



WORLD ADMINISTRATORS

ALLIANCE

GLOBAL SKILLS MATRIX 2026

Administrative Capability Framework

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Foreword

Over the past decade the administrative profession has undergone a significant transformation. Responsibilities that were once defined primarily by task execution increasingly encompass operational coordination, governance preparation and strategic support to leadership.

The Global Skills Matrix was introduced in 2021 to provide a shared framework through which this contribution could be understood and structured. Since that time the complexity of administrative work has continued to expand, reflecting broader changes in organisational design, digital transformation and leadership practice.

The 2026 edition of the Global Skills Matrix builds on the original framework by incorporating new research drawn from more than 3,221 administrative professionals across 69 countries. The findings demonstrate that administrative capability now plays a critical role in supporting organisational coordination and executive effectiveness.

This revised framework provides organisations, HR leaders and administrative professionals with a common architecture for understanding levels of contribution and capability within the profession.

Helen Monument

Chair

World Administrators Alliance



Key Findings from the 2025 Global Skills Matrix Survey

Administrative work has expanded significantly since 2021, with

59%

reporting increased responsibility.

60%

now routinely manage projects or programmes, indicating a shift toward operational coordination.

42%

report using AI or automation tools within their workflow.

38%

support governance or board-level preparation, demonstrating increased proximity to decision-making.

43%

report that their job title does not accurately reflect their responsibilities.

Despite expanded contribution,

51%

report no clear career pathway within their organisation.

More than

80%

of administrative professionals have over ten years' experience, and 54% have more than twenty. This is an experienced operational workforce with limited early-career representation.

These findings indicate a structural evolution in administrative contribution, moving from task-based execution toward operational coordination and leadership support.



How to Use the Global Skills Matrix

The Global Skills Matrix provides a structured framework for understanding levels of administrative contribution based on judgement, coordination complexity and organisational impact.

It is designed to support individuals, organisations and professional bodies in aligning administrative capability with modern organisational demands.

The framework does not prescribe job titles or organisational structures. Instead, it provides a reference architecture through which administrative roles can be assessed, structured and developed.

For Organisations and HR Leaders

Organisations can use the Global Skills Matrix to assess the level of work being performed within administrative roles and align those roles with appropriate grading, development and progression pathways.

Assessment should be based on level of contribution and judgement exercised, not tenure or time in role.

The framework supports:

- benchmarking administrative roles against defined contribution levels
- distinguishing workload expansion from escalation in level of work
- aligning administrative roles with organisational operating models
- designing structured career pathways within the administrative function

- integrating administrative capability into workforce planning and organisational design

Used effectively, the framework enables organisations to structure administrative capability intentionally rather than allowing responsibilities to evolve informally.

Administrative professionals can use the Global Skills Matrix to understand the level of contribution associated with their current role and identify development priorities required for progression.

The framework enables individuals to:

- assess the scope and judgement level of their current responsibilities
- identify capability gaps between their current role and higher levels
- articulate their contribution in terms of organisational impact rather than tasks
- guide professional development and career planning

The framework also provides a shared language through which administrative professionals can discuss role scope and performance progression with leadership and HR.

Organisations should also apply the Global Skills Matrix through a talent management lens. Administrative professionals are not simply a resource to be deployed against tasks, but a highly capable, judgement-driven talent pool operating within organisational infrastructure. Framing the

function in this way shifts the focus from task allocation to capability investment, enabling organisations to identify transferable skills, build structured talent pipelines and align administrative capability with broader workforce planning. In a profession where the workforce is highly tenured, yet more than half report no clear career pathway, this shift is critical to unlocking both progression and organisational leverage.

For Professional Associations and Training Providers

Professional bodies, networks and training providers can use the Global Skills Matrix to align professional development programmes with defined levels of administrative capability.

The framework provides a basis for:

- structuring training and certification pathways
- aligning educational programmes with organisational capability needs
- establishing professional standards across the administrative profession
- supporting international consistency in administrative capability development

By providing a shared reference architecture, the Global Skills Matrix enables professional development to be aligned with the evolving scope of administrative contribution.

A Reference Architecture

The Global Skills Matrix is intended to function as a reference architecture rather than a prescriptive model.

Organisations may adopt the framework fully or use it as a guide when reviewing administrative roles, designing career pathways or aligning capability with organisational complexity.

Its purpose is to bring clarity and consistency to a profession whose contribution has evolved significantly but whose structural recognition has not always kept pace.



1.

