Levels of Responsibility

This section describes the generic attributes that characterise SFIA's seven levels of responsibility and accountability. The underlying structure of the framework ensures that the definitions of professional skills are defined in a way that makes their different levels recognisably distinct and aligned to the levels of responsibility.

The power of the levels of responsibility

The SFIA seven Levels of Responsibility not only enable recognition of career progression but also provides a means by which other frameworks and corporate structures may map to the SFIA Framework. The nature of the generic attributes makes them suitable for use as the basis of core competencies, mappings and stages within a career path.

- An organisation that already has a set of core competencies or values can use them in combination with SFIA's professional skills and benefit from the spacing that the SFIA levels provide.

- An organisation, or a professional body or trade association for instance, that wishes to map its own established structure to SFIA can do so using the levels of responsibility characterised by the generic attributes as the basis of such a mapping.

Universal applicability

SFIA is intended as a framework for the digital, IT and software engineering community – the professional skills reflect this, although many are directly relevant outside of this area. Its universal applicability means that SFIA can be extended beyond these broad areas into any technical endeavor and probably beyond that too. These levels of responsibility allow for an integration of different professional work using the levels of responsibility as the foundation whether that be framework to framework or an organisation's structure to the SFIA Framework.

Responsibility **Level 1**

Autonomy

Works under supervision. Uses little discretion. Is expected to seek guidance in unexpected situations.

Influence

Minimal influence. May work alone, or interact with immediate colleagues.

Complexity

Performs routine activities in a structured environment. Requires assistance in resolving unexpected problems.

Knowledge

Has a basic generic knowledge appropriate to area of work. Applies newly acquired knowledge to develop new skills.

Business skills

Has sufficient communication skills for effective dialogue with others.

Demonstrates an organised approach to work.

Uses basic systems and tools, applications, and processes

Contributes to identifying own development opportunities.

Follows code of conduct, ethics and organisational standards. Is aware of health and safety issues.

Understands and applies basic personal security practice.

Responsibility **Level 2**

Autonomy

Works under routine direction. Uses limited discretion in resolving issues or enquiries. Works without frequent reference to others.

Influence

Interacts with and may influence immediate colleagues. May have some external contact with customers, suppliers and partners. May have more influence in own domain. Aware of need to collaborate with team and represent users/customer needs.

Complexity

Performs a range of work activities in varied environments. May contribute to routine issue resolution.

Knowledge

Demonstrates application of essential generic knowledge typically found in industry bodies of knowledge. Has gained a basic domain knowledge. Absorbs new information when it is presented systematically and applies it effectively.

Business skills

Has sufficient communication skills for effective dialogue with customers, suppliers and partners.

Is able to work in a team. Is able to plan, schedule and monitor own work within short time horizons. Demonstrates a rational and organised approach to work.

Understands and uses appropriate methods, tools and applications.

Identifies and negotiates own development opportunities.

Is fully aware of and complies with essential organisational security practices expected of the individual.

Responsibility **Level 3**

Autonomy

Works under general direction. Uses discretion in identifying and responding to complex issues and assignments. Receives specific direction, accepts guidance and has work reviewed at agreed milestones. Determines when issues should be escalated to a higher level.

Influence

Interacts with and influences colleagues. Has working level contact with customers, suppliers and partners. May supervise others or make decisions which impact the work assigned to individuals or phases of projects. Understands and collaborates on the analysis of user/customer needs and represents this in their work.

Complexity

Performs a range of work, sometimes complex and non-routine, in a variety of environments. Applies methodical approach to issue definition and resolution.

Knowledge

Has a sound generic, domain and specialist knowledge necessary to perform effectively in the organisation typically gained from recognised bodies of knowledge and organisational information. Demonstrates effective application of knowledge. Has an appreciation of the wider business context. Takes action to develop own knowledge.

Business skills

Demonstrates effective communication skills.

Plans, schedules and monitors own work (and that of others where applicable) competently within limited deadlines and according to relevant legislation, standards and procedures.

Contributes fully to the work of teams. Appreciates how own role relates to other roles and to the business of the employer or client.

