

**Northampton College  
Competency Dictionary  
Business Support Roles**

**Sep 2008**

## Introduction to Competencies

The College's Core Competencies will be used as part of the selection process, probationary review and at the appraisal meeting. The competencies are for all posts within the College. There are three levels within each competency - a, b and c. The person specification will refer to the level required for each competency. All of these competencies are underpinned by the College's Core Values:

### College Values

*Northampton College helps people achieve their potential by....*

- Respecting and helping each other
- Engaging people through teaching with expertise and enthusiasm
- Developing people through learning
- Bring out the best in each other
- Playing a positive role in our community

### How will the Competencies be used?

This booklet is for business support positions within the College, roles include:

- Assessors
- Demonstrators/Technicians
- Administration
- Employee Development Executives (Band A of the Business Centre pay spine)

Competencies will be used as part of the selection process as well as part of reviewing performance during the probationary period and then at the appraisal meeting. Prior to the selection interview or review meeting you will be asked to think of specific examples of where and when you have demonstrated effective performance in each competency. For example if the person specification has **Team Working at level A** – then you may describe a situation where you volunteered to help colleagues in the team with a piece of work that urgently needed completing within a tight timeframe.

Competencies that you know need developing should be shared with your line manager so that developmental support can be discussed. For example. **Planning and Organising – level B**. You may lack experience and knowledge in developing comprehensive project plans, which would be beneficial in your role, in which case you may want to look at a course in Project Management or MS Project.

## Index for Competencies

	Page No
<b>Working with people</b>	
Communication	3
Collaborative working	4
Team-working	5
Developing self and others	6
Knowledge	7
<b>Working with processes</b>	
Decision making and problem solving	8
Planning and organising	9
Delivering results and customer service	10
<b>Working with change</b>	
Adaptability and flexibility	11

## Working with people

### Communication

*The ability to communicate relevant information in a clear and precise manner. Adapts own style to the needs of the situation and the audience.*

#### Level A

- Tends to use clear, appropriate language
- Checks audience understanding and adapts accordingly
- Gets to the point quickly
- Uses the appropriate media
- Displays understanding by making appropriate contributions and/or questioning
- Is sensitive to information about others and maintains confidentiality, as appropriate
- Generally pays attention to what other people are saying
- Understands the need for clear written communication

#### Level B

- Produces clear, concise written material that is well structured, grammatically correct and rarely needs to be checked
- Invites two way dialogue, even if there is disagreement
- Displays active listening skills
- Is able to communicate complex ideas simply and in a logical way
- Knows when extra detail will help or hinder in getting the message across

#### Level C

- Provides a focus and direction for the College by developing and sustaining open communications
- Shows active listening in situations of conflict or controversy
- Is able to communicate clearly with a wide variety of audiences within and outside of the organisation
- Is capable of producing high quality written materials which could be presented to a range of audiences within and outside of the organisation

#### What we don't want to see

- Makes assumptions about the audience
- Does not adapt to the audience
- Is not receptive to feedback from the audience
- Makes comments which are often unclear
- Takes a long time to get to the point
- Uses words, tone or body language which is demeaning, threatening or inappropriate
- Written work is often hard to follow and may be grammatically incorrect
- Does not listen attentively enough and may make inappropriate contributions
- Uses jargon inappropriately
- Uses terminology and language which can be seen to be divisive between departments

## Working with people

### Collaborative Working

*Shows a commitment to collaborative working. Understands and is tolerant of differing needs and viewpoints. Achieves positive outcomes through diplomatic handling of disagreements and conflict.*

