

**DECISION CRITERIA FOR TENURE AND PROMOTION
IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE**

The Core Precepts provide the guidelines by which Selection Boards determine the tenure and promotability of U.S. Foreign Service employees. These Precepts will be in effect for the **2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013** rating cycles. The precepts reflect the principles of the Career Development Program (CDP), with its emphasis on operational effectiveness, leadership and management effectiveness, sustained professional language and/or technical proficiency, and responsiveness to *customer and* service needs. ***The Precepts also reflect specialist competencies, based on the 2009 job analysis of specialists.***

The Precepts enlarge upon the headings found in existing Employee Evaluation Report (EER) forms, defining the specific skills to be considered and the level of accomplishment expected at different grades. They distinguish between apprentice, journeyman and master level – the ***entry-level***, mid-level and senior-***level ranks, respectively.***

The Precepts are the collection of competencies determined to be essential to a successful Foreign Service career. Competencies are the skills, knowledge, and abilities that an employee applies to the job. The Precepts are described in terms of observable behavior that model employees exhibit in the accomplishment of the job, in getting results, and achieving goals and objectives. In preparing Foreign Service work requirements, the supervisor and employee should define performance expectations early in the evaluation period. By focusing first on results and expectations, the supervisor and employee can more readily identify the specific training and development needs of any of the required skills that the employee does not currently possess.

Organizationally, the Precepts are arranged in a grid; the left column defines the skill; the progressive possession and exercise of that skill are captured in boxes from left to right. The skills are cumulative; the descriptions for each level assume the employee has mastered those at the lower level(s). The rating employee should review descriptions at lower levels before making an evaluation. For instance, in rating a mid-level employee, the rating employee should review the descriptions both for “Mid-level” and for “Entry-level.”

Because progression in some specialist skill codes is capped at the mid-levels, the Senior Foreign Service column does not apply to those specialists.

Management has consulted with AFSA regarding the content and form of these Precepts.

Leadership Skills

Entry-Level	Mid-Level	Senior-Level
Innovation		
<p>Takes initiative to go beyond assigned tasks; identifies problems and proposes creative and realistic solutions; seeks to improve job and organization performance.</p>	<p>Develops insights into situations and applies them in the workplace; devises innovative solutions, including technical solutions, to make process/organizational improvements and policy adjustments; engages staff in process of developing new and effective solutions.</p>	<p>Creates an organization-wide environment which encourages innovation; takes a long-term view and acts as a catalyst for constructive change; conceives and institutes organization-wide policy and program initiatives; anticipates and prepares for the future.</p>
Decision Making and Judgment		
<p>Identifies issues (including safety and security concerns) within context of own job which require decisions or other action; arrives at recommendations in a logical, orderly manner; acts confidently and decisively within own purview, consulting others as appropriate; is sensitive to needs and opinions of others. Displays good judgment by discerning what is appropriate, practical, realistic, and allowable in the performance of official duties.</p>	<p>Makes reasoned, effective, and timely decisions after considering all relevant factors and options, even when data are limited or conflicting or will produce unpleasant consequences; implements decisions and evaluates their impact and implications, making adjustments as needed. Determines whether and how to make decisions or take action without senior-level review displaying good judgment in making those decisions.</p>	<p>Integrates policy and administrative factors into problem solving and decision making in a manner enhancing the entire organization; actively works to achieve Department's goals and objectives; encourages staff to accept responsibility. Demonstrates good judgment in all decisions.</p>