Introduction

The World Administrators Alliance is a global, non-profit body representing administrative associations, networks and professionals across multiple countries and sectors. Its purpose is to guide, influence and elevate the administrative profession through international collaboration and shared standards.

The Global Skills Matrix (GSM) was introduced in 2021 to provide a unifying framework defining levels of administrative contribution. Downloaded more than 14,000 times, the Matrix established a five-level capability model designed to support administrative professionals, employers and HR teams in identifying levels of work, benchmarking roles and creating clearer career pathways.

The Matrix was developed as a sector-agnostic framework, independent of job title and geography. It was intended to bring consistency to a profession characterised by diverse naming conventions and inconsistent grading structures.

Administrative roles now exist under more than 187 different job titles worldwide. When the Global Skills Matrix was first introduced in 2021, there were already over 160 titles identified.

This rapid expansion reflects the growing scope of administrative work, but it also creates significant structural ambiguity. Similar work is described using widely different titles across organisations, sectors and geographies. The Global Skills Matrix addresses this challenge by focusing on the level of work being performed rather than the job title attached to the role.

In 2025, the World Administrators Alliance undertook a comprehensive global survey to assess current practice and inform the continued development of the framework.

The findings of that 2025 survey form the evidence base for the 2026 edition of the Global Skills Matrix.

The sections that follow outline the evidence gathered and define the updated capability architecture.

2.

Executive Overview

Since the publication of the Global Skills Matrix 2021, the scope and complexity of administrative work have expanded materially.

The Global Skills Matrix 2021 brought clarity to the profession by defining its contribution. The 2026 edition builds on that foundation, retaining the original five-level progression model while positioning administrative capability as operational leadership infrastructure within modern organisational design.

Modern organisations depend on two forms of leadership capability. Strategic leadership defines direction. Operational leadership ensures that decisions translate into coordinated execution across the organisation.

Operational leadership encompasses the management of information flow, executive operating rhythm, governance readiness, cross-functional alignment and risk awareness within leadership systems.

The Global Skills Matrix identifies the capabilities that support this operational layer of leadership. In many organisations these capabilities are embedded within senior administrative roles, where professionals coordinate information flow, decision preparation, cross-functional alignment and governance readiness.

The 2025 Global Skills Matrix Survey, drawing on 3,221 responses from 69 countries, confirms measurable change:

- 59% report increased responsibility since 2021.
- 60% now perform project or programme management routinely.
- 42% have implemented AI and automation tools within their workflow.
- 38% support governance or board-level preparation.
- More than 80% have over a decade of experience in the profession.

- Only 13% believe the 2021 framework still fully reflects their current role, demonstrating how rapidly the profession has evolved.

These findings indicate systemic evolution rather than incremental adjustment.

Administrative roles increasingly include operational coordination, digital integration, governance preparation and strategic decision support. The profession has shifted from task-based execution toward judgement-led orchestration and cross-functional alignment.

The Global Skills Matrix 2026 retains the five-level progression model while recalibrating capability thresholds to reflect:

- AI-enabled workflow
- Increased governance exposure
- Embedded project management
- Greater strategic interface with senior leadership

The updated framework provides a scalable architecture through which organisations can benchmark administrative contribution, align roles to capability, and establish structured progression.

The 2026 edition therefore represents more than revision. It marks the point at which administrative capability can no longer be accurately described as solely a support function. The evidence demonstrates that the profession has crossed a structural threshold. The framework now reflects a discipline operating within organisational infrastructure rather than at its periphery.

3.

Structural Shifts Since 2021

The Global Skills Matrix 2021 defined levels of administrative contribution based on scope, responsibility and professional maturity.

The 2025 Global Skills Matrix Survey indicates that the operating environment in which administrative professionals function has changed materially.

These changes fall into four categories: expansion of scope, digitisation of workflow, escalation of judgement and persistent structural misalignment.

3.1 Expansion of Scope

The majority of respondents report increased responsibility since 2021.

- 59% report increased responsibility.
- 21% report that responsibilities have remained stable.

The increase reflects not simply workload, but expansion of remit.

Project and programme management is now routinely embedded within administrative roles:

- 60% report performing project management regularly.

Governance and compliance exposure has also expanded:

- 38% support governance reporting or board preparation.

In addition, 26% report advising executives on strategic or operational risk matters.

These figures indicate a shift from task-based coordination to operational oversight and judgement-driven contribution.

While the survey reflects the reported experience of administrative professionals rather than organisational performance metrics, the scale and consistency of these findings indicate a structural shift in how coordination and leadership support are performed within modern organisations.

