

Customs and Freight Forwarding Clerk

FF15 Logistics, transport and supply chain · ISCO-08 3331 · CBS 0435 Work planners and logistics staff · seniority junior · Also known as: Forwarding agent

Handles the administrative processing of international shipments, from transport documents to customs formalities, liaising with client and carrier throughout.

The customs and freight forwarding clerk works more broadly than a declarant, handling transport planning and customer contact alongside customs matters. The distinction from a customs declarant lies in the broader administrative role rather than specialist declaration knowledge. Selection often fails on candidates who are customer focused and administratively strong but lack enough knowledge of international trade documentation to flag errors in time.

Key figures for this profile

22 skills · 6 competencies to measure · 5 knockout skills · centre of gravity: Professional knowledge domains 32%, Execution, craft, safety and sustainability 15%, Self-management, drive and resilience 14%

1 Competencies to measure

These are the behavioural and ability constructs in this profile. Each one shows which hrmforce questionnaire measures it.

Competencies to measure	Target level	hrmforce instrument	Assessment method	Behavioural anchor at target level
Safety awareness Competency (50-framework): Discipline Knockout	 N2	Big Fifty, Competency Check	Situational Judgement Test	Follows the safety rules of the workplace and checks back when in doubt about an operation.

Competencies to measure	Target level	hrmforce instrument	Assessment method	Behavioural anchor at target level
Accuracy and attention to detail Competency (50-framework): Accuracy Knockout	 N2	Big Fifty, 360 Feedback	Personality questionnaire	Goes through the own work with a checklist and repairs errors found before the work is passed on.
Discipline and keeping commitments Competency (50-framework): Discipline	 N2	Big Fifty, 15PF, 360 Feedback	Personality questionnaire	Arrives at the agreed time with the agreed work and reports any delay to the supervisor.
Client focus Competency (50-framework): Customer Focus	 N2	Big Fifty, Competency Check, 360 Feedback	360-degree feedback	Responds to client questions within the agreed term and refers on when the answer falls outside own task.
Managing workload pressure Competency (50-framework): Stress resilience	 N2	Big Fifty, Competency Check, Pulse Survey	Structured interview	Tells the supervisor that the work does not fit the available time and follows the choice that is made.
Sustaining pace in repetitive work Competency (50-framework): Discipline	 N2	Big Fifty, Work sample test	Work sample test	Completes the assigned series of operations at the pace indicated and reports when a backlog arises.

2 Full skill profile

Every skill in this profile, sorted by weight. The behavioural anchor under each skill belongs to the target level.

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Logistics planning Completes the daily plan according to the standard schedule and reports availability bottlenecks to the planner.	 N2	5	yes	Work sample test	Work sample test, Knowledge test (client-specific)
G	Safety awareness Follows the safety rules of the workplace and checks back when in doubt about an operation.	 N2	5	yes	Situational Judgement Test	Big Fifty, Competency Check
K	Customs and international trade documentation Independently determines commodity code and procedure for a shipment, files the declaration and answers questions from customs.	 N3	4	yes	Knowledge test	Knowledge test (client-specific)
G	Accuracy and attention to detail Goes through the own work with a checklist and repairs errors found before the work is passed on.	 N2	4	yes	Personality questionnaire	Big Fifty, 360 Feedback
V	aligning and coordinating Aligns own activities with one direct colleague and confirms who picks up which task and when.	 N2	4	no	Assessment centre	Competency Check, 360 Feedback

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Planning and organising Makes a daily or weekly schedule for own tasks and sticks to the agreed order and times.	 N2	4	no	Work sample test	Competency Check, 360 Feedback, Work sample test
G	Discipline and keeping commitments Arrives at the agreed time with the agreed work and reports any delay to the supervisor.	 N2	4	no	Personality questionnaire	Big Fifty, 15PF, 360 Feedback
V	Operational inventory management Counts stock under supervision according to the counting instruction and records the result in the system.	 N2	4	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Knowledge test (client-specific)
T	Using warehouse management systems Registers receipts and order lines in the system according to the work instruction and reports error messages to the team leader.	 N2	4	yes	Work sample test	Work sample test, Knowledge test (client-specific)
V	Load securing and transport safety Secures a load under supervision with the prescribed equipment and checks before departure that the lashing straps are tensioned.	 N2	4	no	On-the-job observation	Work sample test, Knowledge test (client-specific)

