

Head of Department

FF02 Operational and team management · ISCO-08 1219 · CBS 0521 Managers in Business and Administrative Services · seniority senior · Also known as: Department Manager, Head of Unit

Leads a department with several teams or specialisms, is accountable for budget, staffing and results, and translates organisational policy into departmental plans.

The head of department sits between the executive layer and the team leaders and holds the budget for that part of the organisation. Unlike a team leader, steering is aimed at managers and annual plans rather than individual employees. In practice selection tests mainly professional content, while budget ownership and defending departmental interests in the management team are more often the real problem.

Key figures for this profile

28 skills · 3 competencies to measure · 4 knockout skills · centre of gravity: Leadership and organising 55%, Collaboration and interpersonal effectiveness 15%, Business operations, commerce and entrepreneurship 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
Directing and steering people Competency (50-framework): Management Knockout	 N5	Big Fifty, Competency Check, 360 Feedback	Assessment centre	Designs the management line for the whole organisation, addresses managers on their style and defines what good steering means here.

Competencies to measure	Target level	hrmforce instrument	Assessment method	Behavioural anchor at target level
Managing workload pressure Competency (50-framework): Stress resilience		Big Fifty, Competency Check, Pulse Survey	Structured interview	Cuts or shifts tasks independently when busy on the basis of importance, records this and discusses consequences with clients.
Safety awareness Competency (50-framework): Discipline		Big Fifty, Competency Check	Situational Judgement Test	Recognises unsafe situations in own process, intervenes and addresses colleagues without bringing the work to a halt.

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
G	Directing and steering people Designs the management line for the whole organisation, addresses managers on their style and defines what good steering means here.	 N5	5	yes	Assessment centre	Big Fifty, Competency Check, 360 Feedback
V	Planning and organising Sets the planning system for the organisation, links annual plan, capacity and budget and decides on conflicting claims.	 N5	5	yes	Work sample test	Competency Check, 360 Feedback, Work sample test
V	Monitoring progress Designs the progress and reporting structure for the whole organisation and determines which indicators are tracked at each level.	 N5	4	no	Structured interview	Competency Check, 360 Feedback
V	Stakeholder management Assesses influence and interest per party, chooses a fitting form of contact and discusses conflicting wishes before a decision is taken.	 N4	4	no	Assessment centre	Competency Check, 360 Feedback

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	conflict handling Brings parties together, separates positions from interests and records the resulting agreement and its follow-up in writing.		4	yes	Assessment centre	Conflict Styles, Big Fifty, 360 Feedback
V	giving feedback Discusses unwanted behaviour with the person concerned, describes fact, effect and request, and agrees on a follow-up.		4	no	Assessment centre	360 Feedback, Communication Styles
V	holding others to agreements Also addresses colleagues outside own team about agreements, names the consequence and follows up on the new agreement.		4	yes	Assessment centre	360 Feedback, Competency Check
V	Translating direction into goals Translates department goals into measurable result agreements per team member and records how and when progress will be measured.		4	no	Structured interview	Competency Check, 360 Feedback, Development Review
V	Delegating Chooses per task who is able and allowed, agrees decision space and leaves the execution with the other person.		4	no	Assessment centre	Competency Check, 360 Feedback, Big Fifty

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Conducting performance conversations Conducts annual reviews independently, supports the judgement with facts and records improvement agreements with deadlines in writing.	 N4	4	no	Simulation	Development Review, 360 Feedback, Competency Check
V	Coaching Holds coaching conversations with open questions, names patterns in behaviour and lets the other person formulate a learning goal.	 N4	4	no	Simulation	Competency Check, 360 Feedback, Development Review
V	Capacity and resource planning Calculates required hours and qualifications per period, makes a staffing plan and substantiates requests for extra capacity.	 N4	4	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Knowledge test (client-specific)
V	Continuous improvement Organises short improvement cycles in the team, measures the effect of a change and secures what works in the work instruction.	 N4	4	no	Work sample test	Competency Check, Pulse Survey
V	Budget and financial accountability Draws up the team budget, explains monthly variances with figures and adjusts in order to stay within the annual budget.	 N4	4	no	Knowledge test	Knowledge test (client-specific), Work sample test

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Budgeting and cost control Makes the budget for an own project, follows realisation per period and proposes measures in case of deviation.	 N4	4	no	Work sample test	Knowledge test (client-specific), Work sample test
V	Planning of operational processes Makes the weekly planning for a team, takes peak load and absence into account and replans when disruptions occur.	 N4	4	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Competency Check
V	Business reporting Builds a report from question to conclusion, separates fact from interpretation and phrases recommendations with a named owner.	 N4	3	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Competency Check
V	promoting psychological safety Explicitly asks the team for doubt and dissent, names own mistakes and reports back what was done with signals raised.	 N4	3	no	360-degree feedback	Pulse Survey, 360 Feedback
V	Guiding absence and work ability Holds absence conversations without asking for medical details and draws up an action plan with the occupational physician.	 N4	3	no	Situational Judgement Test	Knowledge test (client-specific), Competency Check

