

Skills audit

This resource sheet should help you to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Auditing these can influence the type of career role that you choose and can help as you apply for work and prepare for job interviews. Indeed, employers will expect you to articulate and evidence relevant skills. These skills can be developed at university; in work (of any type) and in your extra-curricular life.

In the table below, tick those skills which you have developed at university; in work or in life generally. Then, think of an example that would offer evidence of how you've used each skill. This table notes some of the most commonly sought skills but is not exhaustive. Think of other skills that you could add. Note too that you may identify skill gaps but that you can work to fill these whilst at Massey. Contact the staff of Massey's Career and Employment Service (<http://careers.massey.ac.nz>) for advice on this.

Skill	Uni	Work	Life	Example of using this skill
Communication				
Team work				
Negotiation				
Relationship building				
Leadership				
Critical thinking				
Problem solving				
Analytical				
Initiative				
Planning and organising				
Flexibility and adaptability				
Innovation				
Research				
Decision making				

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Skill	Uni	Work	Life	Example of using this skill
Business acumen				
I.T. skills				
Interpersonal				

Other skills	Uni	Work	Life	Example of using this skill

Now, take a few moments to record how competent you feel in each of these skills and the extent to which you would want to use each of them in a career.

A: In column two, rate your competence level in the skill concerned from 1 = Not at all competent to 4 = Very competent

B: In column three, rate the extent to which you would want to use the skill concerned in a career from 1 = Not at all to 4 = To a great extent.

Skill	Competence	Work
Communication		
Team work		
Negotiation		
Relationship building		
Leadership		
Critical thinking		
Problem solving		
Analytical		
Initiative		
Planning and organising		

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Skill	Competence	Work
Flexibility and adaptability		
Innovation		
Research		
Decision making		
Business acumen		
I.T. skills		
Interpersonal		

Others	Competence	Work

Having worked through this skills audit, you're likely to find that a number of the skills will have particular relevance to your choice of career and the kind of work you will do in the future. It's important to appreciate that most roles involve a range of skills that are, to a greater or lesser extent, important. Coupled with this, you may have skills which might not be needed in your job, but which will be used and developed in your life outside of work. In addition, note that you should also try to match your career choices to an analysis of your values; interests and personality.

Massey's Career and Employment Service (<http://careers.massey.ac.nz>) can offer you resources to assist with analysing these factors and generating resultant career ideas.

Remember too that skills can be developed. It is very possible that this exercise, and research that you do into your career options, will reveal skill gaps. These are areas you might need or want to develop and the Career and Employment Service staff can offer you suggestions of ways in which you could do so.



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Now however, you may want to use the work done in this particular audit to research how your skills relate to particular careers and potential employers. You could do this, for example, through:

- The information on a wide range of types of work found in 'jobs database' section of the Careers NZ site (<http://www.careers.govt.nz>)
- Attending career fairs and employer presentations – for details of those taking place on campus use the 'view all events' at <http://careerhub.massey.ac.nz> regularly
- Reading newspapers; industry magazines; company brochures and employer websites
- Undertaking relevant work experience or voluntary work and reviewing advertised jobs. To help with this use the 'view all jobs' tab at: <http://careerhub.massey.ac.nz>
- The NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Occupation Outlook Reports accessible at: <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/>
- Joining any relevant professional associations that operate in the career areas concerned – see: <http://www.indexnz.com/Top/Business-and-Economy/Services/Professional-Associations>
- Networking and informational interviews. The latter involves contacting people already working in the careers that interest you and interviewing them for information. The Career and Employment Service staff can offer you advice on this technique
- Exploring options with your major on sites such as <http://www.nomajordrama.co.nz>

COMMUNICATION

Good communication orally, in writing, or via electronic means is the key to being successful and satisfied in many situations: work, personal and social. At work, communication skills are most commonly shown in meetings, and in developing positive working relationships with colleagues and clients. They include the ability to use and understand language, whether spoken or on paper and you need a good command of language to get your ideas, opinions and feelings across clearly. Listening carefully is also a fundamental communication skill, as is the ability and confidence to ask questions when you need to understand something or get information from someone. Competence in a language other than English also counts as a communication skill as do interpersonal communication, presentation and negotiation skills.



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TEAM WORK

This can include your capacity for working effectively and collaboratively with others to achieve goals; your ability to co-operate; strengths in handling conflict and in assuming different roles as required and flexibility and adaptability. As a good team worker you may well be able to keep teams to task; have an aptitude for leadership; be skilled in recognising the strengths of other team members; be competent in encouraging others to contribute and have the ability to work with people who have different backgrounds, personalities and experiences to your own. Good team workers are those who can show flexibility; act with positivity; share responsibility; contribute ideas and cope well with changing demands.

NEGOTIATION

Are you skilled in discussing issues with others to arrive at a consensus or agreement? Do you have skills in dealing effectively with conflict, in mediation and in persuasion? Can you listen effectively and communicate with impact. All of these are good negotiation skills.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Here, skills include the ability to build and maintain relationships in person or via tools such as LinkedIn. Doing so effectively often requires the ability to motivate others; negotiate and reason; explain; listen; direct and accept direction and share. Coupled with this, relationship building skills can include advising; sharing; resolving conflict; being proactive and a keenness to get involved.

LEADERSHIP

Increasingly sought by employers, leadership skills include the ability to take control and to empower others to want to do something. As an effective leader you would inspire and energise others whilst showing a clear sense of direction and values. Any job which involves directing a team, managing a project, supervising people or teaching a skill is essentially about leadership. Employers will often be looking for evidence of leadership potential. Respect for others; sensitivity to honest reactions; sharing information and ideas; showing genuine concern; being willing to take risks and show initiative; having a sense of vision as well as proportion and communicating clearly about objectives are all components of good leadership. Sometimes it involves making personal sacrifices or showing you're willing to do so if necessary. Always it involves seeing and planning ahead and having people look up to you.

