

REVIEW OF THE CIVIL SERVICE POLICY PROFESSION

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REFORM

Executive Summary

1. The Civil Service Policy Profession Board commissioned *Reform* to carry out “a broad assessment of improvements in the quality of policy making since the publication of the *Civil Service Reform Plan* in June 2012, including the extent to which policy advice takes into account issues of implementation.” The assessment should take into account the *Twelve Actions to Professionalise Policy Making*, published the following year, but the formal remit did not extend to an evaluation of the commitments set out in that report nor was *Reform* asked to identify recommendations for further action.

2. Various sources of evidence were drawn on in the preparation of this report, including:

- An online survey of 770 members of the policy profession at SCS and Grade 6/7 level;
- An online survey of 230 members of the operational delivery profession;
- Fifteen half-hour interviews with current and former Coalition Government Ministers;
- Four half-hour interviews with the Head of the Cabinet Office Policy Lab, a former Special Adviser and two Heads of the Policy Profession.

3. The ability to make direct comparisons between the two surveys is limited, in part because they share only three key questions in common but also because the responses to the operational delivery survey were heavily skewed to one department. Care is also required drawing comparisons between the surveys and the interviews because of the different methodologies employed. Nevertheless, some broad conclusions are possible.

4. The survey of policy professionals returned a generally upbeat self-assessment of the state of the profession, including relationships with Ministers, with the operational delivery profession and with the general public. Respondents clearly identified with the policy profession itself and two thirds know the identity of their departmental Head of Policy Profession. By contrast, the survey of operational delivery professionals expressed more negative views, particularly about the practicality of the policy they had to deliver and their ability to influence Ministers and policy professionals.

5. The views of Ministers appear to be more closely aligned with those of operational delivery professionals. Both groups questioned whether the advice of policy professionals was being designed and implemented in a practical way, the degree to which policy professionals understood their departments’ delivery environment and the extent of their dialogue with citizens, businesses and other organisations. Ministers identified three broad areas for improvement:

- Opportunities for systemic improvement: breaking down inter- and intra-departmental silos; better connecting policy and operational delivery; opening up the Civil Service to both internal debate and external ideas.
- Opportunities to improve the quality of policy making: bridging the artificial divide between policy and analysis; developing “inward facing” skills like critical thinking and drafting (including basic literacy) alongside “outward facing” skills like commercial awareness and Parliamentary business management.
- Opportunities for better staff management: balancing the need for “sharp generalists” with a proper recognition for those who choose to develop deep subject expertise; balancing a reduction in staff “churn” with more regular use of external employment; balancing the encouragement of greater personal responsibility with tougher management of poor or variable performance.

6. Annex A contains a summary of the twelve actions to professionalise policy making. Annexes B and C set out details of the face-to-face interviews and online surveys. (A more complete analysis of the online surveys can be found in the Cabinet Office report, *Measuring the Impact of Policy Making*.) Annex D identifies a number of methodological issues which may be relevant to future evaluation exercises.

What civil servants said

7. Two online surveys were designed and administered by the Cabinet Office: an eighteen-question survey of the policy profession and a ten-question survey of the operational delivery profession.

Survey of policy professionals

8. The survey of policy professionals received 770 responses in total, one quarter from Senior Civil Servants (SCS) and three quarters from staff in Grade 6 and 7-equivalent posts. The large majority (80 per cent) of respondents consider themselves to be part of the policy profession and two thirds say they know their departmental Head of Profession.

9. Policy professionals were not asked directly about the quality of their advice to Ministers but they were instead asked about the quality of the evidence in their policy advice. Three quarters described this as good or very good. Most also said that their advice was designed and implemented in a practical way (55 per cent), that they understood their organisations delivery environment (68 per cent) and that they keep citizens, businesses and other organisations in mind when developing policy (75 per cent).

10. The most commonly used policy making tools are transparency, what works evidence, behavioural insights and horizon scanning. Use of these tools is broadly balanced between SCS and non-SCS staff, although SCS policy professionals are significantly more likely to report use of transparency-based tools (58 per cent compared to 48 per cent).

11. When consulting others before preparing advice for Ministers, policy professionals are most likely to approach analytical colleagues, lawyers and colleagues in other Government departments. SCS policy professionals are significantly more likely to approach academics and think tanks than Grades 6/7. They are also more likely to use visits to keep up to date.

12. The large majority (81 per cent) of policy professionals believe the Civil Service is mindful of political sensitivities. Three quarters say they always highlight risks to Ministers. The top risk highlighted relates to “communications and presentational” issues. Financial, legal and operational risks are also important.

Survey of operational delivery professionals

13. The survey of operational delivery professionals received 230 responses in total, with slightly more than one quarter from the SCS and slightly less than three quarters from staff below the SCS. (It is unclear whether the survey was completed by staff in grades below Grade 6/7 level.) The large majority of respondents (77 per cent) work in HM Revenue and Customs.

