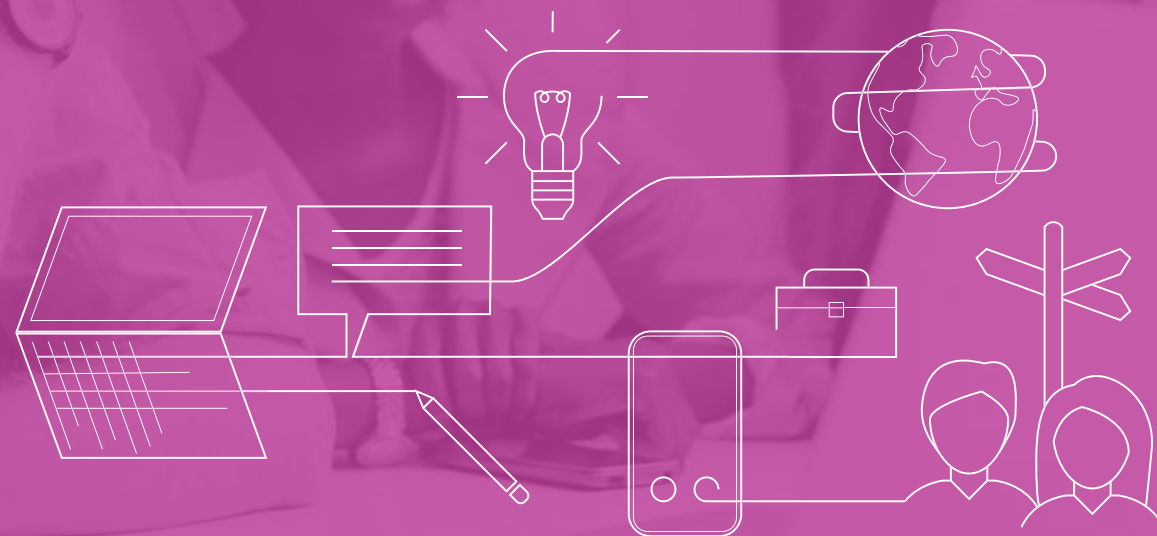




Government
Communication
Service

Your career within the Government Communication Service

GCS career framework



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Using the GCS career framework

This career framework is for all of you – from policy colleagues looking to move into communications, to professionals across the UK Civil Service, central government, arm's length bodies and devolved administrations looking to progress their careers in government communications.

Our UK-wide community encompasses the MCOM disciplines and specialised roles – from internal communication managers in NHS Blood and Transplant, to digital officers at the Scottish Government, and graphic designers in the Department for Work and Pensions. Our inclusivity lies in our shared aim to deliver excellent public service communications.

What is a career framework?

A career framework is a breakdown of job roles which feature at different grades. It enables people to identify what is expected for each role at each level, and to see how they might progress or develop through different job roles and levels.

When should I do this?

The career framework can be used as part of your Personal Development Plan with your line manager, and during objective setting to agree the capability level you should be progressing towards during the performance year. It can also be used as a basis for career and talent conversations with

your line manager to discuss future aspirations and possible career moves. It is a living document and should be reviewed on a regular basis, and used alongside our [GCS Aspire curriculum](#), which offers a range of learning opportunities to help you develop towards the next level or a different area of expertise.

New to the Civil Service?

This career framework will give you a snapshot of the core roles within the profession, and set out the opportunities available to you to develop a career within the Government Communication Service (GCS).

Each role is set out by level/grade with an overview of the skills, experience and capabilities needed to develop within each role.

Looking at your next steps

The career framework is not simply about promotion. The purpose of this framework is to signpost to the GCS professional development offer available to you as a member of GCS. This highlights opportunities to build breadth and depth of expertise within the profession.

It is not essential to meet every element of the grade before seeking a new opportunity, but we recommend building your experience across the different communication disciplines to grow your skills and experience.

As a manager

Your role as a manager is to help develop your team's skills and capabilities. The career framework can be used as part of career or personal development conversations to help your member of staff consider the breadth of experience and skills to cover.

The framework also helps to set out the opportunities for learning and relevant skills for the role at each level/grade, from technical skills to leadership capability.

Mapped against Success Profiles, this framework identifies the core roles for each level/grade within the profession. For these roles the career framework highlights the core technical and experience elements required.

As a recruiting manager

The career framework maps against the Success Profiles approach to recruitment in the Civil Service, to highlight suggested technical skills, experience, and behaviours for each grade.

This should be adapted based on your business need and the specific role you are recruiting.

Using a range of elements to assess candidates, and using a variety of selection methods, gives the best possible chance of finding the right person with the right skills for the job now, and those skills we will need in the future.

Foreword

The [Government Communication Service \(GCS\)](#) draws together professional communicators to support the work of 25 ministerial departments, 20 non-ministerial departments and over 400 agencies and other public bodies, working in the UK and around the world. This is a world-class profession, evidenced by our canon of professional practice, standards and successful campaigns.

We attract, support and develop brilliant communication professionals from interns to directors of communication. GCS has always had a relentless focus on raising standards and improving the quality of public service we deliver. Our collective understanding of the skills we need is at the heart of our campaigns and cross-government collaboration, so I am pleased to be able to launch this GCS career framework to help build that shared understanding.

I believe strong communication professionals should have expertise across all disciplines, developing a breadth of communication and leadership experience internally and outside of the Civil Service before progressing to more senior

posts. Leaders at all levels across GCS have a critical role in inspiring great performance, providing visible leadership and direction, and nurturing talent and creativity.

You can have an exciting and fulfilling career here in government communication. Our community is full of people with interesting career stories and collectively we have a diverse range of knowledge, skills and experience to share.

I look forward to working with you as we use this framework to create an [exceptional communication profession](#).

Alex Aiken

Executive director
of government
communication



Introduction

Working with over 4,500 communication professionals across the UK, GCS delivers world-class public service communications that support ministers' priorities, enables the efficient and effective operation of public services, and improves people's lives.

Communication professionals in GCS make a real impact every day. They are passionate, skilled and work with honesty and integrity to deliver in a rapidly changing environment.

We need GCS to be a diverse and inclusive place to work where our people have access to varied careers across the UK and are supported and invested in to reach their full potential.

This career framework is designed to help you navigate and plan your career and will evolve alongside the work we are doing to make this profession fit for the future.

You have the opportunity to join the profession at any level, with a wide variety of roles across government being advertised on the GCS careers page. Take a look through this framework and read some of the career stories to find out more about the opportunities you have to grow and develop your career in communications.

Good luck!

Cheryl King-McDowall

Deputy director,
professional standards



About the communication profession

GCS is behind many of the stories you read, retweet and blog about.



We help build the economy, protect the vulnerable, promote the UK across the world and ensure the public understands the priorities of the government of the day.

We reach key audiences such as families, young people, older people, businesses and international groups.

GCS brings together over 4,500 professionals across 25 ministerial departments, 20 non-ministerial departments and over 400 agencies and public bodies.

Examples of GCS campaigns include THINK!, the GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland campaign, and the NHS Keep Antibiotics Working campaign.



GCS leadership model

As Civil Service leaders, we take responsibility for the effective delivery of the government's programme and ministers' priorities, living the Civil Service values and serving the public.

The Civil Service Code forms part of the terms and conditions of every civil servant. It outlines the core values of the Civil Service and describes the standards of behaviour expected.

The Civil Service Leadership Statement highlights the 3 key characteristics expected of effective leaders in the Civil Service. They are:

Inspiring - about their work and its future

Confident - in their engagement

Empowering - their teams to deliver

The GCS leadership model is currently being developed by the GCS2020 'Leading the Way' work strand. This will articulate the specific attributes expected of all communication leaders across the profession.



GCS communication disciplines

The GCS operates in accordance with the [Government Functional Standard GovSO.11: Communication](#), the [Modern Communications Operating Model](#) (MCOM2.0). This provides the proposed structures, skills and capabilities a high-performing communication directorate or team should have. This is the model used across most departments and can be used to consider your strengths and identify areas to gain the rounded experience needed to progress. Across the wider professions in government, these disciplines are sometimes referred to as job families.

There are many commonalities across these communication disciplines in terms of skills expected, from audience insight to evaluation.

Gaining experience across each job family will help build your core capabilities as you progress your career within GCS, with the intention of specialising within your chosen discipline.

