

Senior Executive Officer (SEO) – Grade Descriptor

Overview of Roles at this Pay-band Level

- Roles at this level will include those responsible for managing large and discrete areas of work. Those management responsibilities may relate to work of an administrative, specialist or professional nature. In all such areas management responsibility will be significant with the role-holder seen as responsible for maintaining service standards and meeting specific business plan objectives.
- Role-holders will be expected to consider the practical detail of proposed changes in policy or operations, consider issues that are not clear-cut and develop new approaches. Within their functional work areas, role-holders will be expected to be alert to emerging issues and trends and to consider the impact they might have on the immediate work area and more widely, across the department. They will also be expected to identify and evaluate risks and to develop options for consideration by more senior staff to manage and mitigate those risks.
- Roles at this level will also include those responsible for providing professional or specialist advice to others either as individuals or more likely as leaders of small specialist teams. In this latter respect, most roles of this type are likely to be found in posts responsible for managing and co-ordinating the work of other specialist or technical staff where responsibilities centre on reviewing work for technical and quality excellence.
- At this level all roles will demand the use of discretion, interpretation and collaboration with others in order to resolve issues and problems where there may be some ambiguity. Undertaking more detailed research and investigation to identify options and recommendations is a key feature of these roles.

Key Functions at this Pay-band Level

- **Management & Administration:** managing a number of discrete sections responsible for processing casework or managing a section responsible for policy and legislation; managing a section responsible for providing training, audit or IT services.
- **Professional & Specialist:** managing engineering, construction or general work services. Operational, inspectorial and compliance orientated roles including those linked to functions such as engineering, construction, health and safety, marine surveying or veterinary

services. Leading and directing projects.

- May include senior professional or specialist practitioners in the accountancy, IT, HROD or procurement fields who manage teams of specialists or are individual practitioners with a high level understanding of organisational requirements and underlying operational issues.

Key Differences from Roles in the Pay-band Level below

- In terms of day-to day management and leadership, these roles will typically be responsible for managing and co-ordinating elements of departmental activity where there is a responsibility for one or more strands of functional activity. Similarly, the majority of specialist, professional or technical roles will involve managing and co-ordinating the work of others including that of other specialists working in the same or related disciplines. For those singleton specialists whose roles do not extend to managing and co-ordinating the work of others, they will typically be acknowledged as technical experts possessing a greater degree of specialist, technical or professional acumen than practitioners in the level below. As such these individuals will often act in a leadership capacity i.e. focal point, for their particular specialist, professional or technical discipline.
- In short, roles at this level will typically head areas of policy, operation, function or specialism which require more evident leadership and management skills or a wider and more detailed application of specialist, professional or technical expertise.

Knowledge & Skills

- Roles at this level require an in-depth knowledge of the work area, as well as a sound working knowledge of linked areas of work and the external operating environment. Role-holders will also be expected to contribute to developmental activity through the provision of advice and guidance to others at more senior levels.
- In roles where the emphasis is directed towards the provision of specialist or professional advice or guidance, individuals may also require specialist or professional qualifications, together with job-specific experience and expertise.
- Additionally, strong interpersonal, consultative and negotiating skills (including the ability to persuade and influence) are key requirements

for these roles. For many roles at this level management skills will also be a core requirement.

Contacts & Communications

- Representation of the organisation either alone or in support of more senior staff is a common requirement for all roles at this level. This can arise from interdepartmental discussions and meetings with a wide variety of external bodies and organisations. Other representational roles may include serving as a member or a committee or working group or in some cases, chairing those committees or working groups.
- In general the emphasis at this level in terms of communication activity will be on developing understanding, securing co-operation for particular positions or approaches, or maintaining standards of service delivery. For those roles with a strong professional or advisory element providing comprehensive and authoritative advice on issues, and subsequently explaining and defending those positions in a balanced and convincing way will form a key part of the role.
- In operational management areas particularly those linked to managing construction, engineering or similar projects, chairing meetings of contractors, consultants or other third parties to plan projects, resolve contractual difficulties or linked aspects of progress or performance is likely to be a prominent feature of the role. In this context the emphasis will be on reconciling different priorities, maintaining working relationships or brokering mutually acceptable solutions to project problems.

