

EXPECTED COMPETENCIES OF STAFF AT SUAN SUNANDHA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY, NAKHON PATHOM CAMPUS

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Abstract

In response to the evolving demands of globalization, digital transformation, and educational reforms, this study aimed to identify the desired competencies of academic support staff at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus. Emphasizing the development of competencies aligned with institutional goals, The primary objectives were: (1) to identify the desired competencies of staff at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus; and (2) to explore appropriate guidelines for developing these competencies. Employing a quantitative research approach, data were collected from 30 academic support staff members using a structured questionnaire. The instrument, validated by experts through the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), comprised five parts: general information, core competencies, functional competencies, guidelines for competency development, and additional opinions. Statistical analyses included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Findings indicated that overall desired core competencies were rated at a high to very high level. The "Service Mindset" dimension, particularly the ability to maintain confidentiality and interpersonal relations, received the highest ratings. In functional competencies, "Empathy" was rated very high, especially in understanding others without interpretation and applying that understanding in work contexts. However, competencies such as "Problem-solving" and "Thinking outside the box" were rated at a moderate level, suggesting areas for improvement.

Keywords: Desired Competencies, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus

Introduction

In the context of dynamic changes driven by globalization, digital transformation, and national education reforms, the competencies of staff in higher education institutions have become critical for institutional success and long-term sustainability (OECD, 2021; Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation [MHESI], 2020). Universities today are expected to play multidimensional roles—not only as centers of knowledge production and dissemination but also as catalysts for regional development and innovation (Cheng, 2016). This has created an increasing demand for professional, adaptable, and forward-thinking university staff.

Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus, a regional branch of a leading Rajabhat institution in Thailand, is tasked with responding to local and national development agendas through quality teaching, community engagement, and academic services. In order to effectively fulfill these mandates, it is essential that staff exhibit a set of

competencies aligned with the university's strategic direction, organizational values, and performance expectations (MHESI, 2020).

This study focuses on identifying and analyzing the desired competencies of staff affiliated with Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus. Desired competencies in this context refer to the knowledge, skills, attributes, and attitudes that support successful job performance and promote organizational excellence (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The findings from this research will be instrumental in guiding human resource development, performance evaluation, and strategic planning within the university. Moreover, such insights can contribute to a broader understanding of competency-based management in Thai higher education institutions under the framework of public sector modernization and New Public Management (Hood, 1991; Bovaird & Löffler, 2009).

Research Objectives

1. To identify the desired competencies of staff at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus.
2. To explore appropriate guidelines for developing the desired competencies of staff at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus.

Scope of the Research

This research focuses on the desired competencies of staff at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus. The scope of the study is defined in terms of the following dimensions:

1. Content Scope:

The study examines the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that constitute the desired competencies for university staff. It also investigates strategies and practices for developing these competencies in alignment with institutional goals and national higher education policies.

2. Population Scope:

The target population includes staff at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus. This comprises academic staff, administrative staff, and support staff who are employed at the campus during the academic year in which the study is conducted.

3. Geographical Scope:

The research is confined to Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus, located in Nakhon Pathom Province, Thailand.

4. Time Scope:

The study was conducted over a period of January to April 2025], during which data collection, analysis, and interpretation were performed.

Research Methodology

1. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the desired competencies of staff at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus, with a specific focus on identifying the development needs of executive secretaries at the College of Logistics and Supply Chain. The methodology includes structured data collection through a questionnaire developed based on theoretical frameworks, previous research, and expert validation.

2. Research Steps

The research process consisted of the following key steps:

2.1 Reviewing relevant literature, theoretical models, and prior studies related to desired competencies of executive secretaries.

2.2 Defining operational terms and constructing the research instrument.

2.3 Validating the questionnaire through expert review using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC).

2.4 Distributing the finalized questionnaire to the target group.

2.5 Analyzing collected data using statistical software.

3. Data Collection

3.1 Population

The population in this study consisted of 30 academic support staff members working at the College of Logistics and Supply Chain, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Education Center.

3.2 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into five parts:

Part 1: General Information – Checklist and open-ended questions regarding gender, age, education level, work experience, and job position.

