Security Guard Career Paths

In 2024 the Private Security Authority launched an initiative to assist with defining the career paths of a Security Guard (Static). The work was concluded in July 2024. The findings have identified eight main stages of progression and within some stages there may be more than one level. It was determined that there can be progression within a stage.

The main headings or titles are:

- **S1 -** Security Guard
- **S2 -** Security Team Leader
- **S3 -** Security Supervisor
- **S4 -** Site Security Manager
- **S5 -** Account Manager
- **S6 -** Security Operations Manager
- **S7 -** Chief Operations Officer
- **S8 -** Chief Executive Officer

If the description matches what an individual does (in the main), then this is what they are called. Roles at the higher levels may be combined, it is unlikely that any one employer will have staff at all the higher levels.

It would be beneficial to the individuals if the title / position is not confined to the current employer only. The individual should have recognition as for example, an industry ‘Supervisor’ (Guarding) or an industry ‘Operations Manager’ (Guarding).

This document is intended as a guide; it is not a legal document. At the early stages of the project over 50 titles at all levels were reviewed. The focus is on the individuals who perform the identified tasks. Thereafter, recognising their roles not just within a company but within the industry. While there is no universal agreement, it is considered that this may be a starting point and build a better picture of the industry and the people working in it.

Feedback:
During the consultation process the role of the Security Consultant and the Security Risk Assessor came up in the context of the tasks performed by senior security people. The PSA are looking at a licensing category for Security Consultants. There has been no discussion on the Security Risk Assessor. It may be that the tasks, experiences or qualifications can be mapped against one or more of the career path stages, but this document does not look at that at this point.

A title and description of each stage is outlined in the following pages.

S1 - Security Guard

The industry entry level is static guard. A static guard is typically positioned at a fixed location to prevent loss by controlling access and egress to and from premises and patrolling premises. The role involves responding to incidents and emergencies, checking suspicious activity, challenging trespassers, monitoring site safety compliances, monitoring alarms, warning systems, enforcement of site rules, key controls and CCTV systems as appropriate.

Protection of life and property are key elements of the role.

The physical and visual presence of the professional security guard is a deterrent, meaning that dress and deportment are important aspects of the role.

Work instructions and tasks typically originate from assignment instructions, which are unique to each site. It is very important that the security guard is both fully aware of and follows the assignment instructions. Shiftwork and nightwork are features of the role.

Observing, accurate recording and reporting are essential.

The locations are varied and include factories, manufacturing plants, office blocks and construction sites. While the static guard has some autonomy, they usually work under supervision and follow instructions. Committing fully to site familiarisation and understanding individual site processes are vital requirements. The security guard may work individually or as part of a team.

Mandatory training for licensing purposes provides an understanding of generic skills and legislation. To be most effective the security guard receives onsite training and familiarisation at each location they are deployed on. Site specific assignment instructions, procedures and work practices are unique to each individual location.

The nature of the industry sees a large percentage remain for a short period only. Typically, less than 10% will advance in a career. For those that remain progression can occur through moves to other sites with better facilities, more engaging work, or more favourable shift patterns. Although these changes are not promotions, they still represent career advancement.

Other opportunities include advancing to mobile services, retail services and a team leader or leading guard role.

The security guard reports to the supervisor, site manager and / or operations manager.

S2 - Security Team Leader

A more experienced or senior security guard with a higher level of site and security knowledge who has progressed from the Security Guard role. This includes security risk and loss prevention measures, typically gained through experience. The term leading guard is also used.

The position involves performing the duties and functions of a security guard but with a deeper understanding of the reasoning and purpose of the tasks performed. Good knowledge of assignment instructions, policies and procedures with a strong customer focus are essential to the role.

Additionally, those taking up the role of team leader will act as a mentor, guiding and instructing other team members when authorised. A feature of the team leader is the ability to communicate well with colleagues and work within that team environment.

Responsibilities include leading and mentoring less experienced security guards, providing support, instruction and guidance to others. Responsibilities can extend to task allocation, deployment and roster oversight. Utilising their advanced knowledge and experience to handle more complex situations. At the early stages of any incident or problem the team leader would be the first point of contact for the security guard. Responding to emergency situations will benefit from the experience of the team leader.

Typically described as a member of the team with added responsibility, the team leader works with others supporting, advising and guiding, rather than warning or disciplining. Team briefing such as at shift handover are important features of the role.

Taking up other roles such as alarm receiving centre, command and control, mobile services or retail, which benefit from that higher level of knowledge and experience and taking more individual responsibility and independent working such as in patrol driving and response.

Another opportunity can be advancing to the role of security supervisor.

The security team leader reports to the supervisor and site manager.

S3 - Security Supervisor

Supervision is the initial stage of management within the security sector. Supervisors are responsible for overseeing the behaviour and activities of security staff. The supervisor's role includes implementing management decisions, playing a key role in site familiarisation. Ensuring that tasks are allocated and completed and that procedures are followed as well as compliance monitoring, alongside performing standard security tasks.