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Executing transport and distribution Independently drives a multi drop route, keeps track of driving times and resolves problems at the customer on the spot.	 N3	3	no	Certificate or diploma	Knowledge test (client-specific), Work sample test
V	Prioritising and weighing options Completes the own tasks in the agreed order and reports it when two tasks clash with each other.	 N2	3	no	Work sample test	Competency Check, Work sample test
G	Client focus Responds to client questions within the agreed term and refers on when the answer falls outside own task.	 N2	3	no	360-degree feedback	Big Fifty, Competency Check, 360 Feedback
V	Time management and prioritising Follows a task list provided by others and asks which task takes priority whenever new requests arrive.	 N2	3	no	Work sample test	Competency Check, 360 Feedback
G	Managing workload pressure Tells the supervisor that the work does not fit the available time and follows the choice that is made.	 N2	3	no	Structured interview	Big Fifty, Competency Check, Pulse Survey

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Working with digital devices and applications Opens and uses the prescribed applications for own tasks and asks for help whenever an unfamiliar message appears.	 N2	3	no	Work sample test	Knowledge test (client-specific), Work sample test
G	Sustaining pace in repetitive work Completes the assigned series of operations at the pace indicated and reports when a backlog arises.	 N2	3	no	Work sample test	Big Fifty, Work sample test
V	Working with shift work and irregular hours Works according to the roster, arrives on time and hands over outstanding matters at the end of the shift.	 N2	3	no	Structured interview	Big Fifty, Structured interview
V	Clear oral expression Restates in own words what has been agreed and repeats the core of the instruction as a check.	 N1	2	no	Assessment centre	Communication Styles, Competency Check
V	Retaining and applying knowledge Looks up the required procedure in the manual and follows it step by step on a familiar task.	 N1	2	no	Knowledge test	Ability Scan, Knowledge test (client-specific)

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
T	Spreadsheets and worksheets Enters data in an existing worksheet and uses simple formulas such as sum and average as instructed.		2	no	Work sample test	Knowledge test (client-specific), Work sample test
V	Managing service levels and performance indicators Reads the performance overview and reports which agreement was not met in the past week.		2	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Competency Check

3 Levels per seniority

The same profile with the job family seniority adjustment applied. Target levels are clamped to 1 to 5.

Skill	junior	medior
Logistics planning	N2	N3
Safety awareness	N2	N3
Customs and international trade documentation	N3	N3
Accuracy and attention to detail	N2	N3
aligning and coordinating	N2	N3
Planning and organising	N2	N3
Discipline and keeping commitments	N2	N3
Operational inventory management	N2	N3
Using warehouse management systems	N2	N3
Load securing and transport safety	N2	N3
Executing transport and distribution	N3	N3
Prioritising and weighing options	N2	N3
Client focus	N2	N3
Time management and prioritising	N2	N3
Managing workload pressure	N2	N3
Working with digital devices and applications	N2	N3
Sustaining pace in repetitive work	N2	N3
Working with shift work and irregular hours	N2	N3
Clear oral expression	N1	N2
Retaining and applying knowledge	N1	N2
Spreadsheets and worksheets	N1	N2
Managing service levels and performance indicators	N1	N2