14. 70 per cent of SCS operational delivery professionals report slight or significant involvement in the formulation of policy advice to Ministers. Less than half (48 per cent) report satisfaction with this level of involvement.

15. Regardless of grade, only 20 per cent of operational delivery professionals think that policy professionals understand the needs of users/customers. Only 19 per cent think that the policies they are given to implement are practical and can be operationalised.

16. 60 per cent of SCS operational delivery professionals agree or strongly agree they can provide feedback to colleagues in the policy profession once a policy has been implemented. Only 13 per cent of junior operational delivery professionals believe this is the case.

Relationship between the two professions

17. The two surveys had three key questions in common and this allowed some direct comparisons to be made between the policy profession and the operational delivery profession. To ensure these were representative, the comparisons were restricted to the 176 operational delivery professionals who work in HM Revenue and Customs and the 57 policy professionals who work in either HM Treasury or HM Revenue and Customs with. (More detailed statistics are given at Annex C2.)

➤ *Do you think that Civil Service policy advice is designed and implemented in a practical way?*

Senior Civil Servants in the policy profession and operational delivery profession share a common view on this, with slightly more than a third saying that policy is always or mostly designed and implemented in a practical way and slightly less than a third saying that this was not often or never the case. Below the SCS, policy professionals were much more optimistic; operational delivery professionals were much less optimistic.

➤ *Policy professionals understand their organisation's delivery environment*

Operational delivery professionals were much less positive about this than policy professionals, with around half saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Policy professionals were more positive, particularly those below the SCS.

➤ *The Civil Service keeps citizens, businesses and other organisations in mind when developing policy*

Operational delivery professionals were less positive than policy professionals that the Civil Service keeps citizens, businesses and other organisations in mind when developing policy. Again, there was a split between the SCS and those below the SCS. In the policy profession, junior staff were very positive; in the operational delivery profession, junior staff were very negative.

Cross-check interviews

18. Alongside the two surveys, interviews were also held with the Deputy Director of the Cabinet Office Policy Lab; the Director General of Roads, Traffic and Local Group at the Department for Transport; the Director of Central Policy at HM Revenue and Customs; and (at the suggestion of one of the Ministerial interviewees) a former Special Adviser employed as a temporary civil servant. Points made in these interviews included:

- the under-appreciated importance of good HR management, echoing many of the comments on people skills mentioned by Ministers in the next section;
- the good practice being put in place around the induction of new entrants to the policy profession;
- a culture of continuous improvement around the production of submissions and correspondence;
- the need to recognise the heterogeneity of Ministers and to respond more quickly and flexibly to the arrival of a new Minister.

"A good team has a mix and it isn't a 'prescribed from the centre' mix. It's a mix of people who've been around a while and people who haven't."

"If it's the case that my professional colleagues are going in front of Ministers and giving them the impression that they're skating on the thin ice veneer of respectability beneath which is the chasm of ignorance, then they're not policy professionals are they? They're policy amateurs and they shouldn't be doing the job."

"When you hear [Sir Jeremy Heywood] talk about policy work you'd think it was all about 'thinking', when 60 or 70 per cent of the day job of people in a policy team is going to be writing letters and briefing."

"Now with the open policy making idea, to some extent the very wide consultation we've always done is in that space. But we are still, I think, quite old-fashioned in the way in which we do that."

What Ministers said

19. Fifteen interviews were held with current and former Coalition Government Ministers, ten of whom attend Cabinet, six with Secretary of State-level experience. All of the interviewees had praise for individual civil servants or particular policy teams. Most also expressed general satisfaction with the support they received from their departments.

20. Across the span of the interviews it was clear that the core Civil Service values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality were held in high regard by Ministers. However, none of the interviewees was able to identify any specific improvements to the policy making process since 2010 (other than as a result of their own personal leadership) and their statements of support for the Civil Service were typically qualified in some way.

“It’s the best Civil Service in the world but it doesn’t operate in the most democratic way.”

“I love Civil Service (a) initiative and (b) robust advice. But I want it delivered properly, in good time, appropriately, and then take no for an answer.”

“I’m reasonably positive about my experience of trying to make and change policy with the Civil Service. But that said, there are nevertheless some attitudes and perhaps behavioural patterns that do make the process ... less efficient.”

21. With the exception of the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, there were no unprompted references either to the *Civil Service Reform Plan* or to the *Twelve Actions to Professionalise Policy Making*. Similarly no Minister used the term “policy profession” at any point in any of the interviews. Indeed some took exception to the very notion of civil servants as policy makers, a role which they saw as their own. By contrast there was widespread and positive use of the term “generalist”, best characterised by one Minister of State as someone with “intellectual and analytical quickness ... able to understand systems, get arguments, ask questions, follow things through to their logical conclusion.”

“If you hadn’t told me that the Government has a *Civil Service Reform Plan*, I wouldn’t have known.”

“What the Civil Service talk of as policy making and what a political person talks of as policy making are actually fundamentally different ... What they really mean is policy implementation more than policy making.”