3.2 Digitisation and AI Integration

AI and digital workflow tools have moved from experimental to embedded.

- 42% report implementing AI or automation tools within their role.

AI is being used to:

- Draft and refine documentation
- Analyse information
- Conduct research
- Manage scheduling and communication triage
- Improve workflow efficiency

As routine tasks become increasingly automated, the remaining contribution centres on interpretation, prioritisation and decision sequencing.

Capability expectations must reflect this redistribution of effort.

3.3 Escalation of Judgement

The profession is characterised by a highly tenured workforce. 54% report more than 20 years in their role, and 81% report more than 10 years. While tenure can

contribute to deep organisational knowledge and contextual awareness, this is not guaranteed and does not in itself determine level of contribution.

In many organisations, administrative roles have not been defined through clear accountabilities, responsibilities or capability thresholds. As a result, tenure has not consistently translated into progression. Highly tenured professionals may continue to operate at task-based levels, not due to lack of capability, but due to the absence of structured role design and assessment.

At the same time, demographic distribution indicates potential long-term sustainability challenges. Fewer than 8% of respondents fall within the 25–34 age bracket. Combined with the concentration of tenure in the 45–64 age brackets, this indicates a high concentration of institutional knowledge and elevated succession planning risk.

This is not a short-term recruitment issue. It is a long-term sustainability consideration.

Administrative professionals report increasing proximity to decision-making processes and leadership forums. Their work increasingly involves:

- Anticipating and sequencing priorities
- Coordinating cross-functional dependencies
- Preparing governance documentation
- Filtering information for executive review
- Advising on operational risk

These responsibilities require independent judgement rather than procedural compliance.

The data also reveals a divide in digital confidence. Self-reported AI confidence ranges from 0 to 100, with an average score of 53.

This indicates not uniform hesitation, but polarisation between early adopters and those without structured support or access.

This is not a capability gap. It is an opportunity gap. AI proficiency is becoming a differentiator within the profession, separating those positioned for strategic expansion from those at risk of task compression.

The framework must therefore account for both escalating judgement and uneven digital enablement.

3.4 Persistent Structural Misalignment

Despite expanded contribution, organisational alignment remains inconsistent.

- 51% report no clear career pathway within their organisation.
- 43% report that their job title does not accurately reflect their responsibilities.
- Only 13% believe the 2021 framework still fully reflects their current role.

In most professions, the absence of defined progression for over half the workforce would be considered a design failure rather than an individual limitation.

The central challenge facing the profession is not capability. It is classification.

Administrative professionals are performing work aligned to higher contribution thresholds, yet organisational systems often continue to categorise roles according to historical titles rather than defined levels of judgement.

The increasing prevalence of hybrid and compound role descriptions illustrates contribution growth that has outpaced formal classification. Approximately 25% of respondents selected “Other” when identifying their role, frequently reflecting titles such as Executive Business Partner, Executive Operations Manager and Administrative Business Partner, or roles combining administrative coordination with operational, project or governance responsibilities.

These evolving titles signal expansion of contribution, but not necessarily clarity of architectural alignment.

This disconnect limits visibility, distorts grading and constrains progression.

The absence of defined capability architecture produces predictable outcomes: unclear advancement pathways, inconsistent remuneration alignment and uneven development investment.

The recalibration of the GSM responds directly to this condition.

The framework is therefore designed to clarify classification by defining contribution through clear accountabilities, responsibilities and levels of judgement.



3.5 Implications for the Framework

The findings do not suggest incremental adjustment. They indicate recalibration.

The 2026 revision must:

- Reflect increased operational complexity
- Embed AI capability across levels
- Clarify governance exposure
- Distinguish workload expansion from level escalation
- Define judgement thresholds more precisely

The next section defines the revised five-level architecture.

The five levels of the Global Skills Matrix can also be understood as a progression of operational leadership capability. As responsibility increases, administrative professionals move from executing defined processes toward coordinating organisational activity, supporting executive decision-making and ultimately shaping the operational infrastructure through which leadership functions.

4.

The Five Levels of Contribution and Capability

Each level builds on the previous, incorporating and extending all prior capabilities.

Progression is defined by increasing judgement, accountability and organisational impact, not tenure, title or proximity to leadership.



FIGURE 1. GLOBAL SKILLS MATRIX 2026 – LEVELS OF CONTRIBUTION

The Global Skills Matrix defines administrative work through five progressive levels of contribution.