4 The proficiency scale

Level	Label	Autonomy	Complexity	Scope	Depth of knowledge
N1	Guided	works under supervision and follows instruction	routine, one variable at a time	own task	basic understanding of terminology
N2	Applying	works independently within set frameworks	familiar situations with limited variation	own role	working knowledge, applies standard approach
N3	Proficient	sets own approach and seeks input proactively	several variables, some ambiguity	own team or process	thorough knowledge, weighs alternatives
N4	Advanced	directs others and decides on the approach	complex, with conflicting interests	several teams or a department	in-depth knowledge, advises others
N5	Leading	sets the standard and the policy	strategic, under high uncertainty	organisation, value chain or profession	authority, advances the profession

5 Behavioural anchors per skill

Anchors sit at N1, N3 and N5. N2 and N4 are deliberately not anchored: raters interpolate between them, following the O*NET convention.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Logistics planning Plans goods flows, capacity and routes so that lead time, cost and availability stay balanced, and adjusts the plan when disruption occurs.	Completes the daily plan according to the standard schedule and reports availability bottlenecks to the planner.	Independently replans routes and capacity when resources fail, weighs cost against lead time and informs customer and carrier.	Designs the organisation's logistics network and planning principles and holds chain partners to performance agreements.
Safety awareness Continuously watches for unsafe situations and actions at work, addresses others about them and chooses the safe working method even under time pressure.	Follows the safety rules of the workplace and checks back when in doubt about an operation.	Recognises unsafe situations in own process, intervenes and addresses colleagues without bringing the work to a halt.	Sets the safety standard for the organisation, makes safety discussable at every level and steers behaviour and culture.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Customs and international trade documentation Knows commodity codes, import duties and document requirements for cross border transport and prepares declarations and transport documents correctly.	Checks under guidance whether the required documents for a shipment are present and complete.	Independently determines commodity code and procedure for a shipment, files the declaration and answers questions from customs.	Sets up the organisation's customs processes, maintains the licences and accounts for compliance during inspections.
Accuracy and attention to detail Works carefully, checks own work for errors and keeps to agreements about completeness and correctness of data.	Goes through the own work with a checklist and repairs errors found before the work is passed on.	Builds check moments into the own process, keeps track of errors and prevents repetition by adjusting the method.	Sets the standards for completeness and correctness, has samples checked and addresses teams on structural sloppiness.
aligning and coordinating Aligning the activities of different people and groups in timing, sequence and content so that duplicated work and delays are prevented.	Aligns own activities with one direct colleague and confirms who picks up which task and when.	Organises consultation between the parties in a shared process, records agreements and actively tracks whether these are met.	Sets up the coordination structure between departments or chain partners and decides which meetings, roles and information flows the organisation uses as standard.
Planning and organising Placing activities, people and resources in time, setting priorities and arranging dependencies so that agreed results are delivered on schedule.	Makes a daily or weekly schedule for own tasks and sticks to the agreed order and times.	Plans the work of the team for several weeks, distributes tasks and reshuffles on disruptions without missing deadlines.	Sets the planning system for the organisation, links annual plan, capacity and budget and decides on conflicting claims.
Discipline and keeping commitments Sticks to agreements, procedures and commitments even without supervision, and reports in good time when a commitment turns out to be unachievable.	Arrives at the agreed time with the agreed work and reports any delay to the supervisor.	Commits only to what is feasible, tracks own commitments and informs those involved as soon as a deadline comes under pressure.	Anchors the standard for reliable follow through in working agreements and addresses anyone at any level who lets that standard slip.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Operational inventory management Tracks stock levels, order moments and locations, carries out counts and explains differences between system stock and actual stock.	Counts stock under supervision according to the counting instruction and records the result in the system.	Independently sets order levels for a product group, analyses stock differences and removes the cause in the process.	Sets the inventory policy, defines standards for turnover and service level and tests execution against them.
Using warehouse management systems Uses a warehouse management system for receipt, storage, order picking and shipping and resolves differences between system and shop floor.	Registers receipts and order lines in the system according to the work instruction and reports error messages to the team leader.	Independently resolves differences between system stock and location and adjusts settings within own authority.	Determines the configuration of the warehouse system, sets rules for its use and leads the introduction of new functionality.
Load securing and transport safety Secures loads according to weight, centre of gravity and regulations and works safely when loading, unloading and carrying dangerous goods.	Secures a load under supervision with the prescribed equipment and checks before departure that the lashing straps are tensioned.	Independently determines the securing method for an unusual load, calculates the required lashing force and refuses unsafe transport.	Draws up the company's load safety instructions, analyses incidents and tests compliance among drivers and loading crews.
