



**DIRECTIVE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCY BASED ASSESSMENTS,
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT
SERVICE (SMS) IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE, AS AMENDED.**

**ISSUED BY THE MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION IN TERMS OF REGULATION 86 READ
TOGETHER WITH REGULATION 90 OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATIONS, 2016 (PSR)**

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ACRONYMNS

CPP	Cognitive Process Profile
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
LDMSF	Leadership Development Management Strategic Framework
MPSA	Minister for the Public Service and Administration
PDP	Personal Development Plan
PSR	Public Service Regulations
SMS	Senior Management Service
The 15FQ+	The Fifteen Factor Questionnaire Plus

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Over the years, competency assessment practice has been institutionalised as part of the developmental process for senior managers in the public service. This assessment practice is based on the generic managerial competencies that are outlined in Chapter 5 of the Senior Management Service (SMS) Handbook. The current SMS competency assessment is conducted during the selection process to identify developmental gaps. In 2021, the Cabinet recommended that assessments of emotional intelligence and integrity be included when assessing the competencies of senior managers. The National Framework towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector also cited that “integrity testing must be introduced across all levels as a way of professionalising the public service”.
- 1.2 The Directive is revised to incorporate the assessments for integrity, emotional intelligence, training, development, and provide clear roles for Human Resource Management (HRM) and Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners during the assessment process. Including the psychometric assessment in the recruitment and selection process reduces subjectivity and bias, resulting in a fair, consistent, and evidence-based hiring process.
- 1.3 The Directive further outlines the competency assessment methods and tools to be used when assessing the competencies of SMS members. SMS members will be assessed on the core generic competencies listed in Chapter 5 of the SMS Handbook, technical, integrity testing, emotional intelligence, and the Cognitive Process Profile.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In July 2006, the Cabinet approved the implementation of competency-based assessment for members of the SMS on a compulsory basis. Considering the approval, there was a need to review the practice of competency assessments.
- 2.2 A project was initiated in 2007 to develop new tools to accommodate different levels of management and to improve the competency framework. The review of the 2001 competency framework and the assessment battery was conducted with users to determine whether they were still relevant to the managerial work of SMS members. The review was

also used to identify areas of change in management since the establishment of the SMS initiative in 2001.

- 2.3 Consequently, the developed tools and competency framework emerged from an exhaustive process of interviews, desktop studies, surveys, focus group sessions, and analysis. The data-gathering exercise spanned across the SMS and culminated in a wealth of data on behaviours. In the process, a wide range of stakeholders were involved. Subject matter experts and senior managers were consulted
- 2.4 The Leadership Development Management Strategic Framework (LDMSF) was also approved in 2003 to provide a structured, integrated, and competency-based approach to developing leadership capability within the Public Service. It aims to professionalise and strengthen leadership by aligning development initiatives to the SMS competency Framework, organisational priorities, and service delivery outcomes.
- 2.5 The Framework ensures that leadership development is informed by competency assessments, linked to Personal Development Plans, and integrated throughout the employee lifecycle, from entry to succession planning, and continues development. By standardizing leadership development practices across departments and promoting ethical, accountable, and high-performing leadership, the LDMSF supports the broader objective of building a capable, developmental state that delivers quality public services. The Framework emphasises that:
- i. Targeted training and development remain an imperative to improve the level of competence of members of the SMS.
 - ii. Creating an environment that is structured towards the promotion of training and development, which is broadly the intention of the Directive.

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1 The purpose of this Directive is to:
- a) Provide a systematic approach for competency assessment to facilitate selection and developmental initiatives for candidates and existing SMS members.

- b) Instill a culture of continuous development and promote professionalism in senior managers through compulsory capacity development.

4. AUTHORISATION

This Directive is issued by the Minister for the Public Service and Administration (MPSA) in terms of Regulation 86 read together with Regulation 90 of the Public Service Regulations, 2016 (PSR)

5. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

5.1 The Directive applies to:

- (a) All National, Provincial departments and Government Components; and
- (b) All SMS members as defined in the Public Service Regulations, 2016.

6. REPEAL AND COMMENCEMENT

6.1 This Directive repeals the 2015 Directive on the implementation of competency-based assessment for members of the Senior Management Service (SMS) in the Public Service.

