



MASSEY UNIVERSITY Career and Employment Service

Transferable skills

One of the most useful approaches to making a career transition is to assess your personal skills and strengths, in order to understand what you are offering a prospective employer, or to use as a basis for future study or career choice. Most roles require a combination of technical skills (the skills and knowledge specific to a profession) and non-technical competencies, which include personal qualities and positive character traits.

We all possess a range of skills and strengths, built up over a lifetime of learning and experience, which are essentially a means of contributing to society. We may know them by a range of names, such as talents, gifts, or aptitudes. For a list of significant and relevant skills, see the [Action Words](#) handout. To acquire and utilise skills which are transferable from one context to another is an essential requirement for the modern workplace. Your unique portfolio of skills can be beneficial if you are able to apply them to your own experience and learning.

What skills do employers look for?

Employers look for functional or transferable skills in a new graduate and often presume you have acquired these skills during your years of study. A valuable exercise is to list the academic activities you have experienced as a student and then try to translate them into functional skills. For example:

Activity:

Structuring your time to meet deadlines:
Completing research projects:
Presenting tutorial or seminar papers:
Writing essays:
Collecting information to write research papers:

Can be translated to functional skills in:

Work programming or completing tasks
Collection and analysis of data
Oral communication
Analytical skills – creative or report writing
Locating and using resources

Commonly sought skills that can be developed through your studies include:

Information Management

Sorting and evaluating data
Synthesizing facts, concepts and principles
Applying information creatively to specific tasks

Compiling and ranking information
Organising information effectively
Using library and research resources

Design and Planning

Identifying alternative courses of action
Following through with a plan or decision
Predicting future trends and patterns
Accommodating multiple demands

Setting realistic goals
Managing time effectively
Making and keeping to a schedule
Setting priorities

Research and Investigation

Using a variety of sources for information
Applying a variety of methods to test validity of data
Using audio-visual formats/tools to present ideas

Identifying problems and needs
Undertaking detailed and accurate work
Working on projects

Communication

Use various forms of written communication
Using audio-visual formats to present ideas
Developing effective listening skills
Persuading others to accept your ideas
Making effective speeches and presentations

Speaking effectively to individuals and groups
Conveying a positive image to others
Listening actively
Comprehending and conveying written material
Following well-defined instructions

Human Relations and Interpersonal

Interacting effectively with peers, supervisors
Understanding the feelings of others
Teaching a skill, concept or principle to others
Demonstrating effective social behaviour
Helping people with their problems
Relating to a wide variety of people

Expressing own feelings appropriately
Showing commitment to others
Analysing behaviour of self and others in groups
Working well under pressure
Co-operating with a work team
Displaying interest in/empathy for others

Management and Administration

Identifying people who can help solve a problem
Identifying a range of resources available for solutions
Organising people and tasks to achieve specific goals

Analysing specific tasks
Motivating and leading others
Delegating tasks as required

Personal/Career Development

Developing personal growth goals that are motivating
Matching knowledge of self to career information
Predicting the consequences of own actions
Establishing goals and following through
Assessing personal values for career suitability

Analysing own life experiences
Identifying own strengths and weaknesses
Identifying and describing personal skills
Organising time effectively
Investigating job availability in your chosen field

Critical Thinking / Problem-solving

Identifying quickly and accurately the critical issues when making a decision or solving a problem
Identifying a general principle that explains related experiences or factual data
Defining the parameters of a problem
Identifying criteria for assessing the value of appropriateness of an action or behaviour
Adapting own behaviour and concepts to changing conventions and norms
Applying appropriate criteria to strategies and action plans
Creating innovative solutions to complex problems
Analysing the inter-relationship of events and ideas from several perspectives
Developing alternative approaches to problems
Identifying problem areas and making effective decisions
Analysing and evaluating ideas

Ongoing skill development

Repeating this exercise is a worthwhile activity for other aspects in your life. For example, you can also develop specific skills for work through campus activities. Such activity may include helping to run (and write for) student media and events; organising and chairing meetings, persuading people to join in activities, or tutoring. Part-time work to support yourself financially, from waitressing (tact, energy, carrying out requests correctly) through retail work (always valuable if you hope to go into marketing or indeed into any work where you have to deal with clients regularly) to data entry (accuracy, an eye for detail), all provide valuable skill development. We recommend engaging in activities that say something about you and therefore differentiate you from your peers.

For further information on transferable skills and skill development, please refer to the [Career and Employment Service: http://careers.massey.ac.nz](http://careers.massey.ac.nz)