Executing transport and distribution Transports and delivers goods according to route and driving time rules, checks freight documents and resolves deviations when loading and unloading.	Drives a fixed route under guidance, checks the consignment note and reports deviations on delivery.	Independently drives a multi drop route, keeps track of driving times and resolves problems at the customer on the spot.	Sets the execution standards for transport, reviews compliance with driving times and instructs drivers on new rules.
Prioritising and weighing options Orders tasks and options by importance, urgency and yield and makes the balance between cost, time and quality visible.	Completes the own tasks in the agreed order and reports it when two tasks clash with each other.	Chooses what is left undone when the planning is full, justifies this by importance and urgency and aligns it with those involved.	Sets the priority rules for the portfolio, stops running initiatives and accounts for the allocation of people and resources.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Client focus Acting from the question and interest of the client, keeping agreements and visibly directing own work towards usefulness for that client.	Responds to client questions within the agreed term and refers on when the answer falls outside own task.	Uncovers the real need behind a client question, makes a fitting proposal and checks after delivery whether it works.	Translates client signals into changes in services and policy and holds the organisation accountable for the promised client experience.
Time management and prioritising Allocates available time across tasks by urgency and importance, sets a sequence and adjusts it when new work arrives during the period.	Follows a task list provided by others and asks which task takes priority whenever new requests arrive.	Ranks own work by urgency and importance, builds in buffer time and explains to others why an item will arrive later.	Sets prioritisation agreements and planning standards across the organisation and decides which work streams receive time and capacity when both are scarce.
Managing workload pressure Keeps an overview when the volume of work rises, chooses what goes ahead and what does not, and puts the consequences to stakeholders.	Tells the supervisor that the work does not fit the available time and follows the choice that is made.	Cuts or shifts tasks independently when busy on the basis of importance, records this and discusses consequences with clients.	Redistributes work and capacity across departments in cases of structural overload and sets norms for sustainable workload distribution.
Working with digital devices and applications Uses computers, mobile devices and standard applications to carry out work tasks, adjusts settings and resolves simple usage problems without help.	Opens and uses the prescribed applications for own tasks and asks for help whenever an unfamiliar message appears.	Selects the appropriate device and application for each task and fixes common disruptions without support from others.	Defines organisation wide which digital workplace facilities are used and guides their introduction across all teams.
Sustaining pace in repetitive work Maintains a constant pace and constant quality in recurring operations throughout the shift and spreads the effort over the available time.	Completes the assigned series of operations at the pace indicated and reports when a backlog arises.	Sustains the pace for a full shift, builds in own rhythm and short recovery moments and stays within the quality standard.	Sets attainable pace standards for the team and organises the work so that quality is retained at high output.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Working with shift work and irregular hours Organises own work around changing shifts and irregular hours, keeps handover complete and coordinates planning and availability with the team.	Works according to the roster, arrives on time and hands over outstanding matters at the end of the shift.	Plans own work across changing shifts, allocates tasks to the part of day that suits them best and swaps carefully.	Designs roster models for the organisation, weighs continuity against workability and makes agreements with team and representation.
Clear oral expression Phrasing messages in spoken language so that the core point, the structure and the requested action are immediately clear to the listener.	Restates in own words what has been agreed and repeats the core of the instruction as a check.	Builds an unprepared spoken explanation into core point, background and next step, and adapts pace to the listener.	Sets the organisation wide standard for spoken clarity, explains complex strategic choices understandably and coaches others on their word choice.
Retaining and applying knowledge Keeps acquired professional knowledge available, retrieves the right rule or procedure at the moment it is needed and applies it correctly at work.	Looks up the required procedure in the manual and follows it step by step on a familiar task.	Knows the rules of the own field by heart and applies them without reference material in varying situations.	Oversees the knowledge base of the whole domain, decides which knowledge must be secured and documents it for the organisation.
Spreadsheets and worksheets Builds worksheets with formulas, references and pivot tables, checks outcomes and presents figures understandably in tables and charts.	Enters data in an existing worksheet and uses simple formulas such as sum and average as instructed.	Builds a worksheet with linked formulas and pivot tables, checks for errors and explains the calculation logic to colleagues.	Sets the standards for calculation models in the organisation and judges whether models are reliable enough for decision making.
Managing service levels and performance indicators Agrees measurable service and performance standards, measures the actual results and takes action when agreed levels are not met.	Reads the performance overview and reports which agreement was not met in the past week.	Draws up indicators and standards for a service, reports per period and carries out improvement actions on deviation.	Determines the system of service levels for the organisation and negotiates these with customers and suppliers.