Level A	Level B	Level C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is aware of, and encourages discussion about, other people's needs</li> <li>• Demonstrates active listening skills</li> <li>• Demonstrates a willingness to work in different ways and explore new possibilities</li> <li>• Shows empathy and authenticity in approach</li> <li>• Identifies the key points of agreement in a discussion</li> <li>• Is willing to share information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows understanding of the main outcomes being sought by the other party.</li> <li>• Initiates discussion to explore alternative ways to achieve the outcome which is mutually acceptable</li> <li>• Uses a variety of influencing styles</li> <li>• Anticipates and prepares for others' reactions and plans how to tackle objections</li> <li>• Adapts style to maintain perspective, including consideration of the use of humour</li> <li>• Adapts style to help generate and maintain a constructive climate</li> <li>• Is able to challenge others in a way that wins their respect</li> <li>• Stays positive about the possibility of agreement even when things go wrong or mutually agreeable solutions are unclear</li> <li>• Establishes relationships across the College</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has excellent negotiation skills</li> <li>• Is able to develop mutually agreeable outcomes with people at all levels</li> <li>• Has the flexibility to switch approaches in response to changing circumstances</li> <li>• Plans an approach before taking action and thinks about the potential impact</li> <li>• Is able to influence others in a positive way</li> </ul>

### What we don't want to see

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sticks rigidly to own viewpoint and is unwilling to accept other people's viewpoints</li> <li>• Goes over argument repeatedly without modifying approach</li> <li>• Works in isolation and fails to see the impact of decisions on other people or departments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is not open to ideas from others</li> <li>• Is unaware of the need to gain support from others around them.</li> <li>• Will revert to blaming others or making excuses when consensus is not achieved</li> </ul>
--	---

## Working with people

### Team Working

The ability to work cooperatively within a group and across the College to achieve group or College goals.

Level A	Level B	Level C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps team members informed of their activities</li> <li>• Is prepared to pull together in order to meet team deadlines</li> <li>• Recognises the need to work with others in order to achieve the College's goals</li> <li>• Demonstrates respect for other people's views, skills and abilities within the team and will adapt accordingly</li> <li>• Appreciates and recognises the contribution and role of self and others within the team</li> <li>• Contributes positively and assists the team spirit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives feedback and encouragement to the team as a whole</li> <li>• Encourages a sense of common purpose within a team</li> <li>• Demonstrates an understanding of the team dynamics and will adjust own role accordingly</li> <li>• Uses a knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individuals to build suitable teams</li> <li>• Demonstrates publicly their support for the team and the decisions it makes</li> <li>• Keeps other teams informed of their activities as and when required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates appropriately across the organisation about the teams' work</li> <li>• Instigates opportunities for team working to take place</li> <li>• Is proactive in developing excellent working relationships with other teams and individuals in the organisation</li> <li>• Leads the team by commitment conveying enthusiasm and encouraging others.</li> </ul>

### What we don't want to see

- Focuses on own job rather than that of the wider team or organisation
- Is seen by other team members as unhelpful or pessimistic
- Stirs conflict in a destructive manner
- Is insensitive to the feelings of others
- Is unwilling to share the workload of others
- Tends to criticise other team members without making any real effort to resolve problems
- Is a loner
- Slows down the progress of the team

## Working with people

### Developing self and others

Identifies and pursues opportunities for self and others to develop new skills to broaden current effectiveness and to make progress towards career goals. Creates the climate to support others in reaching development goals

Level A	Level B	Level C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complies with basic staff development requirements</li> <li>Demonstrates willingness to improve personal performance</li> <li>Seeks feedback from others to establish own learning needs and analyses own development needs</li> <li>Participates actively in appraisals</li> <li>Takes personal responsibility for developing own career path</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delegates appropriate tasks to develop others</li> <li>Seeks opportunities for development for self and others</li> <li>Assesses the appropriateness and effect of their behaviour</li> <li>Acknowledges personal limitations</li> <li>Agrees rather than imposes objectives on others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deals promptly and appropriately with poor performance</li> <li>Delegates fully and appropriately</li> <li>Empowers and supports others to take risks with clearly defined parameters</li> <li>Thinks about long term succession planning issues and identifies ways and means of addressing these</li> <li>Takes action to achieve long term personal behaviour change</li> </ul>

