

Strategic leadership - Diagnostic tool – User Guide

This [diagnostic tool](#) is for leaders of staff development (SD) units in Higher Education (HE) institutions, or those aspiring to a leadership role, to assess their strategic capability. The tool is derived from, and designed to be used in conjunction with, a SD strategic leadership [capability framework](#).

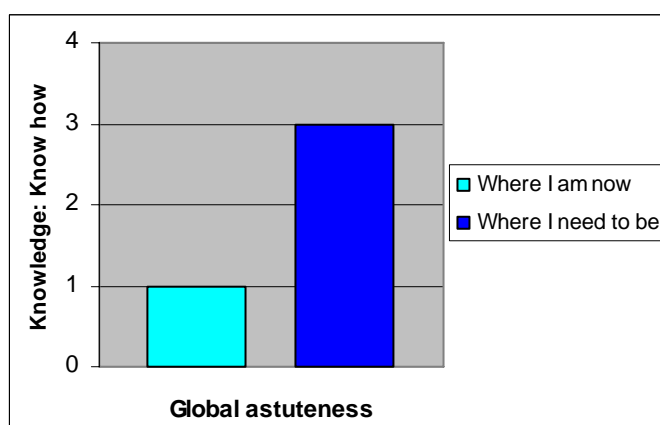
The tool can be used in a number of ways to evaluate current capability and help identify those areas that may require some attention to enhance strategic leadership capability. The process can range from a very simple, rough-and-ready self assessment through to a reasonably in-depth capability analysis, possibly in conjunction with other interested parties. It is probable that this tool will be most useful as the basis for discussions on strategic leadership capability with peers, or line managers.

1. Comparator Graphs:

These graphs can be used on their own for a very quick assessment. The blank 2D comparator graphs can be printed off from the [diagnostic tool](#) by printing pages 6 – 8. Then, by reference to the strategic leadership [capability framework](#) page 4 and the expanded statements on pages 5 – 7, it should be possible to reflect upon and then draw histograms to compare your current capability score with that of 'where you need to be' for each of the nine graphs. To do this you would need to use overall scores on a five-point scale to indicate the extent of your capability, where:

- 0** = Not at all
- 1** = To a little extent
- 2** = To some extent
- 3** = To a great extent
- 4** = To an expert level

So for example: you might consider that you were knowledgeable 'to a little extent' with regard to external drivers that impact on staff and organisational development but feel that to be effective at the strategic level you should be knowledgeable 'to a great extent' in this area. Consequently, you could draw the following histogram for the 'Knowledge/Know-how' v 'Global astuteness' comparator graph:



By continuing along the same lines, with the remaining eight comparator graphs, derived from the strategic leadership capability framework, it is possible to build up, reasonably quickly, a fairly comprehensive picture of your strengths and weaknesses in strategic leadership.

3. Full diagnostic tool:

This uses the same scoresheets described above but number scores are added directly into the 'Excel' [diagnostic tool](#) spreadsheet, using the drop-down boxes provided in each cell. This act will populate mean scores into the corresponding data tables for the 2D comparator graphs, which will be drawn automatically. Additionally, 3D graphs will be drawn, indicating 'Where I am now' on page 9 and 'Where I need to be' on page 10. These provide overall topographical images of current, and necessary, strategic leadership capability, respectively. It is important that the limitations of the current spreadsheet format are realised. For example, only **one** numerical score must be added in each row. Also means will be calculated using all the white rows, or all the shaded rows, in a sub-section, whether they have all been scored or not.

Extensive comments can be appended in the comments column and again items that are felt to be very important can be indicated by inserting a 'Y' in the final column. It would be relatively easy, by removing the scoring from all rows not deemed 'very important', to get an indication of strengths and weaknesses in these areas considered to be crucial.

User-defined statements can be added and scored in Section D but these will not be automatically converted into graphical displays, unless adjustments are made in the 'Excel' formulae to either include these data in the data tables for the appropriate comparator graphs, or additional graphs are set up.

To obtain a print out of the completed scoresheets and associated graphs, print pages 1 – 3 and 6 – 10. This should provide a document that is a starting point for reflection and discussion. It may also be useful in helping to define the areas that are covered in a full 360° appraisal.

This diagnostic tool does not set out to exemplify exhaustively leadership capabilities, as these are covered by numerous generic leadership frameworks. It tries to concentrate on areas that have been identified, through supporting research in the sector, as specific to strategic leadership of SD units in HE institutions. The diagnostic tool also does not offer any readymade solutions. Those who are interested in enhancing their strategic leadership capability are encouraged to read the following additional outputs from the Staff Development Forum's Strategic Staff Development project:

Being strategic in staff development – concepts and tools by Andy Wilson

Developing capability in the university – strategically enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness and well-being of the institution by Paul Blackmore and Andrew Castley

Survey Report on Staff and Educational Development Leaders including Views on Strategic Leadership by Richard Dales and Andy Wilson