Problem Solving

- In general, problems and issues that arise at this level will interact with issues which may be the responsibility of others across Government or have an external dimension. Moreover, the solution to these problems and issues will not always be immediately apparent. Problem solving at this level will frequently be characterised by the need to get to the heart of the issue, consider and evaluate options and where necessary, broker or support more senior staff in negotiating mutually acceptable solutions.
- A distinguishing feature of problem solving demands at this level is dealing with problems and issues that are not necessarily immediately obvious as such. A frequent challenge will lie in identifying which issues are, or might become problems, and in discerning underlying causes prior to confronting them. Some problems may present previously unencountered situations which cannot be resolved by recourse

to past precedent. In such instances appropriate courses of action will need to be considered from general principles.

Decision Making

- Roles at this level will normally take all decisions affecting the day-to-day management and co-ordination of work within their discrete area of responsibility. More significant decisions involving the longer term prioritising, planning and allocation of work will typically fall to individuals at more senior levels. Nevertheless, role-holders at this level will be expected to contribute significantly to business planning and resource allocation process by identifying objectives and priorities and the resources needed to achieve priority objectives.
- On a day-to-day basis role-holders will exercise judgement on a range of operational issues including: the control of expenditure; authorising expenditure within specified financial limits, defining requirements and standards for projects or works; or the relative priority of tasks. Role-holders will also make a range of interpretative judgements including: formulating responses to particular issues or policy developments; determining appropriate courses of action in relation to specific issues or cases; considering the practical detail of proposed changes to departmental policy; or the handling of sensitive or contentious issues.
- Additionally, role-holders at this level will also play a significant role in contributing to decisions which are taken at more senior levels. This would usually involve putting forward proposals based on a detailed analysis of the options available. In specialist areas where the individual is the acknowledged expert or lead in the subject area, role-holders will be expected to put forward authoritative advice and guidance to enable more senior staff and/or departmental Member(s) or Minister to take decisions.

Autonomy

- Roles at this level will have the latitude to take decisions affecting the day-to-day management and co-ordination of work within their discrete areas of responsibility.
- In general, most roles will be expected, within the context of the department's business plan, to develop appropriate work programmes, determine and balance relative priorities, and task individuals and/or teams. In short, roles at this level will be expected to manage and co-ordinate work using their judgement and discretion with reference to more senior management confined to broader issues rather than

points of detail In terms of formal management reporting and review, progress against business plan objectives would be subject to review by more senior management at regular intervals.

- The degree to which work at this level is governed by established practice or precedent will vary from role to role. Some roles will be governed by departmental policy or practice or established professional guidelines, whilst others may have little in the way of practice or precedent to guide the way. However, making interpretative judgements where there may be little or no practice or precedent, or where such practice or precedent does not appear to adequately cover the issue at hand is a key feature of work at this level.

Management of Resources

- Management responsibilities will vary depending on the type of role. A role concerned solely with specialised subject matter might have no direct staff management responsibilities (although this is likely to be the exception rather than the norm); whilst a role responsible for a large area of administrative or operational activity may have significant staff management responsibilities.
- For some roles managing and co-ordinating the work of third parties including various contractors and consultants may be a key feature of the role. Other roles, particularly those operating in specialist fields, may have informal leadership responsibilities arising from their status as the acknowledged expert or lead for that area of specialism. This may involve acting as a focal point for the specialism and providing advice and guidance to others internally or externally on issues relating to that area of expertise.
- The negotiation and agreement of contracts to specified levels and the authority to commit expenditure to third-party suppliers will also be a feature of these roles.

Impact

- Roles at this level typically have the scope to contribute significantly to the achievement of departmental objectives. In so doing, they will contribute to controlling, co-ordinating and defining timescales, standards, quality and direction of organisational work programmes. In short, their actions can affect organisational performance in a number of different ways and usually, across a number of different work

areas.