22. The views of Ministers fell into three broad categories:

- the structure of the Civil Service – how the system works and how it might be improved;
- policy skills – various perceived deficits in the policy design and implementation process; and
- people skills – the types of people the Civil Service ought to be recruiting, retaining, line managing and dismissing.

Structure of the Civil Service

23. There was a general perception amongst Ministers that the culture of the Civil Service is one that is inherently resistant to change. This was primarily seen as a systemic issue rather than one of deliberate obstruction. However, there was a related concern, detailed below, about “ideological resistance” from civil servants who for whatever reason disagreed with their Ministers’ priorities.

24. Interviewees, particularly at Secretary of State level, noted the disconnect between policy professionals and operational delivery professionals (although they did not use these terms). There were two elements to this: the perceived sparsity of essential delivery skills and an apparent prejudice

amongst policy professionals against “the business of delivery”. These were seen as deep flaws which compromised the Government’s ability to implement ambitious programmes.

“If I may just start with an observation about the fact the Cabinet Office is focusing on policy because I think actually the real challenge for the Civil Service ... is bringing in the skills that can run operations ... obviously policy is developed but a lot of the issues arise from how operations are run.”

“There was a sort of snobbery towards [*the operational delivery professional*] on the part of some of the policy officials, as though he were involved in the business of trade and they were part of the policy priesthood.”

25. There was broad support in principle for Extended Ministerial Offices but most Ministers who expressed a view wanted (or had) a single, trusted policy confidante to help them better engage with the department. This could be a good Private Secretary, a policy advisor appointed on a temporary contract or a permanent civil servant. All stressed that these staff were not the same as politically appointed Special Advisers. What they wanted were people who understood the policy area and their priorities.

“In a department as big as this I needed someone who knew where to go when there was a problem.”

“I’m a great believer in the extended private office that in theory is being trialled though I’m not quite sure where.”

26. There was disappointment that departments did not encourage more open, internal debate on policy issues – often appearing to “waste time” trying to secure consensus before approaching Ministers for a decision. However this view was countered, at least in part, by one Secretary of State who expressed frustration about receiving three separate submissions from two Directorates in one week, all covering different aspects of the same policy with no apparent attempt at coordination.

27. Other relatively common comments about the structure of the Civil Service included:

- the unwelcome role of the centre (either the Cabinet Office or HM Treasury) offering to “help” departments in one way or another;
- frustrations with silo working (both within and between departments) as well as the wider challenges of “departmentalism”;
- an apparent Civil Service obsession with hierarchy. (“Oh, well, you know, we’ll need a Grade 7 to do that. What’s a Grade 7? I’m still not entirely sure what a Grade 7 is. I just try to see people around the table.”)

Policy Skills

28. Ministers did not identify innovation as a critical skill for policy professionals. They wanted greater openness to innovation but saw the sources of new ideas as either themselves or others beyond Whitehall – particularly “front line staff” (ie. operational delivery professionals). A small number of interviewees made positive reference to the work of the Behavioural Insights Team but there were no unprompted references to the Cabinet Office Policy Lab or to other, similar organisations (such as the Innovation Unit, which was spun out from DfE as a social enterprise in 2006).

“My strong view is that it’s Ministers that should arrive with a policy agenda, and the responsibility of the Civil Service is to implement it. So in terms of innovation, there is no monopoly on good ideas and certainly if people who are interested and experienced in the subject matter have ideas to share, the Minister should certainly do it. But I do think it’s important that they see themselves, as they always have traditionally, as being there to implement the policy of the government of the day.”

29. A number of Ministers reported encountering passive or active resistance from civil servants which they believed was ideologically driven. Whilst such episodes appeared to be exception rather than the rule, they were clearly corrosive of trust and may have been correlated to the Ministerial preference for trusted in-house policy advisers. There was also a cluster of views about critical skill shortages:

- weak policy appraisal, including “sloppy” use of evidence and insufficient use of real-time management information.
- the artificial divide between policy makers and departmental analysts, described variously as “ludicrous” and “ridiculous”;
- the lack of knowledge of Parliamentary business management (seen as a particular challenge in the event of future coalition governments);
- the lack of a commercial mindset.

“I don’t think the programme has been a disaster but it’s nowhere near delivered what Ministers were told. And what some officials believe – what I am now told – is there was quite a lot of scepticism elsewhere in the Department.”

“We do [policy appraisal] pretty badly *ex ante* because we spend all this money of these estimates and no-one reads them. And they make no difference.”

30. Ministers acknowledged the central role of written submissions in the policy making process and there was some concern about officials who saw submissions as a template to be followed rather than a tool for succinct communication. Reflecting some of the points made earlier, there was also concern about:

- the lack of quality control by Senior Civil Servants, either by not preventing submissions on overlapping issues or by not filtering out badly drafted work;
- the misuse of submissions, either to push a personal ideology or to conceal bad news.

