>
<th>SG4</th>
<th>SG5</th>
<th>SG6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORKING WITH OTHERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork &amp; Partnership</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for Others</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACHEIVING RESULTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Accountability</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Thinking</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Management</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating &amp; Influencing</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAKING A DIFFERENCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendices for SOCA Grade 5 Generic Officers

#### Communication – Level C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability to communicate information and ideas appropriately using a variety of methods available. Uses language and style of communication appropriate to the situation and audience.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicates appropriately with a variety of stakeholders including external partners, teams and individuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Communicates in a way that is understandable and meaningful to everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adapts communication style to suit the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supports arguments and recommendations effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Delivers difficult messages sensitively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ensures that important messages are communicated and understood within the Business Area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Teamwork and Partnership – Level C

## Behaviour definition

Works collaboratively with partners, colleagues and customers. Develops strong working relationships with internal and external stakeholders to achieve common goals. Breaks down barriers between groups and involves others in decisions as appropriate.

## Level definition

Maintains working relationships with existing partners. Works effectively within a team.

## Positive indicators

- Sets up teams or working groups and involves them in achieving goals.
- Gets commitment from stakeholders by consultation and involvement.
- Supports team members. Shows interest in each member of their team and is aware of their personal needs and circumstances.
- Develops good relationships and cooperation within the team.
- Actively promotes the interest of the organisation to our partners.
- Develops partner relationships and seeks to understand the key priorities of stakeholders.
- Ensures that our partners are satisfied with the service they receive.
## Respect for others – Level A

### Behaviour definition

Considers the opinions, circumstances and feelings of others, promotes equality, good relations and positive attitude towards others. Treats everyone with fairness and respect and adheres to the principles of Inclusion, Diversity and Equality.

### Positive indicators

- Actively promotes an inclusive environment which values equality of opportunity and diversity.
- Role models the highest standards of behaviour.
- Challenges inappropriate attitudes, language and behaviour that are abusive, aggressive or discriminatory.
- Acknowledges and respects a broad range of social and cultural customs, beliefs and values within the law.
- Demonstrates mutual respect tolerance and integrity.
- Listens to and values others’ views and opinions.
## Problem Solving – Level C

### Behaviour definition

Gathers and analyses information from a variety of sources, identifies issues and proposes appropriate solutions.

### Level definition

Solves complex, work-related problems in an effective manner.

### Positive indicators

- Demonstrates ability to solve complex problems.
- Gathers information from a range of sources to identify problems and resolve issues within business area.
- Makes sure that decisions are made using as much reliable and accurate information as possible.
- Carries out research to identify relevant facts that are not immediately available.
- Assesses and takes account of risk when making decisions.
- Shows an ability to identify risk, including information risk, and takes action to manage it.
### Personal Accountability – Level C

#### Behaviour definition

Demonstrates accountability for overall service delivery, displays commitment and perseverance. Acts with a high degree of integrity.

#### Level definition

Is accountable for team performance and success. Provides support and contributes to the performance of the business area. Manages own workload and, where applicable, the workload of others.

#### Positive indicators

- Takes ownership for the work within the team to deliver to time, and agreed quality standards.
- Drives own personal development and develops own skills and knowledge.
- Takes personal responsibility for own actions.
- Is willing to take on responsibility and works to overcome obstacles, to ensure delivery of targets and achievement of results.
- Responds logically and decisively in difficult situations.
- Ensures that team understand the standards of professionalism expected of them.
- Abides by the law, policies and procedures.
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<td>Takes a broad perspective and considers impact and consequences to achieve advantage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates an understanding of SOCA strategy. Understands and supports SOCA’s vision.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive indicators</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Understands and supports SOCA’s strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keeps up with developments in own and other parts of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understands how own role contributes to the goals of the whole organisation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## People Management – Level D

### Behaviour definition

Actively encourages and supports the development of others. Sets goals and ensures others perform to their full potential and meet required standards, motivates others to achieve.

### Level definition

Takes ownership of own performance and development

### Positive indicators

- Sets high performance standards for self (and others - where individual is in a position that holds line management responsibility).
- Improves own job related knowledge.
- Takes ownership for personal development.
### Negotiating and Influencing – Level C

#### Behaviour definition

Persuades and influences key stakeholders using logic and reason. Sells the benefits of proposals and negotiates to find acceptable solutions.

#### Level definition

Persuades and influences peers and managers.

#### Positive indicators

- Successfully persuades and influences through building support and considering the reactions of stakeholders.
- Sells the benefits of a decision or situation to others.
- Uses logic and reason to persuade and influence others.
- Identifies clear aims in negotiations and achieves satisfactory outcomes.
- Handles objections by acknowledging issues and suggesting alternatives.
# Innovation – Level D

## Behaviour definition

Identifies and implements new ways of working to benefit SOCA. Encourages creativity and actively seeks the ideas and input of others.

## Level definition

Takes responsibility for building own knowledge. Supports innovation and develops innovative ideas.

## Positive indicators

- Uses knowledge to assess the importance and relevance of information.
- Proposes new ideas in relation to own work.
- Keeps abreast of new development and initiatives outside the organisation.
- Supports and tries out new ideas and initiatives with enthusiasm.
- Contributes to innovative ideas within own team.
- Seeks to learn, improve and update knowledge.
- Drives own personal development. Improves own job related knowledge.
# Change – Level D

## Behaviour definition

Recognises and responds to the need for change to improve organisational efficiency and support SOCA’s aims.

## Level definition

Open to and willing to accept change

## Positive indicators

- Is willing to accept change and has a positive attitude towards change.
- Is flexible and responsive to change as required.
- Tries new ideas and initiatives with enthusiasm.
- Puts self forward to undertake tasks and additional responsibilities for the benefit of the organisation.
- Suggests changes to existing systems and other initiatives to achieve improvements.