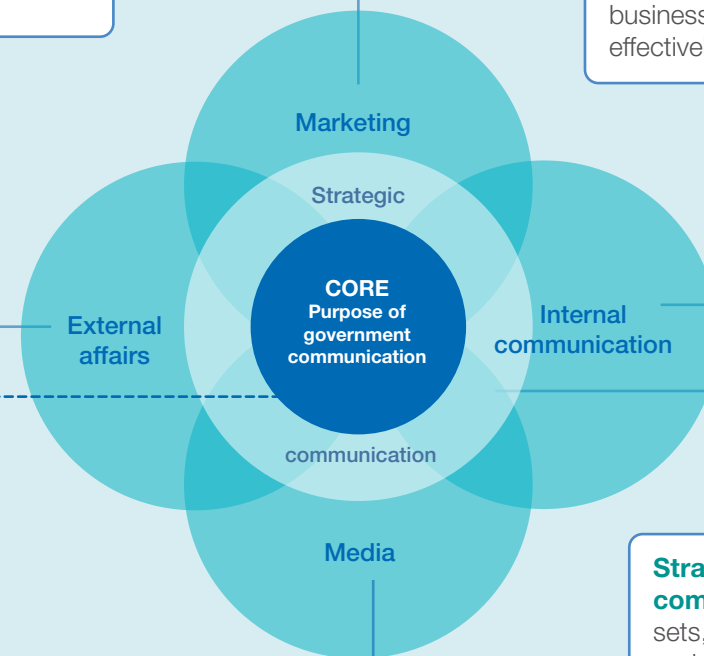
The GCS competency framework outlines 4 common skills all communicators should develop regardless of their area speciality: Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact.

Full details can be found on the [GCS website](#).

External affairs works to build and maintain relationships with influential individuals and organisations for the public benefit.

Marketing raises awareness of policies, influences attitudes and behaviours and supports the operation of services.

Internal communication engages staff in delivering priorities and supporting organisational and cultural change, maximising performance and delivering business strategy most effectively.



C – Changing behaviour
O – Operational effectiveness of public services
R – Reputation management
E – Explaining policies

Media includes proactive and reactive handling of the press, relationship management, content creation and insight and evaluation.

Strategic communication sets, co-ordinates and guides the implementation of activity, based on insight as part of an overarching plan to deliver against agreed priorities to measurable effect.

Your career development

- > How to join GCS
- > Civil Service Success Profiles
- > GCS career framework
- > GCS apprentice
- > Assistant information officer (AIO)
- > Information officer (IO)
- > Government communication fast streamer
- Senior information officer (SIO/SEO) and above:
 - > External affairs
 - > Marketing
 - > Internal communication
 - > Strategic communication
 - > Media
- > Design and creative
- > Director (SCS1/ SCS2)

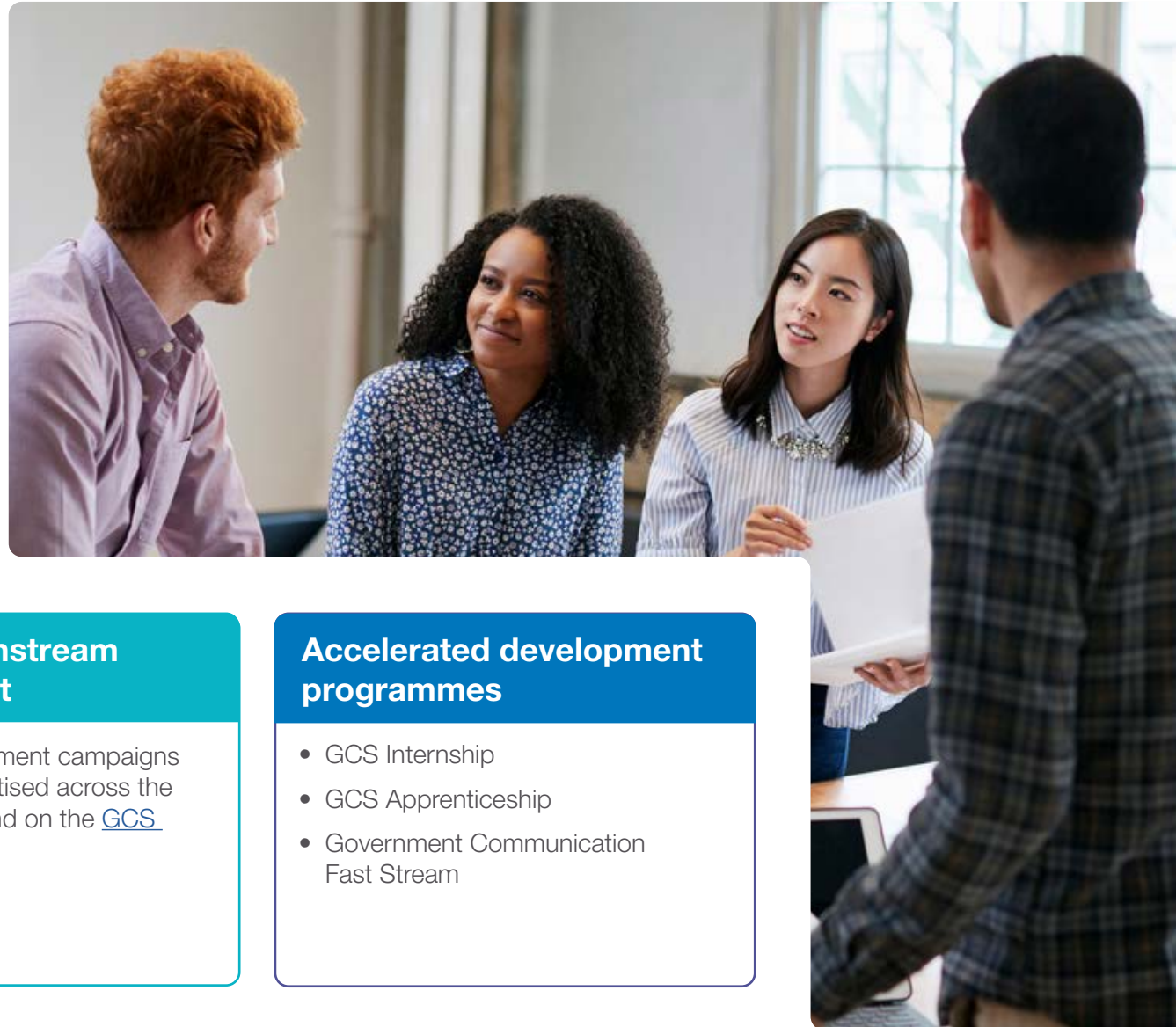


How to join GCS

GCS is proudly committed to diversity and fostering a culture of inclusion. Many of our members have worked in public, private and third sector industries before joining GCS.

We strongly value the diversity of staff in all areas, including diversity of thought and working practices. We warmly welcome differences of experience, background and views, in order to truly represent the society we serve and celebrate.

Below are just a few examples of the different routes into the profession.



Internal movement

- Temporary promotion
- Expression of Interest (EOI)
- Managed moves
- Loans and secondments
- Departmental or centralised recruitment

Direct mainstream recruitment

External recruitment campaigns with jobs advertised across the UK can be found on the [GCS Careers page](#)

Accelerated development programmes

- GCS Internship
- GCS Apprenticeship
- Government Communication Fast Stream

Civil Service Success Profiles

The Success Profile framework assesses candidates against a range of elements using a variety of selection methods. This will give the best possible chance of finding the right person for the job, driving up performance and improving diversity and inclusivity. GCS uses career frameworks and our competency framework to drive professional standards and capability across all of our roles.

Vacancy holders: Not all elements are relevant to every role, so the makeup of the Success Profile should be different for different types of job to improve the chances of getting the best person for the role. For further information on Success Profiles visit the [website](#).

The Success Profiles approach looks at 5 different elements:

Experience is the knowledge or mastery of an activity or subject gained through involvement in or exposure to it.

Strengths are things we do regularly, do well and that motivate us.



Ability is the aptitude or potential to perform to the required standard.

Technical is the demonstration of specific professional skills, knowledge or qualifications – this is where the [GCS Competency Framework](#) fits in.



Behaviours are actions and activities that people do that result in effective performance in a job. These are based on competencies, but they have been refreshed and rewritten for Success Profiles.

