Legal Professionals
Capability Set

Capability Framework
NSW Public Sector
Using the Legal Professionals Capability Set

Legal Professionals Capability Set


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Further information

This publication can be accessed online at: http://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/workforce-management/capability-framework/about-the-framework/terms-and-conditions-of-use

Further information regarding the Legal Professionals Capability Set, including answers to frequently asked questions, is available on the Public Service Commission website.

Resources and information on the Capability Framework and other Occupation Specific Capability Sets are also available.

For general enquiries concerning the Legal Professionals Capability Set, please contact: capability.framework@psc.nsw.gov.au

Feedback

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NSW Public Sector Capability Framework and the Legal Professionals Capability Set

Personal Attributes
- Display Resilience and Courage
- Act with Integrity
- Manage Self
- Value Diversity

Relationships
- Communicate Effectively
- Commit to Customer Service
- Work Collaboratively
- Influence and Negotiate

Results
- Think and Solve Problems
- Deliver Results
- Plan and Prioritise
- Demonstrate Accountability

Business Enablers
- Finance
- Technology
- Procurement and Contract Management
- Project Management

People Management
- Manage and Develop People
- Inspire Direction and Purpose
- Optimise Business Outcomes
- Manage Reform and Change
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Statutory Interpretation
Interpret legislation, subordinate legislation and instruments in accordance with legislation and accepted legal principles

Level 1
Apply understanding of the legislative process and common law to analyse and interpret statutory provisions.
Locate and make use of extrinsic materials as aids in the interpretation of statutes, consistent with legislative and common law requirements.
Understand and apply current legislation applying to interpretation of statutes.
Read and interpret Acts and subordinate legislation with reference to their structure and operative provisions.

Level 2
Apply understanding of the legislative process and common law to identify and solve statutory interpretation issues.
Make use of extrinsic materials to resolve statutory interpretation issues, consistent with legislative and common law requirements.
Solve issues of statutory interpretation by applying current legislation relating to interpretation of statutes.
Read and interpret Acts and subordinate legislation, drawing on knowledge of the structure and operation of legislation.

Level 3
Apply understanding of the legislative process and common law to identify and solve complex issues of statutory interpretation.
Make use of extrinsic materials to resolve ambiguity and complex statutory interpretation issues, consistent with legislative and common law requirements.
Understand and apply current legislation relating to interpretation of statutes to solve complex interpretation issues.
Draw on detailed knowledge of the structure and operation of Acts and subordinate legislation in undertaking statutory interpretation.

Level 4
Identify and solve highly complex statutory interpretation problems through application of an extensive knowledge of the legislative process and common law, and resolve competing interpretations.
Make use of extrinsic materials to resolve ambiguity and highly complex or challenging statutory interpretation issues, consistent with legislative and common law requirements.
Understand and apply current legislation relating to interpretation of statutes to solve highly complex interpretation issues.
Solve complex and challenging statutory interpretation problems through an extensive understanding of the structure and operation of Acts and subordinate legislation.
About the Legal Professionals Capability Set

How the Capability Framework and the Legal Professionals Capability Set work together

The Legal Professionals Capability Set is intended to be used in conjunction with the 2013 NSW Public Sector Capability Framework ("Capability Framework") to support the full range of workforce management and development activities, including:

- role design and description
- recruitment
- performance management
- learning and development, and
- workforce planning.

The Capability Framework applies to all public sector roles, both executive and non-executive. Every role requires, at an appropriate level, all of the capabilities in the Capability Framework, including the People Management capabilities for roles responsible for managing others.

The Legal Professionals Capability Set consists of eight capabilities that define additional knowledge, skills and abilities required for roles within the legal profession. As a guide, most legal roles would be expected to require in the range of 3-5 Legal Professionals capabilities (in addition to the core capabilities from the Capability Framework), depending on the focus of their responsibilities.

When used together, the Capability Framework and the Legal Professionals Capability Set provide a comprehensive description of the capabilities required for successful performance in a legal role.