6.2 This Directive is effective from the date of approval by the Minister for the Public Service and Administration.

7. COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT METHODS AND TOOLS

Assessment of SMS members shall be conducted using three competency assessment methods: technical, psychometric, and leadership. The following assessment instruments shall be used to assess the competencies of SMS members: a practical exercise, interviews, the Giotto integrity assessment, the Fifteen Factor Questionnaire Plus (15FQ+) as part of emotional intelligence, the Cognitive Process Profile (CPP), and the DPSA competency assessment battery (core generic competencies).

7.1 Technical exercise/assessment

A technical assessment shall be conducted to assess a candidate's abilities related to the specific function of the job he or she applied for. This assessment will focus on an individual's practical abilities and understanding in response to the operational requirements of the position they have applied for. All shortlisted candidates shall undergo a technical exercise/assessment to determine their capabilities for the job role. The technical exercise shall be in the form of a practical exercise, theoretical test, or project-based assessment. The selection committee shall design the exercises based on the functions outlined in the Job description.

7.2 Psychometric assessment

The psychometric instruments that will be used to assess the personality, cognitive capabilities, preferences, thinking style, and integrity of the candidates will be the Giotto Integrity Assessment, the 15FQ+, and the CPP. Recommended candidates shall be subjected to the psychometric testing to assess their emotional intelligence using the 15FQ+ and integrity using the Giotto assessments. CPP shall be used to measure the cognitive preferences and capabilities of SMS members.

7.3 Leadership assessment (Core Generic Leadership and management competencies)

SMS members shall be subjected to leadership assessment to assess the managerial competencies required for SMS members in the Public Service as specified under Chapter Five (5) of the SMS handbook. This assessment shall be conducted to determine an individual's ability to lead, manage, and direct others. The leadership assessment will apply to both newly appointed and existing SMS members to identify developmental gaps in core generic leadership and management competencies. The assessment for newly appointed SMS members shall be conducted within one (1) month of their appointment. For the existing SMS members, the assessment may be conducted every five (5) years to identify further development gaps based on the outcome of their performance assessment at the end of the financial cycle or as part of a skills audit.

8. ASSESSMENTS FOR SELECTION PURPOSES

- 8.1 Technical exercise, interviews, Giotto integrity assessment, 15FQ+, and CPP shall be implemented as part of the selection process for new SMS members and SMS members who wish to progress to higher levels within the SMS. The new assessment process shall also apply to all advertised positions that are not yet in the selection process (shortlisting and interview).
- a) The technical exercise shall take the form of either a written response or a hands-on assessment to a technical question, a presentation on a topical issue, or a project relevant to the technical functions of the post. All shortlisted candidates must undergo a technical exercise. The selection committee shall determine a technical exercise that covers the core function of the post. The technical exercise shall be conducted before or on the interview date. Departments must include the following in the advert for SMS posts:
 - i. “All shortlisted candidates will be subjected to a technical assessment that intends to assess relevant functional elements of the job.
 - ii. Assessment for core competencies outlined in the SMS Handbook shall be conducted within one month of the appointment of the candidate.
 - iii. The department shall communicate the logistics for the psychometric assessments to the candidate.
 - b) All shortlisted candidates will be subjected to a structured interview to assess their competencies, technical knowledge, experience, and overall suitability for the position in line with the job requirements.
 - c) The selection committee shall combine the technical and interview scores to determine the three candidates for psychometric assessments.
 - d) Based on the outcome of the technical and interviews, a maximum of three (3) candidates who received the highest scores and are the best fit for the position shall undergo a psychometric assessment (Giotto, 15FQ+, and CPP assessments).
 - e) The service provider shall prepare an integrated assessment report three (3) days after assessment, and the report for virtually impaired candidates shall be prepared within five (5) working days.

- f) For a better understanding of the psychometric assessment results, a panel of service providers who administered the assessments shall provide the interpretation of the psychometric assessment results to the selection committee.
- g) The HR Manager shall arrange the interpretation of the psychometric assessment results for the selection committee.
- h) The psychometric assessment report shall be submitted to the User Department or designated departmental contact person on the morning of the feedback session.
- i) The interpretation of the psychometric assessment results to the selection committee shall be conducted through a face-to-face or virtual meeting within one (1) week of conducting assessments.
- j) The committee shall review the results concerning Giotto, 15FQ+, and CPP, and subsequently make an informed recommendation regarding the candidate's appointment.
- k) The results of the psychometric assessment shall be the determining factor for the appointment of an SMS member.
- l) The performance and quality of the candidate throughout the selection process (technical exercise, interview, and psychometric assessments) must be considered before making a final appointment decision. The authority to appoint to the position resides with the Executive Authority or a delegated authority, who will consider the recommendation from the selection committee. It is also essential to recognize that decisions are made in accordance with the approved Employment Equity Plan and Human Resource Plan of the relevant department.
- m) The validity period of the psychometric assessment results shall be as follows:
 - i. Giotto integrity assessment results shall be valid for 24 months.
 - ii. Cognitive Process Profile results shall be valid for 5 years.
 - iii. The 15FQ+ results shall be valid for 24 months.

9. ASSESSMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENTAL PURPOSES

- 9.1 Leadership assessment shall be implemented as part of identifying developmental gaps for new and existing SMS members. This assessment is based on core generic leadership and management competencies and shall be conducted for all SMS members who are expected to elicit generic managerial competencies as determined by their job profiles, and not for

pure technical specialists remunerated at the SMS level who are not expected to perform managerial duties.

- a) Newly appointed candidates shall undergo the leadership assessment to evaluate the leadership competencies required for senior managers, as outlined in Chapter 5 of the SMS handbook, within one (1) month of their appointment.
- b) The identified skills gaps must be incorporated into a Personal Development Plan for an employee.
- c) Training must be prioritized to remedy the identified gaps and managed through the performance management and development system for the SMS via the PDP.
- d) The results of the competency assessments shall be valid for 24 months from the last day of the assessments to allow an individual ample opportunity to respond to developmental gaps.
- e) The departments must address the identified training need with relevant targeted training within 24 months of assessment of the candidates.
- f) Targeted training may be implemented through competency-based assessment, structured learning interventions, workplace exposure (on-the-job training), mentoring, coaching, and continuous impact evaluation to ensure measurable improvement in performance and service delivery outcomes.
- g) Existing SMS members may be subject to a leadership assessment to identify further developmental gaps, based on the results of their performance assessments or every five (5) years for skills audit purposes.
- h) A copy of Appendix A of the Leadership assessment report of a candidate shall remain with the HRD for incorporation of the identified training needs into their HRD plans.

9.2 Implementation of integrity testing and emotional intelligence for the developmental purposes of existing SMS members.

- a) All existing SMS members shall be subjected to integrity testing and emotional intelligence assessment within two (2) years of the implementation of this directive.
- b) Further assessment shall be conducted every five years to determine the SMS members' ethical standing, assess the risk areas, and the individual character traits and behavioural style as part of development.

- c) The identified developmental gaps must be incorporated into the PDP of the existing SMS member.
- d) Training must be prioritized to remedy the identified gaps and managed/monitored through the performance management and development system for the SMS via the PDP.

10 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

10.1 SMS members are required to participate in capacity development activities and mandatory training

10.1.1 Capacity development

SMS members are expected to engage in ongoing development to stay current with advancements in their relevant fields. All SMS members must participate in targeted training to address identified development gaps based on a competency or performance assessment at a specific performer level. This training should focus on general managerial skills and/or technical expertise. The developmental gaps identified through the assessment process must be remedied within 24 months.

10.1.2 Mandatory training

Every SMS member shall undergo compulsory development at a service delivery point every performance cycle year, arranged by their department. This will be done to ensure that SMS members in the public service are continually exposed to the realities and challenges on the coalface of service delivery. When deployed to the coalface, they apply their skills to solve the service delivery problems that they identify.

Other compulsory training programmes, as outlined in the directive for implementation of compulsory training programmes, should be attended as soon as possible. Compulsory training for SMS members, as outlined in the directive on Compulsory Training Programmes, shall form part of the mandatory training. SMS members shall include these programmes in their PDPs. All SMS members must be provided with a fair opportunity for

training, with priority given to addressing deficient skills, while also considering financial and operational implications.

11. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

11.1 Selection committee

The selection committee shall:

- a) Ensure compliance with recruitment and selection policies.
- b) Plan and prepare for the selection process.
- c) Ensure fairness, transparency, and compliance in the selection process.
- d) Evaluate and score candidates individually to maintain objectivity.
- e) Treat all information about candidates as confidential.
- f) Decision-making based on the outcome of the assessments and recommendations to the delegated approval person.
- g) Documentation and audit trails.

11.2 Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management and practitioners shall:

- a) Ensure fairness and consistency in the selection process.
- b) Be responsible for handling all the assessment processes for selection purposes within their departments.
- c) Arrange a feedback session for the interpretation of the psychometric assessment results with the appointed service provider and selection panel within one (1) week of conducting assessments.
- d) Prepare and submit a report to the DPSA on the assessment conducted for selection purposes on an annual basis.