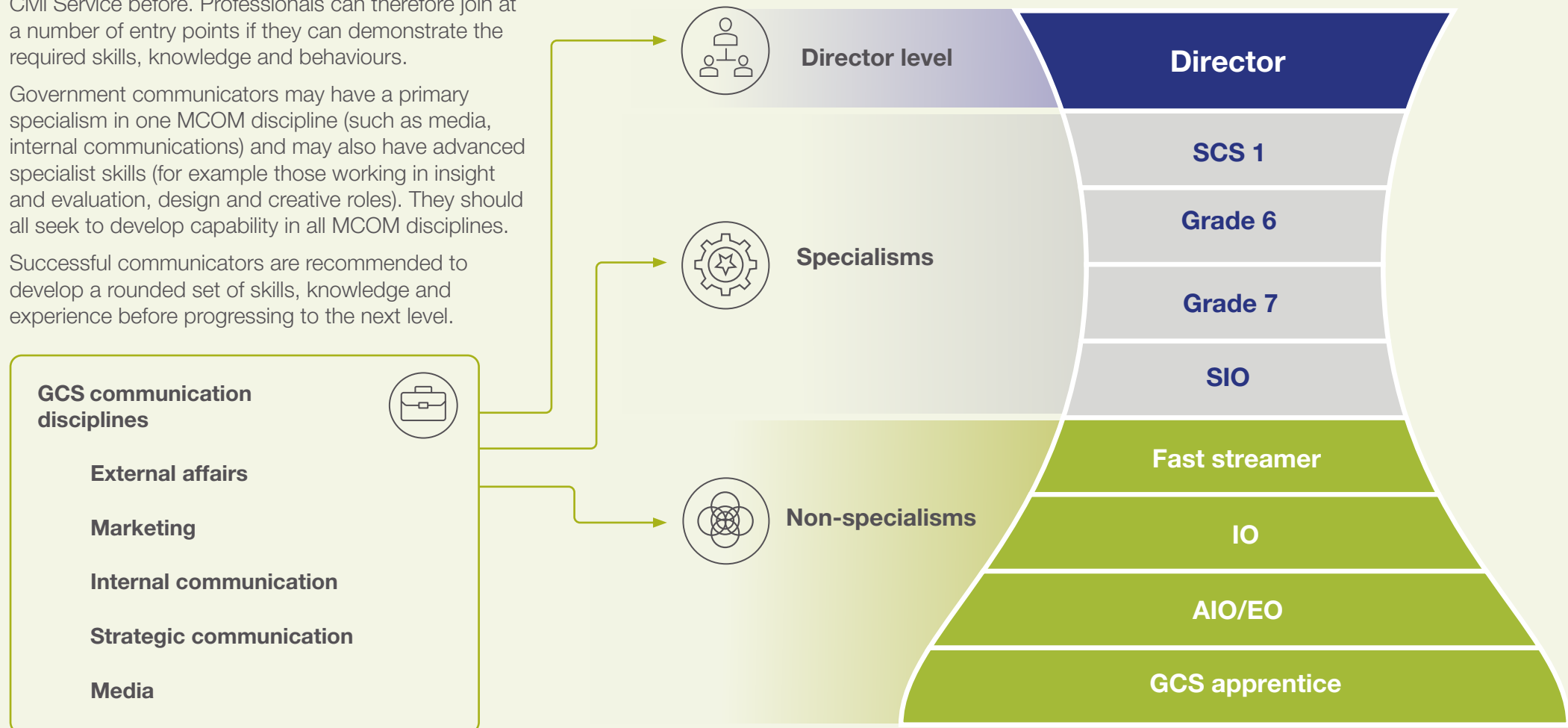
GCS career framework

There is a range of career paths in GCS, attracting professionals from other functions such as HR and policy, and candidates who have never worked in the Civil Service before. Professionals can therefore join at a number of entry points if they can demonstrate the required skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Government communicators may have a primary specialism in one MCOM discipline (such as media, internal communications) and may also have advanced specialist skills (for example those working in insight and evaluation, design and creative roles). They should all seek to develop capability in all MCOM disciplines.

Successful communicators are recommended to develop a rounded set of skills, knowledge and experience before progressing to the next level.

Entry points



GCS apprentice (AO)



The GCS apprenticeship is one of the entry grades into the communication profession. GCS apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to begin a fulfilling career in communication by combining work experience with academic study.

GCS apprentices complete a [PR and Communications Assistant Level 4 Apprenticeship](#) over 18 months, and it is expected that AOs gain broad experience across at least 2 MCOM disciplines.

As an AO, you will be interested in considering how news stories and current affairs can impact government communications. AOs could be working in a range of roles from organising events and supporting the delivery of campaigns, to using digital tools and social media.

On completion of this qualification alongside your job role, you will have developed a range of skills and experience to apply for a variety of roles at AO, AIO or IO grades by the end of the scheme.

To be operating effectively as a GCS apprentice you will:

Have an interest in creating content for news and social media channels, and collecting and analysing market research.

Understand how insight can be used to develop marketing briefs and campaigns.

Have an interest in news stories and current affairs.

Demonstrate a basic understanding of employee engagement and behaviour change.

Have an interest in stakeholder engagement, and consider how to explain government policies and public services to different audiences.

Have an interest in conducting research and analysing audience insight to inform future communications.



[Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours level 1](#)



[GCS Aspire Curriculum](#)



[Career opportunities](#)



Read about working as a GCS apprentice

> [In the Department for International Trade](#)

> [In Cabinet Office](#)

Assistant information officer (AIO/EO)



An assistant officer is one of the entry points into the communication profession. It is expected that AIOs/EOs gain broad experience across 2 or 3 communication disciplines to build their insight and technical experience, which will help them progress to the next grade.

As an AIO, you will be able to demonstrate good written and verbal communication skills, and stakeholder engagement skills. AIOs will have an ability to quickly learn new tools, contributing new ideas and learning new approaches to delivering world-class communication.

Roles include:

Internal communication officer, assistant press officer, social media and digital officer, assistant content producer and assistant marketing campaigns officer.

To be operating effectively as an assistant information officer you will:

Develop and publish creative content for social media and digital channels.

Help develop briefs for marketing activity and brief external agencies.

Demonstrate a basic understanding of how to engage with a wide range of stakeholders.

Demonstrate an ability to conduct research and analyse audience insight to inform future communications.

Demonstrate curiosity and an interest of the media landscape.

Contribute to content creation, and demonstrate an understanding of employee engagement and behaviour change.

At this level you would be expected to demonstrate the following competencies and behaviours

[GCS Competency level 1 and 2 across Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact](#)

[Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours level 2](#)

[Career opportunities](#)

Read about working as an AIO in GCS

> [Internal communication officer in NHS Blood and Transplant](#)

Information officer (IO/HEO)



IOs joining at this grade will usually have relevant communication experience before joining GCS.

IOs are at a pivotal grade to gain a wide range of experience across the profession. By building their skills, knowledge and breadth of experience, IOs contribute to and manage a range projects with greater responsibility for content and delivery. At this level IOs would be developing their management and leadership skills.

As an IO, you could be working on different areas of government communication. For example communicating internal change programmes, creating content for campaigns and utilising best practice and expertise from across UK government.

Roles include:

Events officer, digital communication manager, internal communication manager, marketing communication officer and campaigns officer.

To be operating effectively as an IO you will:

Have experience in a media or marketing role, with experience driving evidence-based marketing campaigns and managing agencies.

Show a good understanding of the importance of stakeholder engagement to achieve wider communication objectives, as well as how to identify and map key stakeholders.

Be able to analyse data and inform on the best channels to use to reach key stakeholders.

Understand how to plan communications using the OASIS model, with experience of strategic planning and managing budgets.

Have experience in a communication or content creation role; understanding of employee engagement and behaviour change and the ability to influence senior leaders and stakeholders.

At this level you would be expected to demonstrate the following competencies and behaviours



[GCS Competency level 1 and 2 across Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact](#)



[Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours level 2](#)



[Career opportunities](#)



Read about working as an [IO in GCS](#)

Government communication fast streamer IO-SIO

The government communication fast stream is an accelerated development programme for future communication leaders who have aspirations to be a GCS senior civil servant (SCS). Previous communication experience and qualification are not a prerequisite for joining the scheme but having a keen interest in the communication profession is. GCS fast streamers complete the CIM Diploma in Strategic Communications and must demonstrate ability to use learning from the qualification and other relevant GCS training.

Fast streamers will work across a wide range of departments and communication disciplines to build their breadth of experience and exposure. Successful fast streamers will have:

- a strong understanding of the communication landscape and best practices including knowledge of a wide range of channels and industry trends with specific skills in digital, social media, PR, and stakeholder engagement
- organisational skills (personal and project management), with an ability to prioritise and manage high volumes of work for both self and team
- resilience and flexibility, being able to adapt to and deliver a high standard of work in each rotation

Roles include:

Press officer, digital communication manager, internal communication manager, marketing communication officer and campaigns officer.

To be operating effectively as an IO you will:

Have experience in a media or marketing role and/or relevant academic or professional qualifications or training.

Demonstrate ability to deliver successful marketing campaigns working with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders and agencies.