### What we don't want to see

- Shows little or no interest in staff development activities
- Shows a lack of willingness to use new skills or to learn them
- Relies purely on training courses to address any development needs
- Does not take the time to reflect on learning achieved through doing new activities
- Believes that staff development is driven by others
- Avoids dealing with poor performance
- Provides little or no performance feedback to others
- Does not see the value in developing others to succeed

## Working with people

### Knowledge

Has the knowledge needed to perform the role and has a positive approach to developing own knowledge base. Actively shares knowledge and learning and promotes the sharing of information. Keeps self informed of the organisation, own team and others' concerns, problems and situations and offers input, as appropriate.

Level A	Level B	Level C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps up to date with knowledge and skills required for the successful execution of the role</li> <li>• Knows the aims, missions and values of the College and understands the impact for self, team and department.</li> <li>• Knows what is expected of own role and how this contributes to the objectives of the College</li> <li>• Knows what services are available within the organisation</li> <li>• Incorporates knowledge gained from previous experience to current situations</li> <li>• Admits own knowledge limitations and seeks ways to address these</li> <li>• Seeks out others who can provide information, knowledge and advice</li> <li>• Shares knowledge and good practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively seeks out information which may impact on job performance and delivery</li> <li>• Establishes relationships across the College to broaden knowledge of the College</li> <li>• Knows the structure of the organisation</li> <li>• Is able to apply knowledge from previous roles to current role</li> <li>• Ensures that all activity is aligned to the achievement of the business objectives</li> <li>• Is able to impart own knowledge to others effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands the implications on the College of changes taking place in the FE Sector</li> <li>• Understands the local and regional context of the College provision and plans</li> <li>• Plays an active role in developing others' knowledge and understanding</li> </ul>

### What we don't want to see

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believes that they know all they need to know in order to do the job effectively</li> <li>• Does not accept guidance from others</li> <li>• Does not have knowledge of or adhere to established policy or procedures</li> <li>• Is unable to explain the structure and workings of the organisation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not apply learning from previous roles to current role</li> <li>• Does not share information with others</li> <li>• Does not adjust activities and priorities in light of changing information</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## Working with processes

### Decision Making and Problem Solving

*Is able to make informed, logical and well reasoned decisions. Is able to act promptly where necessary. Has an analytical approach to problem solving.*

#### Level A

- Makes objective, informed decisions
- Will clarify the decision to be made if uncertain
- Involves relevant people in all stages of decision making
- Assesses the implications of their decisions
- Is prepared to change decisions in light of new information
- Has a clear view of the justification of decisions
- Takes ownership of decisions made

#### Level B

- Empowers people to make decisions
- Ensures that individuals working for them have sufficient information and guidance to make effective decisions
- Is able to balance conflicting priorities in decision making
- Follows up decisions with actions to implement
- Communicates decisions to relevant people

#### Level C

- Does not let uncertainty prevent decision making
- Tests ideas with a wide range of people internally and externally
- Is prepared to make difficult decisions
- Considers external developments, identifying trends and emerging patterns when making important decisions

#### What we don't want to see

- Makes decisions without consultation
- Avoids decisions
- Panics under pressure
- Rushes into decisions without relevant facts
- Does not review decisions in the light of new information
- Makes staff feel cautious about making decisions
- Relies too much on manager for guidance

## Working with processes

### Planning and Organising

*Recognises the importance of planning for achieving objectives. Plans effectively and monitors progress towards achievement of plans. Manages resources to ensure the delivery of results.*

#### Level A

- Plans ahead whilst busy on current tasks
- Allocates time to planning
- Sets realistic timescales for self and others
- Prioritises activities to meet business needs
- Demonstrates flexibility
- Asks for help if needed

