



1. MINISTER OF STATE
 2. PRIME MINISTER
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Senior Management Development Programme

In my minute A085/228 of 23 January reporting progress on the Senior Management Development Programme (SMDP), I said that I would report again when the scheme was nearly ready to start.

2. The development of the SMDP was a response to the Prime Minister's thought, when she approved proposals for the Top Management Programme, that that needed to be supported by improved management training at lower levels. The programme was described in "Training for Senior Management Study" (the Coster Report), which you endorsed on 6 August 1984. It is aimed at developing staff of good quality early in their careers and initially covers younger staff between Principal level and Grade 4 (Assistant Secretary plus) in all occupations. It has two primary objectives:

- a. better preparation for those with potential to get to Grade 3 (Under Secretary) and above; and
- b. better performance at the levels from Principal to Grade 4, whether or not the participants are likely to reach Grade 3 or above.

3. The SMDP is not simply a training or developmental course; its object is to provide an integrated approach to more effective management through a combination of relevant job experience, secondments, projects and training throughout the years spent in these grades. Training is only one, although important, part of SMDP.



4. Our target date for implementation of SMDP was the end of September 1985. We have met that target. We shall be receiving and following up reports from Departments in October to check that the Programme has been launched on time, and to obtain information about numbers of participants.

5. When I last reported, we were undertaking research to define competencies (ie those areas of knowledge, ability and skills in policy, management and other issues which staff need to be good at if they are to do their jobs well and develop effectively). Our research included a questionnaire survey of over 500 potential SMDP participants and a series of interviews with Permanent Secretaries and top specialists. As a result we have drawn up and agreed with Departments a set of "core competencies" which are of equal importance to the core but not as likely to be needed by everyone. The list of competencies is attached (Annex A). Departments will be supplementing this list with additional competencies which reflect their particular needs and circumstances.

6. The competencies have been incorporated into a Personal Development Plan. The Plan will be issued to all SMDP participants. It will provide them with a framework to determine where they now stand in relation to the competencies, to set development objectives, to identify their priority needs and to find out how those can best be met. The process places considerable reliance upon individual initiative although Plans have to be agreed and approved by the manager - who also has an important part to play in reviewing progress.

7. Most Departments have now issued invitations to potential participants. These invitations have frequently been signed by the Permanent Secretary, thus stressing top management's commitment to effective development. Our aim has been to have



all the necessary documentation in the hands of participants during September so that they can make a start on drawing up their individual development plans.

8. To get this far so quickly has put heavy pressure on Personnel Divisions in Departments; this pressure will continue after SMDP is established, since it requires personnel management to take a more purposeful and active role in ensuring that individuals are developed effectively.

9. On value for money, we have agreed with Departments that two types of test should be applied periodically to the SMDP:

"market" tests (ie the equivalent in SMDP terms of measuring the number of customers continuing to buy the product) - numbers opting in and out, use of the SMDP material, achievement of the target of 5 days' SMDP training per year, and so on.

"feedback" tests - using views obtained from participants, their line managers, grade managers and other personnel staff and trainers (inside and outside Departments); and separately from Establishment Officers and Permanent Secretaries.

10. The detail of these tests and the more precise definition of targets within these areas are being worked out with Departments, but by the end of the first full financial year of the SMDP (1986-87), we should have:

1. In each Department an initial assessment of the effect of the SMDP on performances. The main source will be feedback from line management, top management and participants. And centrally an overall picture of these Departmental assessments, from which we shall derive a central view of the overall effect of the Programme.



2. In each Department a mechanism for assessing the impact of the SMDP on job postings. The main source for this will be the feedback from grade managers and other personnel staff. From this we shall obtain an initial view of whether the job postings side of the Programme is functioning properly.

3. Centrally an initial view on whether the Programme is going in the right direction, and on any modifications that may be necessary.

By the end of the second financial year of the SMDP (ie by Spring 1988), it will be possible to take a firm central view on whether the Programme is achieving its aims and on whether it represents value for money.

11. I will report progress on SMDP again in June 1986.

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

3 October 1985

Date of assessment

Core Competencies

What you have learned from
experience or training

Important
to
develop?

**A. Management of resources/
organisations**

-Setting objectives

-Deciding on priorities

-Quantifying outputs and measuring
performance

-Financial management (including
interpretation and use of financial
control data)

-Value-for-money principles and
techniques (including challenging the
need for work)

Core Competencies (continued)

What you have learned from
experience or training

Important
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B. Management of staff

-Motivation; encouraging staff to give
of their best

-Communicating with staff (eg.
explaining the reasons for a particular
task) and listening to their views

-Assessing strengths and weaknesses of
staff (eg. for allocating work)
(see explanatory note 1)

-Delegation allocation of work

-Development of staff

Core Competencies (continued)

What you have learned from
experience or training

Important
to
develop?

**C. Knowledge/understanding of the
context of your work**

-Your role in your own department (in
relation to its management structure
and use of central resources) (see
explanatory note 2)

-Immediate context (eg. the policy
concerns of other parts of the
department; other organisations
affected by your work (eg. local
government, nationalised industries)

-Political context (Ministers, Cabinet,
Parliament)

-Broader context:
the private sector
(see explanatory note 3)

economic/social/technological
trends
(see explanatory note 4)

Core Competencies (continued)

What you have learned from experience or training

Important to develop

<p>D. Managing your own work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Allocating priorities to your work -Managing your own time -Coping with tight deadlines		<p>●</p>
<p>E. Information technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Awareness of potential uses of information technology -Ability to make personal use of computerised equipment		
<p>F. More specialised knowledge/ expertise</p> <p>... in your own area of work, or a specialised function to which you may return later in your career (includes professional technical functional specialisms, but also specialised aspects of administrative work) (see explanatory note 5)</p>		

Although the core competencies are presented as a list, many of the items are clearly interrelated, and can be seen as representing different aspects of a more integrated picture. There are training opportunities and other sources of learning specifically designed to draw together and develop general management abilities. Details of these are included in the "Training Opportunities" section of the binder. You should consider whether you would benefit from an opportunity of this kind.

Now read through the list of "Important Competencies", and use the middle and right hand columns as before.

Important competencies

What you have learned from
experience or training

Important
to
develop?

**Representational/presentational
skills**

-Representing Government interests
and policies persuasively (see
explanatory note 6)

-Making oral presentations

-Negotiating skills

-Communicating clearly with the public
(see explanatory note 7)

-Public relations (including contact with
the media)

Important competencies (continued)

What you have learned from experience or training

Important

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<p>Written/administrative skills (see explanatory note 8)</p>		
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<p>Policy Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Assessing options (including costing); formulating policies -Planning implementation (including use of critical paths and other project management techniques) -Assessing performance (see explanatory note 9)		
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Important Competencies (continued)

What you have learned from
experience or training

Important
to
develop?

<p>Economics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-General understanding of the macro-economy and macro-economic policy -General understanding of micro-economics (including the principle of opportunity cost) -General understanding of the economic basis of, and techniques for, appraising and costing options and evaluating outcomes		
<p>Accounting and finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-General principles of management accounting -Government finance and accounts -Investment appraisal		
<p>Quantitative skills/statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-General understanding of techniques involving numbers, and personal ability to use the simpler of these techniques -Knowledge of the general types of statistical data available; how to get them and how to use them		

Important Competencies (continued)

What you have learned from
experience or training

Important
to
develop?

<p>Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Knowledge of legislative procedures -Appreciation of general principles of administrative law		
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<p>Industrial relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Contact with trade unions -Negotiating skills		
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