



Key Competencies at Concordia

A reference guide for management and staff

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide managers and supervisors with a practical tool to assist them in determining the skills, knowledge, and abilities that an individual would need to have and the behaviours that he or she would need to demonstrate in order to fulfil a specific role in a department or unit. The document will also assist individuals in understanding what skills the employer is looking for and what types of behaviour typically demonstrate them. These specific sets of skills and behaviours are referred to as competencies.

Individuals possess different competencies, developed or demonstrated at different levels. Positions are comprised of various activities and responsibilities requiring different knowledge, skills, and behaviors. It is essential to establish a match between the competencies demonstrated by an individual and those required to fulfil his or her role in the department or unit and meet set objectives.

For recruitment and selection purposes, we identify competencies that are required to carry out duties and responsibilities; we then assess individuals' levels of competence with respect to these in order to have a basis for making a decision regarding the likelihood of success. The basic assumption is that individuals who demonstrate specific job-required competencies will perform better and be more likely to succeed in their role. The same reasoning must apply when probation or trial period evaluations are performed.

This document defines twelve competencies that have been identified as critical to achieving position and department objectives and results. For each competency, we have provided a definition and examples of positive behaviour by which an individual demonstrates the competency. Because people at different levels of the organization demonstrate a given competency in different ways, there is a gradation in the examples of behaviour that we provided in order to reflect these differences.

The guide should be used by supervisors when

- preparing job profiles and postings
- planning and conducting interviews
- evaluating employees' contribution during probation or trial period evaluations
- identifying own and employees' training and developmental needs (IDP)

Employees will find this guide useful when

- describing their competencies in job applications
- preparing for selection interviews
- preparing for trial or probation evaluation meetings
- identifying training and developmental needs (IDP)

Additional information is available in the Employment and Employee Development section on the Human Resources and Employee Relations web site.

1. Client Service Orientation

Definition:

↳ Client Service orientation implies helping or serving others in order to meet their needs. It means focusing on discovering these needs and figuring out how to best meet them. The term client refers to both internal and external clients.

Behaviours:

1. Clearly establishes mutual expectations with clients to ensure satisfaction. Gives clients all the information they need and offers service beyond the client's expectations.
2. Personally commits to advancing a client's request or correcting client service problems. When possible, remains available or spends extra time with the client, especially when the client is going through a critical period.
3. Tries to identify the real needs of the client, that is, those not necessarily expressed at the outset, and matches these needs with customized products or services.
4. Works to establish a long-term relationship with clients: tries to give them durable benefits. May become their primary advisor and accept more difficult conditions to build a longer-term relationship.

2. Conceptual Thinking

Definition:

↳ Understands a situation or a problem by putting the pieces together, seeing the large picture. Identifies patterns or connections between situations that are not obviously related; identifies key or underlying issues in complex situation.

Behaviours:

1. Uses rules of thumb, common sense, and past experiences to identify problems or situations.
2. Sees crucial differences between current situation and things that have happened before.
3. Applies and modifies complex concepts or methods appropriately.
4. Identifies useful relationships between complex data from unrelated areas.
5. Identifies problems and situations not obvious to others and not learned from previous education or experience.

3. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Definition:

✎ Critical thinking is the ability to break a situation down into smaller pieces to identify its key or underlying issues. It includes not only organizing the parts of a problem systematically and comparing all of its aspects, but also figuring out cause-and-effect relationships (if...then...) that can help solve it. It also involves using rigorous logic and methods to find realistic solutions.

Behaviours:

1. Analyses basic relationships between a few parts of a problem or situation; makes causal links (A causes B) and pro-and-con lists to make simple decisions.
2. Analyses relationships between several parts of a problem or situation. Breaks down relatively complex tasks into more manageable parts. Recognizes more subtle causal links. Generally anticipates obstacles and thinks of the next step or about alternatives.
3. Breaks down very complex, multi-dimensional problems or processes into key parts. Uses sophisticated techniques, such as strategic planning and flow charts, to solve problems or improve operations.
4. Thinks of totally new concepts to rework the way things are done and to solve problems. Also experiments with several multi-faceted concepts or theories.

4. Developing Others

Definition:

↳ Fosters the learning or development of one or several people; sends people to training or developmental programs that exceed statutory or organizational requirements. Provides learning and developmental opportunities through committee work, special projects, or assignments in order for the employee to acquire additional skills and increase expertise.

Behaviours:

1. Expresses positive expectations of others even in difficult cases; believes others can and want to learn.
2. Gives directions or demonstrations with reasons or rationale included as a training strategy.
3. Identifies training or developmental needs.
4. Gives negative feedback in behavioural rather than personal terms and expresses positive expectations for future performance or gives individualized suggestions for improvement.

5. Flexibility

Definition:

↳ Flexibility is the ability to work effectively in a variety of situations and with various individuals or groups. It entails understanding and appreciating different and opposing perspectives on an issue, adapting one's approach to the changes at hand, and easily accepting such changes, be they in one's own duties or in the whole University's direction.

Behaviours:

1. Readily accepts to change one's work or schedule or to replace a colleague whenever the need arises. Understands that other people's points of view are as good and reasonable as one's own.
2. Applies procedures flexibly where context allows; for example, alters normal procedures to fit a specific situation or to meet a client's needs.
3. Adapts one's own plans; agrees to change an overall plan or goal in response to a new situation.
4. Introduces important changes to meet the needs of a specific situation; oversees large-scale changes such as the amalgamation or abolishment of services and of programs.

6. Information Seeking

Definition:

- ☞ Information seeking is driven by an underlying desire to know more about things, people, or issues, beyond that required in the job. This competency may include searching extensively for exact information, solving problems by asking a series of questions, or stockpiling information that may be of future use.

