The specialist Core Skills for government communicators are designed to be used alongside generic departmental competence frameworks which cover the general behaviours and attitudes expected of staff.

This Professional Practice Framework is for use in:

**Recruitment and selection**
Before advertising a vacancy, line managers use the Core Skills to help determine the person specification for the post they wish to fill. Applicants will be measured against these communication skills as well as departmental competences, which incorporate Professional Skills for Government (PSG).

**Performance management**
The Core Skills help define standards of performance as well as informing managers and individuals about the level of competence required in their jobs. This enables effective and ineffective performance to be recognised.

**Identifying training needs**
The Core Skills are useful in helping to identify learning and development needs. Performance reviews can identify gaps in performance as well as identifying areas where further development is required to reach the next level.
There are six Core Skill areas consistent with the Engage* framework for best practice government communications which all government communicators are expected to demonstrate:

**COMMUNICATIONS – DRAFTING, LAYOUT AND DESIGN:** Produces clear, persuasive and accessible communication products

**CHANNELS AND TECHNOLOGIES:** Uses the most effective and appropriate channels and technologies to deliver communications

**BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT:** Understands the organisation’s business and how communication supports it; is aware of the wider communication context and GCN; is fully aware of and applies propriety guidelines

**RELATIONSHIP/ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT:** Understands, responds to and satisfies the communications needs of diverse audiences – clients, government stakeholder groups, partners, media and employees; builds and maintains constructive relationships and balances different demands

**STRATEGIC MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION:** Plans, builds and manages delivery of strategies, campaigns and day to day marketing and communication services which are based on audience insight and are effective in getting the organisation’s messages across and delivered to the highest professional standard; promotes coherent and consistent organisation brand(s)

**EVALUATION, RESEARCH, EVIDENCE:** Gathers and interprets data on the effectiveness of communication strategies, campaigns and services and their impact on audience behaviour and business outcomes; identifies improvement opportunities

* To find out more about Engage please visit www.comms.gov.uk
How to use the Professional Practice Framework

- Alongside PSG/departmental competences which cover generic skills
- This table gives examples of how the six specialist Core Skill areas can be demonstrated at each level – from AIO to SCS
- The skills are accumulative so for example, Grade 7s are expected to demonstrate their own level as well as those at essential and managerial level
- Examples under Professional Communicator apply to all disciplines
- Additional specialist boxes contain specific examples
- It is flexible eg when writing person profiles:-
  - You can pick and mix or adapt from these examples – it is not definitive
  - You can add to it – it is not exhaustive
- It is not a tick list!
**COMMUNICATIONS – DRAFTING, LAYOUT AND DESIGN (page 1 of 2)**

