

# CORE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

## PRACTICAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CANDIDATES

### HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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This guide supports candidates in understanding the OECD's approach to panel interviews. It outlines the interview process and provides practical guidance and advice to support candidates in their preparation to help candidates get the most out of the interview process and have a positive experience.



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# OECD Core Competency Framework

The OECD Core Competency Framework is a model that describes **behavioural and leadership excellence** in the Organisation. Closely linked to our values of **Courtesy, Dignity, Respect and Non-Discrimination; Loyalty and Independence; Impartiality; Tact, Discretion and Confidentiality**; and **Integrity and Accountability**, it provides both structure and a common language that underpins all HR processes and supports our HR Strategy.

The Core Competency Framework forms one of three pillars of recruitment and assessment. Core competencies are assessed, in conjunction with other relevant factors to determine the ability of

a candidate or staff member to perform in the function. These include **Organisational needs** such as technical skills and diversity as well as **OECD Values** and the **OECD Ethics Framework**.

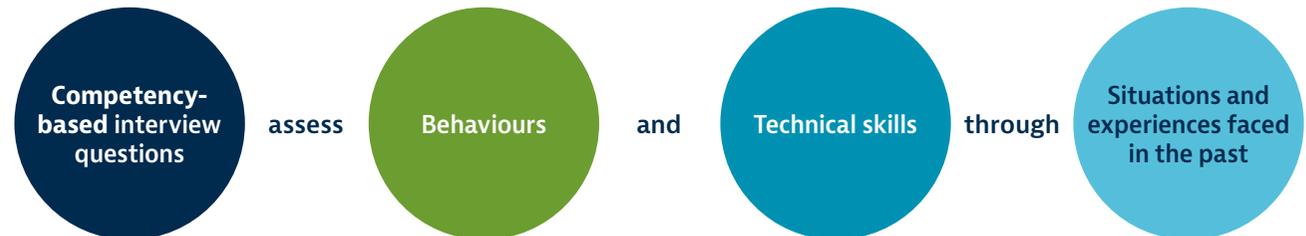
OECD staff are expected to demonstrate the appropriate behaviours as well as technical skills, knowledge, experience and expertise to be successful. The Framework is designed to **support understanding** as well as **consistent, fair, objective and transparent decision-making** across different HR processes. It is the cornerstone of recruitment processes, supports performance management and is integral when considering mobility and career progression.



## Competency-Based Interviews

The OECD seeks to attract applications from candidates from all of our Member counties. We employ a competency-based approach to interviewing which supports the standardised, objective, fair and transparent evaluation of candidates. Competency-based interviews, also known as behavioural interviews, consider how a candidate has approached situations and applied behaviours and skills in past experiences. They are based on the premise that past behaviours are a strong indicator of future performance.

The questions asked during the interview will support the objective evaluation of both core competencies (behaviours) and technical skills.



## Why does the OECD use competency-based interviews?

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Competency-based interviews provide clarity and transparency around expected behaviours and they allow you to determine if your values and behaviours are aligned with the OECD. They allow you to demonstrate your knowledge, skills, attitude and motivation using evidence from current or previous roles.

Competency-based interviews provide a number of benefits:

- They are aligned with the specific requirements of the role and allow candidates to provide evidence that their behaviours and skills are aligned to the specific position.
- They provide more consistency in a recruitment process and ensure fairness to all candidates.
- They standardise interviews across teams and ensure that there is cohesion in the Organisation.
- They are a good predictor of job success.
- They provide an objective and evidence-based method of evaluating candidates.
- They help to minimise bias by focussing on key behaviours, skills and attitudes, rather than demographics or background.

## What is a competency-based interview?

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Competency-based interviews focus on evaluating behaviours, skills and abilities through previous experiences to predict future performance. You will be asked to recall specific situations from previous experiences and demonstrate what you did, how you did it, what the results were and what you learned from the experience. There are no trick questions.

Questions will be linked to the job and are based on situations that someone in the role would face. This helps the OECD ensure that hiring decisions are based on concrete evidence of past performance rather than only qualifications or interview performance.



# Interview Guidance

## What to expect from the interview

While interview questions will vary from interview to interview, the following criteria are standard for all panel interviews at the OECD.



Panel interviews are conducted exclusively online via a video conferencing application such as Zoom or Teams to ensure fair and equal assessment of all candidates, regardless of location.



Interviews typically last around 45 minutes.



The interview will consist of five or six questions including an introductory question. All candidates interviewed for the same role are asked the same questions.



The interview panel is composed of three to five evaluators and is diverse in terms of gender and nationality composition.



Interview questions are tailored to the job description and competency mastery levels are appropriate to the grade and function.



The panel may use follow-up questions. This is an opportunity to expand upon, refine and explain your example in more detail.



Keep your answers structured, logical, concise and to the point. Panel members will ask you for more information if they require further evidence.



Avoid reading a script from a document or on-screen. You may find it helpful to have brief notes in front of you of the main points you wish to cover.



The OECD uses both English and French as working languages. Be prepared to answer a question in either English or French to test your basic language skills.



You will have the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview. This is your opportunity to find out more information about the position, and work and life at the OECD.



Before the interview ensure you have a stable internet connection and are somewhere you will not be disturbed (including by devices such as mobile phones, instant communicators or other).



If you are struggling to recall examples from a professional experience, use personal experiences and if you do not understand a question, ask the interviewer to repeat or clarify the question.