Part 2: Core Competencies – 20 items on a 5-point Likert scale, covering five dimensions:

- 1) Achievement Orientation (4 items)
- 2) Service Mindset (4 items)
- 3) Professional Expertise (4 items)
- 4) Integrity and Ethics (4 items)
- 5) Teamwork (4 items)

Part 3: Functional Competencies – 20 items on a 5-point Likert scale, covering:

- 6) Analytical Thinking (4 items)
- 7) Information Seeking (4 items)
- 8) Empathy (4 items)
- 9) Process Checking (4 items)
- 10) Persuasive Communication (4 items)

Part 4: Guidelines for Competency Development – 8 items on a 5-point Likert scale related to development approaches.

Part 5: Additional Opinions – Open-ended questions for respondents to provide additional suggestions or feedback.

Instrument Construction and Validation

The questionnaire was developed through the following process:

- 1) Reviewing academic theories, concepts, and previous research.
- 2) Drafting competency definitions aligned with the research objectives.
- 3) Creating items based on the defined competency framework.
- 4) Conducting expert validation with three specialists using a 3-point IOC rating

scale:

+1 = clearly congruent

0 = unsure

-1 = not congruent

- 5) Calculating the IOC for each item using the formula:

$$IOC = \frac{\sum R}{N} \quad IOC = \frac{\sum R}{N}$$

Where R is the score given by each expert, and N is the number of experts.

- 6) Selecting items with an IOC score of 0.50 or higher (Phanee Leekitwattana,

2011).

- 7) Revising the questionnaire based on expert feedback.

- 8) Finalizing and printing the validated version for distribution.

4. Data Analysis

Data were collected in May 2019 and analyzed using a statistical software package.

The analysis procedures were as follows:

4.1 Part 1: General Information

Frequency and percentage were used to describe demographic variables and general characteristics of respondents.

4.2 Parts 2–4: Competencies and Development Guidelines

Mean and standard deviation were used to describe the level of perceived importance of competencies and development needs.

The 5-point Likert scale was interpreted using the following criteria:

Mean Score Range Interpretation

4.51 – 5.00	Very High
3.51 – 4.50	High
2.51 – 3.50	Moderate
1.51 – 2.50	Low
1.00 – 1.50	Very Low

Research Results

1. General Information of Respondents

The study involved 30 academic support staff from the College of Logistics and Supply Chain, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Nakhon Pathom Campus. The demographic data revealed that the majority of respondents were female (70%), aged between 31–40 years (53.33%), and held a bachelor's degree (60%). Most had between 1–5 years of work experience (60%), and the most common job position was "General Administrative Officer" (36.68%).

2. Core Competencies of Staff

2.1 Achievement Orientation

Respondents rated their competency in achievement orientation at a very high level overall (Mean = 4.52, SD = 0.48). The highest-rated item was "Ability to check work accuracy" (Mean = 4.87), followed by "Determination and commitment to work" (Mean = 4.63).

2.2 Service Mindset

The competency in service orientation was also rated very high (Mean = 4.56, SD = 0.36). The highest-rated item was "Ability to maintain confidentiality" (Mean = 4.74), followed by "Good interpersonal skills" (Mean = 4.65).

2.3 Professional Expertise

This competency was rated at a high level (Mean = 3.54, SD = 0.45). The most notable item was "Attention to detail" (Mean = 3.82), while "Problem-solving skills" received the lowest mean (3.13), indicating a moderate level.

2.4 Integrity and Ethics

Overall, this competency was rated high (Mean = 4.04, SD = 0.36). The item "Responsibility to the university" received the highest rating (Mean = 4.91), while "Maintaining a professional image" was rated the lowest (Mean = 3.09), considered moderate.

2.5 Teamwork

Teamwork was also rated at a high level (Mean = 4.17, SD = 0.41). The highest-rated item was "Willingness to listen to others" (Mean = 4.55), while the lowest was "Confidence to express opinions and make decisions" (Mean = 3.77).

