

# How SFIA works

At the core of SFIA is the descriptions of professional skills and generic attributes. These form SFIA's most valuable resource. This section describes how it all fits together to form a simple, yet powerful, and proven approach.

Level 7	Set strategy, inspire, mobilise
Level 6	Initiate, influence
Level 5	Ensure, advise
Level 4	Enable
Level 3	Apply
Level 2	Assist
Level 1	Follow

## SFIA's seven levels of responsibility

The backbone of SFIA is a common language to describe levels of responsibility across roles in all the professional disciplines represented in SFIA.

The SFIA Framework consists of seven levels of responsibility from Level 1, the lowest, to Level 7, the highest.

The levels describe the behaviours, values, knowledge and characteristics that an individual should have in order to be identified as competent at the level.

The levels are precisely written to be progressive, distinct and consistently described.

Each of the seven levels is also labelled with a guiding phrase to summarise the level of responsibility.

## The generic attributes that characterise the levels of responsibility

The levels of responsibility are characterised by a number of generic attributes: Autonomy - Influence - Complexity - Knowledge - Business Skills.

The definitions of these levels describe the behaviours, values, knowledge and characteristics that an individual should have in order to be identified as competent at the level.

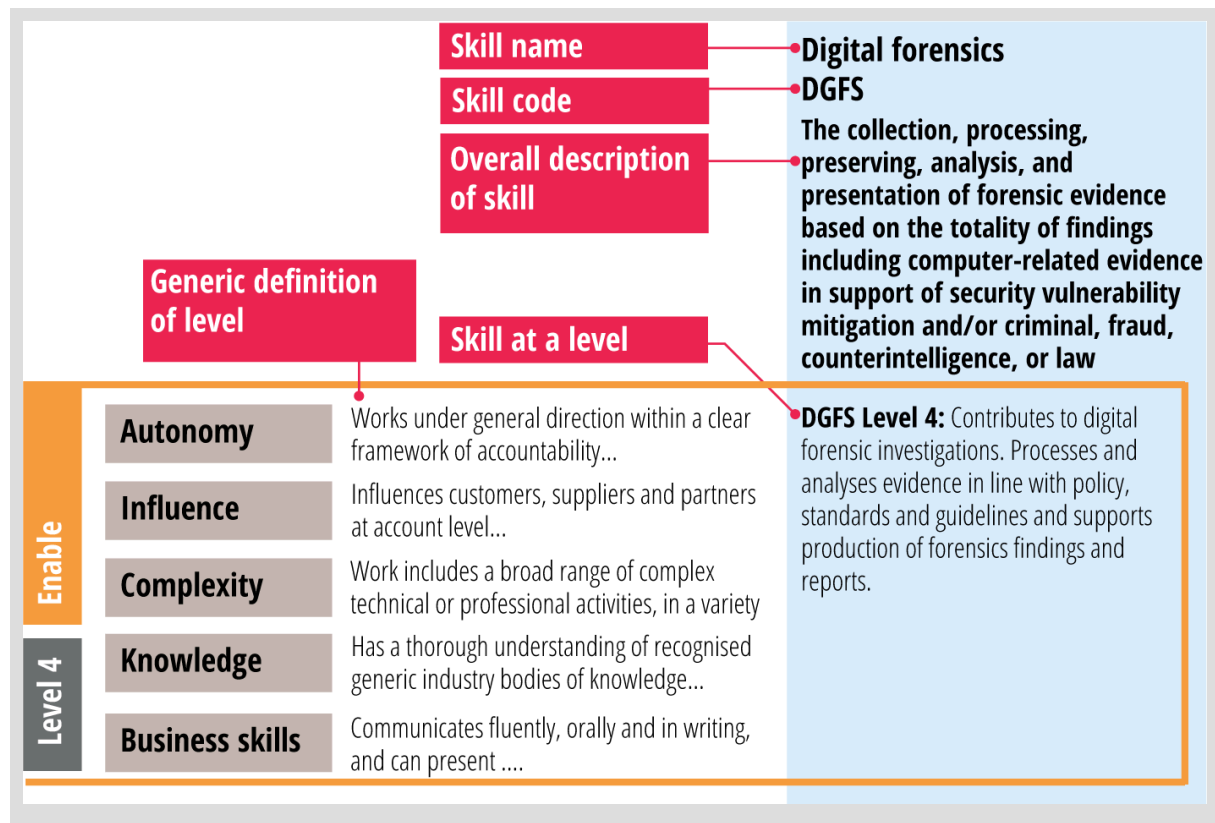
The breakdown of each level of responsibility can be found in the levels of responsibility and generic attributes section of this guide. SFIA Level 1 is shown here as an example.

## Professional skills

SFIA 7 consists of 102 professional skills.

- The consistency of the levels of responsibility carries forward into the professional skills.

Follow	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.
Level 1		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.