31. On correspondence, there was a widespread resignation about the general poor quality of drafting, which was largely attributed to a lack of attention under the previous administration. Amongst those who expressed a view, junior Ministers saw little connection between the quality of correspondence and the quality of policy making, whereas Secretaries of State did.

“The worst submissions come from those ... who have been shuffled into low priority areas because no-one has been able to find an appropriate exit for them.”

“It is deeply frustrating when you go out with something and then two months later ... you see a submission that says there’s this problem, and then it’s sort of, oh, well, we always knew there was this.”

“I have been shocked at the poor quality of writing generally in the Civil Service – and that is policy documents as well as correspondence ... I am the chief proof-reader for [the Department].”

People skills

32. Ministers held strong and broadly consistent views on the types of people the Civil Service ought to be recruiting, retaining, line managing and dismissing. As noted earlier, there was widespread support for the retention of a relatively small cadre of “sharp generalists”, able to turn their minds to any issue. However a number of respondents pointed to the lack of sufficient specialists to work alongside generalists, including contract managers and project managers but also including those who might choose to remain in a policy area and build up a degree of expertise. They also questioned the apparent lack of respect (and remuneration) shown to those specialists that the Civil Service had been able to attract and retain.

“I feel strongly about this ... there is room in the Civil Service – should be in any organisation – for the particularly knowledgeable specialist who isn’t suited to going around doing lots, who isn’t a manager of people, but whose knowledge and insights will always be valuable.”

“Contract management, another very good case in point. I would advocate the ability to have several long-term specialists working alongside the talented generalist.”

33. Two specific consequences of the skills deficits listed in the previous section, highlighted by a number Secretaries of State, were an unwillingness by policy professionals to admit mistakes and a failure to take personal responsibility. More than one respondent spoke of the use of follow-on submissions to “hide” unpalatable information.

34. Concerns were also expressed about:

- the variation in the quality of policy advice, which did not appear to Ministers to be correlated to seniority;
- the rapid turnover of key officials which (particularly in the context of coalition government), which meant that Ministers frequently knew more than their civil servants;
- the perceived poor quality of non-Fast Stream civil servants and the inability of the Civil Service to dismiss non-performing staff.

“One of the irritations of the Civil Service is that you get people who are just as effective policy makers who are earning 25 grand as on 75 grand.”

“The rotation of people and bodies has got to stop. You’ve got to have serious guys in there that can do the job. And so I think that whole culture of generalisation – you do everything nicely, do it well, you move on up – has got to stop.”

35. Finally, a view that was held particularly widely amongst junior Ministers was that policy professionals do not get out enough into “the real world”. This was thought to lead to various problems:

- the “beautifully drafted” submission that doesn’t actually reflect the situation on the ground;
- an over-emphasis on “the theoretical possibility of human abuse” when designing new policy;
- a “tick box mentality”, where Senior Civil Servants feel the need for a cursory spell in an arm’s-length body or frontline agency to secure promotion.

Richard Harries,
Deputy Director, *Reform*.

Annex A: Twelve Actions to Professionalise Policy Making

Action #	What?	Who?	When?
1	Transform departmental HOPP role to raise the standard of policy making	Permanent secretaries, departmental Heads of Policy Profession (HOPPs)	March 2014
2	Enhance policy profession support, including the establishment of a Policy Lab	Civil Service Head of Policy Profession (CS HOPP)	December 2013
3	Regular communications with policy officials, focused on personal development	Departmental HOPPs, CS HOPP	From October 2013
4	Adopt, embed and quality assure fundamental policy standards	Departmental HOPPs, all SCS	March 2014
5	Peer-review "transparent policy improvement systems" on an annual basis	Departmental HOPPs	Annually
6	Champion open policy making	Departmental HOPPs	n/a
7	Overhaul policy induction for new entrants	Policy Profession Board, departmental HOPPs	During 2014-15
8	Continuous professional development, used for staff appraisal and promotion	All policy professionals, departmental HR directors	n/a
9	Introduce learning and development opportunities for G7-SCS1, with a focus on (a) deep subject expertise (b) post-graduate qualifications (c) experience (d) skills	Departmental HOPPs, departmental HR directors	n/a
10	Planned release of High Potential Directors as a Civil Service-wide resource	Departmental HOPPs, departmental HR directors	From April 2014
11	Fundamental review of departmental knowledge management	Policy Profession Board	During 2014
12	Annual independent assessment	Policy Profession Board	Annually