Demonstrate an ability to deliver high-profile campaigns, content, media handling and engagement through turning complex insights and evaluation learnings into clear communication strategies and engaging campaigns.

Be able to form effective relationships with senior people and influence them. Act on feedback to ensure communication is insightful, effective and timely.

You will have the ability to analyse data and inform the best channels to use to reach staff, partners and external bodies.

Demonstrate an ability to understand and interpret the evolving stakeholder landscape, identifying the risks and opportunities linked to these changes.

Provide sound advice on stakeholder engagement strategies, and manage the delivery of those strategies once agreed.

Have the ability to use the OASIS model to plan and deliver high-quality communications.

Desirable to have experience in a media or marketing role and/or relevant academic or professional qualifications or training.

Have experience of strategic planning and managing budgets.

At this level you would be expected to demonstrate the following competencies

[GCS Competency level 3 across Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact with a strong emphasis on leadership skills and behaviours](#)

[Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours level 2](#)

[Career opportunities](#)

Watch a video about working as a [fast streamer in GCS](#)

External affairs



External affairs professionals build and maintain relationships with influential individuals and organisations for the public benefit. Their work involves gathering intelligence from key stakeholders and building successful partnerships to amplify our communications and reach our target audiences.

External affairs professionals inform internal thinking, coordinate high-level stakeholder engagement, and explain government policies to encourage supportive voices and mitigate criticism, wherever possible.

You can find out more about the external affairs profession [here](#).

Roles include:

External affairs officer, external affairs manager, senior external affairs manager, deputy director of external affairs.

To be operating effectively within the external affairs discipline you will:

SIO

Provide sound advice on stakeholder engagement strategies, and manage the delivery of those strategies once agreed.

Grade 7

Confidently oversee stakeholder engagement strategies, assessing the risks and benefits of different approaches, including presenting insight and advice to ministers and senior civil servants.

Grade 6

Demonstrate a robust understanding of what excellent stakeholder engagement entails.

Use this expertise to lead innovative stakeholder engagement strategies, working with ministers and senior civil servants.

SCS1

Have significant, senior experience of stakeholder engagement, ensuring this is at the heart of our communication approach.

Lead in advising ministers and senior civil servants on complex stakeholder engagement strategies.

You will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies and behaviors



[GCS Competency level 3 and 4 across Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact](#)



[Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours level 3-4](#)



[GCS Aspire curriculum](#)



[Career opportunities](#)



Read about working in [external affairs](#)



Marketing



The purpose of marketing is to help fulfil operational and policy objectives by effectively understanding and meeting the needs of citizens. Marketing includes research into citizen behaviour, insight generation, strategic planning and the implementation of communication programmes across multiple channels.

Communicators in the marketing discipline will raise awareness of policies, influence attitudes and behaviours and support the operation of services.

You can find out more about the marketing discipline [here](#).

Roles include:

Senior marketing manager, senior marketing campaign manager, senior strategic communication and campaigns officer and communication and marketing manager.

To be operating effectively within the marketing discipline you will have:

SIO

Experience of developing marketing briefs to deliver objectives and drive behaviour change.

Grade 7

Experience in marketing, using behavioural insights to inform campaign strategies.

Grade 6

Substantial experience in devising, implementing and evaluating marketing communication campaigns, underpinned by insight, in complex environments.

SCS1

Significant experience, and a successful track record in leading, developing and implementing marketing strategies in a complex stakeholder environment.

Using marketing strategically to enhance the citizen experience of an organisation.

You will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies and behaviours



[GCS Competency level 3 and 4 across Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact](#)



[Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours level 3-4](#)



[GCS Aspire curriculum](#)



[Career opportunities](#)



[Read about working in marketing](#)



Internal communication



The purpose of internal communication is 2-fold: to improve our organisations' performance externally, creating proud advocates for our work, and to make those organisations work better internally, creating ambassadors for our culture.

We partner with and advise senior leaders, foster insight-driven 3-way communication, drive engagement in change, engage people creatively through innovative means, and engage people in the purpose and impact of our organisation.

Internal communication also creates understanding in colleagues of the value they bring to their organisation, helping them feel valued in return. Starting from SIO level you are likely to start developing your leadership experience, with progressively expanding responsibilities.

You can find out more about the internal communication discipline [here](#).

The internal communication profession also run IC webinars (for one hour) every 6 weeks.

Roles include:

Senior internal communication manager, internal communication and engagement manager, head of internal communication and deputy head of internal communication.

To be operating effectively within the internal communication discipline you will:

SIO

Have experience advising managers and leaders on their content and messages ensuring use of the right tone, language, format and channel for staff groups, and encouraging effective listening to the response.

Grade 6

Have the ability to influence senior leaders providing recommendations to business leaders on communicating the business/change agenda.

SCS1

Understand top leaders' priorities for delivering the organisation's goals, and for cultural change.

Have experience of challenging, advising, and influencing top leaders on the expectations of staff and on their personal visibility.

Grade 7

Have experience of leading a team and using organisational insight to advise senior leaders on relevant and targeted employee communication strategies.

You will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies and behaviours



[GCS Competency level 3 and 4 across Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact](#)



[Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours level 2](#)



[GCS Aspire curriculum](#)



[Career opportunities](#)



[Read about working in internal communication](#)

Strategic communication



The purpose of strategic communication is to plan communication activity based on insight in a timely way, and deliver agreed priorities to measurable effect. Communication specialists work alongside policy, operations, HR and project delivery colleagues from the outset, so they can inform and advise the government and organisational decision-makers on appropriate communication options and strategies. At SIO level you are likely to start developing your leadership experience, and will need to be able to persuade senior officials of the merits of a certain communication approach.

The purpose of insight and evaluation is to bring meaning to data. We generate actionable insights to ensure government campaigns are relevant, meaningful, and effective. We establish a deep understanding of audiences, identifying motivations and barriers to behaviour change, and find out what messages and channels will resonate and best reach them. We make sure government communication strategies have robust and measurable objectives, and develop effective evaluation plans with KPIs.

You can find out more about the strategic communication discipline [here](#).

Roles include:

Strategic communication and marketing manager, strategic communication manager, strategic communication and campaigns officer and deputy director strategic communication, grid planner, insight and evaluation manager.

To be operating effectively within the strategic communication discipline you will have:

SIO

Experience of strategic planning, the use of horizon-scanning tools to gather and synthesise information to inform the plot for core narratives and activities.

Grade 6

Experience leading the development of integrated communication strategies and delivering insight-driven behaviour change campaigns across a range of marketing communication channels.

Grade 7

Experience translating policy and operational goals into measurable communication objectives, developing integrated communication strategies to drive outcome-focused activities across a range of channels.

SCS1

Experience directing insight-driven behaviour campaigns. Significant experience managing communication issues at a board level, setting direction and strategically influencing the policy making process.

You will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies and behaviours



[GCS Competency level 3-4 across Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact](#)



[Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours level 3-4](#)



[GCS Aspire curriculum](#)



[Career opportunities](#)



Read about working in [strategic communication](#)

Media



Across GCS, media offices, news teams and media centres work proactively with campaigns and digital colleagues, evaluating their work, planning future communications strategically and dealing with reactive issues and events. Invariably the first port of call for ministers, media teams operate at a frenetic pace under the spotlight of a truly 24/7/365 breaking news cycle, fuelled by the rise of social and digital media consumption. At SIO level you are likely to start developing your leadership experience, with progressively expanding responsibilities.

The most important set of skills that media relations teams need to have is the ability to build influential relationships – with ministers, with policy and operational colleagues in the Civil Service, and with journalists and commentators. The 5 core functional aspects required to operate with confidence and appropriate expertise are:

- proactive media handling
- reactive media handling
- relationship management
- digital/content creation
- insight and evaluation

Find out more about the media profession [here](#).

Roles include:

Media officer, senior media officer, deputy head of news, head of news and chief press officer.

To be operating effectively within the media discipline you will:

SIO

Have experience crafting an impactful press notice, understand the global news agenda, and proactively build and influence relationships with key stakeholders.

Grade 7

Have the ability to anticipate and spot breaking news stories and drive the team to issue swift, robust and appropriate responses.

Oversee media handling advice on policy briefs on sensitive, complex and high profile issues.

Grade 6

Have experience managing a modern media team and developing proactive long-term strategies across a full range of channels.

Help manage a busy and reactive press office.

SCS1

Possess significant experience of using effective communication and engagement techniques and building strong networks with key influencers in the media.

You will be expected to demonstrate the following competencies and behaviours

[GCS Competency level 3-4 across Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact](#)

[Civil Service Success Profiles Behaviours level 2](#)

[GCS Aspire curriculum](#)

[Career opportunities](#)

Read about working in a [media office](#)

Design and creative



Design102 is the government's centre of excellence in designing and creating in-house content. These are a few examples of highly specialised roles which can be found across Design102 and the communication profession.

