

Ghent University Competency Matrix for early career researchers

If you’re looking for some guidance on how to get started using this tool, please refer to our [manual](https://www.ugent.be/en/research/doctoralresearch/competentiematrix-handleiding-en.pdf).

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| **Skills clusters** | **Competencies** | **Statements** | **How much experience do you have in each area and at what level (no or little experience / some experience / significant experience / high level of experience)?[[1]](#footnote-1)**  |
| EXPERTISE | Broad (subject & theoretical) knowledge | I can acquire and interpret new (cross-)disciplinary knowledge, which allows me to consider new scientific questions from various intellectual angles. |  |
| I can familiarize myself with the latest research methods within my field of study, which allows me to identify provable theorems and hypotheses. |  |
| I can engage with other people’s research, including from other disciplines, and use it to generate relevant questions and insights for my own research. |  |
| Specialised (subject & theoretical) knowledge | I can articulate the specific gap in my field which my research project is helping to address. |  |
| I can find out the most recent developments within my research area as they relate to my ongoing research and have mastered the techniques and methods required to perform my research. |  |
| I can generate new and impactful ideas within my field and know how to develop them into a significant contribution to my research area. |  |
| Research management | I understand the different stages of managing a research project from start to finish and how to tackle them successfully. |  |
| I can identify the best forum to make my research output public. |  |
| I can spot risks (financial, time-oriented, etc.) to my research project and can devise appropriate means of managing these risks. |  |
| CRITICAL THINKING | Critical and analytical skills | I consistently apply sound critical judgement and analytical thinking to any given problem or situation to achieve the best outcome. |  |
| I can engage with large (meta) datasets and/or evidence bases and can generate useful insights grounded in those datasets. |  |
| I can apply experimental design, research methods or new modes of thinking to any given problem or situation to come up with new ways of tackling them. |  |
| Innovation & creativity | I proactively use my critical and analytical skills to engage creatively with my research material and to generate innovative solutions.  |  |
| I can solve complex problems by combining my discipline-specific knowledge with more abstract problem-solving skills (strategic thinking, design thinking, systems thinking, …). |  |
| I can identify new opportunities and possibilities for value creation grounded in my research. |  |
| Project management  | I can use project management techniques and supporting tools to plan and manage a (research) project. |  |
| I can use (digital) tools, such as data management tools, to keep an accurate record of my data. |  |
| I can prioritise my workload and reevaluate my priorities in the face of changing circumstances as required |  |

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| PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP | Informal leadership | I can identify opportunities for collaboration within my team and introduce ways of working to support that collaboration. |  |
| I can work towards a solution and negotiate a compromise between the diverging views of different stakeholders. |  |
| I can give, ask for and receive feedback. |  |
| Personal effectiveness | I am able to work independently. |  |
| I can maintain my resilience in the face of stressful situations. |  |
| I can maintain a good work-life balance and know how to manage my mental health and wellbeing.  |  |
| Career development | I proactively manage my professional development in view of my career goals. |  |
| I can showcase my skills, competences and strengths as well as my interests and values for future employers in written applications and interviews. |  |
| I can find diverse career opportunities for someone with my expertise that match my career ambitions. |  |

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| INTERPERSONAL SKILLS | Communication | I can communicate effectively in writing, presenting information in a clear, structured and convincing way to appeal to the target audience. |  |
| I can communicate effectively verbally, presenting information in a compelling, clear and concise way and can tailor my communication style to the target audience. |  |
| I can effectively communicate the results of my research in academic English and, where applicable, in other languages relevant to my field. |  |
| Teamwork | I can rally people around shared ideas or goals. |  |
| I can cooperate successfully with a diverse group (international, interdisciplinary, or intersectoral) to deliver shared outcomes. |  |
| I am aware of the different roles I play within a team (leader, coordinator, motivator, conflict resolver, implementer, …) and I can take responsibility for my own role, ideas and results. |  |
| International & cross-cultural mindset | I can build and maintain a network of (international) stakeholders and engage them in my work.  |  |
| I can gauge the interests and needs of different stakeholders and adapt my communication style to their needs |  |
| I can build strong working relationships with others from different cultural backgrounds and positively engage that diversity in my work  |  |

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| PROFESSIONALISM | Ethics and integrity | I am aware of the current standards concerning research integrity, legislation and ethical guidelines. |  |
| I can spot and deal with potential conflicts of interest, ethical breaches and violations. |  |
| I can take responsibility for behaving professionally vis-à-vis the community of researchers and peers. |  |
| Teaching & supervision (for post-doctoral researchers)[[2]](#footnote-2) | I can design courses effectively with defined learning outcomes, making use of digital learning technologies where appropriate.  |  |
| I can guide students in exploring a new research area and can prompt them to think critically about that research area. |  |
| I can teach a course effectively. |  |
| Community engagement | I can identify the relevance and importance of my research for public purposes. |  |
| I can draw on perspectives from the wider community outside academia where relevant. I can identify opportunities for outreach activities on my work. |  |
| I can engage the wider community in my scholarship. |  |

1. In reflecting on your experience in relation to each area, consider both the frequency (how often have you been in situations where you have displayed this competency?) and the context (was the situation high profile or were there particular challenges or pressures which made it more critical for you to display a certain competency?). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. While PhD candidates are not expected to take overall responsibility for designing and delivering a course, they may wish to use this section to reflect on any related skills they have developed as part of supporting courses (e.g. teaching practical seminars). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)