- A description of a skill at a level is described so that it is consistent with the level of responsibility at that level.
- This enforces the consistency of levels of responsibility throughout the whole framework making it solid and robust.
- These categories and sub-categories do not equate to jobs, roles, organisational teams or areas of personal responsibility.
- It is common practice for a specific job description, for instance, to comprise skills taken from multiple categories and sub-categories.
- The grouping is intended to assist with navigation, e.g. when incorporating SFIA skills into role profiles, job descriptions, or, when building an organisation's own competency framework.
- The categories and sub-categories do not have definitions themselves, they are simply logical structural containers to aid navigation.
- SFIA is a flexible resource and the SFIA skills can easily be grouped, filtered, and viewed in alternative ways to support specific industry disciplines and frameworks.

## Professional skills meet generic attributes

The levels of responsibility, and specifically their generic attributes, are used together with the professional skills to describe competence.

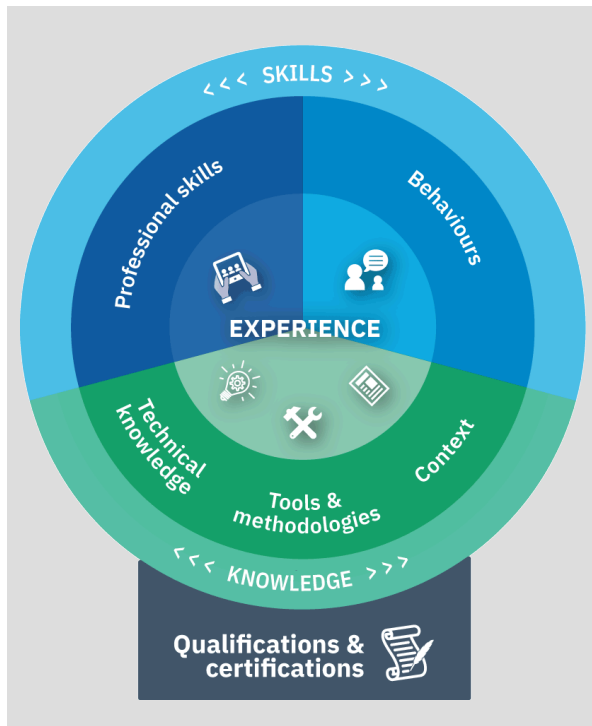
Each skill description comprises an overall definition of the skill and a description of the skill at each of up to seven levels at which the skill might be exercised. These descriptions provide a detailed definition what it means to practice the skill at each level of competency.

## Navigating the SFIA skills

SFIA continues to group skills into categories and sub-categories for the purposes of the reference guide and navigation. Colour coding is also used to identify the categories.

# The context for SFIA

SFIA is industry and business led and at its core is experience. Skills are attained at a particular level due to the practice of that skill, at that level, in a real-world situation. The context for SFIA is, therefore, the real-world environment in which industry and business operate.



In most organisations, any description of professional capability, whether as part of a job description or an assessment of an individual, will include a number of different aspects. The diagram, below, illustrates the context for the different aspects that contribute to capability.

## Experience

At the centre of SFIA is experience: an individual has a skill at a particular level because that skill at that level, has been practised in a real-world situation.

- Experience demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge and achieve outcomes in a practical environment.
- The description of skills within SFIA, at different levels, relate to the experience demonstrated by individuals at that level.

## Professional skills

SFIA defines professional skills aligned to levels of responsibility.

## Behaviours

Behaviours, sometimes known as social skills, are essential components of capability. As such, behaviours are included in the overall SFIA framework.

- But, crucially, SFIA recognises that, in the workplace, behaviours are likely to be highly contextual and culturally specific.
- Many organisations define their own set of behaviours that are used internally; these are sometimes described as corporate values and vary considerably from one organisation to another but SFIA can complement them effectively.
- Some organisations use SFIA's generic attributes to describe behaviours. The SFIA levels of responsibility include many behavioural factors, such as influencing, analytical thinking, delegation, oral and written communication, and presentation skills.

## Knowledge

Knowledge is a critical component of competence and this is recognised by SFIA. To be competent and effective in any role an individual will need a mix of generic, specific and domain knowledge.

- Technologies, products, methods, approaches, legislation, services, processes and domain specifics are all examples of where professionals working in the industry are required to have knowledge.
- Knowledge can be obtained in different ways such as formal training courses, on-the-job training or simply by working with, and mentored by, experienced practitioners.

- Knowledge may be recognised by formal qualifications or certifications and an increasing number of university courses, training courses, events and other mechanisms for gaining knowledge, have been mapped to SFIA to ensure they align with the required professional skills. This approach enhances the employability of students attaining these qualifications.
- The mapping of qualifications to SFIA communicates to potential applicants the usefulness and relevance of the qualification.
- The learning objectives can be matched to continual professional development (CPD) targets expressed in SFIA terms.
- The use of SFIA by awarding bodies, to establish whether an individual meets the required level, is also growing and is increasingly linked to demonstration of experience.

### **Qualifications and certifications**

Qualifications and Certifications are an important part of the industry. SFIA recognises the value of qualifications and certifications and provides a context for positioning them within the skills needed by industry and business. Qualifications and certifications show that an individual has successfully completed some testing or assessment – a great many of these demonstrate textbook knowledge recall of a particular subject area, some demonstrate understanding, and some confirm application of skills.