Projects include the Voter ID pilot, the Border Paws animation and the Journey to GCHQ Instagram campaign which recently won a Digital Communication Award for recruitment and employer branding.

Working together to make a difference to public communication:

Client team

The client team meet new and existing clients across government to scope out projects, provide estimates and make sure those working on the projects are briefed in on what's required. Project management is an essential part of client team roles.

Roles include: head of client services, account manager, account executive, studio traffic manager

Design team

The design team come up with creative solutions to solve communication challenges. Everyone in the team has slightly different strengths in disciplines including typography, illustration and animation. Designers work on a broad range of projects and present their work to clients.

Roles include: design manager, designer, animator

Artwork team

Artwork and information designers develop the technical structure and expand the creative content of design concepts. They create everything from graphics and digital media to reports, parliamentary papers, presentation templates and forms.

Roles include: artwork and information design manager, artworker, information designer

Strategy team

Strategy helps clients understand and solve their problems, shaping campaign strategies, implementation plans and creative briefs so designers have clear direction based on insight. It's then up to writers and editors to develop messages and support the design team when it comes to creating collateral.

Roles include: head of strategic planning, insight and evaluation analyst, editorial consultant, copyeditor

Video team

The video team works on a range of productions including interviews, dramas, case studies, events and piece-to-cameras. Together they produce, research, film, photograph and edit, working with clients from start to finish and engaging with the other teams where appropriate.

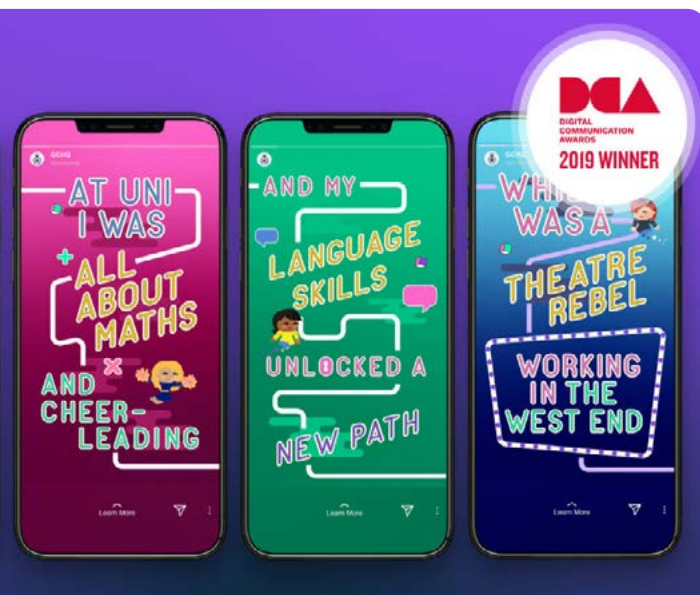
Roles include: video manager, videographer, producer, photographer



[Career opportunities](#)



[Read about working as a designer](#)



Director SCS1/SCS2



A Director of communication is the most senior grade in the communication profession and plays a critical role in inspiring creativity and delivering high performance through visible and empowering leadership. Directors of communication will have a range of extensive communication experience, with confidence in media handling at ministerial level.

GCS aims to help every government communicator perform to the best of their potential and is committed to the [Civil Service Leadership vision](#). As a profession we seek to recruit and develop leaders who are:

- **Inspiring** – about their work and its future
- **Confident** – in their engagement
- **Empowering** – their teams to deliver

Directors will need to demonstrate:

- **Inclusive leadership:** The ability to encourage others in expressing their views and challenging the way things are done. Create a culture of role modelling, transparency and supportive behaviour. This includes challenging unacceptable behaviours and putting into action the importance of a diverse workforce.
- **Visible leadership:** The ability to engage, motivate and coach others.
- **Emotional intelligence:** The ability to build inclusive cultures with an understanding of diverse audiences.
- **Resilience:** The ability to adapt to changing circumstances whilst remaining calm, reassuring others and maintaining performance.

To be operating effectively as a director of communication you will have experience in:

- Leading a high-performing communication directorate to develop and deliver a communication strategy for ministers and the organisation, deploying the full range of communication tools to support the government's aims.
- Providing counsel to secretaries of state, ministers, special advisers and senior officials, and offering practical solutions for managing the reputation of all parts of the organisation, dealing quickly and proactively with politically sensitive issues.
- Running successful communication campaigns on priority themes as set out in the organisation's strategy and the [Government Communication Plan](#).
- Overseeing the communication directorate, ensuring the effective and efficient working of the team, learning from staff surveys and managing budgets and people.
- Strong stakeholder management, developing influential working relationships with other government bodies including No.10 and the Cabinet Office.



Civil Service Development Offer: [CS Leadership Academy Inclusive leadership course](#)



[Career opportunities](#)



[GCS Aspire curriculum](#)



Read about working as a [director of communication](#)

Our development offer

- GCS development offer
- GCS curriculum

Overview of:

- GCS Aspire curriculum - diagram 1
- GCS Aspire curriculum - diagram 2
- GCS Accelerate
- GCS professional development
- Accelerated development programmes:
Impact and Inspire



GCS development offer

The GCS development offer includes a wide range of opportunities to suit different learning styles. Individuals can choose the elements that best meet their personal development needs.

Registering as a GCS member (not an affiliate) gives you membership to the Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA). Membership includes free access to their webinars, insight library and networking events.

A full list can be found on the [GCS professional development pages](#).



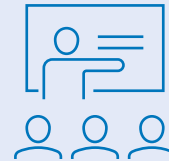
1

Career conversations and personal development plans



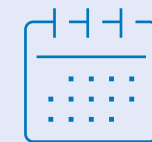
4

Continuing professional development on the job, with peers



2

Bespoke learning and development curriculum including Aspire



5

GCS community – masterclasses and comms exchanges led by comms experts



3

Accelerated development programmes at entry-level, middle and senior management



6

Opportunities for job shadowing, coaching and mentoring, secondments and ALB exchange

The GCS curriculum

The GCS curriculum is a blended learning offer developed to build skills across the key MCOM disciplines, including leadership.

The Professional Standards Team works with the heads of each discipline to design and deliver relevant development opportunities. This is to ensure our offer is up to date, relevant and practical for the work we do in GCS.

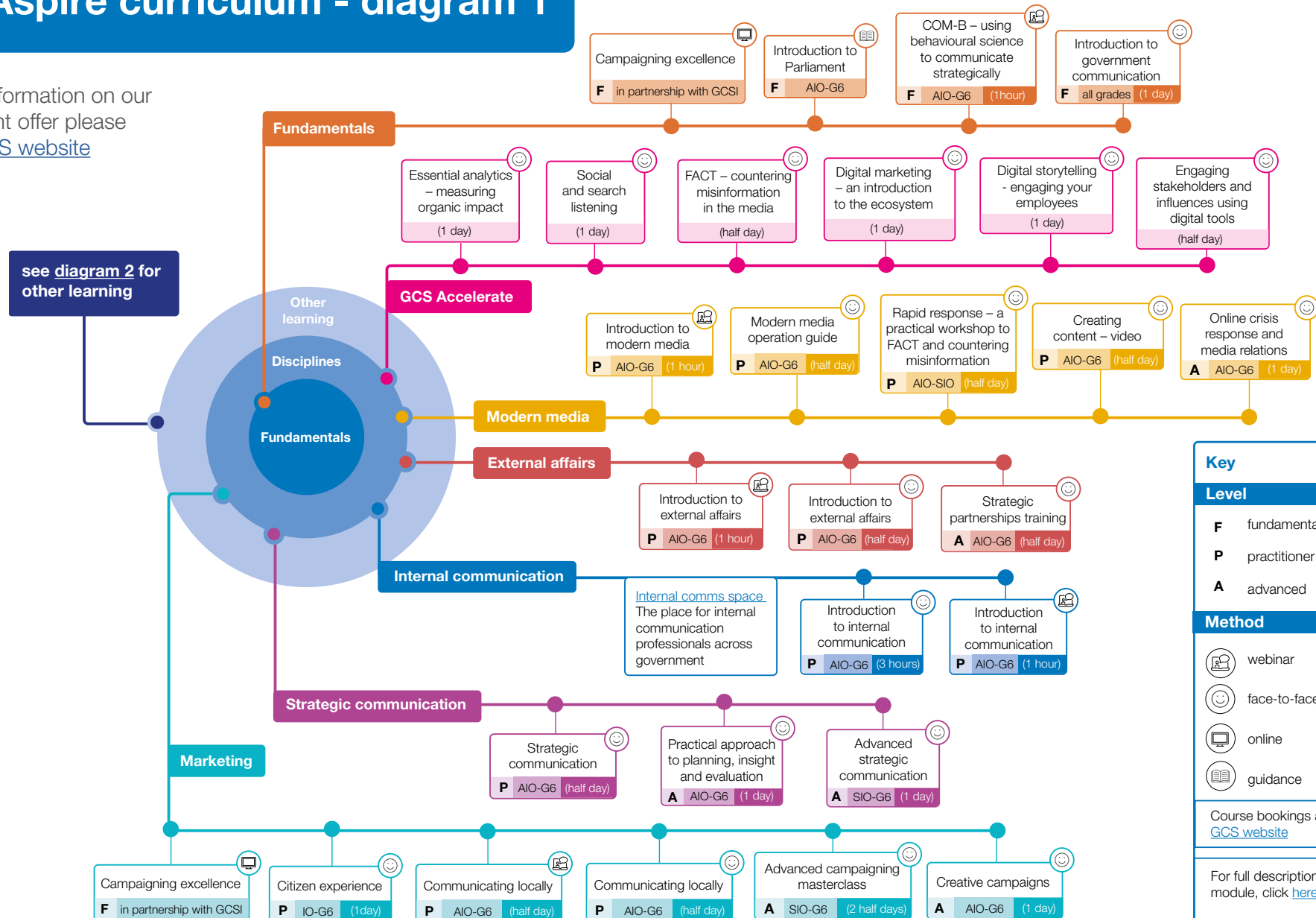
For the latest courses and resources [visit the GCS professional development pages](#).