CRITICAL THINKING

A key skill developed by Humanities and Social Sciences students critical thinking skills include the ability to analyse issues by separating them into parts to discover their nature, function and relationships. Good critical thinkers can recognise similarities and differences and distinguish between factors. They are skilled information seekers who know how to gather evidence, facts or knowledge and how to assess these appropriately. They can draw inferences or conclusions based on evidence.



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PROBLEM SOLVING

Can you devise informed solutions through research; analysis and evaluation? Are you skilled in thinking creatively and laterally and in solving problems by applying logic? Skilled problem solvers commonly break problems down into their key components; consider a range of ways of approaching and resolving them and decide on the most appropriate of these ways. They see things differently and do things in a different way.

ANALYTICAL

Those who have good analytical skills can evaluate information effectively and use attention to detail; perseverance and focus when addressing problems. They can identify and critique problems; recognise underlying principles; define parameters, and construct strategies and solutions.

INITIATIVE

To demonstrate initiative you'll need to be resilient; tenacious; resourceful and determined. Those with initiative can think and act for themselves, often taking a different angle from that of others and one that hadn't been thought of before. Many find decision-making easy and follow through with the decisions they've made. They tend to get things done without waiting to be asked and are often highly self-motivated and enterprising; commonly taking the lead and using their own discipline and energy to achieve projects or tasks.

PLANNING AND ORGANISING

To be effective in planning and organising you'll need to be systematic and efficient and to be skilled in managing your work and other commitments and in meeting deadlines. Typical competencies within this include the ability to assess the time and effort required to complete a task then to identify and organise systems and resources. Many good organisers develop and use schedules; set themselves goals and milestones and allow time to adequately prepare. They are skilled in identifying key tasks; prioritising; applying logic to what needs to be done and in monitoring and adjusting their priorities on an on-going basis.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

These skills are closely connected to imagination and creativity. They are concerned with openness to new ideas and changing circumstances and a willingness (and ability) to take on new responsibilities; adapt and make the best of opportunities presented by change rather than automatically resisting it. Your personal circumstances and commitments may determine whether more or less flexibility is possible in your career and at different times in your life. Adaptable people can anticipate and react well to change, for example when settling in to new environments, or taking on more or different responsibilities quickly and easily.



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INNOVATION

This centres upon your ability to generate new opportunities; ideas; approaches and/or solutions or to improve existing ones. To do so effectively takes creativity and imagination which, in turn, relate to intelligence and are considered extremely valuable attributes in the work environment. They are hard to define. Imagination in a work context is about seeing new ways of doing a job; “thinking outside of the square”: solving problems or organising work that doesn’t merely follow set practices. Creativity does not mean only artistic talent. It means a way of thinking constructively and being inventive, as well as following up with practical suggestions. It means asking yourself, “is there a better way of doing this?” Exhibiting an interest in finding better ways of doing things will show your employer that you have imagination and creativity which may result in you being sought out to participate in projects.

RESEARCH

This is a key skill developed through a tertiary education. It encompasses your capacity to identify, gather and use data and information sources; investigate facts; design experiments; test data; follow set methodologies and report findings. Those with good research skills can use knowledge and skills to create solutions to unfamiliar problems. They have a keen awareness of research methodologies and can analyse and critically evaluate data and information. Coupled with this, they have the ability to generate and test hypotheses; synthesise and organise information and interpret findings.

DECISION MAKING

Those skilled at decision-making can analyse problems; researching options; evaluate the pros and cons of possible solutions and reach logical conclusions. Typically, they will be skilled in knowing how and when to seek help if required and at identifying the best sources of such help. Additionally, they are often creative in their approach to problems and issues.

In decision making, the solution chosen is often one where the positive outcome is seen as outweighing possible losses. Once sure of why a decision is necessary, you’re likely to need to collect relevant information and to decide the criteria on which possible solutions will be evaluated. Then, you’ll arrive at possible solutions; evaluate these; determine the optimum one and put this into action.

BUSINESS ACUMEN

Many graduate employers seek applicants with the ability to understand how the organisation operates, and the competition and other challenges that it faces. Additionally, people who have good business acumen understand the needs and concerns of client’s can make good decisions on how best to develop their businesses. Business acumen requires you to garner essential information about a situation; to concentrate on key objectives and to identify the relevant options that can lead to a solution.

Then, you would need to be skilled in choosing an appropriate course of action and in implementing plans to get things done. This may require adjustments and change in initial plans and action. Those with good business acumen focus on critical factors and understand the future consequences of actions taken today.



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I.T. SKILLS

Most jobs require, to a greater or lesser extent, IT skills. The ones required are likely to include familiarity with the Microsoft Office suite, particularly Word; Outlook; PowerPoint and Excel. Additionally, you'll often be expected to show a keenness to learn and use any IT packages specific to your role. Where you have skills in particularly relevant IT solutions or packages you should make brief note of these in your CV.

INTERPERSONAL

Interpersonal skills are the ones you use most in dealing with others and they can take many forms in the work environment. They may involve making contact with new people; motivating others and negotiating. Equally, they can include reasoning abilities; supervising; teaching skills; explaining; listening; directing; accepting direction; advising; sharing; resolving conflict; making unpopular decisions, and just getting on with all sorts of people. Interpersonal skills are closely linked to communication skills.

