



Professional Services Capability Framework: Thinking Commercially

This document sets out in one place all of the information relating to the **Thinking Commercially** capability, including:

- Capability indicators
- Ineffective behaviours
- Development suggestions, tips, tools and activities
- Formal learning options

This is to support you in developing in this particular capability. This document should always be read with the [Professional Services Capability Framework](#)



Thinking Commercially

Understands the commercial environment in which the university operates internally and externally and considers the impact on decisions and actions



Foundation

Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5

- Develops an awareness of the commercial aspects of the organisation
- Thinks about value for money in the way work is completed
- Understands core policies and processes
- Uses resources wisely
- Works within allocated budget and resources
- Understands their individual contribution to the success of the university



Adept

Grade 6

- Understands the financial, commercial, political and regulatory environment, and takes account of this when making decisions
- Demonstrates skills in managing budgets, resources, contracts and/or procurement
- Ensures non value-adding activities are removed from processes, procedures and working practices
- Continuously reforecasts and reprioritises budget and resources to meet changing needs



Advanced

Grades 7, 8 & 9

- Develops strategies for effective use of budgets and resources
- Develops strategic plans to help ensure sustainability
- Reduces costs, increases income or improves services
- Identifies and develops opportunities that add value
- Responds to political, regulatory and financial changes in a pro-active manner
- Manages budgets, plans and resources
- Leads by example and considers the value for money of activities
- Builds business cases for new services and/or resources
- Uses financial and management information to assess viability of new approaches



Strategic

SSG

- Analyses plans and resources to ensure services are delivered efficiently within budgets
- Anticipates changes within the higher education sector
- Develops strategy which delivers and demands consistent improvement in terms of quality, output and cost
- Demonstrates an understanding of internal and external factors affecting the university's commercial position and outlook
- Identifies income generating opportunities and obtains buy in
- Gains and retains the confidence of external stakeholders
- Seeks out and introduces new business models, systems and approaches to deliver improved commercial outcomes
- Organises services efficiently, identifies opportunities to reduce costs and implement change to deliver



Thinking Commercially: Ineffective behaviours

Examples of behaviours which are ineffective and may indicate a need for further discussion or development

For all

- Ignores value for money when spending University money, for example when booking train tickets, ordering supplies, catering or printing
- Fails to identify or progress opportunities to save costs, be more efficient with resources or to generate income
- Produces proposals or ideas which do not take into account the cost or likely resources of delivering the proposal
- Does not understand the effect of poor services from their team or business area on the University's long term success

For leaders and managers

- Maintains the status quo of the system or approach they and their team use to deliver their services, rather than constantly reassessing whether that approach provides the best value for money for the customer, or could be more efficient or effective
- Manages their budget and resources poorly or as an afterthought, rather than integrated into all decisions about how the team or business area is structured and operates. Does not involve staff in budgeting, setting timescales or resourcing pieces of work or initiatives
- Reacts at the last minute to regulatory or political changes
- Fails to find time to hear ideas from team members for increasing value for money or eliminating inefficiency
- Has no contingency plan for responding to increased costs, new external challenges or resources changes in a business area
- Keeps their team members in narrow roles, creating situations where only one individual has the required knowledge for a business critical role



Thinking Commercially - Development Suggestions

Understands the commercial environment in which the university operates internally and externally and considers the impact on decisions and actions



Foundation

Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5



Adept

Grade 6



Advanced

Grades 7, 8 & 9



Strategic

SSG

Individual activities and reflection

Recognise time is a resource. Think about some of the ways you and your team might inadvertently waste time: [what could you do to save time and work more effectively](#): is there time wasted waiting for approvals, duplicated efforts, unhelpful meetings or is work organised in a way that adds unnecessary steps? How could you change that?

Actions with others

Understand more about your team's budget and how it is spent in different ways to support the university objectives. Ask for an agenda item on a team meeting for your manager to discuss your team's budget and how that translates and supports what you deliver

Arrange a team meeting discuss to talk about any aspects of your work where you spend University money and how could you all reduce those costs? [Consider these 6 steps](#)

Choose one aspect of [University funding](#) and consider it with your team: make sure you understand it

Individual activities and reflection

When making a significant decision about your service try taking time to use a [PESTEL analysis](#) - either yourself, with colleagues or your manager to identify some of the political, environmental or regulatory issues which might affect your decision

Be aware of [University Procurement rules](#), why they are in place and who to contact for expert advice if you are involved in a contract

Take time to ensure that you understand the relevant terms and conditions and deliverables of any contracts which impact your work. Discuss them with a [procurement expert](#) if you need support. Establish how these deliverables are monitored and contractors are held to account and seek ways of receiving updates and providing input on those relevant to your business area

Actions with others

With your team, review your team plans and use [continuous improvement tools](#) to review your processes and working practices to eliminate any non-value

Individual activities and reflection

Gather and use evidence to assess the costs, benefits and risks of a range of delivery options when making commercial decisions or determining the future approach to service delivery

Plan in time to review whether any deliverables and/or services derived from a commercial arrangement are not being delivered to the required level of quality or standard and take appropriate action to hold contractors to account

Regularly review your team's budgets and spending to ensure that it is being prioritised in line with University strategic activities

Consider your business area as if you were an entrepreneur: what would you do differently - how would you generate income, reduce costs or ensure customers choose your service over competitors?

Actions with others

Ensure that all staff have appropriate levels of commercial awareness while creating and embedding an

Individual activities and reflection

Map the external marketplace by visiting other organisations or reviewing their websites: regularly benchmark your business area's quality, standards and added value against those external benchmarks (within and beyond Higher Education)

Review and reduce "vanity projects" in your area those which people enjoy or which boost their profile but which don't add significant value to the University's strategic objectives

[Keep up to date with the factors influencing the commercial context of Higher Education](#) and actively seek out opportunities for income generation, commercial exploitation, and to ensure that Sheffield Hallam retains a competitive edge within the sector

Actions with others

Motivate improved performance by suppliers, challenge any gaps between contractual commitments and actual delivery, or commercial arrangement and changing customer or University needs through joint

<p>and how it might have an impact on your team</p>	<p>adding activity</p> <p>With your team, each bring an insight into how our competitor Universities' approach your service, how they deliver them and why: what ways could we ensure we incorporate any best practice from them</p>	<p>organisational culture that supports this through regular messaging about value for money and saving money in your communications and team meetings</p>	<p>working with commercial / procurement experts</p> <p>Work with your team to seek out and understand innovative business models, systems and approaches being used externally to delivery excellent services. Facilitate their introduction to deliver better, more sustainable services and long term value for money</p>
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Managing Self and Leading Others - formal learning options

Takes personal responsibility to manage work and performance and to lead, inspire and motivate others

Face to face learning

The [Finance Directorate offer](#) training and development to University staff on a number of finance systems and on the broader topics of financial awareness and control.

Online courses

[Managing resources for projects:](#) Learn exactly what a resource is and how to prioritise projects based on resource availability. Find out how to construct a resource plan that ensures no resource is overcommitted or underutilized, identifies bottlenecks and scarcities

Downloadable toolkits and guides

[Universities UK's analysis of Higher Education Funding](#) provides guides to and analysis of Higher Education funding in the UK

Further guides [here](#)