Each level incorporates and extends the capabilities of the previous level while introducing increased scope, complexity and judgement.

Progression is determined by:

- Scope of judgement exercised
- Complexity of coordination
- Governance and risk exposure
- Degree of strategic alignment
- Organisational impact

Progression is not determined by tenure, title or the seniority of the executive supported, but by escalation in judgement, accountability and organisational impact.

The framework distinguishes clearly between increased workload and increased level of work. Expansion in task volume does not automatically indicate progression. Advancement is defined by escalation in judgement and organisational influence.



The following sections define the capability thresholds at each level.

LEVEL 1 **Apprenticeship / Foundational**

Level 1 represents a transitional and supervised role.

Contribution is characterised by reliable execution of defined tasks within established procedures.

Judgement is limited to following structured processes and escalating exceptions appropriately.

The focus is on developing:

- Professional communication
- Foundational digital literacy
- Accuracy and consistency
- Organisational awareness
- Confidentiality discipline

This level establishes the operational foundation upon which higher capability is built.

LEVEL 2 **Professional Administrative**

Level 2 represents independent management of defined administrative processes.

Individuals coordinate workflow within structured parameters and apply judgement within established frameworks.

Contribution includes:

- Calendar and meeting governance
- Travel and logistics coordination
- Process ownership
- Stakeholder interaction
- Maintenance of structured reporting tools

Digital tools, including AI-assisted drafting and scheduling, are used to improve efficiency.

Judgement remains primarily procedural, but autonomy increases.

LEVEL 3 **Operational and Project Coordination**

Level 3 represents the operational centre of gravity within the profession.

Contribution shifts from process execution to workflow orchestration across functions, requiring strong organisational awareness.

At this level, administrative professionals:

- Coordinate cross-functional activity
- Support and lead defined projects
- Interpret and present operational data
- Manage competing priorities across stakeholders
- Support governance documentation
- Flag risks and dependencies

Judgement is applied to sequencing, escalation and operational alignment.

This level frequently interfaces with digital automation tools and data reporting systems.

The distinction between task execution and operational contribution becomes clear at this stage.

LEVEL 4 **Strategic Interpretation and Alignment**

Level 4 represents the application of advanced judgement to interpret organisational priorities and align activity to enable effective execution.

Contribution includes:

- Interpreting strategic priorities
- Managing information flow at senior levels
- Supporting board and governance processes
- Advising on sequencing of initiatives
- Anticipating operational and reputational risk
- Translating strategy into coordinated execution

Judgement extends beyond workflow management into interpretation, alignment and decision support. Digital and AI-enabled analysis is used to enhance insight and organisational readiness.

In many organisations, this level operates in close partnership with senior leadership, including C-suite executives or the board, though this is not a defining requirement of the level.

LEVEL 5 **Leadership Infrastructure**

Level 5 formalises senior administrative contribution as operational leadership within the organisation.



At this level, professionals no longer operate solely within a support capacity. They influence the operational architecture through which leadership priorities are coordinated and executed. There are two distinct pathways.

LEVEL 5A **Administrative Leadership**

This pathway focuses on leading the administrative function as a discipline.

Contribution includes:

- Designing job families and progression pathways
- Aligning capability to organisational need
- Leading digital and AI integration within administrative teams
- Overseeing governance processes
- Managing budgets and workforce planning

Judgement operates at functional and organisational design level.

LEVEL 5B **Executive Operations Leadership**

This pathway focuses on enterprise-level coordination adjacent to senior leadership.

Contribution includes:

- Managing executive office rhythm
- Coordinating enterprise priorities
- Overseeing governance reporting structures
- Integrating cross-functional initiatives
- Managing risk and continuity frameworks

Judgement operates at enterprise level, influencing organisational direction and execution.

Summary of Escalation

Across the five levels, contribution progresses from reliability to process ownership, to operational orchestration, to strategic understanding, judgement and decision support, and ultimately to organisational leadership infrastructure.

Structural Implication

The upward shift of operational contribution to Level 3 and the formalisation of strategic and leadership pathways at Levels 4 and 5, represent the most significant recalibration of administrative capability since the introduction of the Matrix in 2021.

The framework now reflects established practice rather than projected aspiration.



THE GLOBAL SKILLS MATRIX

The Global Skills Matrix defines the core capabilities associated with each level of contribution. Skills are cumulative. Each level incorporates and extends the skills of the preceding level.

