Leadership Competency Framework
The Leadership Competency Framework is an initiative of the People and Culture Thematic Map under the ‘Capability building supports individual and University growth and sustainability’ theme.

Produced by Human Resources Directorate
Australian Catholic University
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Message from the Vice-Chancellor

The strategic direction of the Australian Catholic University, our Mission and Catholic Identity are outlined in the ACU Strategic Plan 2012–14. ACU's people are critical to the realisation of the University's strategic direction and quality leadership is essential to engage and empower our staff.

Our continued success relies on our ability to achieve a shared and articulated culture, fostered through a people competencies and capabilities framework, and agreed people and culture practices that support ACU's identity and strategic direction.

At the 2010 Executive Retreat, the University's Members of the Executive discussed the role of leaders at ACU and identified the leadership competencies and capabilities essential to the University's future success. An agreed outcome of the Retreat was the development of a Leadership Competency Framework by Human Resources, in consultation with Hay Group.

The Leadership Competency Framework outlines the critical success factors for the performance of leaders at all levels of the University and is expected to result in higher levels of staff engagement.

The Framework has many practical applications for people management at ACU, such as in recruitment and selection, development, managing performance, succession planning, career development and broader University development initiatives.

As leaders of the University, I look to you to embrace the Leadership Competency Framework and utilise it as a resource to support your ongoing development and to develop our future leaders.

Professor Greg Craven
Vice-Chancellor
Background

ACU has a unique identity and a clear vision for the future, which is championed by the leaders of the University. It is therefore crucial to articulate the leadership qualities needed to create a unified culture and drive ACU forward.

The People and Culture Thematic Map establishes the principles by which the University will realise the potential of its staff and defines the University’s approach to people and culture management practices. A key initiative of the People and Culture Thematic Map is the alignment of the University’s workforce profile with its strategic direction through the development and implementation of a range of strategies, including a competency and capability framework.

An organisation can articulate the key behaviours that support its strategic direction through a competency and capability framework. This creates a shared vision, a strong identity and culture and also feeds into people management practices, such as recruitment and selection, learning and development, managing performance, succession planning and career development.

The ACU Leadership Competency Framework has been developed by Hay Group and Human Resources, and draws on the Hay Group’s expertise and insight into leadership at ACU, which has been fostered over many years of collaboration.

The Framework has been custom-built for ACU to promote leadership competencies that support the achievement of our strategic direction.
What is a competency?

A competency is a characteristic or trait which, when operating effectively, results in enhanced performance on the job. Competencies assist the University to identify the important characteristics that assist with understanding the behavioural code of conduct at ACU. Competencies are also important for the enhancement of personal performance to drive organisational progress.

Competencies at ACU will be used to achieve strategic goals, by providing focus on leadership characteristics linked to business strategy and direction and management development.

Competency levels – an explanation

Each competency is broken down into incremental levels of performance. The reason for this is that what differentiates leaders in the workplace is not simply how often they demonstrate a competency but the level of sophistication with which they demonstrate that competency. For example, you may have two leaders who both display the ‘Influences effectively’ competency but research shows that the leader who consistently ‘uses complex influencing strategies’ (level 4 behaviour) and not simply ‘communicates based on facts and logic’ (level 1 behaviour) will generate better results for the organisation.

The competency levels are incremental and additive – that is, as you move up the levels the competency increases in complexity. Operating at level 4, assumes that the behaviours at levels 1 to 3 are also being demonstrated regularly.

Red flags indicate behaviours that are not consistent with the competency.
Understanding the Leadership Competency Framework

The Leadership Competency Framework is a snapshot of the critical competencies and behaviours needed by ACU’s leaders. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive list of every competency necessary in the University. Many roles will also have local or specialised competencies and specialised skill sets that are unique to that role, and these should also be considered.

The competencies have been grouped into three broad areas:
1. Preserves Our Essential Character
2. Works Collaboratively
3. Leads Our Future Success.