Team Building		
Applies what he/she learns about team building to be an effective <i>member of an office or team</i> . Is open to views of others; works in collaborative, inclusive, outcome-oriented manner with U.S. and foreign colleagues; accepts team consensus.	Is an effective team <i>or group leader, or supervisor</i> who creates an environment that facilitates full participation and an open exchange of ideas; fosters cooperation and collaboration among U.S. and foreign colleagues; motivates and guides team <i>or group</i> members toward a common goal. Actively develops the skills of subordinates, <i>or colleagues</i> , counsels them, and makes optimum use of their talents.	Is an effective team motivator and leader, who inspires staff to participate and contribute; encourages and develops a sense of pride and cohesiveness among staff; resolves work-related problems by mobilizing team skills and resources; develops and implements strategies to improve the workplace, morale, skills and achievements of team members and the effectiveness of the overall organization.
Openness to Dissent		
Demonstrates the intellectual integrity to speak openly within channels and a willingness to risk criticism in order to voice sensible dissent. Publicly supports official decisions <i>while using appropriate dissent channels in case of disagreement</i> .	<i>Encourages frank communication with colleagues and subordinates</i> . Discerns when well-founded dissent is justified; engages in constructive advocacy of policy alternatives; guides staff to do the same.	Accords importance to well-founded dissent and solicits and defends its appropriate expression.
Community Service and Institution Building		
Participates actively in outreach or “community service” activities that contribute to employee welfare. For example, volunteers for Post or Department programs, initiatives, ceremonies, special events, blood and fund drives, and other activities.	<i>Participates actively in institution building activities that strengthen a post, professional group, or office as an organization. Recognizes importance of and participates in performance evaluation, training, and resource allocation activities, e.g., serves on Selection Boards, post EER Review Panel, or Housing Board, -- and counsels/mentors colleagues, as appropriate.</i>	Participates actively in “institution building” activities that strengthen the Department as an organization, <i>or improves the efficiency and morale of a professional skill group, cone, or functional bureau</i> . For example, recruits for the Department; serves as Diplomat-in-Residence or on the Board of Examiners; works on the Selection Boards; participates in Department mentoring program.

Managerial Skills

Entry-Level	Mid-Level	Senior-Level
Operational Effectiveness		
<p>Plans, organizes, and directs operations and <i>strategizes</i> within areas of responsibility; <i>ensures own projects meet customer requirements and are completed on schedule and within budget and scope</i>; accepts supervision and guidance, and supports the projects of others; provides feedback to supervisors. Demonstrates commitment and/or moral courage by making difficult choices, working with a sense of purpose, and caring about the results.</p>	<p>Completes projects and produces results in most effective manner while balancing the Department's goals and objectives and constraints of time and resources; critically analyzes the organization's strengths and weaknesses, and takes appropriate action.</p>	<p>Establishes effective procedures and controls to manage the work activities of subordinates; encourages, develops and rewards efforts of staff to enhance their effectiveness, including their ability to contribute to the achievement of the Department's goals and objectives; foresees challenges to, and opportunities for, the organization and takes steps in advance to deal with them.</p>

Directing and Developing Performance		
<p>Participates in preparation of work requirements for self and works with staff in preparing their work requirements; develops plans to accomplish work requirements; gives staff both formal and informal feedback on performance and potential; completes employee evaluations in accordance with standards and deadlines.</p> <p><i>Encourages and supports open communication with staff and colleagues.</i></p>	<p>Establishes and clearly communicates broad performance expectations for unit; manages staff effectively to meet those performance expectations; monitors plans to accomplish work requirements; delegates appropriately; creates a productive work environment in which employees' contributions are valued and encouraged; works to prevent and resolve personnel problems in a timely manner; ensures that the evaluation process is properly conducted and that counseling occurs throughout the rating year; effectively selects, trains, develops and supervises employees; ensures that staff is appropriately utilized, appraised, and rewarded; develops these same skills in others.</p>	<p>Establishes and clearly communicates organization-wide performance expectations in accordance with the Department's goals and objectives; inspires a high level of performance in staff; ensures the professional development and mentoring of staff; oversees possible improvements in human resource processes; ensures that the evaluation and counseling process is conducted effectively and in accordance with standards and deadlines.</p>
Management of Resources		
<p>Utilizes internal controls to protect the integrity of the organization and prevent waste, fraud, and mismanagement, reporting any instances where such problems occur; uses material and financial resources prudently; strives to produce highest return with lowest cost.</p> <p><i>Complies with responsibilities regarding resource reporting.</i></p>	<p>Ensures <i>effectiveness of internal controls</i>; allocates resources efficiently, equitably, and in conformity with policy and regulatory guidelines; makes every effort to ensure that employees have the tools needed to work effectively.</p>	<p>Evaluates adequacy of internal controls and ensures implementation of improvements as warranted; holds managers accountable for the consequences of their resource policy decisions; seeks resource adjustments as needed.</p>