Level 1 APPRENTICESHIP / FOUNDATIONAL	Level 2 PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE	Level 3 OPERATIONAL AND PROJECT COORDINATION	Level 4 STRATEGIC INTERPRETATION AND ALIGNMENT	Level 5A ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP	OR Level 5B EXECUTIVE OPERATIONS LEADERSHIP
Professional written and verbal communication	Knowledge of administrative procedures and processes	Multi-stakeholder coordination	Executive-level communication	Functional strategy development	Integrating cross-functional execution across the organisation
Foundational digital literacy	Calendar and meeting governance	Cross-functional workflow orchestration	Advanced stakeholder influence and negotiation	Organisational and job family design	Enterprise strategic insight
Hybrid collaboration awareness	Time management and prioritisation	Project and programme administration	Governance oversight	Governance and policy leadership	Political and relational intelligence
Organisational and planning fundamentals	Decision-making within defined frameworks	Change initiative support	Executive decision sequencing	Workforce and succession planning	Governance and enterprise risk oversight
Accuracy and attention to detail	Stakeholder coordination	Data interpretation and dashboard preparation	Risk anticipation and mitigation	Digital and AI transformation leadership	Programme and transformation leadership
Confidential information handling	Ethical and cultural awareness	Governance awareness and documentation control	Business and financial awareness	Financial and resource management	Systems thinking
Adaptability and willingness to learn	Basic data literacy	Operational risk flagging	Strategic adaptability	Capability benchmarking	Executive influence without formal authority
Teamwork and reliability	Digital collaboration fluency	Influencing without authority	AI-enabled insight generation	Senior stakeholder engagement	Crisis and continuity planning
Awareness of AI-assisted tools	Assisted use of AI for drafting and research	Coaching and peer support	Often operating in direct partnership with senior leadership at C-Suite or Board Level, although this is not a prerequisite.	Enterprise-level judgement	Enterprise-level prioritisation
		Applied AI-enabled reporting			AI-enabled executive analysis



THE TASKS MATRIX

The Tasks Matrix outlines illustrative responsibilities associated with each level of contribution. These tasks are cumulative and indicative rather than exhaustive.

Level 1 APPRENTICESHIP / FOUNDATIONAL	Level 2 PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE	Level 3 OPERATIONAL AND PROJECT COORDINATION	Level 4 STRATEGIC INTERPRETATION AND ALIGNMENT	Level 5A ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP	Level 5B EXECUTIVE OPERATIONS LEADERSHIP
Answering and directing calls	Managing executive or team calendars	Coordinating cross-functional workstreams	Preparing executive and board briefings	Leading the administrative function	Managing executive office operating rhythm
Data entry and document filing	Preparing agendas and recording minutes	Managing complex and competing priorities	Managing executive information flow and filtration	Designing progression pathways and job architecture	Coordinating enterprise-level priorities
Preparing basic documents and presentations	Coordinating travel and logistics	Leading defined projects or initiatives	Leading governance preparation	Overseeing governance frameworks	Overseeing board and governance reporting structures
Managing incoming and outgoing correspondence	Processing expenses	Supporting change and transformation programmes	Coordinating strategic initiatives	Leading digital transformation within administrative teams	Leading cross-functional enterprise initiatives
Booking meeting rooms	Maintaining trackers and shared databases	Preparing briefs, reports and action logs	Leading cross-functional programmes	Managing budgets and workforce allocation	Acting as executive decision integrator
Supporting reception and office cover	Supporting hybrid meetings	Conducting research and structured data analysis	Producing executive decision-support dashboards	Presenting capability insights to executive leadership	Mediating high-level stakeholder priorities
Monitoring office supplies	Coordinating multi-executive logistics	Producing dashboards and operational insights	Advising on operational risk and sequencing	Developing talent pipelines and succession plans	Managing organisational risk and crisis response
Supporting digital collaboration tools	Drafting communications using AI assistance	Implementing workflow automations	Representing executives in senior meetings	Establishing structured development programmes	Coordinating succession and continuity frameworks
		Supporting governance and compliance documentation	Supporting enterprise-level change initiatives		Overseeing enterprise performance tracking
		Monitoring KPIs and operational metrics			
		Representing leaders in defined forums			



5.

Job Title Mapping

The Global Skills Matrix defines levels of contribution and capability.

It does not prescribe job titles.

Administrative titles vary widely across organisations, sectors and geographies. The same title may represent different levels of work, and identical work may sit under different titles. Across global research and industry observation, administrative roles now appear under more than 187 different job titles, illustrating the degree of structural inconsistency within the profession.

The purpose of the GSM is to define the level of contribution being made, independent of the label applied to the role.