## How to prepare for a competency-based interview?

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Being well-prepared for an interview is key to responding confidently to questions during the interview. It helps you provide logical and structured responses and helps demonstrate your motivation. It also allows you to fully understand the job, as well as the behaviours and skills that the position requires.

- Start with the **job description**. This contains key information on the hiring team, the Directorate, the responsibilities, the level of mastery of core competencies and requisite technical skills. Read the job description carefully and pick out key themes and requirements.
- **Understand the core competencies.** All staff should demonstrate behaviours aligned to the six core competencies. The level of mastery of competency is determined by the grade and function and is consistent across all roles at that grade and function. Review and become familiar with the behavioural indicators associated with the appropriate level. You can also review the examples of generic ineffective behaviours to understand what the panel is not looking for.
- **Use the information in the job description to research the team, project or service.** There are multiple materials available online including the [OECD website](#), the [OECD Careers website](#) and the [OECD iLibrary](#). Familiarise yourself with recent research, developments, trends and practices in your field as this allows you to demonstrate up-to-date knowledge and shows your interest. You should also understand, support and be aligned with the OECD's mission and values.
- Be clear about **your motivation for the job** and how it aligns to your career goals. Understand why you want the job, why you want to join or continue with the OECD, and how your experience and skills are aligned with the position and your career. Consider what value you would bring to the position and how you see the position contributing to your goals.
- **Think about specific real-life examples.** The panel is interested in learning what you did, how you contributed, what went well, what challenges you faced, what the results were and what you learned. Break down the experience to identify the behaviours you demonstrated in the different steps. Previous performance management reviews and key achievements from your CV can provide inspiration.
- **Preparing concrete examples** in advance means you can spend less time formulating an answer during the interview and make your response more confident. The [STAR model](#) is useful for adding structure to your examples. Be positive about your experiences and remember that difficult situations or challenges can be just as effective in demonstrating how you behave in difficult situations. Think in specifics and quantify the results where possible. This keeps your example interesting and engaging to the panel.
- Think of questions that an interviewer may ask and **practice responding** to them. Practice with a friend or colleague or record yourself and observe your answers. Time yourself and ensure your response is structured and concise, no more than three to five minutes.

## Examples of Competency-Based Interview Questions

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### Competency



#### Vision and Strategy

##### Example question

Describe a situation where you used evidence and data to help guide a specific strategy or make a decision. What was the situation? How did you identify the data needed and used it? What was the outcome? Did you learn any lessons?



#### Enable People

Describe a situation where your openness to diverse perspectives positively influenced the outcome of a project or decision? How did you ensure that all team members felt heard and respected and what were the key benefits of fostering such an environment?



#### Ethics and Integrity

Describe a situation where you confronted disrespectful comments or comments based on stereotypes in the workplace. What steps did you take to establish practices that promoted a respectful and ethical Organisational culture? How did your actions contribute to creating a more inclusive and respectful environment?

### Competency



#### Collaboration and Horizontality

##### Example question

Describe a situation where you proactively initiated and built working relationships with colleagues from your own team and other teams to drive progress on a project or initiative. How did you approach establishing these connections, and what specific actions did you take to foster collaboration and co-operation among team members?



#### Achieve Results

Describe a situation where you successfully planned, co-ordinated and managed work and resources to accomplish a specific task or project within given deadlines. How did you go about creating a plan and can you share the strategies you employed to co-ordinate the efforts of team members or other stakeholders?



#### Innovate and Embrace Change

Describe a situation where you encountered significant change or uncertainty and how you remained positive and adaptable throughout the process? How did you inspire and encourage others to embrace change?

## The STAR model

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A well-structured answer demonstrates to the interview panel that you are prepared and demonstrates your motivation and commitment.

The **STAR model** is a widely used and well-known model to support you in preparing structured, logical and cohesive responses to competency-based interview questions. It permits you to clearly and effectively explain examples of behaviours, skills and abilities and helps maintain conciseness and focus.

### Situation

**Describe the specific context.** This should be concise but provide enough background information to aid understanding.

### Task

**Outline the task or situation** that needed to be accomplished and be clear about what was expected and the objectives.

### Action

**Describe the actions undertaken,** focussing on personal contributions to achieve the task. Explain what you did, how you did it, and what made you decide to do it that way. Consider competency definitions and behavioural indicators and make sure your answer aligns with them. Consider the challenges you faced and how you addressed them.

### Result

**Share the outcome.** Be specific and highlight any quantitative or qualitative improvements to demonstrate the impact. Share lessons that you learned and how you changed the way you approach tasks as a result of this.

## Which competencies will be assessed?

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OECD staff are required to demonstrate behaviours associated with all six core competencies. The level of mastery of the competency required is indicated in the job description. It is unlikely that the hiring team will have time to assess all of the six required competencies during the interview. They may select three to five competencies most aligned to the position to evaluate during the interview. As OECD staff are expected to demonstrate behaviours aligned to all six core competencies, it is recommended that you prepare examples which can apply to all six.

## Adjustments or special requirements

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The OECD is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes the applications of all eligible and qualified candidates irrespective of their health or disability status. Candidates are under no obligation to inform the OECD of their health or disability status during the interview process, however we want to make sure that no candidates are disadvantaged in the interview process as a result of a disability, condition or impairment. Should you require any adjustments or requirements, inform the hiring team during the process to ensure that necessary adjustments can be made.