Customer Service		
<i>Interacts professionally, courteously and competently with all customers; demonstrates technical proficiency and ability to explain technical information in responding to customers, colleagues and superiors.</i>	Balances competing and sometimes conflicting interests of a variety of customers <i>and adjusts priorities as necessary to respond to customer concerns</i> ; anticipates and responds appropriately to customer needs. <i>Uses available and appropriate technology to meet customer service goals.</i>	At the organization level, encourages customer-oriented focus; maintains or improves services organization-wide. <i>Uses sophisticated understanding to resolve complex problems and meet customer expectations. Promotes own and staff's full utilization of professional and technical skills and technology to achieve bureau/mission customer service goals.</i>

Support for Equal Employment Opportunity and Merit Principles		
<p>Takes diversity training and applies its principles to the workplace; treats all individuals with respect and without regard to race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation; acts in compliance with USG and Department EEO policies.</p>	<p>Manages diversity by recruiting diverse staff at all levels and ensuring staff diversity training and awareness. Promotes diversity awareness through training; ensures, by example and instruction, and verifies, through monitoring and follow-up, that all employees are treated with fairness and respect; applies EEO and merit principles consistently; identifies and addresses situations giving rise to complaints and grievances based on issues of fairness in the workplace.</p>	<p>Fosters an organization-wide environment in which diversity is valued and respected; encourages the organization to realize the full potential of a diverse staff; provides personal leadership and vigorous support for EEO, merit principles, and fair employment practices; recognizes that diversity within the workplace is a strategic advantage and acts accordingly.</p>
Security and Safety, including Management of Sensitive and Classified Material, Information and Infrastructure		
<p>Practices good personal, information, and physical security. Takes full responsibility for <i>properly</i> handling and safeguarding sensitive and classified material, information, and infrastructure. Has knowledge of security threats, responsibilities, procedures, regulations and issues. <i>Properly handles and accounts for dangerous equipment. Reports or addresses possible safety or security hazards or unsafe practices.</i></p>	<p>Encourages the practice of good personal, information, and physical security measures and serves as a model for others. Ensures that effective procedures are in place to protect sensitive and classified material, information and infrastructure and that established security regulations are being followed. <i>Assigns appropriate priority to addressing health, safety or security hazards.</i></p>	<p>Promotes the practice of good personal, information, and physical security measures by employees. Promotes security consciousness on an organization-wide basis; evaluates and monitors procedures to safeguard sensitive and classified material, information, and infrastructure and ensures that necessary changes are made if current procedures are inadequate; holds managers accountable for the consequences of their security policy decisions.</p>

Crisis Management Skills		
<p>Possesses <i>or seeks to possess</i> appropriate knowledge of short-term (emergency) management and long-term (business continuity) management responses to crises, incidents or other serious situations and when appropriate <i>participates</i> in the development of plans to respond to such incidents.</p>	<p>Performs crisis management for the area of responsibility, including the development of preventative (risk management) plans, and develops <i>among the staff</i> awareness and skill in crisis management.</p>	<p>Performs crisis management and risk management for the entire organizational unit; sets the tone for the importance of crisis management for the unit; and seeks to reduce the need for crisis management if possible.</p>