Annex B1: Schedule of face-to-face interviews

	Name	Current position	Previous position(s)	Date of interview
1.	Andrea Siodmok	Deputy Director, PolicyLab	Chief Designer, Cornwall Council; Chief Design Officer, Design Council	26 November 2014
2.	Oliver Letwin	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Cabinet Office	Opposition	15 December 2014
3.	Francis Maude	Minister for the Cabinet Office	Opposition; Financial Secretary to the Treasury; Minister of State for Europe	23 December 2014
4.	Chris Grayling	Secretary of State for Justice	Minister of State for Employment, DWP	5 January 2015
5.	Nick Gibb	Minister of State for School Reform, DfE	Minister of State for Schools, DfE	5 January 2015
6.	Steve Webb	Minister of State for Pensions, DWP	Opposition	6 January 2015
7.	David Lidington	Minister of State for Europe, FCO	Opposition	6 January 2015
8.	Iain Duncan-Smith	Secretary of State for Work and Pensions	Opposition	6 January 2015
9.	Matthew Hancock	Minister of State for Business and Enterprise; Energy, BIS/DECC; Portsmouth	Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise, BIS	6 January 2015
10.	Nick Boles	Minister of State for Skills and Equalities, BIS/DfE	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Planning, DCLG	7 January 2015
11.	Theresa May	Home Secretary	Minister for Women and Equalities	8 January 2015
12.	William Hague	Leader of the House of Commons	Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; Opposition; Secretary of State for Wales; Minister of State for the Disabled, DSS	8 January 2015
13.	Michael Gove	Chief Whip	Secretary of State for Education	8 January 2015
14.	Greg Clark	Minister of State for Universities, Science & Cities	Financial Secretary to the Treasury; Minister of State for Decentralisation, DCLG	12 January 2015
15.	Mike Penning	Minister of State for Justice and Minister of State for Policing, HO/MoJ	Minister of State for Disabled People, DWP; Minister of State for Northern Ireland, NIO; Minister of State for Transport, DfT	12 January 2015
16.	Ed Davey	Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment Relations, Consumer and Postal Affairs, BIS	21 January 2015
17.	Anonymous	No longer working in Government	Special Adviser to a Secretary of State	23 January 2015
18.	Steve Gooding	Director General of Roads, Traffic and Local Group, DfT	Director General Domestic, DfT	5 February 2015
19.	Marie-Clare Uhart	Director, Central Policy, HMRC	Director, Personal Tax Operations, HMRC	6 February 2015

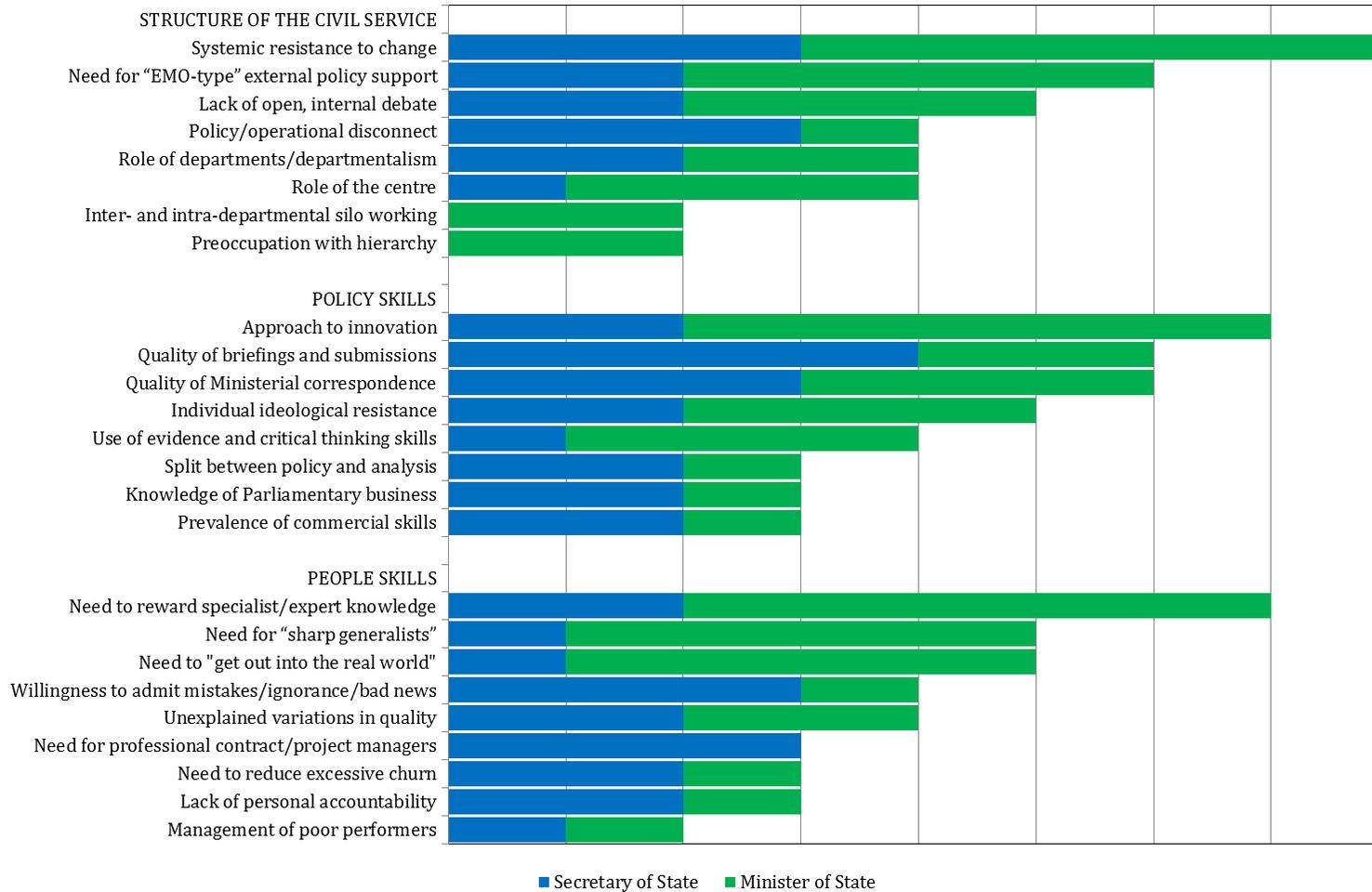
Annex B2: Agreed structure for Ministerial interviews