Produces clear, persuasive and accessible communication products

| Professional Communicator (elements apply in all roles) | Essential *AIO/IO  
* entry level | Management SIO | Leadership G7/6 | Strategic SCS |
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Able to identify and understand internal and external audience needs and adapts style and language to meet them</td>
<td>Controls, monitors and evaluates content of communication products to ensure quality, consistency and accessibility of messages</td>
<td>Champions the use of plain English and sets the standards for quality and drafting and consistently demonstrates these in own work</td>
<td>Demonstrates excellent communication skills both written and oral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Writes clearly, concisely and accurately in plain English for all formats</td>
<td>Ensures communications materials are written with target audience in mind</td>
<td>Provides overall editorial control across the team to ensure appropriate content, tone, brevity and consistency</td>
<td>Confident and able to present in formal, informal and public settings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Demonstrates good oral communication</td>
<td>Advises and persuades clients about best practice in design and layout and the need to translate complex issues into plain English</td>
<td>Challenges any communication product not up to standard</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Researches and drafts concise and accurate briefings</td>
<td>Demonstrates an understanding of design principles and their application</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Demonstrates an understanding of design principles and their application</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media/Press</th>
<th>Management SIO</th>
<th>Leadership G7/6</th>
<th>Strategic SCS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Drafts clear, concise and persuasive copy</td>
<td>Anticipates the emerging news agenda</td>
<td>Demonstrates a strong news sense in media relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* identifies what issues will be of media interest</td>
<td>Displays authoritative, clear and sensitive spokespersonship</td>
<td>Demonstrates consistent application of propriety guidance on media issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands propriety guidance on media issues</td>
<td>Gives clear and trusted advice to Ministers and officials</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gives clear and trusted briefing to media and other stakeholders</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNICATIONS – DRAFTING, LAYOUT AND DESIGN (page 1 of 2)
Produces clear, persuasive and accessible communication products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Essential *AlO/IO</th>
<th>Management SIO</th>
<th>Leadership G7/6</th>
<th>Strategic SCS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Drafts effective design briefs and suggests creative ideas to increase the impact of communication products</td>
<td>▪ Demonstrates in depth expertise in design and layout and leads creative input for communication activities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ *Understands and applies organisation's corporate visual identity and branding principles</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CHANNELS AND TECHNOLOGIES (page 1 of 2)
Uses the most effective and appropriate channels and technologies to deliver communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATOR (elements apply in all roles)</th>
<th>Essential *AIO/IO * entry level</th>
<th>Management SIO</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Understands how different channels interact and work best together to achieve objectives</em></td>
<td><em>Proactively manages multi-channel communications campaigns</em></td>
<td><em>Defines channel strategies to meet organisation’s overall communication objectives</em></td>
<td><em>Able to lead a communications function, along with the ability to demonstrate understanding of all communication channels and strategy development</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Understands the importance of audience access</em></td>
<td><em>Can identify key media trends and their impact on customers and government comms</em></td>
<td><em>Monitors, evaluates and shapes activity across the organisation to ensure co-ordination, avoid cross-over and make best use of resources</em></td>
<td><em>Sets standards and oversees the strategic development and maintenance of channels and implementation of technology</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aware of the rapid changes taking place in the media world</em></td>
<td><em>Knows how to measure the effectiveness of messages and can assess the costs and benefits of different media</em></td>
<td><em>Builds team capability in using different channels for maximum impact and efficiency</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Can articulate the strengths and weaknesses of new technology in communicating with audiences.</em></td>
<td><em>Understands the need for media neutral planning and puts it into practice whenever possible</em></td>
<td><em>Has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different media and their relative roles in a comms campaign</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Aware of the key costs and benefits of different media and understands objective ways to measure this effectiveness</em></td>
<td><em>Identifies opportunities to promote departmental messages in a wide range of media</em></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Understands channels available to reach target audience</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### CHANNELS AND TECHNOLOGIES (page 2 of 2)