Behaviours:

1. Obtains basic answers from the people who are present. Asks questions such as: What happened? Who's involved? When did it happen?
2. Seeks out other people to obtain basic answers. Finds and questions those closest to the problem even though they may not be in immediate surroundings.
3. Actively looks for the root of a problem or situation. Finds out why something happened by asking open-ended questions such as Who? How? Why? Which?
4. Contacts others to better understand the why. Consults persons not directly affected by the situation to tap their perspective, background information, experience, etc.
5. Complements consultations by systematic research; uses different ways of obtaining data or feedback.
6. Sets up procedures or systems to collect information constantly: holds informal meetings, talks to people in their office, establishes a network of people to get information regularly.

7. Job Knowledge/Skill Acquisition

Definition:

- ☞ Possesses a body of job-related knowledge (technical, professional, or managerial) and is motivated to expand, use, and share work-related knowledge and skills.

Behaviours:

1. Has the functional knowledge and skills required to fulfil the assigned role at a high level; for example, has thorough knowledge of Word, is able to set priorities, always meets deadlines, understands processes, demonstrates good writing skills.)
2. Acts to keep skills and knowledge current; easily digests and assimilates new information and technology.
3. Shows curiosity by exploring beyond the immediate field.
4. Volunteers to help others resolve work-related problems and is a credible source of technical or professional information.
5. Takes courses or teaches oneself new subjects (related to work); deals comfortably with concepts and complexity.
6. Acts as a change agent to diffuse new technology or job-related knowledge.

8. Planning and Organizing

Definition:

↳ Accurately estimates length and difficulty of tasks and projects and sets clear objectives, goals, and measures. Develops coherent and effective work plans, adjusts for problems and obstacles, meets deadlines, and evaluates results. Also, figures out the processes and means to get things done: uses and establishes effective work methods, organizes people and activities, and combines tasks to get more out of fewer resources.

Behaviours:

1. Identifies key activities and relationships in a process. Divides projects into manageable process steps.
2. Attends to a broader range of activities than others and gets more done in less time.
3. Develops and establishes schedules, assignments, and action plans, and shares them with team members. Sets up and maintains systems of information.
4. Orchestrates multiple activities at once to achieve a goal. Identifies resources necessary to get things done and uses them effectively.
5. Anticipates obstacles and develops contingency plans; demonstrates excellent judgment and flexibility in adjusting and adapting initial strategies and tactics as required.
6. Integrates planning efforts across work units.

9. Relationship Building and Interpersonal Skills

Definition:

↳ Works to build or maintain friendly, constructive, effective relationships or networks of contacts with people who are, or might some day be, able to help achieve work-related goals. Relates well to people at all levels and builds appropriate rapport with both internal and external contacts and clients.

Behaviours:

1. Establishes rapport easily.
2. Uses tact, diplomacy, and discretion.
3. Perceives the moods and feelings of others; understands the attitudes, interests, needs, and perspectives of others.
4. Practices attentive and active listening; wants to understand others.
5. Remains calm and composed under pressure; can defuse even high-tension situations comfortably; reacts in a mature manner in conflict situations.
6. Networks or establishes friendly relations with many people who may some day be called for information or other assistance. Consciously works at building rapport; extends oneself to build rapport.

10. Result Orientation

Definition:

↳ Meets or exceeds a standard of excellence, set by others or self, based on:

- own past performance
- an objective measure
- the performance of others
- challenging goals
- someone's previous accomplishments

Behaviours:

1. Works to meet a standard set by management.
2. Puts in the time and effort needed to get things done.
3. Pursues everything with energy, drive, and a need to finish.
4. Sets challenging* goals for self or others and acts to reach them.
5. Takes ownership of assignments with a view to making things happen.
6. Maximizes the need to act versus sustained analysis; takes calculated risks.
7. Accelerates decision making while assuring risks are minimized.
8. Acts as role model and coach in driving for results.

* **Challenging** means that there is about a 50-50 chance of actually achieving the goal – it is a definite stretch, but not unrealistic or impossible.

11. Self-Control

Definition:

↳ Self-Control is the ability to cap one's emotions to avoid negative reactions when provoked, when faced with opposition or hostility, or when working under stress. It also includes the ability to stay focused despite prolonged stress.

Behaviours:

1. Responds calmly to spur-of-the-moment stress.
2. When feeling strong emotions (anger, extreme frustration, or intense stress), holds these emotions back and continues to talk or act calmly.
3. Successfully manages more sustained stress. Contains the effects of strong emotions or stress over time; works well despite continued pressure.
4. Knows how to use special techniques or activities to manage emotions or stress.
5. Responds constructively and calms others. Not only controls oneself but also takes action to resolve the cause of the stress or emotions.
6. Tries to craft thorough solutions to stress-inducing problems.

12. Teamwork and Cooperation

Definition:

- ↳ Teamwork and cooperation call for a strong willingness to work closely, as part of a team, with colleagues or with other employees toward a common goal (task force, special issue) as opposed to working in competition with others.

Behaviours:

1. Shares information and cooperates. Regularly informs other team members of both the events and the actions affecting the group.
2. Supports the team's decisions and willingly does a share of the work.
3. Creates team spirit by speaking positively of others. Speaks highly of team members to promote a friendly climate and strong morale; shows confidence in others; recognizes their ability to meet expectations and to contribute effectively to the team's duties.
4. Strengthens team spirit by asking everyone to contribute. Prompts others to play an active role on the team.
5. Wants to learn from others; seeks ideas and opinions not only to make decisions and draft plans but also to promote cooperation.
6. Is the main catalyst in the team's vibrancy. Encourages team members to discuss concerns and conflicts openly rather than covering them up or overlooking them; knows how to solve conflicts to everyone's benefit.