Alignment to level should not be determined by the seniority of the executive supported, but by the scope of judgement, accountability and organisational impact.

The examples below illustrate how commonly used titles may align to each level of capability. These examples are indicative, not prescriptive.





5.1 Clarification

The titles listed above are illustrative.

The Global Skills Matrix does not require organisations to change existing titles. It provides a structured method for assessing the level of work being performed.

The same title may align to different levels depending on scope of responsibility, judgement exercised and organisational impact.

The GSM enables individuals and organisations to identify structural alignment without imposing uniform naming conventions.

6.

From Support Function to Operational Infrastructure

The most consistent finding across the survey is not capability deficit, but systemic misunderstanding of the role.

Historically, administrative work has been described as a support function.

That description reflected a task-oriented model of contribution, focused primarily on execution and coordination within defined boundaries.

The 2025 data indicates that this characterisation no longer reflects the operational reality of the role.

Administrative capability now routinely encompasses:

- Workflow orchestration across functions
- Executive time governance
- Project and programme management
- Governance documentation and preparation
- Digital and AI integration
- Early-stage risk identification
- Cross-functional priority alignment

These are not peripheral activities. They influence organisational stability and decision sequencing.

Within organisational design, infrastructure refers to the systems that enable leadership to function effectively and consistently. In this sense, senior administrative professionals increasingly perform a form of operational leadership. They coordinate information flow, maintain executive operating rhythm, align cross-functional activity and ensure that decisions translate into organisational action. This work often occurs without formal recognition in organisational charts, yet it plays a central role in organisational stability and execution.

Modern administrative capability increasingly operates within this domain.

At Levels 3 and above, administrative professionals contribute to:

- Maintaining executive operating rhythm
- Reducing coordination bottlenecks
- Ensuring information accuracy and timeliness
- Supporting governance integrity
- Integrating digital workflow tools
- Translating strategic direction into coordinated activity

The transition from support to infrastructure is not rhetorical. It reflects a shift in where and how administrative judgement is applied.

While this shift is not yet universally reflected in organisational structures, the evidence suggests that administrative capability is increasingly performing this infrastructure function in practice.

As routine tasks become automated, the value of the role shifts toward:

- Interpretation
- Prioritisation
- Sequencing
- Alignment
- Risk awareness

The framework therefore defines administrative contribution not as assistance to leadership, but as capability embedded within leadership systems.

Where this capability is clearly structured and aligned, executive performance improves and operational stability increases.

Where it remains informally defined, contribution is misclassified and leverage is reduced.

The Global Skills Matrix 2026 formalises this structural positioning.

7.

Administrative Capability as a Measurable Lever

Administrative capability has a direct and measurable effect on executive performance.

One of the primary mechanisms through which this occurs is executive time leverage: the protection and redirection of senior leadership attention from coordination tasks toward strategic decision-making.

Executive time is finite and economically weighted.

Senior leadership hours carry disproportionate strategic and financial consequence. How that time is allocated influences organisational output.

Where administrative capability is clearly defined and aligned to appropriate levels, executive attention is protected from coordination and sequencing tasks and directed toward strategic activity. This alignment must be based on defined levels of contribution rather than tenure or historical role expectations.

Survey findings confirm that administrative professionals are routinely engaged in project management, governance preparation, digital integration and advisory contribution.

These responsibilities influence:

- Decision sequencing
- Information accuracy and readiness
- Meeting effectiveness
- Governance compliance
- Cross-functional coordination

At Levels 3 and 4, administrative professionals contribute to:

- Identifying priority conflicts before escalation
- Ensuring documentation is complete before executive review
- Tracking progress across initiatives

- Highlighting interdependencies across functions
- Integrating AI tools into workflow design

When coordination is structured and predictable, executive capacity expands.

Expanded capacity is measurable in time reallocation. Time redirected from coordination to strategic activity alters organisational output, even when headcount remains constant.

Conversely, where roles are misclassified or under-levelled:

- Senior leaders absorb coordination tasks
- Processes remain informal and dependent on individuals
- Governance preparation becomes reactive
- Digital tools are introduced without defined contribution thresholds
- Progression pathways remain undefined

Administrative capability should therefore be assessed not solely as a support function, but as an enabling component of organisational design.

The Global Skills Matrix provides a mechanism for identifying, aligning and developing this capability intentionally.

Where contribution is formally defined:

- Executive time is allocated more strategically
- Governance preparation becomes consistent
- AI adoption aligns to role design
- Workforce planning becomes measurable
- Succession becomes structured

The cumulative effect is organisational leverage achieved through clarity of contribution rather than expansion of headcount.