Interpersonal Skills		
Entry-Level	Mid-Level	Senior-Level
Professional Standards		
<p>Holds self accountable for rules and responsibilities; is dependable and conscientious; is composed, professional, and productive, even in difficult conditions. Treats all with respect. <i>Is aware of and seeks to report instances or events that could create or result in a hostile work environment.</i></p>	<p>Holds others accountable for rules and responsibilities; consistently maintains equanimity and a professional demeanor; maintains own motivation and encourages others to persevere in difficult circumstances. <i>Manages subordinates in a manner that clearly and consistently demonstrates respect.</i></p>	<p>Sets the standard for integrity and workplace behavior by example and instruction; does not lose composure under stress or in crisis; fosters a climate based on mutual respect and trust.</p>
Persuasion and Negotiation		
<p>Learns to influence others; gains cooperation while showing, in the spirit of mutual respect, understanding of other positions; <i>applies these skills in both technical and nontechnical settings, as appropriate.</i></p>	<p>Influences others deftly; fosters understanding of USG/Department views and positions and/or procedures and requirements; develops <i>mutually-beneficial working relationships</i> with others; finds common ground among disparate forces and builds consensus; facilitates win-win situations. <i>Negotiates effectively with host country or with federal, state and local counterparts as appropriate.</i></p>	<p>Negotiates effectively on a wide range of issues in internal, bilateral, and multilateral environments (<i>to include interagency issues</i>); manages and resolves major conflicts and disagreements in an interest-based manner; manifests a faculty for astute compromise without sacrificing ultimate goals.</p>

Workplace Perceptiveness		
Demonstrates sensitivity in both domestic and foreign environments to status, protocol, interagency relationships , and chain of command; responds considerately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of others; shows respect for cultural differences or different missions of agencies or counterparts .	Understands and deals effectively with relationships and aspirations; anticipates how others will react; frames own responses to achieve results.	Navigates easily in an environment of shifting relationships; anticipates socially sensitive issues and potential conflicts of interest and takes appropriate action.
Adaptability		
Adapts behavior and work methods as needed in response to new information, changing conditions, preferences of other people, or unexpected obstacles; and displays sensitivity to cultural differences.	Champions necessary change. Guides staff in adjusting to change; models and reinforces flexibility in the staff; manages risk and uncertainty; seeks to reduce any negative impact of change on the organization; and maintains own standards and identity despite change.	Anticipates the need for change; weighs risks; creates proactive plans to deal with change that reduces any negative impact on the unit; uses change to improve the effectiveness of the unit and its members; and exercises sophisticated cultural sensitivity in all circumstances.
Relationship Building and Representational Skills		
Establishes and maintains purposeful and productive relationships with domestic, interagency or foreign contacts, clients and counterparts , interacts effectively in official and social encounters. If required by the position , attends, uses and/or hosts representational events to promote relationships and understanding with host country, state, or local officials as appropriate .	Identifies and cultivates professional relationships with key counterparts and institutions ; advances USG interests through hosting and attending representational events.	Moves with ease at all social settings and levels; cultivates professional relationships with audiences important to U. S. interests; hosts (when appropriate) representational events at most senior levels of society.

Communication and Foreign Language Skills

Entry-Level	Mid-Level	Senior-Level
Written Communication		
<p>Writes succinctly; produces written materials that are thorough; conveys analysis that highlights essential points and clearly explains essence of subject to the intended audience -- whether mission management or senior Department official.</p> <p><i>Prepares written technical information appropriate to the audience or individual's frame of reference and uses analogy and other appropriate techniques to ensure understanding.</i></p>	<p>Writes clearly and persuasively; ensures that policy and operational issues are articulated in ways most helpful to the intended audience; assists staff to develop effective writing skills.</p>	<p>Exhibits full mastery of written communication; shows sophisticated ability to analyze, synthesize, and advocate in a timely manner; edits others' texts judiciously.</p>
Oral Communication		
<p>Speaks in a concise, effective, and organized manner, tailored to the audience and the situation; speaks convincingly in groups and in individual discussion. <i>Communicates and explains technical information through use of analogy and other techniques to ensure understanding by the individual or audience.</i></p>	<p>Speaks authoritatively to all audiences, demonstrating comprehensive understanding of issues and options; articulates policy goals persuasively; fosters an atmosphere of open communication and exchange of ideas.</p>	<p>Effectively argues complex policy issues; deals comfortably with the most senior levels of government and society.</p>

