

Competency Framework for the Legal Sector

At Athena Professional we have identified four aspects of successful professional practice:

1. You
2. You & the Team
3. You & the Client
4. You & the Firm

We have drafted competencies which relate to these aspects of working life. The competencies we describe reflect our belief that self-awareness and awareness of impact on others are at the heart of professional conduct. We also emphasise team-work, business outcomes and strategic thinking.

The competencies below have been correlated to the SRA's Competence Statement. All elements of the Competence Statement are covered in this set of competencies.

Aspect	Competency	Observable Behaviour
YOU	Self Awareness and impact on others	Manages own emotions appropriately for the situation
	Self Awareness and impact on others	Shows an awareness of how own behaviour impacts on others
YOU	Self Awareness and impact on others	Admits mistakes and takes corrective action
YOU	Self Awareness and impact on others	Asks for feedback, guidance and support from colleagues to enhance self awareness
YOU	Self Awareness and impact on others	Acknowledges personal limitations knowing when to seek expert advice
YOU	Self Awareness and impact on others	Responds constructively when under pressure, with behaviour that consistently reflects professional standards
YOU	Integrity	Is honest and open when accounting for own actions or decisions
YOU	Integrity	Acts in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements and the SRA handbook and code of conduct
YOU	Integrity	Consistently treats others with respect
YOU	Integrity	Recognises and analyses ethical issues objectively

Aspect	Competency	Observable Behaviour
YOU	Integrity	Proactively maintains ethical standards
YOU	Intellectual Flexibility & Knowledge	Demonstrates intellectual curiosity in a variety of ways
YOU	Intellectual Flexibility & Knowledge	Develops own thinking through discussion and debate with colleagues
YOU	Intellectual Flexibility & Knowledge	Effectively evaluates personal performance at work
YOU	Intellectual Flexibility & Knowledge	Demonstrates adaptability in face of market change
YOU	Intellectual Flexibility & Knowledge	Consistently formulates a well structured legal argument
YOU	Intellectual Flexibility & Knowledge	Takes responsibility for own continuous learning and professional development
YOU	Information handling	Obtains relevant facts and information to support legal argument
YOU	Information handling	Interprets analyses and evaluates information to ensure appropriate conclusions are drawn
YOU	Information handling	Records and presents information in an appropriate manner
YOU	Information handling	Uses appropriate methods and resources to undertake research when required
YOU	Information handling	Presents findings accurately and clearly using language appropriate to the end user
YOU	Information handling	Drafts documents addressing all relevant issues
YOU & TEAM	Communication	Actively listens to other people's views
YOU & TEAM	Communication	Communicates in a manner appropriate to the recipient achieving its intended objective
YOU & TEAM	Communication	Asks questions to check own understanding
YOU & TEAM	Communication	Gives clear relevant instruction to colleagues
YOU & TEAM	Communication	Uses electronic and other communication methods in an appropriate professional manner
YOU & TEAM	Communication	Consistently prepares clear, succinct accurate and logical documentation
YOU & TEAM	Working with others	Consistently builds trust in working relationships

Aspect	Competency	Observable Behaviour
YOU & TEAM	Working with others	Has an approachable manner
YOU & TEAM	Working with others	Works with others to develop ideas and solutions
YOU & TEAM	Working with others	Spots when colleagues are struggling and supports less experienced colleagues
YOU & TEAM	Working with others	Gives feedback in a way that people find acceptable and constructive
YOU & TEAM	Working with others	Is clear about expectations
YOU & TEAM	Leadership	Is a role model of the firm's culture and values
YOU & TEAM	Leadership	Demonstrates faith in others
YOU & TEAM	Leadership	Manages performance issues effectively on a timely basis
YOU & TEAM	Leadership	Shares relevant strategic information with the team, aligning individual's goals to the firm's goals
YOU & TEAM	Leadership	Encourages and recognises the efforts of others
YOU & TEAM	Leadership	Demonstrates best practice in delegating to, supervising and involving people effectively (including exposure to clients), seeking to play to the team's strengths
YOU & TEAM	Leadership	Resolves interpersonal conflicts before they get out of hand
YOU & TEAM	Leadership	Engages others with a vision for the future
YOU & TEAM	Workload Management	Sets realistic objectives and deadlines
YOU & TEAM	Workload Management	Prioritises activities effectively
YOU & TEAM	Workload Management	Consistently delegates the right tasks to the right people
YOU & TEAM	Workload Management	Utilises others time effectively
YOU & TEAM	Workload Management	Consistently delivers on commitments and promises
YOU & TEAM	Workload Management	Proactively looks for work when not at full capacity
YOU & CLIENT	Client Relationship Management	Expands and strengthens client relationships
YOU & CLIENT	Client Relationship Management	Ensures clients understand the terms of the business relationship
YOU & CLIENT	Client Relationship Management	Keeps clients informed and updated with all relevant information