Demonstrates an analytical and systematic approach to issue resolution.

Takes the initiative in identifying and negotiating appropriate personal development opportunities.

Understands how own role impacts security and demonstrates routine security practice and knowledge required for own work.

Responsibility **Level 4**

Autonomy

Works under general direction within a clear framework of accountability. Exercises substantial personal responsibility and autonomy. Plans own work to meet given objectives and processes.

Influence

Influences customers, suppliers and partners at account level. May have some responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of resources. Participates in external activities related to own specialism. Makes decisions which influence the success of projects and team objectives. Collaborates regularly with team members, users and customers. Engages to ensure that user needs are being met throughout.

Complexity

Work includes a broad range of complex technical or professional activities, in a variety of contexts. Investigates, defines and resolves complex issues.

Knowledge

Has a thorough understanding of recognised generic industry bodies of knowledge and specialist bodies of knowledge as necessary. Has gained a thorough knowledge of the domain of the organisation. Is able to apply the knowledge effectively in unfamiliar situations and actively maintains own knowledge and contributes to the development of others. Rapidly absorbs new information and applies it effectively. Maintains an awareness of developing practices and their application and takes responsibility for driving own development.

Business skills

Communicates fluently, orally and in writing, and can present complex information to both technical and non-technical audiences.

Plans, schedules and monitors work to meet time and quality targets.

Facilitates collaboration between stakeholders who share common objectives.

Selects appropriately from applicable standards, methods, tools and applications.

Fully understands the importance of security to own work and the operation of the organisation. Seeks specialist security knowledge or advice when required to support own work or work of immediate colleagues.

Responsibility **Level 5**

Autonomy

Works under broad direction. Work is often self-initiated. Is fully responsible for meeting allocated technical and/or project/supervisory objectives. Establishes milestones and has a significant role in the assignment of tasks and/or responsibilities.

Influence

Influences organisation, customers, suppliers, partners and peers on the contribution of own specialism. Builds appropriate and effective business relationships. Makes decisions which impact the success of assigned work, i.e. results, deadlines and budget. Has significant influence over the allocation and management of resources appropriate to given assignments. Leads on user/customer collaboration throughout all stages of work. Ensures users' needs are met consistently through each work stage.

Complexity

Performs an extensive range and variety of complex technical and/or professional work activities. Undertakes work which requires the application of fundamental principles in a wide and often unpredictable range of contexts. Understands the relationship between own specialism and wider customer/organisational requirements.

Knowledge

Is fully familiar with recognised industry bodies of knowledge both generic and specific. Actively seeks out new knowledge for own personal development and the mentoring or coaching of others. Develops a wider breadth of knowledge across the industry or business. Applies knowledge to help to define the standards which others will apply.

Business skills

Demonstrates leadership. Communicates effectively, both formally and informally.

Facilitates collaboration between stakeholders who have diverse objectives.

Analyses, designs, plans, executes and evaluates work to time, cost and quality targets. Analyses requirements and advises on scope and options for continuous operational improvement. Takes all requirements into account when making proposals. Demonstrates creativity, innovation and ethical thinking in applying solutions for the benefit of the customer/stakeholder

Advises on the available standards, methods, tools and applications relevant to own specialism and can make appropriate choices from alternatives.

Maintains an awareness of developments in the industry. Takes initiative to keep skills up to date. Mentors colleagues.

Assesses and evaluates risk.

Proactively ensures security is appropriately addressed within their area by self and others. Engages or works with security specialists as necessary. Contributes to the security culture of the organisation.

Responsibility **Level 6**

Autonomy

Has defined authority and accountability for actions and decisions within a significant area of work, including technical, financial and quality aspects. Establishes organisational objectives and assigns responsibilities.

Influence

Influences policy and strategy formation. Initiates influential relationships with internal and external customers, suppliers and partners at senior management level, including industry leaders. Makes decisions which impact the work of employing organisations, achievement of organisational objectives and financial performance.