For example: Legal roles that provide legal advice will require strong verbal and written communication skills (Communicate Effectively in the Capability Framework), as well as the specialised Legal Advice capability from the Legal Professionals Capability Set.
Interpreting the Behavioural Indicators

The eight capabilities in the Legal Professionals Capability Set are described by behavioural indicators across four levels of complexity.

The behaviours illustrate the knowledge, skills and abilities expected at each level, and read together they should paint a picture of the capability at the level.

The behaviours are meant to be applied very flexibly and contextualised to the role. Note that:

- the list of behaviours is not exhaustive - there may be many other behaviours expected at the level.
- this is not a competency checklist. Some of the behaviours may not apply to an individual role.

For example, the Legal Advice capability includes professional supervision behavioural indicators at Levels 3 and 4. These indicators do not preclude roles without professional supervisory responsibilities from requiring Level 3 or Level 4 capability and need not be considered when assessing capability, if supervision is not part of the role.

For this reason, while behavioural indicators should not be modified or removed from a capability, a pragmatic approach to application of the Legal Professionals Capability Set should be taken when undertaking assessment activities to fill a role and in performance management discussions.

Determining Capability Levels

Roles require a range of capabilities at varying levels, and the levels in the Legal Professionals Capability Set do not correspond directly to classifications or grades.

Similarly, the levels in the Legal Professionals Capability Set do not correspond directly with levels in the Capability Framework. Legal work requires specialised knowledge, skills and abilities developed through tertiary education, training and occupational experience so the descriptors for Level 1 of the Legal Professionals Capability Set reflect more complex behaviours than those contained at the Foundational Level in the Capability Framework.

Capabilities at Level 4 are not intended to apply exclusively to roles at the highest grade in the legal services function, nor should it be assumed that the capabilities for senior professional or management roles in legal services units must all be at Level 4.

To determine the level of capability required, select the group of behavioural indicators that best fit the role.
Applying the Legal Professionals Capability Set

Deciding whether the Legal Professionals Capability Set is required for a role

The Legal Professionals Capability Set has been designed for those working as a lawyer in the NSW public sector.

Points to consider when deciding whether the Legal Professionals capabilities are required for a role are:

• does the work require some specialised legal knowledge/qualifications, or is it something anyone with sound core capabilities could do e.g. follow the prompts to fill in a Notice of Appearance?
• does the legal work (research, document drafting etc) form a large part of the role’s daily work?

Many roles that work in a legal office may require a grasp of legal terminology and an understanding of the legal environment, but do not require Legal Professionals capabilities. For example, an Executive Assistant role that is primarily focused on providing general administrative support to the General Counsel and legal team.
Deciding which Legal Professionals capabilities apply

The number of capabilities from the Legal Professionals Capability Set that apply to a role will depend on the breadth and nature of its accountabilities. It is not expected that all eight capabilities will apply, and most legal roles would be expected to require in the range of 3-5 Legal Professionals capabilities.

Senior professional or management roles in legal services units should not automatically be assigned all the capabilities from the Legal Professionals Capability Set. The people in these roles may well have all the capabilities, personally, at a high level, but may not need to exercise them in their current role. For example, they may have very high level capability in Legal Research, but may personally do very little legal research. Senior roles in legal units often have a strong component of management and leadership which is captured by the ‘People Management’ group of capabilities in the Capability Framework.

Other occupation specific capability sets

Generally a role would only require additional, specialised capabilities from one occupation specific capability set, because roles usually belong to one profession. For example, a corporate lawyer may require substantial knowledge of finance, but is unlikely to require capabilities from both the Finance Professionals Capability Set and the Legal Professionals Capability Set.

Qualifications and other role requirements

The Capability Framework and the Legal Professionals Capability Set describe behaviours but do not specify qualifications. If a qualification or professional membership is an essential requirement for the role, this remains as a pre-requisite for employment, and should be incorporated into the role description and recruitment process.
Statutory Interpretation
Interpret legislation, subordinate legislation and instruments in accordance with legislation and accepted legal principles

Level 1
- Apply understanding of the legislative process and common law to analyse and interpret statutory provisions.
- Locate and make use of extrinsic materials as aids in the interpretation of statutes, consistent with legislative and common law requirements.
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Legal Research
Undertake Legal Research

**Level 1**
Demonstrate understanding of the applicable legal system, relevant sources of law and operation of precedent.
Efficiently undertake legal research tasks by selecting relevant and current materials and considering the research results.
Present clear and well organised results of legal research undertaken, in accordance with instructions.
Display familiarity and confidence in the use of available technologies to undertake legal research.

