

*The Political Officer
in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*

The political/economic stream provides the bulk of “political officers”, a term derived from a time when international relations were called “high politics”. Political officers are those individuals whose assignments focus mainly on matters with a heavy political or security component, typically the subject matter of the International Security and Cooperation business line. In recent years, the department has also hired substantial numbers of non-FS contract personnel to do political work. At headquarters, many do “desk officer” jobs which in the past would have been performed only by FSs. At least 40 missions also have locally-engaged staff doing a variety of political work.

TABLE 5 FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS Political/Economic Stream (*)			
	Men	Women	TOTAL
FS-1	65	67	132
FS-2	260	84	344
TOTAL	325	151	476*
Diplomas			
BA	219	84	303
BL	44	17	61
MA	133	45	178
MBA	7	4	11
PhD	17	6	23

(*) Data is incomplete

Source: HPF

Political work

Political officers are the foundation of the globalist foreign service officers of the future. It is their job to understand the “big picture”, to identify the major interests at stake, to craft the strategies for protecting and promoting those interests, and to execute the international dimensions of strategies using the networks, lobbying and negotiating methods at their disposal. The functions of political officers can be classified as “core” if they reflect officers’ “globalist” national policy coordination role and require them to draw on their “globalist” knowledge and skills. But political officers perform an enormous range of work, a great deal of which is ancillary to their role. Sometimes this work is substantive in nature, but often it is not.