For information on communication exchanges, networking events and other development opportunities, please check the [GCS website](#).



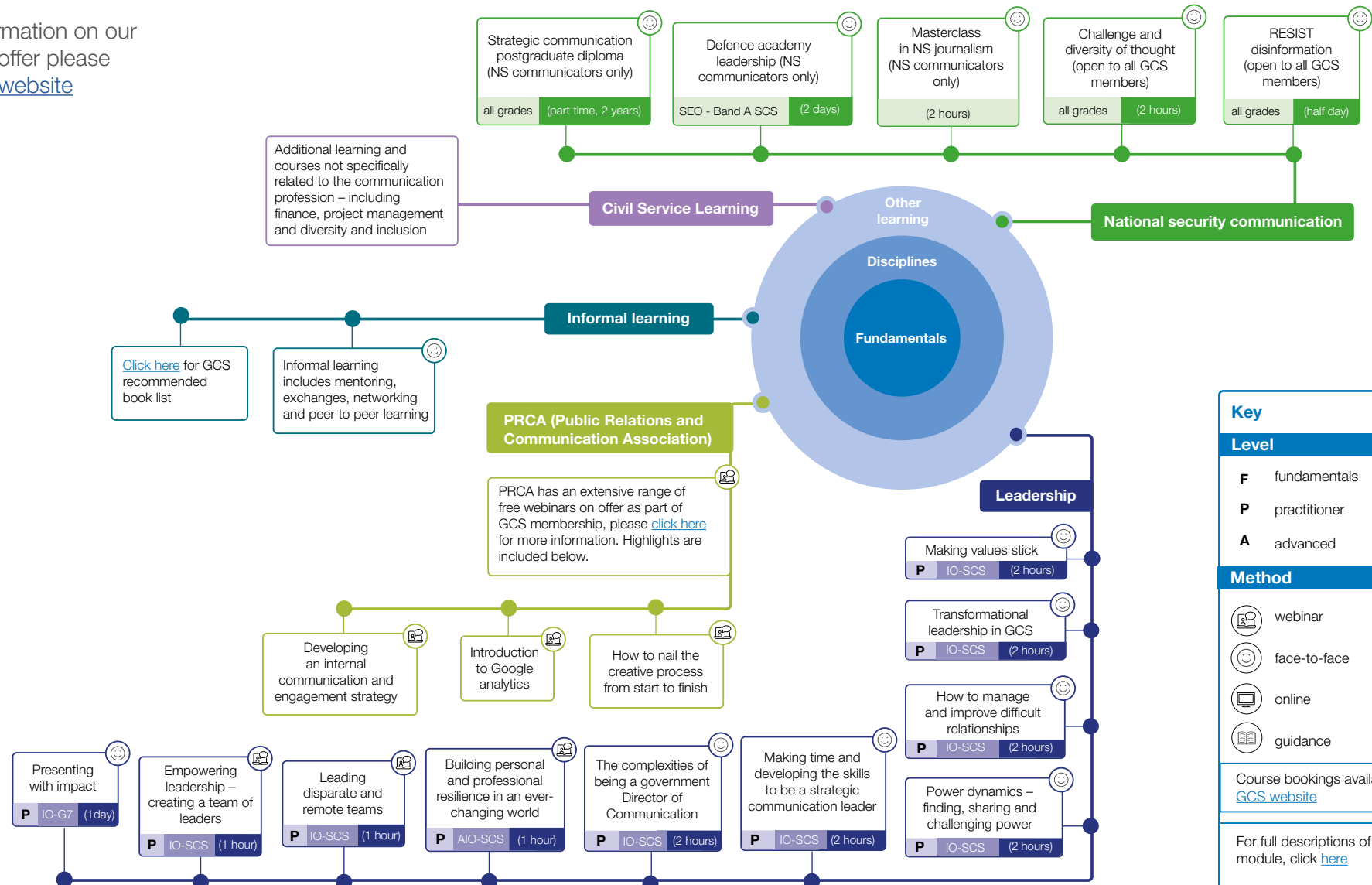
GCS Aspire curriculum - diagram 1

For more information on our development offer please visit the [GCS website](#)



GCS Aspire curriculum - diagram 2

For more information on our development offer please visit the [GCS website](#)



Key

Level

- F** fundamentals
- P** practitioner
- A** advanced

Method

- webinar
- face-to-face
- online
- guidance

Course bookings available via [GCS website](#)

For full descriptions of each module, click [here](#)

GCS Accelerate

[GCS Accelerate](#) is an industry-leading digital skills transformation programme at the forefront of making digital integral to the work of government communicators.

This will be achieved through a coherent professional development offer that will raise digital standards across all areas of the profession, fundamentally shifting how digital is positioned in government communications, and making GCS the most digitally advanced government communications service in the world.

GCS Accelerate is delivered through 2 strands: learning hubs and executive leadership.

Learning hubs are specialist cross-government groups focusing on paid campaigns, media, content and publishing, strategic communication/Insight and evaluation, external affairs, and internal communication.

Executive leadership focuses on providing directors of communication with the leadership tools and industry knowledge needed to implement transformation.

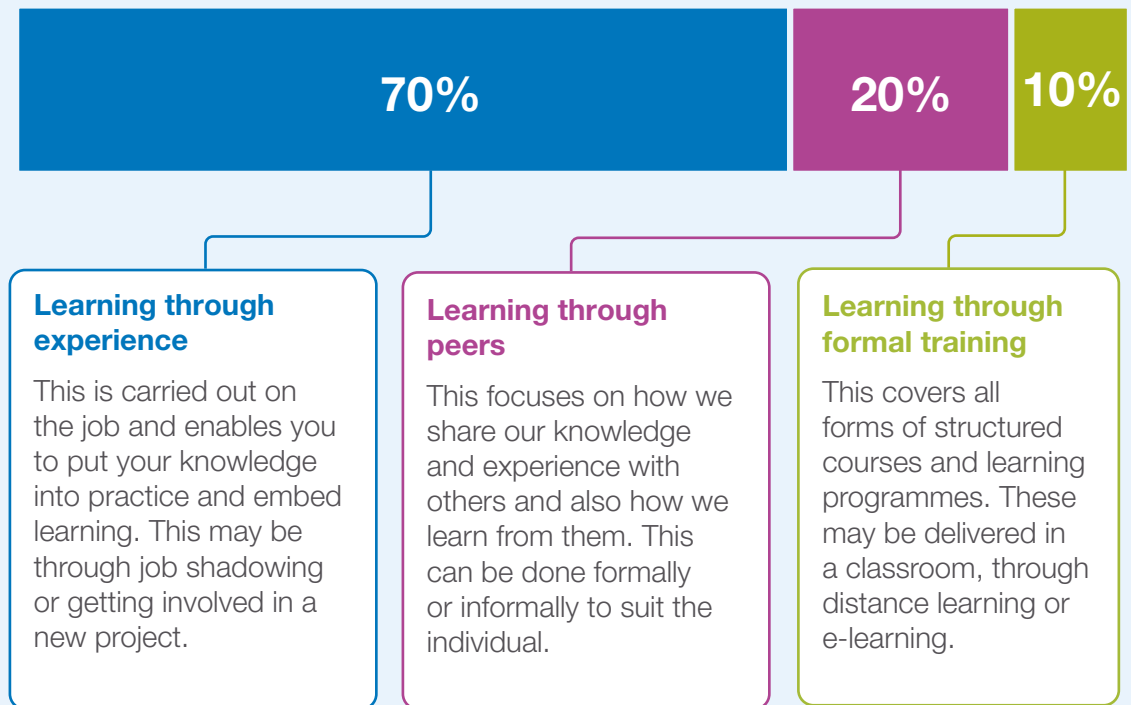
GCS Accelerate aims to empower, equip and engage us as government communicators in driving digital transformation within our profession. Training focuses on topics ranging from countering misinformation to introduction to the media marketing ecosystem and engaging external stakeholders using digital tools.