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

The interview will last 30 minutes. The *Reform* interviewers will ask the following questions:

1. How confident are you in the overall quality and clarity of the policy advice you receive from your civil servants?
 - prompt for views on improvements since publication of the Civil Service Reform Plan in June 2012
 - [for Ministers who have worked in more than one department] prompt for differences with previous department
2. How confident are you that Civil Service policy advice is designed with a view to the practicalities of implementation?
 - prompt for examples of use of evidence in policymaking, consistency with other Government policies, support from outside experts, etc.
 - prompt for knowledge of key stakeholders and the wider delivery environment
3. Do your civil servants have the necessary skills and knowledge to be effective policy makers?
 - prompt for examples of innovation and open policy making
 - prompt for political nous and ability to “speak truth to power”

Annex B3: Qualitative analysis of the main comments made in Ministerial interviews



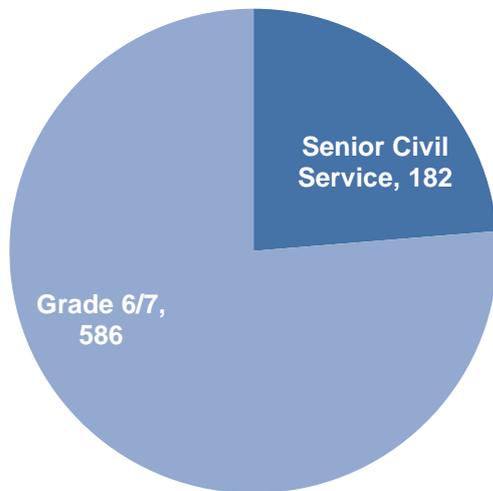
Methodology:

Ministerial interviews were analysed following a four-stage process:

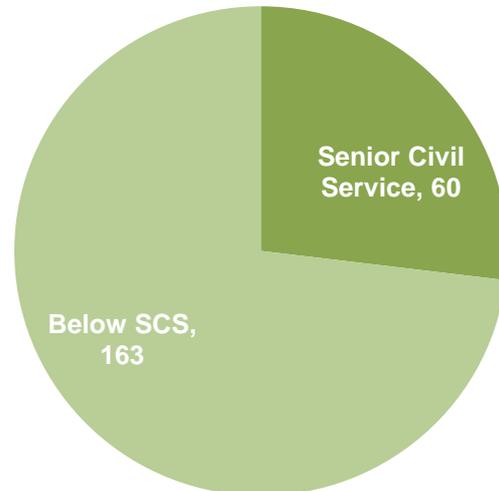
- 1) Interview transcripts were reviewed, with key arguments highlighted and labelled with a short 'descriptor'.
- 2) Descriptors were grouped across interviews into common 'types' of comment.
- 3) Comment types were then clustered into broad 'groups'.
- 4) Each transcript was reviewed a second time, to confirm 'type' consistency and to identify exemplar quotes.

Annex C1: SurveyMonkey Analysis (all respondents)