**Level 2**
Apply an understanding of the applicable legal system, relevant sources of law and operation of precedent to legal research tasks.
Undertake legal research tasks in an efficient and targeted manner by selecting relevant, current and authoritative materials and analysing the information found to guide further research.
Present reliable, clear and accurate results of legal research undertaken and suggest avenues for further research.
Make effective use of knowledge management and legal research technologies to achieve results.

**Level 3**
Achieve reliable and accurate legal research results through an understanding of the applicable legal system and application of case law and precedent.
Undertake legal research tasks in an efficient and targeted manner, identifying the most valuable sources and progressively adjusting research plans based on results.
Evaluate the results of legal research and where necessary, direct the further research to be undertaken.
Demonstrate a sound understanding of technology relevant to legal research and assist others in using the technology available.

**Level 4**
Achieve optimal legal research results through an extensive understanding of the applicable legal system, legal sources and application of case law and precedent.
Lead large or complex legal research projects, ensuring research is conducted efficiently and achieves the optimal results.
Provide guidance on the organisation or presentation of legal research results in large or complex legal research projects.
Guide others in the use of legal research technology; identify and support the development and application of emerging technologies for use in legal research.
Legal Advice
Provide quality independent legal advice and explanation of legal issues

Level 1
Identify the purpose, scope and form of legal advice required.
Obtain relevant information and seek clarification or further information where necessary.
Identify vulnerable clients and manage related legal issues under supervision.
Analyse and apply relevant law to the facts, incorporating policy, probity and operational considerations, and considering the options available to the client, under supervision.
Identify potential legal risks applicable to the advice being provided and non-complex risk management strategies, under supervision.
Recognise where external legal expertise may be required; instruct external legal services providers and assembles legal briefs.
Manage relationship with external legal services providers.
Ensure that legal services provided meet client expectations (quality, timeliness etc) under supervision.

Level 2
Identify the client, purpose, scope and form of legal advice required, and factors such as urgency or sensitivity.
Obtain relevant information in complex matters and seek clarification or further information where necessary.
Manage legal issues relating to vulnerable clients, including where capacity may be in issue or where ethical or cross-cultural issues arise, with minimal guidance.
Analyse and apply relevant law to the facts, and advises on available options, while identifying the relevant policy, probity and operational considerations, with minimal supervision.
Identify legal risks attached to particular courses of action and appropriate policies, processes and controls to manage legal risks, with minimal supervision.
Review and approve the use of external legal services providers based on task and expertise required; supervises briefs.
Manage relationship between external legal services providers and legal staff, with minimal supervision.
Ensure legal work is completed to a high standard, and in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Level 3
Independently identify the client, scope, purpose and form of legal advice required in complex, urgent or sensitive matters.
Clarify and refine instructions where appropriate and assist others to do so.
Deal independently with vulnerable clients, including where capacity may be in issue or where ethical or cross-cultural issues arise.
Independently analyse and apply relevant law to complex facts, incorporating policy, probity and operational considerations, and creatively formulating options.
Independently identify and advise upon emerging legal risks and their strategic, commercial and policy implications.
Provide guidance to others on selection of external legal services providers and approves briefing of external legal services providers.
Conduct quality assurance of external legal advice provided and provide feedback to external legal providers.
Provide professional supervision to other legal roles in preparing legal advice to assure the quality of the advice provided.