Further information about the GCS Accelerate courses can be found [here](#).




GCS professional development

Blended learning goes beyond formal face-to-face training and we recommend our members are proactive in ensuring their Personal Development Plans are agreed with this in mind. All GCS members are encouraged to share best practice across the profession through sharing case studies, participation at events, networking and mentoring opportunities. This is an important part of your professional development.



The 70/20/10 learning and development model is embedded in the GCS Aspire curriculum. You can find out more about our extensive development offer on our [website](#).

 **Personal Development Plan**

Name: _____ Line manager: _____ Date: _____

Development Objective/what I need to learn/do better	What I will do to achieve this	By when	What I have successfully learnt and improved	How I will share this learning to help others	CPD points
E.g. Improve personal impact and build confidence.	Complete personal impact training.	30 June	Used learnings to manage nerves and plan presentation. Delivered a GCS comms exchange event.	Give feedback to a colleague on their presentation skills	10
E.g. Build knowledge of evaluation in digital campaigns	GCS online evaluation course.	30 Sep	Know how to better evaluate digital campaigns using metrics such as clicks, click through rates, conversions etc.	Coach others in the team	5
E.g. Understand the principles of internal communications	Read the ICE materials on the GCS website	31 Dec	Knowledge of internal communications objectives, audiences, strategies and evaluation.	Do a briefing at a team meeting	5
E.g. gain experience in strategic engagement	Volunteer to support colleagues at a stakeholder event	31 Mar	Understand the importance of working with third parties and partners	Apply principles to our next meeting with external colleagues	5
E.g. Develop my line manager skills	Complete Building Effective Teams training	15 Jul	How to get the best from my team and to overcome barriers.	Feedback to peer group	5

Quarterly review dates Q1: _____ Q2: _____ Q3: _____ Q4: _____

Accelerated development programmes: Impact and Inspire

GCS runs 2 accelerated development programmes – [Inspire](#) and [Impact](#) – to develop exceptional communication leaders who are visible, trusted, strategic partners across government, and build a strong talent pipeline for the profession.

Both schemes are focused on achievement of an accredited qualification as part of an intensive blended development programme.

Further information on both schemes can be found in the [accelerated development programmes brochure](#).



Impact

This programme is aimed at high potential IOs and SIOs leading to a new accredited postgraduate qualification. Running over 12 months, it offers a concentrated development experience designed to accelerate your professional progression. The programme focuses on building leadership capability and developing strategic thinking. Around the Chartered Institute of Marketing qualification, participants benefit from communication and leadership masterclasses, coaching, mentoring and action learning.

“I thought it was excellent and can’t think of any significant ways that the workshop could be improved.”

Inspire

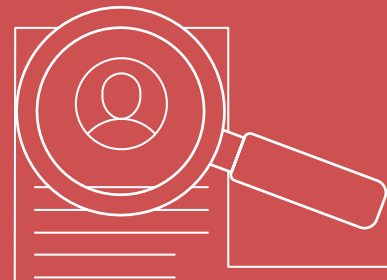
This programme is for high potential grade 6 and 7 communication professionals. Successful completion of the 15-month programme leads to a Postgraduate Diploma in Strategic Communication Leadership from the University of Huddersfield with the opportunity to continue to a masters. The key quarterly academic modules are supported by mentoring, coaching, masterclasses, tailored training and support in career planning.

“Best training experience in my professional career, and likely to remain so. Hard work, but well worth it.”

Career profiles



Click on the case studies below to find out more about the opportunities across the GCS.



GCS apprentice

I joined the GCS apprenticeship after finishing my A-Levels. Throughout my school years, I didn't know what I wanted to do – all of my friends knew that they would go to university, or go straight into work, so it felt like I was the only one left without a clear path after school. What I did know was that I was interested in the media, writing, and also in politics and current affairs. When I found this apprenticeship that combined all of these, I knew that it was something I had to apply for.

Working in the heart of government, earning a salary whilst learning, and training to gain a Level 4 PR qualification is fantastic. This apprenticeship will give me a solid foundation to launch my career in government communications.

Right from the start of the scheme I have been given ownership and responsibility for a number of projects which have challenged me and expanded my skill set. I work on lots of different things from drafting and clearing blogs and articles for our director, to organising and briefing her external speaking events. I'm also currently working on a diversity and inclusion strategy for HMRC comms. This has included working with colleagues to collectively support the actions required to achieve all our D&I objectives, as well as attending events and hosting focus groups.

I would definitely recommend this apprenticeship to those who are interested in a vocational approach to learning, and have an interest in the media, communications and current affairs.

Sophie Barber
GCS apprentice



GCS fast stream

The fast stream is brilliant. You get the opportunity to experience the fast-paced nature of working in government. One moment you can find yourself in a meeting in Number 10, the next you may be writing a briefing for a minister. The fast stream truly throws you into a variety of fascinating and worthwhile work areas across government, and in a very short period of time.

After finishing my first posting in the press office at HMRC, I was excited to find out my next placement would be in the Cabinet Office business partnerships team (BPT). I soon learnt that the BPT, plays a vital role in government. With topics such as innovation, productivity, skills development and EU Exit at the front of business leaders' minds, it has been an incredibly exciting time to work with the team.

The BPT's core purpose is to bring the valuable expertise of businesses into government to help feed into policymaking. This proactive approach has helped to form long-term partnerships with business on a number of projects and campaigns such as Shared Parental Leave, the Race Disparity Audit and Age Tech. My work has brought me in close contact with corporates, think tanks, foundations and entrepreneurs and has helped me to develop my communication skills in narrative development, content creation, social media planning, horizon scanning and much more.

Thomas Channon

GCS fast streamer,
Cabinet Office



Talking to John Manzonei at the all-staff conference



Project support officer and former GCS intern

Tanaye Reid

Project support officer
and former GCS intern,
Cabinet Office



I joined GCS after completing my degree in politics and international relations. My initial attraction to GCS was the impactful and meaningful work government delivers on domestic and international campaigns to help improve the lives of the public. I originally came to GCS as an intern with a 12-week placement in internal communications on the GCS Internship scheme.

I learnt how to effectively support employee engagement and behaviour change across GCS. This involved supporting the co-ordination of internal events, creating and publishing content.

I was offered a role as a Project Support Officer in the Professional Standards Team.

The main bulk of my work was working on the GCS early talent schemes – the GCS Apprenticeship and GCS Internship recruitment campaigns. I strategically planned and implemented OASIS plans for campaigns which led to a record-breaking year for applications to both schemes. As a result, both schemes were awarded ‘best programme’ at the 2019 PR Internship and

Apprenticeship awards making all the hard work even more rewarding. However, none of this would have been possible without a great team and the support of fellow GCS colleagues and all those involved in making the schemes what they are. That’s one thing I truly feel is apparent in GCS – everybody works together to deliver the best results.

What I have enjoyed most in GCS is the willingness of colleagues to support you. I have undertaken a broad range of professional development in GCS including shadowing, emceeing the 2019 Government Communication Plan, mentoring, aspire training, and supported conferences both domestic and internationally facing. The one common thing I find among all communication professionals I meet is passion. I feel I have really taken advantage of all the networking opportunities available within GCS, and have had the freedom to go and find what interests me most – which incidentally is where you will find me next... campaigns. GCS wants the best for you, to get the best out of you – I truly believe that.



Information officer

I have worked in the Civil Service for over 20 years, joining as an AO apprentice. A few years later I became a mother to a beautiful baby girl. Whilst I enjoyed working across a range of topics, progressing my career fell to the bottom of the list, and my confidence began to decline.