Policy profession



Operational delivery profession

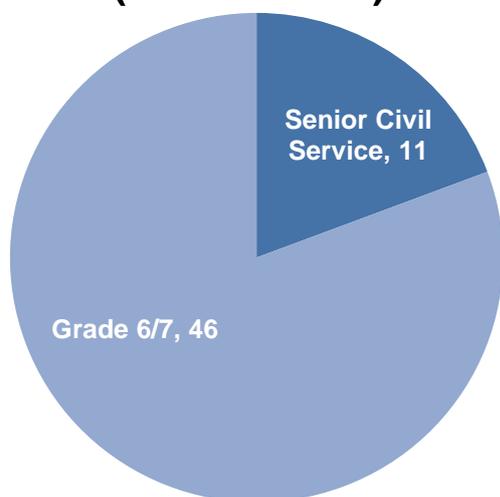


- 80 per cent of policy profession respondents consider themselves to be part of the profession. 16 per cent agree that they work in policy but do not consider themselves part of the policy profession. These results hold regardless of grade.
- 78 per cent of SCS policy professionals know their Head of Policy Profession compared to 60 per cent of Grades 6/7.
- 75 per cent of policy professionals rate the quality of the evidence in policy advice as good or very good.
- 62 per cent of SCS policy professionals think advice is designed and implemented in a practical way, compared to 32 per cent of SCS operational delivery professionals.
- 50 per cent of Grade 6/7 policy professionals think advice is designed and implemented in a practical way, compared to 15 per cent of junior operational delivery professionals.
- 81 per cent of operational delivery professionals do not agree that the policies they are given are practical and can be operationalised.
- 47 per cent of Grade 6/7 policy professionals think the relationship with the operational delivery profession was slightly or much better since 2010, compared to 61 per cent of SCS.
- The top risk highlighted in policy advice to Ministers by policy professionals is related to “communications and presentational” issues. Financial, legal and operational risks are also important.
- The most commonly used open policy making tools are transparency, what works evidence, behavioural insights and horizon scanning. This is broadly balanced between SCS and non-SCS staff, although SCS policy professionals are significantly more likely to use transparency-based tools (58 per cent compared to 48 per cent).
- SCS policy professionals are also significantly more confident than Grades 6/7 about using open policy making tools (64 per cent very or fairly confident compared to 44 per cent).
- When consulting others before preparing evidence for Ministers, policy professionals are most likely to approach analytical colleagues, lawyers and colleagues in other Government departments.

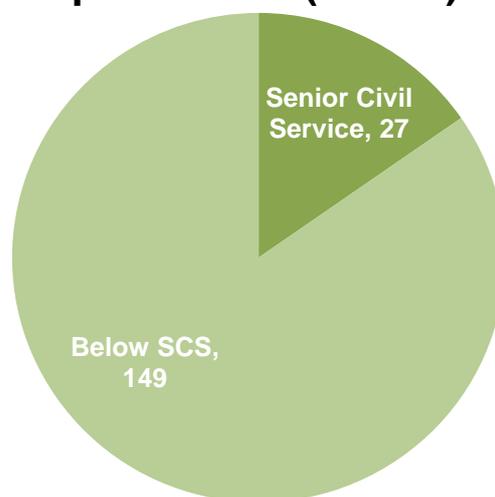
- SCS policy professionals are significantly more likely to approach academics and think tanks than Grades 6/7 (62 per cent compared to 45 per cent for academics, 46 per cent compared to 27 per cent for think tanks).
- SCS policy professionals are significantly more confident than Grades 6/7 about explaining open policy making tools to staff (60 per cent very or fairly confident compared to 46 per cent).
- The most common ways to keep up to date as a policy professional are “departmental learning”, meetings, reading research and visits. SCS policy professionals are more likely to go on visits (72 per cent compared to 60 per cent) but less likely to make use of departmental learning (72 per cent compared to 84 per cent).
- 76 per cent of policy professionals always highlight risks to Ministers.
- 87 per cent of SCS policy professionals believe the Civil Service is mindful of political sensitivities compared to 79 per cent of Grades 6/7.
- 68 per cent of policy professionals say they understand their organisations delivery environment. By contrast, only 17 per cent of operational delivery professionals believe that their colleagues in the policy profession understand the delivery environment. In both cases, these results hold regardless of grade.
- 75 per cent of policy professionals believe the Civil Service keeps citizens, businesses and other organisations in mind when developing policy. This result does not vary much with grade. By contrast, only 60 per cent of SCS operational delivery professionals and only 25 per cent of junior operational delivery professionals believe this is the case.
- Only 20 per cent of operational delivery professionals think policy professionals understand the needs of users/customers. This result does not vary much with grade.
- 70 per cent of SCS operational delivery professionals report slight or significant involvement in the formulation of policy advice to Ministers. Only 48 per cent are very or fairly satisfied with this level of involvement.
- 19 per cent of junior operational delivery professionals report slight or significant involvement in the formulation of policy advice to Ministers. Only 14 per cent are very or fairly satisfied with this level of involvement.
- 60 per cent of SCS operational delivery professionals agree or strongly agree they can provide feedback to colleagues in the policy profession once a policy has been implemented. Only 13 per cent of junior operational delivery professionals believe this is the case.

Annex C2: SurveyMonkey Analysis (HMT+HMRC respondents only)

**Policy profession
(HMT+HMRC)**



Operational delivery profession (HMRC)



Do you think that Civil Service policy advice is designed and implemented in a practical way?