Level 4
Provide guidance on complex issues concerning client identity, multiple clients, scope of instructions, purpose, sensitivity or urgency.
Provide guidance and leadership on legal issues relating to vulnerable clients, including where capacity may be in issue or where ethical or cross-cultural issues arise.
Apply a high level understanding and expert analysis of policy, probity and operational issues to provide solutions and options to resolve complex and sensitive legal questions.
Review legal risk management across the organisation and advise on the strategic, commercial and policy considerations of decisions.
Review internal legal capacity and expertise and develop options for the provision of legal services, including managing cost and tender processes.
Monitor and review relationships with external legal services providers and evaluate cost effectiveness, timeliness and quality of services provided.
Provide professional supervision to other legal roles in preparing legal advice, to assist in their professional development and assure the quality of the advice provided.
Legal drafting
Prepare legal documents to achieve client outcomes

**Level 1**
- Use precedents and templates to draft legally and procedurally correct court and tribunal documents under supervision.
- Understand and apply relevant procedural, evidentiary and ethical rules to the drafting of court or tribunal documents.
- Use relevant precedents to draft straightforward transactional documents which are legally effective and logically organised.
- Assist clients by drafting, reviewing or amending legal documents to achieve the client’s intended purpose, comply with policy and minimise risk, under supervision.
- Understand the standard provisions, structure and key legal principles applying to transactional documents.

**Level 2**
- Adapt precedents and templates to draft legally and procedurally correct court and tribunal documents with minimal guidance.
- Apply knowledge of relevant procedural, evidentiary and ethical rules to draft effective court or tribunal documents.
- Use relevant precedents to draft logically organised transactional documents which meet the requirements of the transaction or project.
- Assist clients by using legal knowledge to draft, review or amend legal documents which achieve the client’s intended purpose, comply with policy and minimise legal and commercial risk.
- Apply knowledge of the law and stylistic and mechanical requirements to drafting transactional documents to ensure that documents drafted are legally effective.

**Level 3**
- Draft complex court and tribunal documents with guidance in contentious or significant matters.
- Draft complex court and tribunal documents to implement litigation strategies while complying with procedural, evidentiary and ethical requirements.
- Draft legally complex transactional documents, adapting precedents or drafting bespoke documents as required, to meet the requirements of the transaction or project and appropriately manage legal risk.
- Uses advanced legal knowledge and experience to draft, review or amend complex legal documents which comply with policy, achieve the client’s purpose, and minimise legal and commercial risk.
- Apply advanced legal knowledge and understanding of stylistic and mechanical requirements to drafting transactional documents, interpreting and negotiating provisions as required.
- Provide supervision to other legal professionals in preparing legal documents to assure the quality of documentation.

**Level 4**
- Draft and settle court and tribunal documents in contentious or significant matters.
- Draft and settle significant and complex court and tribunal documents which achieve their strategic purpose, and establish effective processes for meeting procedural, evidentiary and ethical requirements.
- Apply high level drafting skills to draft and settle complex transactional documents which meet the requirements for significant or contentious transactions and projects and appropriately manage significant legal risk.
- Use expert legal knowledge to draft, review and settle complex and significant legal documents which comply with policy, achieve the client’s purpose and minimise legal and commercial risk.
- Bring an expert understanding of the legal principles applying to transactional documents to drafting and settling complex documentation and resolving issues of interpretation.
- Provide supervision to other legal professionals in preparing legal documents, to provide quality assurance and ensure that ethical and legal requirements are met.
Litigation and Dispute Resolution

Litigate and resolve disputes effectively in relevant forums and jurisdictions

**Level 1**
- Conduct litigation under supervision and in accordance with model litigant requirements; deal fairly with self-represented litigants, and treat opponents and other members of the legal profession with respect.
- Identify and follow relevant court and/or tribunal rules and practice notes concerning litigation and comply with directions and timetables.
- Apply relevant legal knowledge to analysis of facts, pleadings and evidence and identify legal issues.
- Apply knowledge of law of evidence to preparation of evidence, including conferring with witnesses to identify and prepare relevant evidence.
- Identify options for early resolution of disputes, conduct simple negotiations and be mindful of costs of litigation and costs recovery options.
- Recognise where specialist expertise or additional support is required. Instruct external legal services providers and assembles briefs.
- Manage relationship with external legal services providers; ensure that legal services provided meet client expectations (quality, timeliness etc) under supervision.

