EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

and Self-Assessment
Employability Skills

2.1 Introduction

The tow greatest concerns of employers today are finding good workers and training them. The difference between the skills needed on the job and those possesses by applicants, sometimes called the skills-gap, is of real concern of human resources managers and business owners looking to hire competent employees. While employers would prefer to hire people who are trained and ready to go to work, they are usually willing to provide the specialized, job-specific training necessary for those lacking such skills. Finding workers who have employability or job readiness skills that help them fit into and remain in the work environment is a real problem. Employers need reliable, responsible workers who can solve problems and who have social skills and attitudes to work together with other workers. Employees with these skills are in demand and are considered valuable human capital assets to companies.

2.2 Definition

The Australian Council of Educational research (ACER) identified a range of descriptors for the characteristics learners are expected to acquire. These are included in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Commonly understood to refer to an ability to perform a specific task</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td>Used to refer to an observable behavior performed to a specifies level and therefore provides a basis for the assessment of performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attributes, competencies, and characteristics</td>
<td>Refer to those capabilities of an individual in most instances although &quot;characteristics&quot; is sometimes used to describe a workplace/job specific requirement.</td>
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**Employability skills** are those basic, generic skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. They are required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic direction.

Employers look for Employability Skills in new recruits and they develop them through training programs in current employees to integrate and use them in varying combinations depending on the nature of the job activities, and to get along with their fellow workers and supervisors and to make critical decisions.

Unlike occupational or technical skills, employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industry types, business seizes, and job levels from the entry level worker to the senior-most position.

Employability Skills are developed in school and through a variety of life experiences outside school. The student, the family and the educational system, supported and enhanced by the rest of the society, share this responsibility.

**Employability = Employ + ability**

*literally that is the ability to be employed - potentially in lots of deferent jobs and workplaces.*

**Employability skills = the basic skills needed to function effectively at work, no matter what kind of work you’re doing.**
2.3 Why?

Economic glob has been through a decades of changes and economic growth and a strong focus on productivity improvement. Enterprises, in recognition of the economic challenges and globalization, have implemented a range of strategies to support growth and increase their international competitiveness. Such strategies include multitasking, greater automation, workforce restructuring. All of this led to changes in jobs by making more people working part-time jobs part of the year, workers making living through combination of different types of work, keeping customers happy is becoming more important, fewer opportunities for lower educational skills, and greater emphasis on trades and technology.

With companies continue to downsize, technology development and more people doing business globally, focus on adaptation, cost reduction, increased productivity, new markets/products/services, only workers who have more different responsibilities will remain. Recruitment and training choices are being largely driven by these business strategies. In this environment employees will need to be supporting increased competitiveness, flexibility, innovation, client focus and to use their skills in new ways.

2.3 Categories

Employability skills, while categorized in may different ways are generally divided into three sets:

1. Basic Academic Skills: Essential for high performance, gained from school
   - Reading
   - Writing
   - Science
   - Math
   - Oral Communication
   - Listening
   - Foreign Languages Fluency
   - Information / Communication Technology Handling

2. Higher-Order Thinking Skills: To do well and advance, important to job success, gained by self experience, development and learning
   - Self Learning
   - Reasoning
   - Creativity
   - Decision Making
   - Problem Solving
   - Logical Thinking

3. Personal Qualities: To effectively utilize the worker
   - Responsible, Accountable for the action taken
   - Self Confidence & Self esteem toward growth, learning, and personal health
   - Self Control
   - Social Skills
   - Honest and personal Ethics
   - Integrity & Reliability
   - Adaptable & Flexible
   - Team Spirit
   - Punctual and Efficient
   - Self Directed
   - Positive Balanced Attitude
   - Personal Presentation
   - Cooperative
   - Self Motivated
   - Self Management
   - Enthusiasm
   - Ability to deal with pressure
   - Loyalty
   - Commonsense
   - Commitment
2.5 What Are they?