The diagram illustrates how the Leadership Competency Framework links and builds upon the broader University strategic direction, through our Mission, Values, Vision, Goals, and People and Culture Thematic Map.
An overview of the Leadership Competency Framework

Preserves Our Essential Character

At ACU, we pride ourselves on our character that is founded on "a long history of commitment to truth, in a spirit of freedom and service". We prize our philosophy, key values and mission, along with our longstanding commitment to excellence. ACU shares with universities world-wide a commitment to quality in teaching, research, and service. All of this is based on a deep respect for those around us and an underlying concern for the thoughts and feelings of others. To retain our distinctive culture as a university, a core role of all ACU leaders is to preserve the University's essential character.

Works Collaboratively

Outstanding leaders at ACU understand that our success as an organisation requires all of our staff to be aligned with our vision and common goals. They inspire and energise our staff, making it clear how each individual plays a role in the delivery of goals that achieve our vision. Staff work collaboratively across the University, sharing resources with a view to achieving our common goal. To do this effectively, outstanding leaders demonstrate the ability to influence, gaining support for actions that benefit the University as a whole.

Leads Our Future Success

An increasingly challenging external environment requires our leaders to think not just for today but also for tomorrow. Leaders need to recognise the University is a business that is committed to quality and continuous improvement and seeks profitable growth, which is critical to our long-term success. Our leaders need to inspire and engage our staff in times of change and to bring staff with them on the road to change. The ability to take risks and demonstrate confidence in decision making is essential to our future success.
Competency quick reference

Preserves Our Essential Character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Displays Integrity</th>
<th>Delivers Excellence</th>
<th>Demonstrates Interpersonal Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates confidence and courage in achieving ACU’s Mission, Philosophy and Values.</td>
<td>Takes personal accountability for achieving high quality outcomes.</td>
<td>Actively listens to understand others’ thoughts, feelings and concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Acts in a manner consistent with ACU Mission, Philosophy and Values</td>
<td>1. Takes accountability for delivering results</td>
<td>1. Listens and responds appropriately to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Acts on ACU Values even when it is hard to do</td>
<td>2. Acts to make incremental improvements</td>
<td>2. Shows genuine interest in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Acts on ACU Values even when significant cost or risk is associated with doing so</td>
<td>3. Sets and works towards stretch goals</td>
<td>3. Understands and anticipates others’ emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Creates an environment that nurtures integrity in others and the achievement of ACU’s Mission, Philosophy and Values</td>
<td>4. Takes calculated risks</td>
<td>4. Develops a deep understanding of others</td>
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Works Collaboratively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Works in Teams</th>
<th>Leads and Develops Others</th>
<th>Influences Effectively</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sees the benefit of collaboration and works cooperatively across ACU to deliver shared goals.</td>
<td>Energises and develops ACU staff. Creates a climate in which our staff want to do their best.</td>
<td>Gains the support of others for courses of action that benefit the University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Co-operates</td>
<td>1. Provides clarity</td>
<td>1. Communicates based on facts and logic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Seeks input</td>
<td>2. Enables the team to function effectively</td>
<td>2. Tailors approach to the audience or situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Collaborates</td>
<td>3. Engages and empowers the team</td>
<td>3. Influences others using appropriate communication strategies</td>
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Leads Our Future Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Displays Business Acumen</th>
<th>Demonstrates Confidence</th>
<th>Leads Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognises that ACU is a business and seizes opportunities to improve the commercial viability of the University.</td>
<td>Displays the inner confidence to take risks and make timely and effective decisions. Shows confidence in own judgement and actions.</td>
<td>Displays openness and resilience to change, inspires others to change and acts to make change happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Understands the importance of commercial success</td>
<td>1. Acts confidently</td>
<td>1. Accepts and understands change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Demonstrates some awareness of commercial implications</td>
<td>2. Displays self belief</td>
<td>2. Adapts working practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Creates new commercial opportunities for ACU</td>
<td>4. Shows great courage</td>
<td>4. Prepares the ground for change</td>
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</table>
Displays Integrity
Demonstrates the confidence and courage in achieving ACU’s Mission, Philosophy Values

**LEVEL 1** Acts in a manner consistent with ACU Mission, Philosophy and Values

- Understands and can articulate ACU’s Mission, Philosophy and Values
- Takes pride in being trustworthy
- Deals with others in an open and honest manner that fosters trust
- Talks without judgment

