

Apprenticeship Standard for Policy Officer

The primary role of a **policy officer** is to shape and/or influence government policy, by working with a wide range of stakeholders and experts to gather evidence, effectively synthesise information and present recommendations to senior colleagues. Not only will policy officers work within central and local government, but also within private and third sector organisations that interact with and strive to influence government policy. Policy officers will typically work as part of a wider team and report to a senior policy officer.

The responsibilities of a policy officer encompass the development, implementation and evaluation phases of policymaking, and are likely to include: researching and understanding the political environment in order to support the continuous, uninterrupted development of a policy; gathering evidence and being objective to support the influencing and negotiating of new policies; handling sensitive information and keeping accurate records of policy history; assisting the wider team by providing administrative support during the introduction of new legislation; commissioning input from and preparing and drafting submissions for senior officials; and replying to public and formal correspondence within any deadlines given.

Entry Requirements

Individual employers will decide the entry requirement for this apprenticeship, but typically this will be:

- 5 x GCSEs A*-C including Maths and English (or level 2 equivalent)
- 2 x A-levels A*-D (or level 3 equivalent) **or** sufficient work experience is referenced

Knowledge – Policy Officers demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:	
Policy Area	History of the policy area; policy aims, challenges and issues; how to engage relevant organisations; political context; relevant policy tests; legal implications; international aspects as applicable; consideration of sustainable development duties
Organisation	Organisational structure; strategy; purpose; activities; aims; values; visions; structures; how to support and achieve these through own role
Political Environment	Government and Parliament - history, structure, relationship and responsibilities; electoral systems and processes; the British constitution and legislative processes; parliamentary committees; local government; public sector bodies; groups and movements influencing policy
Contextual Factors	Economic; social; technological; legal and environmental factors and the subsequent impact of these on policy; internal and external barriers that exist and how to overcome them
Programme and Project	Basic concepts, language and principles; importance of effective project management including delivering to plan, on time and in budget;

Management	advantages and disadvantages of different planning methods; importance of identifying risks and issues upfront; importance of continuously reviewing and updating plans
Commercial Awareness	The steps involved in making commercial decisions; organisational procurement processes; the requirement to achieve value for money; how to achieve best value; engaging customers and suppliers; elements of risk; financial and reputational implications
Consultation Process	Purpose of consultation; the importance of taking into account stakeholder and public views; engagement with local communities; consultation planning; timescales and deadlines; sample size and quality; advantages and disadvantages of different consultation methods; legal requirements
Policy Delivery	Policy aims and intended outcomes; what successful implementation looks like; basic delivery systems available; the delivery environment including other organisations involved; user-centred design; reputational risks and public perception; how to measure success of the policy

Skills – Policy Officers display the following skills:	
Evidence Gathering	Apply analytical techniques; make use of analytical support and key statistics related to policy area; work with experts outside of policy; apply the basics of economic appraisal; handle sensitive information securely
Evidence-based problem solving	Define the policy problem; demonstrate hypothesis-based thinking; seek advice from relevant experts; make decisions based on sound reasoning and evidence previously gathered; know when to escalate issues
Evaluation	Use research and trials to inform policy; consider evaluations of previous policies; read graphs and tables; understand simple descriptive statistics; consider advantages and disadvantages of evaluation methods including validity and reliability
Presentation Skills	Select and present information in a clear and effective manner; present information according to the audience; use correct grammar and punctuation; structure work in a logical order; write accurately, briefly and clearly; speak confidently and coherently; plan for and be able to answer questions
Communicating with Influence	Communicate confidently; be personable; ask insightful questions; recognise levels of authority; be able to influence others; be able to negotiate effectively and respectfully; confidently represent your organisation; recognise importance of objectivity and impartiality in policy-making
Time Management	Identify risks and issues; monitor progress of actions; demonstrate effective use of resources; manage conflicting priorities and pressures; work to agreed deadlines and timescales; dedicate time to specific activities

Behaviours – Policy Officers demonstrate the following behaviours:	
Continuous Learning and Agility	Takes responsibility for self-development; reflects on lessons learned and feedback to improve performance; champions continuous improvement; seeks out opportunities to improve ways of working; looks to create effective change
Big Picture Thinking	Takes an active interest in understanding organisational priorities and strategy; looks beyond the immediate role; keeps abreast of wider issues which may impact on policy area; keeps a clear focus on the overall policy aim
Looking to the future	Is mindful of future trends and influences; considers potential risks and opportunities and adapts working style accordingly; anticipates how the future can support actions in the present; considers multiple possible outcomes
Working Collaboratively	Shows consideration for others; seeks to develop trusting and effective relationships; shares knowledge; encourages collaboration; is a team player; promotes diversity; listens to others; appreciates different perspectives and respects alternative opinions
Resilience	Is proactive; has a 'can do' attitude; is open to receiving feedback from others; is tenacious and remains motivated under pressure; deals positively with setbacks
Self-Awareness	Reflects on own performance and feedback from others; is mindful of the impact of own actions on others; adapts style to suit circumstances; understands limitations of own knowledge and uses networks to inform own work

Duration

The apprenticeship will typically take 24 months to complete.

Qualifications

Apprentices without level 2 English and maths will need to achieve this level prior to taking the end-point assessment.

Level

This is a level 4 apprenticeship.

Review Date

This standard should be reviewed after three years.