Aspect	Competency	Observable Behaviour
YOU & CLIENT	Client Relationship Management	Manages client's expectations effectively and is responsive to client needs
YOU & CLIENT	Client Relationship Management	Listens to and acknowledges client's views and concerns
YOU & CLIENT	Client Relationship Management	Responds in an appropriate and timely manner to clients' needs
YOU & CLIENT	Client Relationship Management	Identifies possible course of action and their consequences to assist clients to reach a decision
YOU & CLIENT	Client Relationship Management	Considers how the wider firm may assist the client
YOU & CLIENT	Advice and Advocacy	Provides advice having understood client's individual circumstances, needs, objectives, priorities and constraints
YOU & CLIENT	Advice and Advocacy	Ensures advice is informed by appropriate legal and factual analysis
YOU & CLIENT	Advice and Advocacy	Consequences for each proposed course of action are identified at all times
YOU & CLIENT	Advice and Advocacy	Organises facts effectively to support the proposed argument or position
YOU & CLIENT	Advice and Advocacy	Present reasoned argument in a clear, logical, succinct and persuasive manner
YOU & CLIENT	Advice and Advocacy	Deals with all relevant parties in a professional manner
YOU & CLIENT	Negotiation Skills	Appropriately identifies areas for negotiation
YOU & CLIENT	Negotiation Skills	Anticipates how people may react to negotiation and prepares appropriately
YOU & CLIENT	Negotiation Skills	Adapts a negotiating style appropriate to the situation
YOU & CLIENT	Negotiation Skills	Presents a compelling argument to get the best outcome for the client
YOU & CLIENT	Negotiation Skills	Looks for common ground and builds co-operation in interests of the client
YOU & CLIENT	Negotiation Skills	Shows good judgement about when to concede
YOU & CLIENT	Negotiation Skills	Consistently demonstrates strong advocacy skills
YOU & CLIENT	Negotiation Skills	Is ambitious but realistic in approach and preparations to negotiations
YOU & CLIENT	Problem Solving Skills	Can relate legal analysis to practical outcomes for the client
YOU & CLIENT	Problem Solving Skills	Identifies and evaluates all information and evidence in an objective manner
YOU & CLIENT	Problem Solving Skills	Puts the clients best interests at the centre of the problem solving process

Aspect	Competency	Observable Behaviour
YOU & CLIENT	Problem Solving Skills	Thinks creatively and innovatively about the application of the law to given circumstances
YOU & CLIENT	Problem Solving Skills	Takes a collaborative approach to problem solving when in the clients interests
YOU & CLIENT	Problem Solving Skills	Reaches reasoned decisions based on relevant evidence
YOU & FIRM	Independence	Understands when ability to give independent advice to a client may be fettered
YOU & FIRM	Independence	Does not act for client where conflict of interest exists
YOU & FIRM	Independence	Ensures own independence is not compromised or judgement prejudiced by any third party
YOU & FIRM	Independence	Ensures all working relationships are conducted in a professional and objective manner
YOU & FIRM	Independence	Ensures independence of the firm is protected
YOU & FIRM	Business Development	Networks effectively to build the firms external profile
YOU & FIRM	Business Development	Challenges status quo to benefit the business
YOU & FIRM	Business Development	Consistently seeks opportunities for business growth and is energetic in the pursuit of those business opportunities
YOU & FIRM	Business Development	Understands and contributes to the firm/team/group/sector business strategy
YOU & FIRM	Business Development	Shows commercial acumen and understands how own actions impact on the profitability of the firm
YOU & FIRM	Business Development	Shows innovation in fee arrangements to accommodate client and firm's profitability
YOU & FIRM	Business Development	Shows good project management skills to deliver on commitments and promises, clearly communicating any variances in cost on a timely basis to the client
YOU & FIRM	Business Development	Adheres to firm's policies and procedures
YOU & FIRM	Financial and Risk Management	Ensures personal compliance with the firm's financial and business procedures
YOU & FIRM	Financial and Risk Management	Regularly reviews client portfolios to ensure the ongoing profitability of accounts and adjusts accordingly
YOU & FIRM	Financial and Risk Management	Communicates effectively and regularly with the team about the firm's business drivers and profitability
YOU & FIRM	Financial and Risk Management	Uses professional judgement to identify and proactively manage risk to the firm
YOU & FIRM	Financial and Risk Management	Minimises risk by recognising mistakes and difficulties, assessing needs and seeking appropriate levels of supervision and support

Aspect	Competency	Observable Behaviour
YOU & FIRM	Strategic Awareness	Is a positive ambassador of the firm's brand and of fellow partners
YOU & FIRM	Strategic Awareness	Understands how local decisions impact on and fit with the firm's strategic vision / plan
YOU & FIRM	Strategic Awareness	Helps others to understand how their achievements contribute to the firm's broader objectives
YOU & FIRM	Strategic Awareness	Strikes a balance between strategic planning and delivering immediate operational targets
YOU & FIRM	Strategic Awareness	Keeps up to date with strategic developments in the legal sector
YOU & FIRM	Strategic Awareness	Identifies and communicates clear strategies