Staff Engineer

A senior individual contributor with deep technical expertise in one or more domains (software, data, DevOps), solving complex problems, establishing best practices within their team or domain, and providing technical leadership through hands-on contribution and growing influence.

Candidates should use the **STAR method** (Situation, Task, Action, Result). This assessment is about demonstrated experience, not theoretical understanding.

A - Technical Expertise & Architecture

00:10 *- SFIA ARCH / SLEN Level 4–5*

Contributing to architectural decisions, designing robust system components, and applying lifecycle engineering practices to ensure reliability and maintainability.

What to look for:

- Contributed to significant architectural decisions within their team or domain
- Designed system components considering scalability, performance, security, and maintainability
- Identified and evaluated architectural trade-offs (complexity, cost, performance, risk)
- Applied lifecycle engineering practices (observability, deployment, operational readiness)
- Demonstrated understanding of how their systems integrate with broader architecture
- Produced technical specifications and architectural documentation (ADRs, design docs)
- Identified technical debt and contributed to remediation strategies
- Ensured designs align with organisational standards and architectural principles

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B - Software & Data Engineering

00:15 *- SFIA PROG / DATM Level 4–5*

Delivering high-quality, complex software and data solutions with strong engineering discipline, testing rigor, and attention to code quality.

What to look for:

- Designed, implemented, and tested complex software features or data pipelines end-to-end
- Wrote clean, maintainable, well-tested code following established patterns and standards
- Implemented or improved data models, transformations, or data quality controls
- Drove improvements in code quality, test coverage, or engineering practices within their team
- Led code reviews providing constructive, educational feedback to peers
- Debugged and resolved complex production issues with minimal guidance
- Contributed to selection and adoption of development tools, libraries, or frameworks
- Balanced technical excellence with pragmatic delivery, knowing when “good enough” is appropriate

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C - Problem Solving & Systems Thinking

00:20 *- SFIA DESN Level 4–5*

Solving complex technical problems requiring systems thinking, technical creativity, and structured analysis of constraints and trade-offs.

What to look for:

- Tackled complex, ambiguous problems that required investigation and structured analysis
- Broke down large problems into manageable components and iterative solutions
- Evaluated multiple solution options and clearly articulated trade-offs
- Considered system-wide implications (performance, security, data integrity, operational impact)
- Used modeling, prototyping, or spike work to validate approaches before full implementation

- Diagnosed root causes rather than treating symptoms in production issues
- Applied appropriate design patterns and recognised when patterns don’t fit
- Demonstrated solutions that proved robust and maintainable over time

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D - Continuous Learning & Mentorship

00:25 *- SFIA PDSV Level 4–5*

Maintaining professional development aligned with organisational needs and actively supporting the growth of less experienced engineers.

What to look for:

- Demonstrates ongoing learning and skill development relevant to their role
- Has mentored or coached junior engineers (pairing, code reviews, technical guidance)
- Shared knowledge through documentation, presentations, or internal knowledge sharing
- Sought and acted on feedback to improve their technical and collaboration skills
- Contributed to team retrospectives and applied learnings to improve practices
- Stays current with technologies and practices relevant to their domain
- Role models good engineering practices (testing, documentation, code quality)
- Helps onboard new team members and accelerate their effectiveness

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E - Communication & Collaboration

00:30 *- SFIA RLMT Level 4–5*

Communicating technical concepts clearly to diverse audiences and building effective working relationships across engineering and product teams.

What to look for:

- Explains technical decisions and trade-offs clearly to engineers and non-technical stakeholders
- Collaborates effectively with product managers, designers, and other engineers
- Handles disagreements or technical conflicts constructively and professionally
- Participates meaningfully in technical discussions and decision-making processes
- Writes clear technical documentation appropriate for the intended audience
- Builds trust through reliable delivery and transparent communication
- Adapts communication style based on audience (engineers, product, leadership)
- Raises concerns or blockers proactively with proposed solutions

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Scoring Matrix

Thresholds: *18+* is a pass

Competency	1	2	3	4	5
A - Technical Expertise & Architecture					
B - Software & Data Engineering					
C - Problem Solving & Systems Thinking					
D - Continuous Learning & Mentorship					
E - Communication & Collaboration					