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
V	Team development Discusses roles and irritations in the team, makes working agreements and evaluates them after an agreed period.	 N4	3	no	Assessment centre	360 Feedback, Pulse Survey, Colour Profile (Jung)
V	Workforce planning and strategic workforce planning Draws up a staffing forecast for the own team including turnover and retirement and names the vacancies to fill.	 N4	3	no	Work sample test	Knowledge test (client-specific), Work sample test
G	Managing workload pressure Cuts or shifts tasks independently when busy on the basis of importance, records this and discusses consequences with clients.	 N4	3	no	Structured interview	Big Fifty, Competency Check, Pulse Survey
V	Applying a quality management system Carries out internal audits on a process, names the cause of deviations and follows improvement measures through.	 N4	3	no	Work sample test	Knowledge test (client-specific), Work sample test
V	Managing service levels and performance indicators Draws up indicators and standards for a service, reports per period and carries out improvement actions on deviation.	 N4	3	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Competency Check

T	Skill	Target level	Weight	Knockout	Assessment method	hrmforce instrument
G	Safety awareness Recognises unsafe situations in own process, intervenes and addresses colleagues without bringing the work to a halt.	 N4	3	no	Situational Judgement Test	Big Fifty, Competency Check
V	Strategic thinking Places figures, customer signals and trends side by side and names two or three strategic options with their consequences.	 N3	3	no	Assessment centre	Ability Scan, Competency Check
V	Reporting and dashboard building Designs a dashboard together with the user, chooses indicators and definitions and processes user feedback into new versions.	 N3	2	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, Portfolio
T	Using collaboration platforms Sets up channels, task boards and permissions for a team and addresses colleagues on agreements about online collaboration.	 N4	1	no	Work sample test	Work sample test, 360 Feedback

3 Levels per seniority

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

Skill	medior	senior	lead
Directing and steering people	N4	N5	N5
Planning and organising	N4	N5	N5
Monitoring progress	N4	N5	N5
Stakeholder management	N3	N4	N4
conflict handling	N3	N4	N4
giving feedback	N3	N4	N4
holding others to agreements	N3	N4	N4
Translating direction into goals	N3	N4	N4
Delegating	N3	N4	N4
Conducting performance conversations	N3	N4	N4
Coaching	N3	N4	N4
Capacity and resource planning	N3	N4	N4
Continuous improvement	N3	N4	N4
Budget and financial accountability	N3	N4	N4
Budgeting and cost control	N4	N4	N4
Planning of operational processes	N3	N4	N4
Business reporting	N3	N4	N4
promoting psychological safety	N3	N4	N4
Guiding absence and work ability	N3	N4	N4
Team development	N3	N4	N4
Workforce planning and strategic workforce planning	N3	N4	N4
Managing workload pressure	N3	N4	N4
Applying a quality management system	N3	N4	N4

Skill	medior	senior	lead
Managing service levels and performance indicators	N3	N4	N4
Safety awareness	N3	N4	N4
Strategic thinking	N3	N3	N3
Reporting and dashboard building	N2	N3	N3
Using collaboration platforms	N3	N4	N4