The supervisor has a high level of site and security knowledge and takes a leadership role in ensuring assignment instructions are followed. The supervisor will extract tasks, document tasks and direct work, intervening when necessary, providing corrections and instructions to security staff.

The supervisor will be familiar with employer and client contractual obligations, service level agreements or similar are in place and assist with monitoring, managing and measuring staff performance.

A role in staff development may also feature.

Site specific and employer documentation are vital parts of the role. These include maintaining records, checking reports and providing evidence of service delivery. Some responsibilities for safety and wellbeing are part of the role as well as monitoring staff compliance with licensing regulations.

Communicating effectively with all. Reporting to the site manager or operations manager providing updates on staff performance and site security status. The supervisor is part of the employer chain of command and decision-making structure. The supervisor may oversee the work of large or small groups of individuals or multiple teams. A shift supervisor may oversee the work of a small team; a senior supervisor will have much broader responsibilities.

The role can extend to mobile multi-site and multi-service operations where the supervisor has a higher level of responsibility. Performing a range of mobile service duties as well as a mobile supervisory role are typical.

More senior and experienced supervisors will take up the role and responsibilities of a site or mobile assistant manager or deputy manager.

The supervisor reports to the site manager and / or the operations manager.

S4 - Site Security Manager

The site security manager oversees security operations at a fixed location or client sites. Coordinating and managing the activities of security staff and others to ensure that security requirements and employer contractual obligations are met. Through liaison, acts as key point of contact between the employer, client, security staff, suppliers and others, including state agencies.

Requiring an in-depth knowledge of assignment instructions, the site, site operations, site security requirements, emergency plans and contingency plans, escalation paths, contributing to security risk assessments and the site security plan. Managing and coordinating the effective responses to major incidents are features of the role.

Ensuring that true and accurate records are maintained. Reports of incidents are professional and reliable are essential. Ensure that all appropriate documentation is in place and current and that all equipment required is provided, in place and fit for purpose.

The site security manager reports to the client's designated site representative and employer operations manager on, for example, the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and / or Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) providing proof of service and evidence of performance as agreed. A high level of knowledge on site and employer security related ethos, culture, policies and procedures is required.

Induction, site familiarisation and site security staff training / refresher and upskilling needs are critical features of the role. Ensuring compliance with industry regulatory requirements. The role includes rostering, team formation, deployment and task allocation, monitoring and measuring performance and responding to any site staff issues.

Regular staff appraisals and ongoing training needs analysis may be part of a staff development role. Appraisal includes attendance record, timekeeping, deportment and behaviour. Positive and motivational elements must also be included. Security staff safety and wellbeing are important features of the role.

The site security manager plays a crucial role in ensuring that operations run smoothly, delivering a quality service, maintaining a secure environment, and fostering positive relations between all parties involved.

Keeping management informed, providing accurate and timely reports are essential. Facilitating and cooperating fully with visiting operations management and other senior staff.

S5 - Account Manager

The account manager is typically described as a client advocate within the security company. Ideally involved in initial contract negotiations, thereafter the main roles are to manage client relationships, ensuring client satisfaction with the service provided. The account manager will manage a portfolio of clients which may be broken down geographically or by client demographic. This is sometimes referred to as a cluster.

This is a communications role. Communicating regularly with the client, handling queries and complaints, receiving feedback and giving updates. Regular and structured meetings are a feature of the role. Regular and formal written reports may be part of the client / company agreement. Listening and responding promptly are critical features of the role.

The account manager will understand client requirements, contract conditions and all aspects of service delivery. Monitoring staff security issues, regulatory and compliance oversight, budgets, performance indicators or agreed performance measuring matrices to ensure a high standard of service delivery is maintained. The role has a strong customer service / quality service focus. To be effective the account manager will have authority to act. Responding to client needs, addressing client concerns and providing solutions to problems.

Acting on behalf of the employer and as the first point of contact for the client, the account manager builds trust and rapport. Strong rapport is also essential with security staff, site security manager and senior operational staff. The account manager may play a role in developing staff.

Where matters are required to be escalated, the account manager brings these issues back to the employer for discussion, action or other response. Areas of success and satisfaction are included with problems or causes for concern.

The account manager will generate reports for employer management. The role seeks to ensure that the client requirements are aligned with what the employer can deliver. A role in legal and regulatory compliance also features.

Trust and rapport can lead to identifying ways to expand the business relationship. The account manager has a role in looking at opportunities for

growth within the existing client base. Opportunities for new business can be greatly assisted by existing client referrals and recommendations.

The account manager role continues throughout the life cycle of the contract and any contract renegotiation / renewal. Client satisfaction with the account manager can have a positive impact on contract renewal.