**Level 2**
- Conduct litigation in accordance with model litigant requirements; deal fairly with self-represented litigants, and treat opponents and other members of the legal profession with respect.
- Conduct litigation efficiently and effectively in accordance with court and/or tribunal rules and practice notes, directions and timetables.
- Apply relevant legal knowledge and experience to analysis of facts, pleadings and evidence, identify legal issues and develop a case plan.
- Gather and organise relevant evidence, including conferring with lay and expert witnesses to identify and prepare relevant evidence.
- Identify matters suitable for early resolution and undertake dispute resolution processes including negotiation, while protecting the client from risks and unnecessary costs.
- Review and approve the use of external legal services providers based on task and expertise required; supervises briefs.
- Brief and manage external legal services providers and ensure legal work is performed to the required standards, with minimal supervision.

**Level 3**
- Model behaviour expected of government lawyers, provide guidance on model litigant and ethical issues.
- Apply extensive knowledge of court and/or tribunal rules, practice notes and procedures to conduct litigation efficiently and effectively in accordance with best practice.
- Review and supervise conduct and planning of litigation, settle pleadings, formulate and recommend appropriate strategy.
- Conduct high level forensic and strategic analysis and preparation of evidence with regard to the case plan, and confer with expert and other key witnesses.
- Apply high level strategy and negotiation skills to resolve disputes; represent clients in dispute resolution processes including mediation and arbitration, and protect the client from associated risks and unnecessary costs.
- Provide guidance to others on selection of external legal services providers and approve briefing of external legal services providers.
- Conduct quality assurance of external legal services provided and provide feedback.

**Level 4**
- Provide leadership in the areas of model litigant behaviour, ethical conduct and deal with complaints about conduct of legal professionals.
- Provide leadership and guidance to others on the procedural aspects of conducting complex litigation, including in urgent applications and appellate jurisdictions.
- Provide leadership and share expertise on the conduct and management of litigation, promote best practice in litigation management and advise on highly complex and significant strategic issues.
- Review and analyse decisions concerning evidence and/or witnesses in highly complex or significant matters and provide expert advice on evidence where required.
- Provide leadership on the strategic use and conduct of alternative dispute resolution processes and managing costs of litigation.
- Review internal legal department capacity, future needs and expertise and develop options for the provision of legal services; manage cost and manage tender processes.
- Monitor and review relationships with external legal services providers and evaluate cost effectiveness, timeliness and quality of services provided.
Prosecution
Prosecute offences in accordance with the relevant law, conduct rules and prosecutorial standards

**Level 1**
Apply an understanding of the criminal law, ethical obligations and relevant prosecutorial guidelines to the performance of prosecutorial duties, including obligations to victims and witnesses.
Understand and apply the criteria which apply to decisions whether to prosecute; conduct simple plea negotiations.

**Level 2**
Apply an understanding of the criminal law, ethical obligations and relevant prosecutorial guidelines to the performance of prosecutorial duties, including obligations to victims and witnesses, in complex and/or serious matters.
Consider and advise on alternatives to prosecution, applying the correct criteria, and negotiate pleas and charges.

**Level 3**
Apply an extensive understanding of the criminal law, ethical obligations and relevant prosecutorial guidelines to the performance of prosecutorial duties, including obligations to victims and witnesses, in highly complex and/or serious matters.
Consider and advise on alternatives to prosecution in serious matters and resolve negotiated plea outcomes.

**Level 4**
Provide leadership and guidance on complex, serious and/or contentious ethical or legal issues with regard to prosecutorial duties, including obligations to victims and witnesses.
Review negotiations regarding pleas and charges; make determinations on whether to prosecute in significant and serious cases.
Advocacy
Act as an effective and ethical advocate

Level 1
- Analyse the factual material, identify evidence required, and prepare an outline of the case to be presented.
- Express oral arguments clearly and accurately; prepare submission outlines for use at hearings.
- Identify facts in issue and confer with witnesses to prepare them for giving evidence in simple matters.
- Apply knowledge of the law of evidence in case preparation and present relevant and admissible evidence in simple or unopposed matters.
- Act in accordance with applicable ethical standards, rules of advocacy and etiquette when appearing as an advocate.