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
Directing and steering people Making clear to employees what is expected, giving assignments, setting boundaries and intervening when work or behaviour deviates from what was agreed.	Gives a colleague a concrete assignment with expected result and timing and checks whether the assignment is understood.	Sets expectations and boundaries per team member, addresses deviating behaviour directly and records agreements in writing.	Designs the management line for the whole organisation, addresses managers on their style and defines what good steering means here.
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.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Monitoring progress Tracking agreements and workflows, measuring in between whether results are on schedule and adjusting in time on the basis of facts and signals.	Keeps a list of own tasks and reports to the manager when an agreement threatens to slip.	Holds fixed progress reviews with the team, compares plan with actuals and intervenes when deviations appear.	Designs the progress and reporting structure for the whole organisation and determines which indicators are tracked at each level.
Stakeholder management Mapping who has an interest in an initiative and maintaining contact with those parties so that decisions keep their support.	Maintains a list of those involved and informs them about progress according to the agreed rhythm.	Assesses influence and interest per party, chooses a fitting form of contact and discusses conflicting wishes before a decision is taken.	Maintains a network reaching governance and political bodies, connects parties with differing interests and safeguards the position of the organisation.
conflict handling Naming a difference of interest or opinion, clarifying the positions of those involved and reaching a workable agreement with them.	Reports a conflict to own manager and describes factually what happened and what was said.	Brings parties together, separates positions from interests and records the resulting agreement and its follow-up in writing.	Mediates conflicts with high stakes between departments or partners and establishes organisational policy for resolving conflict.
giving feedback Naming concrete behaviour and its effect to another person, with a request or proposal, at a moment and in a way that keeps dialogue possible.	States after a shared task what a colleague did well and gives a concrete example with it.	Discusses unwanted behaviour with the person concerned, describes fact, effect and request, and agrees on a follow-up.	Introduces feedback as a working method across several teams, trains managers in it and monitors whether unwanted behaviour is raised earlier.
holding others to agreements Approaching others when agreements or standards are not met, naming the gap and recording a new agreement together with them.	Addresses a direct colleague about an agreement that was not met and asks when it will be done.	Also addresses colleagues outside own team about agreements, names the consequence and follows up on the new agreement.	Addresses executives and partners on compliance with agreements and anchors that practice in the organisation's way of working.
Translating direction into goals Converting strategy and vision into concrete, measurable goals and result agreements for teams and employees, with a clear ordering in time and priority.	Turns a given team goal into own tasks with a deadline and discusses this with the manager.	Translates department goals into measurable result agreements per team member and records how and when progress will be measured.	Builds an organisation wide goal structure in which strategy, annual plans and team agreements align, and sets the measurement standards.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Delegating Transferring tasks and authority to the right person with clear agreements on result, room and feedback, without taking the work back over.	Hands a clearly bounded task to a colleague and explains which result and which deadline apply.	Chooses per task who is able and allowed, agrees decision space and leaves the execution with the other person.	Defines which authorities belong at which organisational level and ensures mandates are used consistently across units.
Conducting performance conversations Preparing and holding conversations about performance and results, using factual examples, mutual checking and recorded agreements about improvement or next steps.	Prepares a conversation with two concrete examples of work and asks the manager to review it beforehand.	Conducts annual reviews independently, supports the judgement with facts and records improvement agreements with deadlines in writing.	Sets the review cycle and assessment standards for the organisation and samples the quality of recorded judgements.
Coaching Helping employees reflect on their own behaviour and choices through questions, mirroring and feedback, so they take a next step in their work themselves.	Asks a colleague after a job what went well and what they would do differently next time.	Holds coaching conversations with open questions, names patterns in behaviour and lets the other person formulate a learning goal.	Trains managers in coaching behaviour, guides peer supervision groups and determines how coaching is deployed across the organisation.
Capacity and resource planning Matching available hours, qualifications and resources against expected workload and distributing staffing so that peaks and shortages remain manageable.	Fills in the staffing list according to the roster and reports gaps in the planning to the planner.	Calculates required hours and qualifications per period, makes a staffing plan and substantiates requests for extra capacity.	Develops the capacity model for the whole organisation, links it to demand forecasts and decides on structural use of flexible capacity.
Continuous improvement Finding, testing, measuring and sustaining small improvements in daily work, together with the people who carry out that work.	Brings improvement ideas to the work meeting and tries out a proposed small change in own work.	Organises short improvement cycles in the team, measures the effect of a change and secures what works in the work instruction.	Embeds continuous improvement as a way of working across the organisation, trains improvement coaches and reports gains to the executive team.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Budget and financial accountability Drawing up a budget, tracking spend against plan, explaining variances and accounting for financial choices to a sponsor, executive team or controller.	Keeps track of spend within a given budget and submits receipts and justification according to procedure.	Draws up the team budget, explains monthly variances with figures and adjusts in order to stay within the annual budget.	Sets the multi-year budget of the organisation, weighs investment proposals and provides accountability in the annual accounts and to supervisors.
Budgeting and cost control Drawing up a budget for a task, team or project, tracks spending against that budget and intervenes when overspending threatens.	Tracks spending in the supplied overview and reports deviations above the agreed limit.	Makes the budget for an own project, follows realisation per period and proposes measures in case of deviation.	Sets the budget framework for the organisation, decides on reallocation of resources and accounts for it to the board.
Planning of operational processes Distributes work, people and resources over time so that the required output or service is achieved with the available capacity.	Fills in the daily roster following the fixed planning rules and reports staffing bottlenecks to the planner.	Makes the weekly planning for a team, takes peak load and absence into account and replans when disruptions occur.	Determines the planning model for several departments and decides on capacity expansion or outsourcing of work.
Business reporting Bringing findings, figures and recommendations together in a report that leads the reader to a decision or next step in one reading.	Fills in an existing report template with the correct figures and describes per section what has been done.	Builds a report from question to conclusion, separates fact from interpretation and phrases recommendations with a named owner.	Sets the reporting line for the whole organisation, tests the quality of steering information and accounts for outcomes to board and regulator.
promoting psychological safety Acting so that others can voice mistakes, doubt and criticism without disadvantage, by keeping own reactions predictable and following up on what is raised.	Responds calmly when a colleague reports a mistake and thanks that person for raising it.	Explicitly asks the team for doubt and dissent, names own mistakes and reports back what was done with signals raised.	Measures across the organisation whether people feel safe to speak up and steers leadership behaviour on those outcomes.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
Guiding absence and work ability Holding absence conversations, monitoring work ability and workload capacity and agreeing with occupational physician and employee on recovery and return to work.	Reports absence according to the fixed procedure and keeps contact with the absent colleague at agreed moments.	Holds absence conversations without asking for medical details and draws up an action plan with the occupational physician.	Sets the organisation wide absence and vitality policy, tracks causes across departments and steers on structural root causes.
Team development Turning a group into a collaborating team by discussing roles, mutual expectations and working agreements and by addressing tensions in the collaboration.	Takes active part in team agreements and names in the team meeting what would make collaboration easier.	Discusses roles and irritations in the team, makes working agreements and evaluates them after an agreed period.	Develops the collaboration standard between teams and departments and guides managers through deadlocked cooperation across the organisation.
Workforce planning and strategic workforce planning Determining current and future staffing needs in numbers and qualifications, comparing them with the present workforce and deriving actions for hiring and development.	Supplies data on staffing and turnover and checks the personnel list for errors and duplicates.	Draws up a staffing forecast for the own team including turnover and retirement and names the vacancies to fill.	Builds strategic workforce planning for the whole organisation, links it to strategy and labour market and puts the risks on the executive agenda.
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.
Applying a quality management system Works according to documented procedures and standards, records deviations and carries out improvement and audit actions within the quality system.	Follows the prescribed procedure in the own work and records a deviation in the reporting system.	Carries out internal audits on a process, names the cause of deviations and follows improvement measures through.	Builds the quality system of the organisation, sets the standards and represents it towards the certifying body.