6 Assessment methods and validity

The validities are the corrected meta-analytic estimates from Sackett, Zhang, Berry and Lievens (2022) in the Journal of Applied Psychology, which replace the older Schmidt and Hunter (1998) figures. The spread matters as much as the mean: with a high SD, validity varies strongly by context.

Assessment method	rho	SD	What it is
Work sample test	0.33	0.09	The candidate performs a representative work sample under standardised conditions.
Situational Judgement Test	0.12	0.11	Scenario with response options, scored on knowledge or behavioural tendency.
Knowledge test	0.40	0.13	Test of declarative job knowledge, usually assembled per client.
Personality questionnaire	0.40	0.15	Self-report of behavioural preferences. At hrnforce the Big Fifty and the 15PF.
Assessment centre	0.29	0.09	Multiple exercises, multiple assessors, dimension-wise scoring.
On-the-job observation	-	-	Structured workplace observation with a form based on behavioural anchors.
Certificate or diploma	-	-	Formal proof of completed education or examination.
360-degree feedback	-	-	Multiple raters around the person rate behaviour against behavioural anchors.
Structured interview	0.42	0.19	Behaviour-based interview with fixed questions and a rating scale per question.

7 Assessment instruments for this job

hrnforce instrument	Skills	What it measures
Work sample test	11	Representative work sample under standardized conditions
Knowledge test (client-specific)	9	Professional knowledge test, customized for each client
Competency Check	9	Behavioral-Level Competency Assessment
Big Fifty	7	Personality questionnaire, 150 items, 25 factors
360 Feedback	6	Multiple assessments based on behavioral anchors

hrmforce instrument	Skills	What it measures
15PF	1	Personality Profile, a shorter alternative to the Big Fifty
Pulse Survey	1	Periodic measurement at the team and organizational levels
Structured interview	1	Behavioral interview with a fixed structure
Communication Styles	1	Preferred communication style
Ability Scan	1	Aptitude Test: Verbal, Numerical, and Abstract Reasoning Skills

8 How to use this profile

1. Agree the profile with the hiring manager before the first candidate is measured. Weights shifted afterwards make the outcome indefensible.
2. Choose the assessment method per skill from the Assessment method column. Combine at most three methods per candidate.
3. Calibrate the assessors in a two-hour session using the anchors in chapter 5. Anchors without rater training deliver little.
4. Fill in the match calculator and discuss the gaps in the development conversation. Type A and type G are selection criteria, not one-quarter development goals.

Source: hrmforce Skills Framework 2.0, version 2.0.0, built 2026-09-08. Crosswalks to ESCO v1.2.1, O*NET 31.0, Lightcast Open Skills, SFIA 9, DigComp 3.0, EntreComp, LifeComp, GreenComp, Allit, WEF Future of Jobs 2025, ISCO-08 and the Dutch CBS occupational classification BRC 2014 edition 2025. This profile is a starting point, not a standard: align it with your own organisation before selecting on it.