Uses the most effective and appropriate channels and technologies to deliver communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential *AIO/IO * entry level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Understands the principles of face to face marketing and display</td>
<td>▪ Segments audience to deliver communications through most appropriate channels</td>
<td>▪ Able to use a mix of media e.g. PR, Partnership, Marketing and engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Understands organisational channels available to reach target audience</td>
<td>▪ Has a thorough understanding of employee communication techniques</td>
<td>▪ Supports organisational leaders as communications channels of cultural change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digital/social media</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Understands and can apply interactive communication technology</td>
<td>▪ Proficient in sub-editing, design and layout using associated software packages</td>
<td>▪ Provides up to date advice on how to make best use of digital communications channels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Understands and can apply relevant software</td>
<td>▪ Manages delivery of content</td>
<td>▪ Delivers digital communications solutions as part of the wider mix and evaluates results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Oversees content delivery</td>
<td>▪ Knows and demonstrates best practice; accessibility, usability and writing for digital channels and able to provide e-communications advice to colleagues</td>
<td>▪ Understands new systems and how they are configured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Advises on building, designing and branding channels</td>
<td>▪ Understands interactive design and usability issues</td>
<td>▪</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT (page 1 of 2)
Understands organisation’s business and how communication supports it; is aware of the wider communication context and GCN; is fully aware of and applies propriety guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROPERSONAL COMMUNICATOR (elements apply in all roles)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Builds in depth knowledge of areas of organisation’s business</td>
<td>Ensures a consistent level of business knowledge within the team and that this knowledge is applied effectively</td>
<td>Demonstrates in depth knowledge of organisation’s business strategy</td>
<td>Influences, negotiates and robustly defends and champions the communication function</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands the pressure from and demands of Ministers/Chief Executives and officials</td>
<td>Inputs intelligence from the communications network and other sources to help shape the team's strategy and service delivery approaches</td>
<td>Has a comprehensive understanding of policy currently being developed and of underlying strategic issues</td>
<td>Works strategically and imaginatively, linking the news agenda to organisational priorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can describe the relevant communication audiences and their requirements</td>
<td>Understands policy priorities, and the issues driving these</td>
<td>Works closely with policy and delivery colleagues to ensure that the customer experience is understood and reflected in policy and implementation</td>
<td>Able to handle politically sensitive situations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Keeps up to date with industry developments in communication through GCN and other professional networks</td>
<td>Spots the publicity or news values of policy or operational developments</td>
<td>Demonstrates a high level of understanding and appreciation of the political landscape and wider government communication strategy</td>
<td>Leads on the transformation of organisational communications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Aware of key organisational and ministerial priorities</td>
<td>Able to draw up clear specification for communications contracts</td>
<td>Works willingly with other government organisations to integrate communications to support policy outcomes</td>
<td>Experience of a variety of communication disciplines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Understands the Unit's communications strategy and where they fit in</td>
<td>Advises on propriety of communication issues</td>
<td>Identifies and considers the impact of comms activity on wider organisational and government plans</td>
<td>Participates actively in cross government communication delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates an understanding of how other communications disciplines operate</td>
<td>Makes persuasive and objective case to support communications advice</td>
<td>Makes communications fundamental to departmental strategy</td>
<td>Provides sound advice on the application of propriety guidance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Aware of the elements of the customer experience and the ways in which policy and delivery can positively affect it</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uses knowledge of communications and customer insight to influence business strategy and operations</td>
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Understands organisation’s business and how communication supports it; is aware of the wider communication context and GCN; is fully aware of and applies propriety guidelines

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<td></td>
<td>*Keeps up to date with current affairs and is aware of the broader political/government context</td>
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<td>Provides direction to ensure communications materials are aligned with other areas of the organisation eg policy, press office, marketing, internal comms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knows what information can and cannot be released</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Demonstrates an understanding of propriety guidance</td>
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RELATIONSHIP/ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT (page 1 of 1)
Understands, responds to and satisfies communications needs of diverse audiences – clients, government stakeholder groups, partners, media and employees; builds and maintains constructive relationships and balances different demands

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<tr>
<td>▪ <em>Understands key relationships and importance of networks for the organisation’s communications</em></td>
<td>▪ Helps clients define communication needs and advises on most effective communication methods, channels and presentation</td>
<td>▪ Continuously monitors the effectiveness of delivery of communication plans across accounts</td>
<td>▪ Oversees relationships with advertising agencies and external suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Actively engages with a broad range of internal stakeholders from operations, policy, finance and other areas in shaping communication approaches</td>
<td>▪ Oversees and coordinates effective marketing and communication planning for a range of accounts</td>
<td>▪ Is persuasive with opinion formers and actively manages organisation’s reputation across all audiences</td>
<td>▪ Able to act as the adviser on all matters relating to communication and support Directorates with their communication challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Develops and sustains stakeholder relationships using appropriate channels to keep them informed</td>
<td>▪ Feeds information from account management into communication strategy to ensure this is built from client perspectives</td>
<td>▪ Able to work with other government organisations and No.10 to co-ordinate presentation and policy</td>
<td>▪ Able to build influential networks and to communicate and engage with others effectively in a wide range of settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Manages events including identifying possible speakers, venues, AV and exhibition suppliers and target audience</td>
<td>▪ Engages relevant stakeholders early in the development process</td>
<td>▪ Can map stakeholders and develop appropriate communications for each key stakeholder group</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Can map stakeholders and develop appropriate communications for each key stakeholder group</td>
<td>▪ Uses stakeholder analysis tools</td>
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<td>▪ Able to work with other government organisations and No.10 to co-ordinate presentation and policy</td>
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</table>