8.

System Conditions Without Structured Architecture

In the absence of a defined capability framework, administrative functions commonly operate within informal structures.

Where contribution is not clearly levelled, predictable patterns emerge.

These conditions are not individual failings. They are systemic outcomes of structural ambiguity.

8.1 Title Fragmentation

Without defined capability thresholds:

- Job titles proliferate without consistency
- Similar work is labelled differently across departments and organisations
- Identical titles represent materially different levels of contribution
- Benchmarking across organisations becomes difficult

Title variation obscures capability rather than clarifying it.

8.2 Promotion Dependency

In many organisations, progression remains tied to:

- The seniority of the executive supported
- Tenure
- Organisational hierarchy rather than capability

This creates advancement pathways dependent on structure rather than contribution.

Where progression is vacancy-driven rather than level-driven, capability stagnation can occur.

8.3 Workload Escalation Without Reclassification

Administrative roles frequently absorb additional responsibilities during:

- Organisational restructuring
- Leadership transitions
- Workforce reductions
- Digital transformation initiatives

Without structured levelling, expansion of scope is often interpreted as increased workload rather than increased level of work.

This blurs the distinction between task volume and judgement threshold.

8.4 Informal Performance Assessment

Where capability levels are undefined:

- Performance evaluation becomes subjective
- Differentiation between levels is unclear
- Remuneration alignment is inconsistent
- Development planning lacks structure

In the absence of defined thresholds, expectations are interpreted rather than codified.

8.5 Inconsistent Development Investment

Without level-linked capability definitions:

- Training is discretionary rather than structured
- Development budgets are unevenly distributed
- AI adoption occurs without clear role expectations
- Progression is not aligned to capability growth

Where development is not anchored to defined levels, investment becomes inconsistent.

8.6 Under-Leveraged Capability

When administrative contribution is informally structured:

- Senior capability may be classified at junior levels
- Strategic work may be described as administrative
- Governance exposure may not be formally recognised
- Cross-functional coordination may not be captured in job architecture

This limits visibility of contribution and constrains organisational leverage.

8.7 Organisational Implication

These conditions do not arise from lack of professionalism within the administrative workforce.

They arise from the absence of defined architecture.

Where contribution is not formally structured:

- Executive time may be absorbed by coordination tasks
- Progression pathways remain unclear
- Digital transformation is not fully integrated into role design
- Succession planning is informal
- Organisational dependency rests on individuals rather than defined capability

The Global Skills Matrix addresses these conditions by defining progressive thresholds of contribution and aligning them to organisational design.



9.

What Organisations Must Do Now

The findings of the 2025 Global Skills Matrix Survey and the recalibrated framework indicate that administrative capability requires formal alignment within organisational design.

The framework supports organisational design reviews, workforce transformation initiatives, and digital operating model alignment.

The following actions represent structured responses to the conditions identified.

9.1 Map Roles to Defined Capability Levels

Organisations should assess existing administrative roles against the five defined levels of contribution.

Assessment should focus on:

- Scope of judgement exercised
- Complexity of coordination
- Governance exposure
- Strategic alignment
- Organisational impact

This process frequently reveals misalignment between title and level of work.

Mapping roles to defined levels provides clarity for grading, development and succession planning.

Individuals may also use the framework to reflect on their current scope and identify development priorities.

Assessment should be based on defined levels of contribution and judgement, not tenure, job title or proximity to senior leadership.

9.2 Separate Workload from Level

Increased responsibility does not automatically equate to increased level.

Organisations should distinguish between:

- Additional task volume and
- Escalation in judgement and influence

Clear thresholds prevent informal scope expansion without structural recognition.

9.3 Integrate Administrative Roles into Workforce Architecture

Administrative capability should be embedded within:

- Formal job families
- Grading and remuneration frameworks
- Succession planning processes
- Organisational design reviews

Exclusion from structured workforce planning limits visibility of contribution and reduces long-term stability.

9.4 Align Development to Defined Levels

Survey data indicates that administrative professionals disproportionately self-fund development, underscoring the need for structured organisational investment aligned to capability level.

Professional development should correspond to capability level.

For example:

- Foundational digital and AI literacy at Levels 1–2
- Operational reporting and project capability at Level 3

- Strategic and governance capability at Level 4
- Leadership, workforce design and digital transformation at Level 5

Development should be structured and intentional rather than discretionary.