#### Level B

- Balances different or conflicting priorities
- Develops comprehensive project plans
- Monitors others progress towards achieving their plans
- Ensures projects are completed on time and within budget
- Anticipates problems and develops contingencies
- Has a willingness to delegate to achieve results

#### Level C

- Identifies and establishes milestones to monitor the effectiveness of the broad plan
- Sets overall performance standards for the team and communicates these to team members
- Sets a clear direction and priorities for staff when objectives conflict or are unclear
- Monitors the key performance indicators of the plan

#### What we don't want to see

- Embarks on projects without formulating a plan
- Does not anticipate or prepare for problems
- Consistently misses deadlines because of lack of planning
- Ineffective/wasteful use of resources
- Sets unrealistic timelines
- Does not provide timely updates
- Does not establish project objectives
- Has an unfocused approach to work
- Is unprepared for meetings

## Working with processes

### Delivering Results and Customer Service

*Is determined to succeed and remains persistent and focused throughout. Strives to meet and exceed the requirements of internal and external customers. Is committed to delivering a high quality of service.*

Level A	Level B	Level C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes every effort to understand customers' needs</li> <li>• Is accessible to the customer</li> <li>• Is enthusiastic in pursuing goals, even in difficult times</li> <li>• Is able to meet deadlines within the resources available</li> <li>• Shows attention to detail</li> <li>• Readily volunteers to complete tasks</li> <li>• Meets commitments, and alerts others to difficulties if they arise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is prepared to take ownership and be judged by results</li> <li>• Monitors outcomes and learns from them</li> <li>• Monitors progress towards targets</li> <li>• Considers customers perspective.</li> <li>• Engages in dialogue to deliver results</li> <li>• Actively listens to what the customer is saying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipates potential barriers to achievement</li> <li>• Finds innovative ways of achieving results</li> <li>• Takes responsibility for long term decisions and implementation plans to achieve results</li> <li>• Develops a detailed understanding of what the customer is trying to achieve</li> <li>• Actively seeks feedback regarding departmental procedures and their impact on the external customer</li> </ul>

### What we don't want to see

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procrastinates – puts off difficult tasks</li> <li>• Does only the minimum amount of work required to meet customer needs</li> <li>• Finds excuses/does not see the importance of meeting deadlines</li> <li>• Blames others when things go wrong</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a lack of patience</li> <li>• Makes no effort to understand or meet customer expectations</li> <li>• Does not look beyond immediate customer requests</li> <li>• Is impolite and negative towards customers</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## Working with change

### Adaptability and Flexibility

*Maintains a high level of effectiveness during times of change by adapting behaviour and approaches to changing circumstances. Accepts additional and changing roles and responsibilities.*

Level A	Level B	Level C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to understand the nature of and reason for change</li> <li>• Understands that change is necessary and adapts accordingly</li> <li>• Is willing to take on new challenges and approaches</li> <li>• Continuously seeks improvement in the way things are done</li> <li>• Maintains effectiveness in the face of change</li> <li>• Is open to new ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works to overcome barriers to change</li> <li>• Encourages and supports openness to change</li> <li>• Maintains focus in times of change</li> <li>• Recognises that change affects people differently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knows where to adapt procedures and established routines to enable the College to function more effectively</li> <li>• Encourages others to challenge in order for change to take place</li> <li>• Maintains a clear vision in a crisis</li> <li>• Can manage the implementation of change effectively</li> <li>• Challenges self and others to develop highly innovative proposals</li> <li>• Identifies and implements radical solutions to improve work methods and processes</li> </ul>

### What we don't want to see

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflexible and unwilling to change their approach</li> <li>• Negative and pessimistic about new ideas</li> <li>• Prefers tried and tested solutions</li> <li>• Rejects new ideas and approaches</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waits for others to make change happen</li> <li>• Does not volunteer</li> <li>• Thinks in the short term without thinking of the impact actions could have on the long term</li> <li>• Is unwilling to use new technology</li> </ul> |
|---|---|