Skill	N1	N3	N5
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.
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.
Strategic thinking Analysing developments in the environment, market and technology and deriving strategic choices and alternatives from them for the longer term of an organisation or unit.	Collects data on market and competitors on request and summarises the main developments for the manager.	Places figures, customer signals and trends side by side and names two or three strategic options with their consequences.	Develops scenarios for the whole organisation, weighs uncertainties explicitly and sets the strategic agenda together with the executive board.
Reporting and dashboard building Builds recurring reports and dashboards that show the right indicators for an agreed audience and keeps their definitions up to date.	Fills an existing dashboard or report template with current figures and checks the display for errors.	Designs a dashboard together with the user, chooses indicators and definitions and processes user feedback into new versions.	Determines which management information the organisation uses and keeps definitions unambiguous across all reporting.
Using collaboration platforms Collaborates in digital platforms by sharing files, setting up tasks and channels and following agreements on working together online.	Shares files and messages in the designated channel and follows instructions on permissions and storage locations.	Sets up channels, task boards and permissions for a team and addresses colleagues on agreements about online collaboration.	Determines organisational policy for digital collaboration and steers the introduction of new ways of working together.

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
Assessment centre	0.29	0.09	Multiple exercises, multiple assessors, dimension-wise scoring.
Work sample test	0.33	0.09	The candidate performs a representative work sample under standardised conditions.
Structured interview	0.42	0.19	Behaviour-based interview with fixed questions and a rating scale per question.
Simulation	-	-	Simulated work situation, usually digital, with standardised scoring.
Knowledge test	0.40	0.13	Test of declarative job knowledge, usually assembled per client.
360-degree feedback	-	-	Multiple raters around the person rate behaviour against behavioural anchors.
Situational Judgement Test	0.12	0.11	Scenario with response options, scored on knowledge or behavioural tendency.

7 Assessment instruments for this job

hrmforce instrument	Skills	What it measures
Competency Check	17	Behavioral-Level Competency Assessment
360 Feedback	14	Multiple assessments based on behavioral anchors
Work sample test	11	Representative work sample under standardized conditions
Knowledge test (client-specific)	6	Professional knowledge test, customized for each client
Big Fifty	5	Personality questionnaire, 150 items, 25 factors
Pulse Survey	4	Periodic measurement at the team and organizational levels
Development Review	3	Structured development interview
Conflict Styles	1	Preferred style in conflict situations
Communication Styles	1	Preferred communication style

hrmforce instrument	Skills	What it measures
Colour Profile (Jung)	1	Four color types, linked to Big Fifty factors
Ability Scan	1	Aptitude Test: Verbal, Numerical, and Abstract Reasoning Skills
Portfolio	1	Evaluation of prior work against fixed criteria

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, AILit, 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.