In 2015, then as an EO, I took a chance and landed a communication project management role, on temporary promotion. I really enjoyed engaging and enabling people to be the best they can be at work. But wondered: How do I perfect my communication skills further? I found a GCS mentor who helped me to realise my potential and started to feel empowered as a communicator.

To build on this I wanted to be a part of the GCS community, but I had a choice to make. Do I apply for the permanent promotion within my current team or apply to become a GCS communications professional (yet another level transfer)? It wasn't an easy decision.

I chose the latter and went on to secure an AIO account manager role within the Home Office in 2016. Every day was a new exciting challenge. I learned about the fascinating Border Force business area from a communication prospective, interviewing colleagues across the country, writing engaging stories for the intranet, recording and editing (film/photo/podcast) content to name a few. I was supported with training to build my skills. I had no idea internal communication would be so rewarding and I started to understand just how important and enabling internal communication is across government.

I was offered a temporary promotion to IO content editor and was encouraged to apply for the early talent programme (now Impact) and was successful. I have since taken part in the GCS Connecting Diverse Voices mutual mentoring programme, delivering a panel speech about my career journey at Number 10. I have 2 mentees and am continuing my journey by supporting others who have felt stuck trying to progress their career.

My new mantra is: Trust your journey and be yourself.

Lisa Goering ←
Information officer,
Internal Communication,
Home Office



Senior communication manager

Mark Harrop

Senior communication manager,
GCS Flex Team



Having spent 8 years in the private sector working across PR, marketing and strategy I made the jump across to the Civil Service in November 2018. Joining the Civil Service was something I had always wanted to do and to be at the heart of government campaigns.

Already in my time in the GCS Flex Team I have worked on key campaigns including the GREAT trade campaign at the Department for International Trade, CyberAware at the Home Office, Take Five at the Home Office

and Britain Helps at the Home Office. These campaigns have tested my skills and I have been privileged to work with dedicated people who are willing to share their knowledge but also learn from my skillset.

Working in GCS Flex, you have to pick up your brief quickly and start making an impact from day one. You're there to deliver results and looked to for expert advice that we bring from working across Whitehall.



Senior press officer

Rachel Tooze
Senior press officer,
Home Office



Before I joined the Home Office press office almost 4 years ago, I spent several years working in PR agencies and in-house at a local government press office. Having studied politics and international relations at university, I've always had a keen interest in current affairs. I was keen to join GCS to hone my reactive media handling and work on more high-profile stories.

I applied for the Home Office role, because it was an exciting opportunity to be at the centre of the action, communicating about policies that regularly attract front page headlines. Working at the heart of government during transformational events has been challenging and fascinating in equal measure.

I currently work on the Safeguarding and Extremism desk in press office, managing a team of five who are leading on creative and proactive announcements on how the department protects some of the most vulnerable people in society.

I feel a great sense of achievement in supporting my team to deliver on front page announcements and generating creative ideas which reach diverse audiences.

During my time at GCS, I have really benefited from professional development. This includes participating in the 'Presenting with Impact' course, which helped boost my confidence and improve my public speaking skills. Honing my communication skills has been particularly beneficial as I have become more senior and expected to represent my department at a higher level.

Working in a government press office is a fantastic career choice for those who relish an exciting and fast paced environment. I have however particularly enjoyed the experience I've gained with working with colleagues across communications disciplines to maximise the potential of any announcements.



Designer

Tanya Hutnik
Designer at Design102



I always knew I wanted to use my design skills to make a positive impact on the world but I wasn't quite sure how I was going to do that. When I found out about the work Design102 does as part of GCS I was thrilled. I feel privileged to be part of a team of like-minded people who really care about using design to make a difference to society.

Since joining Design102 I have worked on some great campaigns such as the Voter ID Pilot, an awareness campaign encouraging eligible voters to bring ID to the polling station, and a recruitment

campaign for GCHQ that aimed to attract more women and applicants from diverse backgrounds. 'GCHQ – Journey to the Known' recently won a Digital Communications Award – an international award that celebrate brands, campaigns and innovations that are leading the way in online communications across the world.

It goes to show the work we are doing is at the top of its game, and it can only get better. I'm excited to see what the future holds for Design102 and GCS.



Head of internal communication

Sherma Julien

Head of internal communication,
Department for Education



Moving from grade 7 to 6 was about me deciding that I am ready for more responsibility and accountability, and being more focused on what I am aspiring to achieve career-wise. So being better at managing my own career – that's a personal responsibility.

I am lucky enough to have worked with and for really supportive leaders in roles where I have led teams, worked closely with colleagues in other communication disciplines and been exposed to many challenges that have enhanced both my professional and leadership skills.

I understand how I learn best and the importance of finding the right interventions to support my growth.



Head of campaigns and digital

Clark Solgaard Dunn

Head of campaigns and digital,
Office of the
Secretary of State
for Scotland



I came into the Civil Service in 2007 from the private sector, where I had worked as a business and political journalist, and in PR and public affairs. If I'm honest, my plan was to get into government, get my public sector 'scout badge' and then go back to the commercial world after a year or two. The fact I'm still here 13 years later proves (to me anyway) how involving a career in government comms can be.

My first GCS job was as Chief Press Officer in the Scotland Office in Edinburgh looking after the newsdesk, and I later moved into the Head of News role ahead of the independence referendum in 2014, working across a wide range of issues and with government departments across Whitehall. I worked in press for about 9 years.

I had some background in digital design and publishing, so when the opportunity arose in 2016 to set up a campaigns and digital team from scratch here in Scotland, I took it. I have heard a lot of colleagues talking about how difficult it can be to move between communication disciplines and not get pigeonholed as a specialist, but I think GCS provides a lot of useful support and frameworks to enable comms professionals to do that easily – and also get the experience they need, through shadowing or secondment, to pick up new skills.

I think part of the strength of GCS is the deep pool of colleagues across Whitehall who are on hand to provide advice and expertise, from behavioural science to social research and digital skills. I know my team come from a wide range of backgrounds outside GCS and are always amazed to experience the range of training and opportunity that working in government offers.



Head of communication and deputy director

I'm currently leading a multi-disciplinary communication team supporting HSE's mission to prevent work-related death, injury and ill health. It's brilliant to do work every day that is helping to change behaviour to save and protect lives. I joined GCS to make a difference in delivering better public services and feel privileged to be part of a world-leading organisation, working to the highest standards.

Throughout my career, I've benefited from the varied and challenging roles GCS offers to develop expertise across disciplines and leadership skills, both in Whitehall and in ALBs, which have helped me to progress to the Senior Civil Service. A brilliant way to develop your leadership skills in GCS is to contribute to developing the profession, and I've really enjoyed building capability by applying behavioural science to improve campaign outcomes, bringing in thinking from outside of the Civil Service.

I'm now leading a workstream on GCS 2020 to help ensure our profession is fit for the future and able to respond to the pace of change in society, building on the success of previous improvement programmes. I'm fortunate to have the opportunity to continue my development through the Civil service accelerated development scheme for senior leaders, helping to increase my impact as a communication leader in the public sector.

Lester Posner

Head of communication and deputy director, Health and Safety Executive



Director of communication

Sharon Sawers

Director of communication,
Cabinet Office



One of the barriers that prevented me from applying for a SCS2 role was the belief that I wouldn't be a credible candidate without a head of news background.

I didn't have the confidence to apply despite being told by my permanent secretary that I was ready and capable. I had a very strong track record in marketing, insight, digital and campaigns, but was very aware of my media handling skills gap.

To help fix this I undertook some short secondments in other Whitehall press offices. I then accepted a temporary promotion to Acting Director of Communications at the Home Office which included sitting on the Executive Committee and providing advice across all communication disciplines. This was the stepping stone I needed to boost my credentials as well as my own self-belief (the two are very much related for me). A week after the promotion ended I was offered my (now) current role at the Cabinet Office.



References

GCS provides a series of guides, frameworks and tools to support government communicators in their work.

These are available from gcs.civilservice.gov.uk

- [Government Functional Standard GovS 011: Communications](#)
- [Campaign highlights 2017/18](#)
- [Handbook](#)
- [GCS Aspire learning and development offer](#)
- [Success Profiles](#)
- [GCS Diversity and inclusion strategy](#)
- [Modern media operations Modern Communications Operating Model \(MCOM\)](#)
- [Delivering excellence in partnership](#)
- [Evaluation framework](#)
- [Government Communication Plan](#)
- [OASIS campaign guide](#)
- [Professional standards](#)
- [Recommended reading](#)
- [5 trends in leading-edge communications](#)
- [GDS social media playbook](#)
- [The IC space](#)
- [RESIST](#)





Government
Communication
Service

Find out more about the GCS:

gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/

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