UGA Staff Competency Model
Frequently Asked Questions

What is a competency model?

A competency model is a collection of competencies—often organized into categories or clusters—considered pertinent to an organization and a particular function within an organization (e.g., job code, position, etc.). Some models may be general and apply to all employees, while other models may apply to specific occupations or positions. Not every competency in the occupation-specific model may be relevant to an individual’s position.

What are competencies?

Competencies comprise the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) that contribute to individual and organizational performance. Definitions and examples of KSAO’s are as follows:

- **Knowledge:** Information developed or learned through experience, study, or investigation.
  
  *Example:* Institutional Knowledge is knowledge of the processes, systems, cultural values, and policies that make up the organization.

- **Skill:** The result of repeatedly applying knowledge or ability.
  
  *Example:* Complex Problem Solving is identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.

- **Ability:** An innate potential to perform mental and physical actions or tasks.
  
  *Example:* Learning Agility is the ability and willingness to learn from experience and then apply that learning to perform successfully in new situations.

- **Other Characteristic:** Encompasses the observable reactions of an individual to certain situations.
  
  *Example:* Integrity is being honest, transparent, and ethical.

The target proficiency level for each competency will vary based on an individual’s position and the organization’s needs.

What are UGA’s plans for implementing competencies?

Suggested competency models are being created for common staff job codes across UGA. These competency models will be made available as an example of what knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics are needed for each position.
What is the relationship between performance and competencies?

The relationship between competencies and performance is indirect. As staff increase their proficiency levels, their performance outputs would generally be expected to improve. Organizations whose staff have high proficiency levels are organizations that would be expected to have superior organizational performance. However, this is not always the case. An individual may possess the required knowledge, skills, abilities, and characteristics but may be performing at a lower level than expected due to various factors, e.g., personal problems, lack of focus, job dissatisfaction, negative reaction to organizational change, lack of organizational resources, etc.

Why is UGA developing competencies?

UGA is investing in competencies to establish a competency-based performance management process that delivers the following:

- transparent performance expectations;
- alignment of performance standards across the institution;
- targeted, consistent performance feedback and guidance; and
- performance based criteria for personnel decisions.

How have competencies been used by other organizations?

For many years, competencies have been used effectively in both the private and public sectors. They play a key role in organizational development and improvement by articulating the capabilities required for individual and organizational performance. Competencies serve as a solid foundation for human capital areas such as recruitment and hiring of talent, job assessment, employee development and training, performance management, career planning, and succession planning. Depending on the organization’s choice, it can choose to apply competencies to all of these human capital areas or some of them. Competencies may be incorporated into position descriptions, interview guides, hiring criteria and methods, assessment processes, individual development plans, performance management processes, and employee development opportunities (e.g., training).
How can competencies be useful to employees?

Competencies help employees to:

- understand the competencies expected in their job, the key behaviors they should demonstrate, and the steps needed to increase their proficiency levels;
- discuss with their supervisors the employee’s strengths, areas for growth, and suggested training and developmental activities;
- focus on specific training and development opportunities that will help them grow and strive for excellence; and
- understand the competencies they would be expected to have to move into a new job, particularly for employees who are interested in becoming supervisors and managers or in changing careers.

How can competencies be useful to supervisors?

Competencies help supervisors to better:

- screen prospective employees during the hiring process, which results in better hiring decisions;
- discuss with employees their strengths, areas for growth, training, and developmental activities;
- distribute work more efficiently by using the knowledge of employees’ proficiency levels;
- acquire training and development opportunities systematically and efficiently, e.g., develop training partnerships between organizations, bringing tailored training to employees, etc.; and
- determine what type of skill sets are needed in the future, which helps support succession planning.

What if there are other competencies that are relevant for my job but are not included in the model?

The UGA competency model will describe the global competencies required for all staff in a specific position. The model does not describe every competency relevant to a job. If there are other competencies important to your specific job/role, you should discuss them with your supervisor and determine the best approach for incorporating them into your overall career development plan.

Will training be provided on the use of the staff competency model?

Yes, training will be provided on implementation and use of the competency model. More information will be available later this year.