9.5 Integrate AI Within Role Design

AI adoption should be aligned to clearly defined role expectations.

Automation of routine tasks should be accompanied by:

- Clarification of higher-level contribution
- Adjustment of judgement thresholds
- Development of digital competence
- Alignment of governance safeguards

AI integration without role redesign creates ambiguity rather than efficiency.

9.6 Formalise Senior Pathways

The framework recognises two senior pathways:

- Administrative Leadership (Level 5A)
- Executive Operations Leadership (Level 5B)

Organisations should determine which pathway aligns with their structure and ensure that senior administrative contribution is formally recognised within their grading system.

This provides defined endpoints for progression and reduces reliance on vacancy-driven advancement.

Progression within the administrative profession should not depend on the hierarchical advancement of the executive supported.

Defined levels create mobility within the profession itself, independent of organisational vacancy cycles.

9.7 Support Leadership and HR Education

Effective adoption requires that leadership and HR understand:

- The distinction between task-based and judgement-based work
- The progression thresholds defined by the GSM

- The implications of misclassification
- The structural impact of AI integration

Education supports consistent implementation.

9.8 Adopt the GSM as a Reference Architecture

The Global Skills Matrix is designed to function as a reference framework.

It does not require wholesale restructuring. It provides a structured starting point from which organisations can design the administrative function appropriate to their complexity.

Adoption may occur incrementally.

The objective is clarity, alignment and structural consistency.

10.

The Global Standard

Administrative capability operates across every sector of the global economy.

Until recently, it has done so without a universally recognised capability framework.

The Global Skills Matrix 2021 established a shared language for defining levels of administrative contribution.

The Global Skills Matrix 2026 establishes that language as a reference standard.

10.1 A Reference Architecture

The GSM 2026 provides:

- A defined five-level contribution model
- Clearly articulated judgement thresholds
- Progressive digital and AI integration expectations
- Defined governance exposure by level
- Distinction between task volume and level of work
- Dual senior pathways for administrative leadership

This framework enables consistent benchmarking across organisations, sectors and geographies.

It is sector-agnostic and scalable.

Not all organisations require every level. The framework provides a structured architecture from which organisations may design the administrative function appropriate to their operational complexity.

10.2 International Consistency

The 2025 survey reflects participation from 69 countries.

Across regions and industries, common structural conditions were identified:

- Fragmented titles
- Undefined progression
- Informal classification
- Inconsistent development investment
- Expanding operational scope

The GSM 2026 responds to these shared conditions by providing a consistent reference point.

Administrative professionals can articulate their level of contribution with clarity.

Organisations can assess and structure roles with consistency.

HR teams can align grading and development pathways with defined capability thresholds.

10.3 Alignment with Contemporary Organisational Demands

Modern organisations operate in environments characterised by:

- Accelerated digital transformation
- AI-enabled workflow
- Increased governance scrutiny
- Compressed decision cycles
- Cross-functional interdependence



The GSM 2026 aligns administrative capability with these realities.

It defines contribution in terms of judgement, orchestration and organisational impact rather than task execution alone.

This alignment reflects established practice rather than projected aspiration.

10.4 Structural Implication

Where administrative capability is informally defined, misalignment persists within organisational design.

Where it is formally structured:

- Contribution becomes visible
- Progression becomes measurable
- Development becomes aligned
- AI integration becomes intentional
- Organisational dependency becomes transferable rather than individual

The Global Skills Matrix 2026 provides the architecture through which this formalisation can occur.



11.

Conclusion

The Global Skills Matrix 2026 reflects the current state of administrative contribution as evidenced by the 2025 global survey.

At the same time, organisational systems have not consistently adapted to reflect this expanded scope.

The recalibrated framework provides defined contribution thresholds aligned to judgement, coordination complexity and organisational impact. It separates workload from level, formalises progression pathways and embeds digital capability expectations across all stages.

The purpose of this revision is alignment.

The Global Skills Matrix does not impose uniform titles or organisational redesign. It provides a reference architecture through which administrative capability can be consistently defined, assessed and developed.

Where contribution is clearly classified, alignment improves. Where it is not, misclassification persists.

The profession has reached structural maturity. In doing so, it highlights the emergence of operational leadership as a critical capability within modern organisational design. The framework now reflects that position.

The Global Skills Matrix provides the structure through which that capability can now be recognised, developed and aligned with the needs of modern organisations.

For more details and tools
to help you to fully utilise the
Global Skills Matrix, please visit
globalskillsmatrix.com



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