**LEVEL 2** Acts on ACU Values even when it is hard to do

- Confidently represents ACU’s Mission, Philosophy and Values where there is divergence
- Conveys compassion and honesty in difficult situations and even when it may hurt a trusted relationship
- Recognises own mistakes and publicly admits to having made them
- Recognises and acknowledges ACU Mission in action
- Encourages growth in understanding and commitment to the ACU Mission

**LEVEL 3** Acts on ACU Values even when significant cost or risk is associated with doing so

- Challenges influential persons or those in senior positions to act on ACU Values or for displaying unprofessional or unethical behaviour
- Is honest with others where there is a personal cost or risk involved
- Makes sure there is full disclosure, mentioning the costs or drawbacks and the advantages of a situation
- Consistently models and makes decisions aligned with ACU Mission, Philosophy and Values

**LEVEL 4** Creates an environment that nurtures integrity in others and the achievement of ACU’s Mission, Philosophy and Values

- Generates excitement, enthusiasm and commitment to ACU Mission, Philosophy and Values that encourage growth in understanding and commitment to the ACU Mission
- Makes sure that decision making within work groups fosters achievement of the ACU Mission
- Sets high standards for University-wide integrity, including speaking out in instances where behaviours are inconsistent with the ACU Mission
- Employs processes that help people integrate ACU Values in their decision making

**Red Flags**

- Actions and behaviours considered to be unethical
- Being rigid and neglecting other’s views and feelings
- Hiding behind ACU Values as a reason to resist change, using language such as that is ‘anti-Mission’
- Keeping quiet when powerful others act unethically or for personal gain
Delivers Excellence
Takes personal accountability for achieving high quality outcomes

**LEVEL 1**
Takes accountability for delivering results

- Has a ‘can do’ attitude at all times
- Sticks with assigned roles and tasks until completion – does not give up easily
- Expresses determination to do the task well or right

**LEVEL 2**
Acts to make incremental improvements

- Takes action or recommends ways to improve performance without being directed to do so
- Makes specific changes to improve performance
- Looks for new or better ways of doing things

**LEVEL 3**
Sets and works towards stretch goals

- Sets stretch goals/targets (challenging but achievable) with relevant metrics for self and others; works hard to meet them
- Identifies opportunities to exceed goals and works towards them, even in difficult circumstances
- Sets out to achieve something that has not been done before
- Defies inertia and conventional wisdom to make change happen

**LEVEL 4**
Takes calculated risks

- Consistently makes decisions, sets priorities or chooses goals based on an explicit consideration of the costs, benefits and risks
- Evaluates where things could go wrong, thinks through all the contingencies and then takes a calculated risk to achieve long-term improvement
- Commits significant resources, and/or time, in the face of uncertainty to achieve significant, quantified benefits for the University

**Red Flags**

- Failing to deliver consistently
- Showing little concern to improve
- Making excuses rather than looking for solutions
- ‘It was not identified as a priority for me’ attitude
- Accepting status quo when improvement opportunity is present
- Adopting a ‘that is how it has always been done’ mindset
Demonstrates Interpersonal Understanding

Actively listens to understand others’ thoughts, feelings and concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>Listens and responds appropriately to others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Pays attention and listens</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Takes time to build rapport</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Respects others and how they are feeling</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>Shows genuine interest in others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Has awareness of and relates to people from diverse backgrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sees things from other people’s perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Shows genuine interest in the feelings, needs and concerns of others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Seeks to understand both what the person says and how they feel</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>Understands and anticipates others’ emotions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Anticipates how people will feel and act, based on actively listening to them</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Awareness of and responsive to the emotional states and responses of others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Takes into account people’s different styles, personalities, and their unspoken thoughts and feelings</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
<th>Develops a deep understanding of others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Develops a deep understanding of other people’s ideas, behaviour and perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognises the underlying or long-term causes of behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Continually updates, refreshes and checks the accuracy of own understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understands others who are different from oneself, recognising excellence when it looks different from what one expected</td>
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**Red Flags**

- Making assumptions about others’ motives
- Stereotyping
- Being dismissive of others’ point of view
- Ignoring the emotions of others
- Manipulating people
- Not embracing diversity
Works in Teams
Sees the benefit of collaboration and works cooperatively across ACU to deliver shared goals

LEVEL 1  Cooperates

- Sees success as University-wide, rather than focusing solely on the success of own work unit/directorate/faculty or location
- Is a team player; shares information and sees the benefits of working as a team
- Keeps others informed and up-to-date about what is happening
- Promotes a friendly, cooperative environment