S6 - Security Operations Manager

Operations management is the coordinating of multi-site and multi-service activities, performance and support, encompassing all security services offered. Employers use a range of titles to describe the security operations manager, these include duty, shift, area, contract, regional, national or cluster manager. Can be designated to lead a specific service area such as static, mobile or retail services. May play a role in sales, tendering, contract negotiation and drawing up contacts or agreements. Internal collaboration with sales, finance, HR and others will feature here. One or more may be in place.

A role in legal and regulatory compliance also features.

They will consult with the client, conduct a security review or audit of security requirements, making recommendations for client consideration. Thereafter, set up sites for all services offered. Drafting Standard Operating Procedures for mobile services and Assignment Instructions for static sites. Taking responsibility for selection, induction, training, familiarisation and deployment of staff and other resources required to deliver a quality service. The audit is an essential feature when the employer takes on a new contract.

Engaging with clients on implementing security plans and site-specific requirements as documented in assignment instructions, commenting on the effectiveness of measures on an ongoing basis. Assisting the client with ongoing assessment and management of risk.

The operations manager will understand the roles of all operational staff within their area of responsibility. Monitoring, supporting, motivating, developing and training as required. Staff safety and wellbeing are constant features of the role. Regular reviews of staff are features as is regular feedback on staff performance, intervening and correcting as required.

Reporting to the chief operations officer or chief executive officer, the operations manager will engage with clients, site security managers, supervisors, teams and staff in a planned and structured way. Improvement plans are a feature of the role.

Reviewing and updating documentation and procedures as required. Ensuring that effective management and supervision of staff remain in place. Upwards and downwards reporting processes will be established between all parties.

Ensuring the effective implementation and ongoing delivery of security services across all operations within their area of responsibility. Typically, the contact point for incidents and senior decision maker in the event of major incidents.

S7 - Chief Operations Officer

The COO or director of operations is the highest level operationally. The COO will carry out all the functions of an operations manager but with extensive added responsibilities. A security company will have one COO who will have responsibility across all geographical areas and all services.

The COO is responsible for conducting security risk assessments, audits or surveys and providing advice on security measures, including emergency, contingency and continuity plans. Requiring an extensive knowledge of security systems and procedures and different methods of providing a security service, the COO will engage with clients on loss prevention and security risks. Drafting comprehensive security plans, either on taking over an established site or a green field site. The security plan will lead to agreed site and risk specific assignment instructions, procedures, staffing levels, training, equipment and supports.

The COO will monitor legislative changes, reviewing and updating site plans as required. Communicating site requirements to all appropriate staff, keeping those responsible informed and up to date on a continuous basis.

The COO will formulate or contribute to employer policies and procedures. Thereafter manage procedures for maintaining effective standards and client satisfaction by monitoring service delivery. Monitoring the overall performance of, and conducting regular scheduled appraisals of, all employer operations and management staff. The COO manages managers to ensure contractual obligations are met. Contractual obligations will require evidence or proof of service delivery; these may be captured in Service Level Agreements overseen by the COO.

The COO has a role in all staff related matters including safety and wellbeing, continuous professional development and identifying suitable candidates for progression or promotion.

A critical function is to formulate and manage a cohesive communications strategy involving clients, managers, suppliers and department heads. Being proactively involved in HR, training, procurement and site issues including complaints or allegations. Receiving and responding to reports from sites, clients, managers and others feature here.

Keeping the chief executive and / or board informed of best practice operations procedures, compliance with legislative requirements and standards across all security service areas, including a key role in business initiatives, innovation and business development.

S8 - Chief Executive Officer

The most senior staff member in a company is the Chief Executive Officer or Managing Director. The CEO is typically a board member and is the link between all operations and the board or owners. External stakeholder engagement is a feature. The CEO is typically the public face of the employer.

The ultimate role of the CEO is to plan, organise, direct, coordinate, and control all aspects of the business. Working closely with the COO, the CEO's priorities will focus on a business management function rather than an operational security function.

The ethos and standards of the employer flow from the owners and board through the CEO to all others. This includes financial control, pricing, budgets, expansion, acquisitions, divestments, diversification, profitability, business compliances and corporate governance. Ensuring adequate resources are in place to support the business and its aims.

Advising the board on direction, strategy and policy and following through on implementing agreed strategies including a sustainable and realistic business plan. Monitoring the business environment for risk and threats to the business, it's sustainability and continuity. Providing accurate, timely and clear information to the board on an ongoing basis.

The CEO is the ultimate empowered individual decision maker on the day-to-day management of a company. The CEO will agree the criteria for and influence all other appointments, building and maintaining an effective management team to support the delivery of quality services. Upwards and downwards reporting and communications are vital to ensure all activity is coordinated and focused on the overall aims of the company. Providing leadership is an essential feature of the role.

The ultimate responsibility for legal and regulatory compliances, including safety, licensing, employment law and company law rests with the CEO.

The scale of the operation may see the operations manager, chief operations officer and chief executive officer roles held by one person.

The COO may deputise for the CEO.