Level 2
- Analys the factual material, advise on evidence, and develop a logical and effective strategic plan for presenting the case.
- Use developed advocacy skills to prepare and present written and oral submissions which are clear, accurate and persuasive.
- Confer with witnesses to identify facts in issue and prepare them for giving evidence in complex matters.
- Lead relevant and admissible evidence and conduct cross-examination and re-examination.
- Handle objections to evidence effectively.
- Demonstrate an adherence to appropriate ethical standards, rules of advocacy and etiquette in all aspects of advocacy.

Level 3
- Master the factual and legal issues of the case, advise on and manage complex evidentiary issues and case strategy.
- Advise on appeal prospects and conduct of appeal in lower courts and/or tribunals.
- Use highly developed advocacy skills to prepare and present written and oral submissions which are clear, accurate and persuasive, in complex matters.
- Assess witnesses’ evidence forensically and strategically with regard to the case plan and potential risk.
- Use developed advocacy skills to present effective evidence, including expert evidence; deal effectively with complex evidentiary issues and conduct cross-examination and re-examination in complex matters.
- Model appropriate conduct as an advocate and provide guidance on issues of advocacy conduct, ethics and etiquette.

Level 4
- Provide guidance on highly complex evidentiary issues and case strategy.
- Advise on appeal prospects and conduct of appeals in higher courts and/or complex appeals.
- Use advanced and sophisticated advocacy and influencing skills to prepare and present written and oral submissions in complex or significant matters.
- Review and analyse decisions concerning witnesses in complex or significant matters and provide expert advice on associated legal risk.
- Expertly present and obtain evidence in challenging contexts, including lengthy, highly significant, sensitive or complex proceedings.
- Provide leadership and guidance on complex ethical, etiquette and conduct issues.
Legislative Development and Drafting
Provide legal services relating to legislative proposals and legislative drafting

Level 1
Advise on the process for developing legislation or legal policy and its potential impact.
Identify and analyse issues of law, logic, policy or implementation relating to legislative proposals and drafting of legislation.
Identify legislative options for achieving policy outcomes.
Draft proposed legislation in language that gives effect to Cabinet decisions and instructions and is well structured and organised.
Use knowledge of the legislative process and drafting skills to facilitate the passage of legislation.

Level 2
Advise on procedural options for developing legislation or legal policy and its potential impact.
Identify, analyse and resolve issues of law, logic, policy or implementation relating to legislative proposals and drafting of legislation.
Identify and develops legislative options to meet required policy outcomes.
Drafts complex legislation that gives effect to Cabinet decisions and instructions and is well structured and organised.
Use advanced knowledge of the legislative process and drafting skills to facilitate the passage of legislation.

Level 3
Advise on procedural options for developing legislation or legal policy and on the potential impact of significant or sensitive legislative proposals.
Identify, analyse and resolve complex issues of law, logic, policy or implementation, relating to legislative proposals and drafting of legislation.
Develop legislative options for resolving complex policy issues and incomplete or politically sensitive policy proposals.
Draft and review complex or politically sensitive legislation (including uniform legislation) that gives effect to Cabinet decisions and instructions and is well structured and organised.
Provide strategic legal advice and advanced drafting assistance to assist with the passage of legislation.

Level 4
Provide expert advice and insight into the preferred legislative mechanisms for developing significant, complex or sensitive legislation and the potential impact of complex legislative or legal policy proposals.
Determine and resolve complex and politically sensitive issues relating to legislation and legislative proposals and provide drafting guidance in relation to such issues.
Provide leadership in determining the preferred legislative options for resolving complex incomplete or politically sensitive policy proposals.
Draft and settle significant and complex legislation (including uniform legislation) which resolves legislative issues arising from Cabinet decisions and maintains legal integrity.
Lead the development of legislative drafting policy, style and practices.