**Media/Press**

| | | | |
| ▪ Develops and nurtures excellent contacts with newspapers and broadcasters | ▪ Able to have robust and resilient conversations with any stakeholder | | |
STRATEGIC MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION (page 1 of 3)
Plans, builds and manages delivery of strategies, campaigns and day to day marketing and communication services which are based on audience insight and are effective in getting the organisation’s messages across and delivered to the highest professional standard; promotes coherent and consistent organisation brand(s)

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Understands the basic principles of effective marketing and communication and how they apply in own organisation</td>
<td>Consistently uses a wide range of sources to develop propositions</td>
<td>Develops overall marketing and communication strategies and plans to meet organisation’s goals</td>
<td>Embeds Engage principles/best practice communication throughout the unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Contributes to marketing and communication planning activity and suggests creative and innovative ideas</td>
<td>Translates creative ideas into practical communication</td>
<td>Promotes the integration of strategic communication and policy development and delivery</td>
<td>Devises and implements successful large scale marketing and communications strategies for both internal and external audiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Understands how communication can contribute to changing behaviour</td>
<td>Interprets communications strategies to inform and produce marketing plans</td>
<td>Forms and directs effective cross-departmental teams from an early point in the formulation of policy</td>
<td>Oversees the development and delivery of an integrated communications strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Understands and applies customer segmentation principles in developing communication solutions</td>
<td>Uses insight to inform decisions</td>
<td>Devises and reviews the communications strategy for own policy area</td>
<td>Develops high quality communication products and projects for use at both national and local level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Seeks to make active contribution to insight development process</td>
<td>Takes an integrated approach to communication planning and uses channels and technologies to full potential</td>
<td>Ensures strategy is built on sound evaluation and evidence</td>
<td>Engages ministers/ board in and approval of marketing and communications strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Builds simple business cases for communication programmes and services, demonstrating return on investment</td>
<td>Builds business cases for communication campaigns to get key messages across and reinforce the organisation’s brand</td>
<td>Sets clear, actionable and measurable objectives for comms strategy</td>
<td>Demonstrates strong brand management and promotion of corporate reputation abilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Demonstrates awareness of political context in making communication choices</td>
<td>Leads development and delivery of targeted communication campaigns to get key messages across and reinforce the organisation’s brand</td>
<td>Actively participates in debate about communication strategy within the wider government communication network</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STRATEGIC MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION (page 2 of 3)
Plans, builds and manages delivery of strategies, campaigns and day to day marketing and communication services which are based on audience insight and are effective in getting the organisation’s messages across and delivered to the highest professional standard; promotes coherent and consistent organisation brand(s)