LEVEL 2  Seeks input

- Genuinely values the input, expertise and experience of others
- Recognises and rewards the contributions of others
- Asks others for their views and opinions when making decisions and plans
- Seeks to understand the perspectives of others

LEVEL 3  Collaborates

- Forges connections and maintains effective relationships across the University
- Considers the impact of decisions/priorities for other work units/directorates/faculties or locations
- Supports wider University initiatives
- Puts the goals of the University ahead of individual needs/wants

LEVEL 4  Builds a collaborative environment

- Builds an environment of collaboration across the University by promoting shared goals
- Shares resources and expertise to achieve overall ACU objectives and encourages others to do the same
- Sees and works towards possible synergies across the whole University

Red Flags

- Displaying a ‘silo’ mentality
- Not sharing information and/or resources
- Putting needs of own work unit/directorate/faculty or location ahead of the wider University
- Acting in an abrasive manner
- Being fixed in own views and thinking own views are superior to other people’s views
- Placing greater importance on personal achievement than team or unit achievement
Leads and Develops Others
Energises and develops ACU staff. Creates a climate in which ACU staff want to do their best

**LEVEL 1  Provides clarity**

- Engages in regular communication with staff and provides rationale for decisions
- Identifies clear work priorities for the team
- Gives specific instructions and/or on the job training

**LEVEL 2  Enables the team to function effectively**

- Creates the right conditions to enable the team to perform at its best – e.g. provides appropriate structure, hires appropriate people, supports attendance at induction, conducts teamwork meetings/activities, manages performance with fairness (career development), awareness of workload implications
- Celebrates success, openly recognises individual and team achievement and gives credit where credit is due
- Delegates; pushes tasks and decisions down without deferring responsibility
- Supports team members, especially during difficult times, e.g. takes time to discuss their concerns and answer their questions

**LEVEL 3  Engages and empowers the team**

- Empowers the team by giving real ownership for delegated activities
- Clearly and consistently communicates the key priorities and how they link to ACU’s strategy
- Gives specific constructive feedback for developmental purposes
- Has high visibility as a leader beyond locational boundaries

**LEVEL 4  Communicates a compelling vision and sense of purpose**

- Provides a clear vision of ACU future success which is compelling and engaging
- Believes in the vision and inspires confidence in the vision
- Talks about possibilities; is optimistic about the future
- Provides in-depth mentoring, coaching or training

**Red Flags**

- Failing to see self as leader; continues to act as a 'technical expert'
- Being hesitant in delegating and doing everything personally
- Relying on a ‘command and control,’ dictatorial approach when leading others
- Failing to communicate priorities to the team
- Using location as an excuse for not providing leadership to team members
- Not addressing performance and/or behaviours in the workplace because they relate to non-work personal matters
Influences Effectively
Gains the support of others for courses of action that benefit the University

LEVEL 1  Communicates based on facts and logic
- Uses analysis, data, research and concrete examples to present arguments and recommendations
- Communicates a similar argument to various parties rather than adapting to meet their specific needs
- Writes and speaks clearly and concisely
- Conveys facts, concepts and technical information using terms that most people can understand

LEVEL 2  Tailors approach to the audience or situation
- Adapts style, language and context to suit the audience
- Anticipates and prepares for others’ reactions
- Listens to and is sensitive towards others’ agendas, concerns, interests and views; adapts approach accordingly
- Tries a different approach if the first attempt to gain buy-in fails

LEVEL 3  Influences others using appropriate communication strategies
- Uses chains of influence – e.g. asks A to persuade B who will persuade C
- Uses third parties to persuade
- Takes two or more steps to influence, with each step tailored to the specific audience
- Responds appropriately to feedback in real time; can “think on their feet” when seeking to influence others

LEVEL 4  Uses complex influencing strategies
- Thinks through how to influence over time and develops deliberate influencing strategies
- Builds a breadth of internal and external relationships, networks and alliances and leverages these to build and sustain support
- Builds support for ideas through informal stakeholders
- Uses an in-depth understanding of the interactions within a group to move towards a specific outcome