Active Listening		
Listens attentively; understands and <i>comprehends</i> others' messages; correctly reads nonverbal signals; summarizes others' views accurately and confirms accuracy of understanding; considers and responds respectfully and appropriately. <i>Recognizes situations when use of active listening is critical (i.e., engaging customers on technical-related issues they do not understand.)</i>	Instills trust in others which motivates them to speak openly and candidly; understands and respects cultural sensitivities and constraints in discussing issues and opinions; asks open-ended, incisive questions to ensure accuracy of understanding.	Adeptly discerns the meanings and nuances of messages that others convey.
Public Outreach		
Develops public speaking and writing skills by seeking appropriate opportunities <i>and forums (including professional associations)</i> to present U. S. views and perspectives.	Seizes and creates opportunities to advocate U.S. <i>or agency</i> perspective to a variety of audiences. Actively develops the skills of subordinates.	Deals comfortably with the media; is active and effective in public diplomacy, both in the U.S. and overseas. Contributes to and implements strategies to encourage a fair hearing for U.S. <i>or agency</i> views and perspectives
Foreign Language Skill (Generalists; Specialists as applicable)		
Meets <i>appropriate</i> language probation requirements; uses foreign language skills to enhance job performance <i>and better serve customers</i> ; seeks to improve foreign language skills.	<i>Actively builds foreign language skills to meet Career Development (CDP) requirements</i> , strives to acquire advanced level proficiency and/or general professional proficiency in additional languages; uses that skill effectively to communicate USG themes and exercise influence, <i>or to improve relationships with local community to better serve customers and promote USG programs</i> , works to increase foreign language ability.	Maintains and/or further develops proficiency in foreign language(s); uses skill to promote U.S. interests with a wide range of audiences, including the media.

Intellectual Skills

Entry-Level	Mid-Level	Senior-Level
Information Gathering and Analysis		
<p>Locates, <i>determines reliability of, and evaluates key information and quickly assimilates it</i>; reorganizes information logically to maximize its practical utility and identify key underlying factors; recognizes when additional information is required and responds accordingly; considers a variety of sources, cross-checking when appropriate.</p>	<p>Has a sophisticated understanding of sources and their reliability; knows what to report and when; accepts that it may <i>be necessary</i> to base recommendations, decisions, or actions on <i>incomplete</i> information; <i>anticipates consequences; guides and motivates staff to refine their own analytical skills to include developing a sophisticated understanding of the body of professional knowledge applicable to the job.</i></p>	<p>Integrates fully a wide range of information and prior experiences in policy making; ensures that <i>subordinates research and</i> evaluate information before making recommendations and decisions; recognizes situations in which information and analysis are incomplete, and responds wisely; accepts accountability for self and insists on it for staff.</p>
Critical Thinking		
<p>Identifies key information, central issues, and common themes; identifies the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches; outlines realistic options; distinguishes fact from opinion and relevant from irrelevant information.</p>	<p>Isolates key points, central issues, and common themes in a mass of complex information or procedures; <i>determines</i> the best solution or action from a range of options; <i>objectively analyzes problems and judges people.</i></p>	<p><i>Clearly</i> analyzes and defines complex policy issues, in terms which permit them to be dealt with in a practical way; encourages staff to analyze situations and propose options, giving constructive and instructive feedback; correctly senses when it is appropriate to take risks, and does so.</p>

Professional Development, including Active Learning		
<p>Seeks out new job-related knowledge and readily grasps its implications for the workplace; seeks informal feedback and learns from mistakes; recognizes own strengths and weaknesses and pursues self-development. <i>Is frank about own areas of insufficient knowledge. Maintains current certifications as appropriate.</i></p>	<p>Develops own knowledge through broadening experiences, whether work-related, academic studies, or other type of professional development; applies the principles learned on the job and encourages and supports professional development among subordinates <i>and colleagues</i>; provides informal feedback to colleagues and seeks feedback on own performance.</p>	<p>Anticipates the need for new information or knowledge for self and others; identifies sources of new information; communicates these sources to staff and facilitates access; actively promotes professional development at the organizational unit level; applies principles to foster organizational improvements, and promotes a workplace supportive of continuous professional development.</p>
Leadership and Management Training		
<p>Learns basic principles of effective leadership and management. Pursues formal and informal training opportunities.</p>	<p>Uses training opportunities to improve personal leadership and management skills and to keep abreast of current theory and techniques. Applies the principles learned at FSI and other relevant courses on the job; e.g., by developing subordinates. <i>Promotes training that benefits the organization or develops employee skills even if it does not immediately benefit post or office.</i></p>	<p>Actively promotes leadership and management training at the organizational unit level; applies principles of leadership and management training to foster organizational improvements.</p>