11.3 Human Resource Development

Human Resource Development Managers shall:

- a) Manage or handle all assessment processes for developmental purposes within their departments.
- b) Ensure that assessment happens within one month of the appointment of the SMS member(s).
- c) Arrange a feedback session on the leadership assessment results with the appointed service provider, line manager, and the appointed candidate within two (2) weeks of assessments.
- d) Plan all the training interventions.
- e) Arrange targeted training programmes or interventions to address the identified developmental gaps on behalf of the employee.
- f) Prepare and submit a report to the DPSA on leadership assessment, training, and development.

11.4 A panel of service providers appointed by the DPSA

A service provider appointed in the panel contract shall:

- a) Prepare candidates for assessments.
- b) Conduct leadership assessments.
- c) Administer all the psychometric assessments (Giotto, 15FQ+, and CPP).
- d) Prepare and submit an integrated assessment report to the departments.
- e) Provide feedback to the candidates and share psychometric assessment reports.
- f) Provide interpretation of the assessment results to the Selection Committee, Line Manager, and candidates.
- g) Share the leadership assessment report with the candidates during/after the feedback session.

11.5 Line Manager

Line managers shall:

- a) Take part in the feedback session on the outcome of the employee's assessment.
- b) Monitor the performance of the employee through the performance management system.
- c) Support the learning and development of employee(s).
- d) Provide an employee with a fair opportunity for training to address deficient skills.

11.6 Candidate/employee shall:

- a) Avail himself or herself for assessments, training, and development.
- b) Incorporate the skills gap into his or her Personal Development Plan.
- c) Take charge of his or her own development.

12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Departments must ensure that sufficient funding is made available for the implementation of this Directive. Departments shall apply the prescribed requirements for the utilisation of the personnel budget for training and development in the Public Service.

13. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING.

13.1 The DPSA shall monitor the implementation of this Directive through its Human Resource Development Monitoring and Evaluation processes of the Public Service Human Resource Development Strategic Framework contemplated in Regulation 28(2) of the PSR.

13.2 The departments shall submit their implementation reports on 31 May every year.

13.3 An online reporting template on the implementation of this Directive shall be provided to Departments.

14. COMPLIANCE

14.1 In line with the provisions of section 16A (1) of the Public Service Act, an Executive Authority shall:

- a) immediately take appropriate disciplinary steps against a Head of Department who does not comply with the provisions of the Act or a regulation, determination, or directive made thereunder;
- b) immediately report to the Minister the particulars of such non-compliance; and
- c) as soon as possible, report to the Minister the particulars of the disciplinary steps taken.

14.2 In line with the provisions of section 16A (2) of the Public Service Act, a Head of Department shall:

- a) immediately take appropriate disciplinary steps against an employee of the department who does not comply with the provisions of this Act, or a regulation, determination, or directive made thereunder;
- b) immediately report to the Director-General: Department of Public Service and Administration, the particulars of any such non-compliance; and
- c) as soon as possible, report to the Director-General of the Department of Public Service and Administration the particulars of the disciplinary steps taken.

14.3 The Minister for the Public Service and Administration may report to the Cabinet or Premier, to the Executive Council of the relevant province, any non-compliance by an executive authority with a provision of this Act or a regulation, determination, or directive made thereunder.

15. STANDARDISATION

15.1 For purposes of standardization.


- a) The Departments shall utilize the approved DPSA panel of service providers to perform assessment services.
- b) The CPP for visually impaired candidates shall be administered by the test developer, Cognadev, through interview protocols to ensure consistency, fairness, in-depth data collection, and reliability throughout the process.

- c) The service provider who administered the psychometric assessment during the selection process shall also be used to conduct leadership assessments once the candidate is appointed, for easy integration of reports.
- d) The selection weights shall be as follows:

Assessment instrument	Weight
Structured interview	45%
Psychometric tests/assessments	40%
Technical knowledge test/exercise	15%
Total	100%

- e) The cost of the service shall be standardized and fixed among all approved service providers.
- f) Departments shall receive regular communication from the DPSA concerning changes to the process, which include standardised pricing, list and contact details of the approved and accredited panel of service providers, as well as amendments to this Directive.

16. APPROVAL

APPROVED  <hr/> Inkosi E.M Buthelezi, MP Minister for the Public Service and Administration Date: 28/05/26