	Policy profession	Operational delivery profession
SCS	Always or mostly: 36% Not often or never: 27%	Always or mostly: 37% Not often or never: 30%
"Grade 6/7" or "Below SCS"	Always or mostly: 69% Not often or never: 9%	Always or mostly: 13% Not often or never: 44%

Policy professionals understand their organisation's delivery environment

	Policy profession	Operational delivery profession
SCS	Strongly/Agree: 36% Strongly/Disagree: 27%	Strongly/Agree: 19% Strongly/Disagree: 52%
"Grade 6/7" or "Below SCS"	Strongly/Agree: 61% Strongly/Disagree: 11%	Strongly/Agree: 15% Strongly/Disagree: 49%

The Civil Service keeps citizens, businesses and other organisations in mind when developing policy

	Policy profession	Operational delivery profession
SCS	Strongly/Agree: 64% Strongly/Disagree: 27%	Strongly/Agree: 52% Strongly/Disagree: 16%
"Grade 6/7" or "Below SCS"	Strongly/Agree: 82% Strongly/Disagree: 0%	Strongly/Agree: 22% Strongly/Disagree: 38%

Annex D: Methodological issues

Measuring changes over time

1. The original remit of the research was “to carry out a broad assessment of improvements in the quality of policy making since 2010 and particularly since the publication of the *Civil Service Reform Plan* in June 2012, including the extent to which policy advice takes into account issues of implementation.” However, only one out of the 28 questions in the two SurveyMonkey surveys made reference to changes over time (“How do you think the relationship between the policy profession and the delivery profession has changed since 2010?”). Moreover, despite its reciprocal nature, this question was only asked one of the two surveys.

2. Whilst the Ministerial interviews afforded greater opportunities to test views about changes over time, few respondents chose to phrase their responses in this way, preferring to use examples over their period in office to illustrate more general points about the policy profession. Future reviews should give consideration to better ways to measure progress over time.

Sample selection

3. Whilst both surveys received enough responses to ensure the results are broadly robust, the decision to exclude staff below Grade 7 will have consequences for their wider applicability. The uncertainty about the non-SCS grade cut-off for the operational delivery survey suggests that the responses for this cohort should be treated with particular caution. Given the relatively important role they play with Ministers, any future surveys should at least consider the inclusion of HEO(D)-level Fast Streamers.

Question design

4. The table on the next page compares the questions in the two surveys, based on whether:

- they ask a question or invite support for a declarative statement;
- they use identical wording in both surveys or different wording;
- they ask about the individual’s knowledge, skills and experience or about their views of the profession and/or Civil Service.

5. There is a particular risk that survey respondents, when asked to agree or disagree with statements expressed in the positive, may default to agreement. So, for example, the statement “Policy professionals always highlight the risk of policy options to Ministers [Agree/Disagree]” might be better phrased as “Do you think policy professionals highlight the risk of policy options to Ministers? [Always/Sometimes/ Never]”

Comparison of **Policy Profession** and **Operational Delivery Profession** SurveyMonkey question types

Asks a question	Using identical wording	About the individual	<p>Q1. & Q1. Are you a civil servant?</p> <p>Q2. & Q2. Which is your home department?</p>
		About the profession	<p>Q4. & Q5. Do you think that Civil Service policy advice is designed and implemented in a practical way?</p>
	Using different wording	About the individual	<p>Q6. Which risks do you tend to highlight in preparing policy advice for Ministers?</p> <p>Q7. Which types of evidence do you tend to use in preparing policy advice?</p> <p>Q8. Which of the following open policy making tools have you used in preparing policy evidence?</p> <p>Q9. Of the open policy making tools that you have used, how confident are you in using them?</p> <p>Q10. As you apply the principles of open policy making, which groups do you tend to consult/involved before preparing evidence for Ministers?</p> <p>Q11. How confident are you in understanding and explaining how open policy making relates to your staff and the work they do?</p> <p>Q12. How do you keep yourself up to date as a policy professional?</p> <p>Q3. What level of involvement do you and your staff have in formulating policy advice to Ministers?</p> <p>Q4. How satisfied are you at the level of involvement you and your staff have in formulating policy advice to Ministers?</p>
		About the profession	<p>Q3. How would you rate the quality of evidence that the Civil Service provides in their policy advice?</p> <p>Q5. How do you think the relationship between the policy profession and the operational delivery profession has changed since 2010?</p>
Makes a statement	Using identical wording	About the individual	
		About the profession	<p>Q17. & Q7. Policy professionals understand their organisation's delivery environments.</p> <p>Q18. & Q8. The Civil Service keeps citizens, businesses and other organisations in mind when developing policy.</p>
	Using different wording	About the individual	<p>Q13. I consider myself part of the policy profession.</p> <p>Q14. I know who the Head of Policy Profession is in my department.</p> <p>Q9. The policies I am given to implement are practical and can be operationalised.</p> <p>Q10. I am able to provide feedback to policy professionals once policy has been implemented.</p>
		About the profession	<p>Q15. The Civil Service is mindful of political sensitivities and incorporates these into its policy advice without compromising its impartiality.</p> <p>Q16. Policy professionals always highlight the risks of policy options to Ministers.</p> <p>Q6. Policy professionals understand the needs of our users/customers.</p>