3. Functional Competencies of Executive Secretaries

3.1 Analytical Thinking

Rated high overall (Mean = 3.61, SD = 0.64), with "Prioritizing urgent tasks" being the highest (Mean = 4.41), and "Planning preventive measures" the lowest (Mean = 3.17).

3.2 Information Seeking

This competency was also rated high (Mean = 3.62, SD = 0.43). The item "Curiosity in seeking beneficial information" received the highest mean (3.89), while "Organizing information systematically" was rated the lowest (3.31).

3.3 Empathy

The empathy competency was rated very high (Mean = 4.50, SD = 0.33), particularly in "Understanding without interpretation" (Mean = 4.79) and "Applying understanding for work" (Mean = 4.77).

3.4 Accuracy in Workflow Processes

This competency was rated high (Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.50). The top item was "Attention to accuracy" (Mean = 4.98), while "Checking others' work" received the lowest score (Mean = 3.08), indicating a moderate level.

3.5 Persuasive Communication

This area was rated high (Mean = 3.51, SD = 0.38). The most highly rated item was "Readiness to handle all listener reactions" (Mean = 3.84), while the lowest was "Predicting outcomes of communication" (Mean = 3.13), considered moderate.

4. Guidelines for Competency Development

The overall competency development guideline was rated high (Mean = 3.95, SD = 0.47). The highest-rated item was "Willingness to sacrifice and dedicate oneself" (Mean = 4.59), followed by "Building relationships with stakeholders" (Mean = 4.57). The lowest was "Thinking outside the box" (Mean = 3.13), rated moderate.

5. Additional Opinions

Additional qualitative data revealed the following:

- The most frequently mentioned competency was "Effectively scheduling appointments for executives" (20%).
- This was followed by "Efficiently organizing meetings" (10%), and "Providing useful suggestions to visitors" (6.67%).

Discussion

1. Competency-Based Education (CBE) Framework

The findings of high levels of desired core competencies among support staff align with the principles of Competency-Based Education (CBE), which emphasizes the demonstration of specific competencies as outcomes of learning. CBE focuses on learners acquiring and applying knowledge, skills, and attitudes in real-world contexts, ensuring that they are prepared for the demands of their roles (Kouwenhoven, 2009).

2. Emotional Intelligence and Empathy

The high scores in the "Empathy" dimension reflect the importance of emotional intelligence in professional settings. Emotional intelligence, particularly the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and those of others, is crucial for effective interpersonal interactions and has been linked to improved job performance and satisfaction (Goleman, 1995).

3. Adaptive Expertise and Problem-Solving

The moderate ratings in "Problem-solving" and "Thinking outside the box" suggest a need for developing adaptive expertise among support staff. Adaptive expertise involves the ability to apply knowledge creatively and flexibly in novel situations, which is essential for addressing complex and unforeseen challenges in the workplace (Hatano & Inagaki, 1986).

4. Organizational Culture and Competency Development

The variation in competency levels may also be influenced by the organizational culture and support systems in place. A culture that encourages continuous learning, innovation, and collaboration can significantly enhance the development and application of competencies among staff (Schein, 2010).

5. Comparative Analysis with Law Enforcement Staff

The similarities between the competencies required for support staff in academic settings and those for non-commissioned police staff, as identified by Noichan and Krutwichit (2025), highlight the universal importance of interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and adaptability across different professional domains.

Recommendations

1. Given the high ratings in "Service Mindset" and "Empathy," it's beneficial to further develop these areas through structured emotional intelligence (EI) training. Such programs can enhance self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills, leading to improved job performance and reduced workplace stress. Research indicates that EI training positively impacts staff interactions and overall organizational climate.

2. The study highlighted the significance of interpersonal relationships in job satisfaction and stress levels. Creating opportunities for team-building activities and open communication can strengthen workplace relationships. Strong social support networks within the workplace are associated with decreased stress and enhanced employee well-being.

3. Areas like "Problem-solving" and "Thinking outside the box" received moderate ratings, indicating room for growth. Organizing workshops focused on creative thinking and adaptive problem-solving can empower staff to handle challenges more effectively and contribute innovative ideas to their roles.

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