Complexity

Has a broad business understanding and deep understanding of own specialism(s). Performs highly complex work activities covering technical, financial and quality aspects. Contributes to the implementation of policy and strategy. Creatively applies a wide range of technical and/or management principles.

Knowledge

Promotes the application of generic and specific bodies of knowledge in own organisation. Has developed business knowledge of the activities and practices of own organisation and those of suppliers, partners, competitors and clients.

Business skills

Demonstrates clear leadership. Communicates effectively at all levels to both technical and non-technical audiences.

Understands the implications of new technologies. Understands and communicates industry developments, and the role and impact of technology in the employing organisation. Absorbs complex information.

Promotes compliance with relevant legislation and the need for services, products and working practices to provide equal access and equal opportunity to people with diverse abilities.

Takes the initiative to keep both own and colleagues' skills up to date.

Manages and mitigates risk.

Takes a leading role in promoting security throughout own area of responsibilities and collectively in the organisations.

Responsibility **Level 7**

Autonomy

At the highest organisational level, has authority over all aspects of a significant area of work, including policy formation and application. Is fully accountable for actions taken and decisions made, both by self and others to whom responsibilities have been assigned.

Influence

Makes decisions critical to organisational success. Inspires the organisation, and influences developments within the industry at the highest levels. Advances the knowledge and/or exploitation of technology within one or more organisations. Develops long-term strategic relationships with customers, partners, industry leaders and government.

Complexity

Leads on the formulation and implementation of strategy. Applies the highest level of leadership skills. Has a deep understanding of the industry and the implications of emerging technologies for the wider business environment.

Knowledge

Has established a broad and deep business knowledge including the activities and practices of own organisation and a broad knowledge of those of suppliers, partners, competitors and clients. Fosters a culture to encourage the strategic application of generic and specific bodies of knowledge within own area of influence.

Business skills

Has a full range of strategic management and leadership skills.

Communicates the potential impact of emerging practices and technologies on organisations and individuals and assesses the risks of using or not using such practices and technologies.

Understands, explains and presents complex ideas to audiences at all levels in a persuasive and convincing manner.

Assesses the impact of legislation and actively promotes compliance and inclusivity.

Ensures that the organisation develops and mobilises the full range of required skills and capabilities.

Champions security within own area of work and throughout the organisation.

Skills

This section contains details of all SFIA skills, organised into categories and subcategories.

Categories and subcategories

The skills in SFIA are grouped into categories and subcategories for the convenience of users.

It is not proposed that these equate to jobs or areas of personal responsibility. The grouping is intended to assist people who are incorporating SFIA skills in role profiles or job descriptions, or who are building an organisation's IT competency framework.

Skills

Each SFIA skill is presented consistently, with a brief overview description of the skill, followed by what it means to practice the skill at each relevant level of responsibility.

Structure of the SFIA professional skills

Skills are constructed with the following reference details:

Skill name:	The name used for reference purposes
Skill code:	A unique code used as a short reference for the skill
Skill description:	A broad definition of the skill, without any reference to the levels at which it might be practiced
Level description:	Definitions of the skill for each of the levels at which it is practised. The phrasing facilitates their use as professional competencies.

Example of a skill structure – illustrated by Digital forensics

Skill name:	Digital forensics
Skill code:	DGFS
Skill description:	The collection, processing, preserving, analysis, and presentation of forensic evidence based on the totality of findings including computer-related evidence in support of security vulnerability mitigation and/or criminal, fraud, counterintelligence, or law enforcement investigations.
Level description:	Level 6: Sets policies and standards and guidelines for how the organisation conducts digital forensic investigations. Leads and manages complex investigations engaging additional specialists if required. Authorises the release of formal forensics reports.
	Level 5: Conducts investigations to correctly gather, analyse and present the totality of findings including digital evidence to both business and legal audiences. Collates conclusions and recommendations and presents forensics findings to stakeholders. Contributes to the development of policies, standards and guidelines.
	Level 4: Contributes to digital forensic investigations. Processes and analyses evidence in line with policy, standards and guidelines and supports production of forensics findings and reports.