Substantive Knowledge

Entry-Level	Mid-Level	Senior-Level
Job Information		
<p>Develops and applies <i>body of professional</i> knowledge needed in current assignment; learns factors which impact work; understands how job relates to organizational goals and U.S. policy objectives. Uses FSI and other training to improve individual job performance.</p> <p><i>Applies accumulated professional and/or technical knowledge to current assignment.</i></p>	<p>Has broad knowledge of job-related processes and practices; remains current on <i>professional standards</i>, policies, programs, and trends that affect the organization; analyzes the interplay of forces influencing the achievement of policy and program objectives and makes reasonable recommendations. Uses <i>professional knowledge</i>, training and other means to <i>effectively monitor and improve programs and operations</i>. Supports continuous learning of employees through both training and work opportunities.</p>	<p>Integrates thorough knowledge of issues arising in job to formulate and implement policies and programs; monitors internal and external sources for information and ideas; uses job knowledge to shape outcomes. Utilizes FSI training to raise level of organizational unit performance. Creates an environment and strategies to support professional development both through training and work opportunities.</p>
Institutional Knowledge		
<p>Understands the roles and authorities of both the Department and other USG agencies and how they affect the Department <i>of State</i>. Applies that knowledge and the institutional realities it imposes to develop interagency cooperation <i>in getting tasks accomplished and providing effective customer service</i>.</p>	<p>Proactively applies knowledge of other USG Agencies and institutional realities, <i>or field of expertise</i>, to <i>effectively advance</i> State Department goals; operates on an equal footing with officials in other bureaus, foreign governments, business communities, academia, and media; develops these same skills in subordinates.</p>	<p>Uses sophisticated understanding of other USG Agencies and institutional realities to <i>effectively advance</i> USG foreign policy objectives, <i>solve complex problems or meet/manage customer expectations, and develop</i> those same skills in subordinates. Promotes interagency cooperation with a wide variety of senior USG officials to achieve the Department's foreign policy objectives.</p>

Technical Skills		
<i>Develops technical skills and makes effective use of technology in the job setting; understands the impact of technology on the workplace and uses it to improve business processes; uses professional body of knowledge to develop and apply best practices in the use of technology.</i>	Continuously enhances own and staff's understanding of work-related technical skills and technology and their applications; advances policy, program, and customer service goals through the use of available and appropriate technology.	Promotes own and staff's full utilization of professional and technical skills , and technology to achieve bureau/mission/ customer service goals; devises efficient and cost-effective strategies to integrate technology into the workplace.
Professional Expertise		
Understands and applies Department of State procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies; assimilates Department of State and Foreign Service culture ; builds knowledge of U.S. and foreign environments; uses developing expertise in work situations. <i>Uses professional expertise to offer solutions, resolve problems, and provide effective customer service.</i>	Deepens understanding of the Department of State and of the Foreign Service as a profession; uses expertise to evaluate policies and programs and to advise, develop and assist others; operates - independently to further bureau/mission objectives. Promotes a work environment that enhances professional development and morale.	Combines mastery of U.S. policy objectives and body of professional knowledge as well as knowledge of foreign environments to advance USG goals; develops Foreign Service skills and expertise of staff.
Knowledge of Foreign Cultures		
Develops and demonstrates knowledge of other cultures, values, and norms to include practicing effective customer service and business etiquette appropriate to the host country culture. Understands foreign or regional perspectives relevant to posting abroad or domestically.	Has thorough knowledge of foreign political, economic, cultural, and information environments; relates this knowledge to fulfillment of bureau/mission and customer service goals.	Uses sophisticated knowledge of foreign environments and other cultures or norms to identify and seize opportunities to advance USG goals and operate effectively in local communities . Develops subordinates' understanding of how best to advance U.S. interests in local environments .