Red Flags
- Influencing others for the benefit of self, rather than for the benefit of ACU
- Manipulating others
- Failing to change the argument or approach when it clearly is not working
- Misrepresenting or misleading information to persuade
Displays Business Acumen
Recognises that ACU is a business and seizes opportunities to improve the commercial viability of the University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>Understands the importance of commercial success</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Understands that ACU is a business that obliges leaders to think commercially</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Works as directed towards financial goals – does not waste financial or other resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Treats ACU resources as if they were their own; asks how can they make every dollar count</td>
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<tr>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>Demonstrates some awareness of commercial implications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Shows basic understanding of how resources (time, materials, staffing etc) link to commercial outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Works to achieve budget or control costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understands the costs and profit drivers of own work unit/directorate/faculty or location and how own area contributes to ACU’s broader commercial success</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>Focuses on commercial outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identifies ways to improve effectiveness of own work unit/directorate/faculty or location</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Applies financial and risk assessment techniques to evaluate commercial opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Focuses on ways to improve profitability and efficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mobilises resources to capitalise on present and future opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Looks at external benchmarks – e.g. what other universities are doing to improve commercial success</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
<th>Creates new commercial opportunities for ACU</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Generates new profit-making initiatives while applying the disciplines of risk and return criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Drives and encourages commercial behaviour within the University</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Creates new commercial opportunities through cross-unit collaboration or external partnerships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Finds new ways to maximise profitability and efficiency</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Takes a University-wide view of potential commercial opportunities</td>
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</table>

**Red Flags**
- Making recommendations without taking into account the commercial implications
- Showing little concern for commercial outcomes or awareness of external influences
- Demonstrating a lack of awareness of how ACU generates revenue
- Finding it difficult to accept that ACU is a business
Demonstrates Confidence
Displays the inner confidence to take risks and make timely and effective decisions. Shows confidence in own judgement and actions

**LEVEL 1**  Acts confidently

- Makes appropriate decisions without asking others
- Acts quickly in uncertain situations; is decisive
- Presents self confidently

**LEVEL 2**  Displays self belief

- Explicitly states confidence in own judgment or abilities, and has the track record to back this up
- Speaks of own strength and capabilities based on realistic self assessment
- Expresses opinion openly

**LEVEL 3**  Stands up for own views

- Stands up for own views under pressure – e.g. in a conflict or with powerful others
- Remains composed even when challenged
- Is prepared to be the lone voice; stops excessive debate and makes an informed decision
- Confidently takes on and seeks out challenging opportunities

**LEVEL 4**  Shows great courage

- Willingly takes on extremely challenging tasks
- Holds out for what is believed to be right for the University even when significant risk is associated
- Takes well-considered and ethical entrepreneurial risks to drive sustainable business results
- Monitors situation and takes action to mitigate risks

**Red Flags**

- Lacking confidence to share opinion
- Showing discomfort when challenged
- Acting defensively to others’ views

- Rarely challenging others
- Shying away from risk
- Abstaining from decision making
Leads Change
Displays openness and resilience to change, inspires others to change and acts to make change happen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>Accepts and understands change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Listens with an open mind to others when they propose new solutions and different ways of doing things</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates willingness to change ideas or perceptions based on new information or ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recognises the driver for change: internal/external</td>
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<tr>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>Adapts working practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Makes changes to the way in which work is carried out but not what needs to be done – i.e. changes how to accomplish the goal or outcome</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges the status quo; is not constrained by routine and the way things have always been done</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cascades the impact of a change into working practices and processes for the staff in a work unit/directorate/faculty or location</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>Advocates for change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Encourages others to be flexible and understand the impact of and benefits of change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is enthusiastic and energetic about potential changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presents the business case for change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Uses both logical and emotional reasoning to gain the buy-in of others</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communicates the need for change/driver of change</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
<th>Prepares the ground for change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Inspires others to embrace change with enthusiasm and energy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Champions and facilitates the development of highly innovative ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Creates a sense of urgency for change when appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Anticipates and take actions to address the emotional impact of change</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognises and reinforces the behaviours of those who embrace the change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Red Flags**
- Is constrained by routine and the way things have always been done
- Focusing only on getting work done faster, rather than looking for smarter approaches
- Failing to engage staff emotionally in change
- Failing to support the University to effect change