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<tr>
<th>Essential *AIO/IO *</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media/Press</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ▪ Drafts media strategies for launches and other media events | ▪ Handles high profile and sensitive media issues  
▪ Initiates and leads proactive media and public affairs campaigns | ▪ Integrates proactive media relations into overall communication strategies | |
| **Internal**        |                |                 |              |
| ▪ Understands the importance and key principles of internal comms  
▪ Applies insight to communicate with internal customers  
▪ Creates and co-ordinates corporate internal communication plans  
▪ Demonstrates awareness of the principles of employee engagement | ▪ Develops integrated internal communication strategies drawing on the whole communication mix  
▪ Demonstrates an excellent understanding of internal communications as an influencer of employee engagement  
▪ Demonstrates a sound understanding of the principles of employee engagement  
▪ Able to develop key messages for the relevant audience segmentation | ▪ Sets clear, measurable internal communication objectives that deliver against organisational performance targets  
▪ Applies Engage principles to ensure strategies have maximum impact  
▪ Clearly applies the principles of employee engagement | ▪ Leads teams capable of delivering long-term internal communication strategies, which are appropriately resourced and based on Engage principles  
▪ Leads teams that play an active role in executing the organisation’s employee engagement approach, working closely with HR, Organisational Development and Change colleagues to increase organisational performance |
STRATEGIC MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION (page 3 of 3)
Plans, builds and manages delivery of strategies, campaigns and day to day marketing and communication services which are based on audience insight and are effective in getting the organisation’s messages across and delivered to the highest professional standard; promotes coherent and consistent organisation brand(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>develops integrated communication strategies drawing on the whole communication mix</th>
<th>Sets clear, measurable communication objectives that deliver against policy and delivery targets</th>
<th>Leads teams capable of delivering long-term communication strategies which are appropriately resourced, based on Engage principles and demonstrate clear benefits to audiences and organisational business performance and PSA targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is aware of the need for a clear media-neutral comms strategy, and the process for developing this, including the role of audience insight</td>
<td>Demonstrates an excellent understanding of the role of communications as a strategic business tool</td>
<td>Applies Engage principles to ensure strategies have maximum impact</td>
<td>Is able to map out departmental activities and events in support of clear communications themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EVALUATION, RESEARCH, EVIDENCE (page 1 of 1)
Gathers and interprets data on the effectiveness of communication strategies, campaigns and services and their impact on audience behaviour and business outcomes; identifies improvement opportunities

<table>
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<th>Essential *AIO/IO * entry level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Understands the importance of consistent, objective evaluation and research in informing the whole communications agenda</td>
<td>▪ Demonstrates in depth knowledge of market research</td>
<td>▪ Ensures evaluation is in place across all communication activity and links with wider departmental evidence gathering</td>
<td>▪ Able to define and deliver market research, including analysis of customer requirements, behaviour, demand, expectations and satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Knows how to embed evaluation in all communication activity</td>
<td>▪ Identifies underlying issues from complex data and proposes improvement actions from analysis of evidence</td>
<td>▪ Uses quantifiable evaluation to direct and refine strategies as appropriate</td>
<td>▪ Able to work with a variety of research methods and techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Makes use of existing research data where possible</td>
<td>▪ Feeds evidence into communication strategy and planning activity in organisation</td>
<td>▪ Ensures research data is used to inform all communication activity and the overall strategy</td>
<td>▪ ▪</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Understands basic research principles and methodologies</td>
<td>▪ Can write a research brief and commission research against specified objectives</td>
<td>▪ Monitors the effectiveness of research across the team ensuring it delivers a good return on investment</td>
<td>▪</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Uses standard processes to collect audience feedback and evaluate the effectiveness of communication activities</td>
<td>▪ Implements measurement criteria as part of a communication plan</td>
<td>▪ Shares key intelligence, research and evidence with the wider network to ensure joined up strategies</td>
<td>▪</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Able to design simple feedback questionnaires</td>
<td>▪ Can identify the best data source for a particular task; understands relative strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>▪ Produces full market reviews and complex analysis</td>
<td>▪</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Analyses standard research data against defined objectives to produce summary reports</td>
<td>▪ Measures results against communications goals/objectives</td>
<td>▪ Has a wide knowledge and deep understanding of the full spectrum of data sources</td>
<td>▪</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Understands the data sources that could contribute to a market segmentation</td>
<td>▪ ▪</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Understands what’s needed for a good research brief and can draft with some help</td>
<td>▪ ▪</td>
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</tbody>
</table>