According to research conducted by the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Australian National Training Authority (DEST, ANTA March 2002), the most common skills sought by employers are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Skills</th>
<th>Basic Definitions – Ability to...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Convey information in both verbal and written formats as appropriate for the needs of the target audience. It includes:</td>
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<td>• Listening and understanding</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Speaking clearly and directly</td>
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<td>• Writing to the needs of the audience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Negotiating responsively</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reading independently</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Empathising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Using numeracy effectively including graphs, charts, and displays</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understanding the needs of internal and external customers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Persuading effectively</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Establishing and using networks</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Being assertive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sharing information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Speaking and writing in languages other than Arabic.</td>
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<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Develop a rapport with others and form working relationships, listen effectively, manage conflict, understand human motivation, understand and respect cultural difference and have a global focus on interpersonal skills.</td>
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<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Work in groups towards a combined effort. It includes:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Working with people of different ages, gender, race, religion or political persuasion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understand and contribute to the organizational goals</td>
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<td>• Plan and make decisions with others and support the outcomes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Respect the thoughts and opinions of others in the group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Exercise &quot;give and take&quot; to achieve group results</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Working as an individual and as a member of a team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Knowing how to define a role as part of a team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Applying teamwork skills to a range of situations eg, crisis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Identifying strengths of team members</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coaching, mentoring, and giving feedback when appropriate to raise the performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Influence, supervise, direct and motivate others to achieve a recognised objective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>Be precise and correct in approach to tasks, have an eye for detail.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Originate or imagine new ideas, methods, or products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Basic Definitions – Ability to...</strong></td>
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| **Problem solving** | Understand and deal with difficult questions or things, apply logic or reasoning to review information, identify problems, their causes, evaluate options and select the best solution. It includes:  
  - Developing creative, innovative solutions  
  - Developing practical solutions  
  - Showing independence and initiative in identifying problems and solving them  
  - Solving problems in teams  
  - Applying a range of strategies to problem solving (Technology, Instruments, Tools, ..)  
  - Using mathematics including budgeting and financial management to solve problems  
  - Applying problem-solving strategies across a range of areas (Science, Social, Technology, ..)  
  - Testing assumptions, taking the context of data and circumstances into account  
  - Resolving customer concerns in relation to complex project issues. |
| **Initiative and enterprise** | Act without prompting, readiness to be energetic and inventive and contribute to innovative outcomes. It includes:  
  - Adapting to new situations  
  - Energy and persistence to get the job done  
  - Developing a strategic long-term vision  
  - Being creative  
  - Identifying opportunities not obvious to others  
  - Translating ideas into action  
  - Generating a range of options  
  - Initiating innovative solutions |
| **Planning and Organising** | Coordinate and give orderly structure to things or tasks. It includes:  
  - Managing time and priorities – setting timelines, coordinating tasks for self and others  
  - Being resourceful  
  - Taking initiative and making decisions  
  - Adapting resource allocations to cope with contingencies  
  - Establishing clear project goals and deliverables  
  - Allocating people and resources to tasks  
  - Planning the use of resources including time  
  - Participating in continuous improvement and planning  
  - Developing a vision and a proactive plan to accompany it  
  - Predicting – weighing up risk, evaluating alternatives, applying evaluation criteria  
  - Collecting, analysing, and organising information  
  - Understanding basic business systems and their relationships. |
<p>| <strong>Flexibility</strong> | Vary or adjust ones approach or style according to situational demands, welcome and manage change. Suggest new ideas to get the job done – creatively |</p>
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<td><strong>Self management</strong></td>
<td>Cope with, prioritise and meet one’s own work and personal commitments, have clear personal goals and strategies and measure performance in regards to these goals, be pro-active in career planning, time management and setting challenges, show personal and professional restraint and seek balance in all life aspects, including health and fitness. It includes:</td>
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|                               | • Having a personal vision and goals  
• Evaluating and monitoring own performance  
• Having knowledge and confidence in own ideas and vision  
• Articulating own ideas and vision  
• Taking responsibility. |
| **Ability to learn**           | Acquire additional new knowledge or skills via study, experience or through teaching or training. It includes:                                                                                                                                                        |
|                               | • Managing own learning  
• Contributing to the learning community at the workplace  
• Using a range of mediums to learn – mentoring, peer support, networking, IT, courses  
• Applying learning to technical issues (eg, products) and people issues (eg, interpersonal)  
• Having enthusiasm for ongoing learning  
• Being willing to learn in any setting, on and off the job  
• Being open to new ideas and techniques  
• Being prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills  
• Acknowledging the need to learn in order to accommodate change. |
| **Technology and Computers**   | Work with new technology and demonstrate proficiency with computer programs. It includes:                                                                                                                                        |
|                               | • Having a range of basic IT skills  
• Applying IT as a management tool  
• Using IT to organise data  
• Being willing to learn new IT skills  
• Having the occupational health and safety knowledge to apply technology  
• Having the appropriate physical capacity. |
Top 10 Employability Skills

- Communicate in writing
- Communicate face to face
- Can identify problems
- Can think creatively
- Can solve problems logically
- Respect the views and contributions of others
- Are punctual and manage own time
- Adaptable – can change direction
- Will ask questions – able to learn from mistakes
- Have a positive outlook (go for it)
The following skills and attributes have been identified as those required for the careers of the 21st Century by (Skills for Graduates in the 21st Century, The Association of Graduate Recruiters, 1999).

- **Self-awareness**: Identify skills, values, interests and other personal attributes. Identify core strengths and what sets you apart. Equipped with evidence of abilities. Seeks and gives feedback. Able to identify areas for personal, academic and professional development.

- **Self-promotion**: Written and oral. Defines and promotes own agenda. Can identify customer needs (academic/community/employer). Sells benefits not just features.

- **Exploring and creating opportunities**: Can identify, create, investigate and seize opportunities. Has research skills to find information, help and support.

- **Action planning**: Plan action to address: Where am I now? Where do I want to be? How do I get there? Implement action plan: organise time, identify steps to goal and prepare contingency plans. Monitor and evaluate progress against objectives.

- **Networking**: Define, develop and maintain. Good telephone skills.

- **Matching and decision making**: Understands personal priorities and constraints (internal and external). Able to balance work/home pressures. Match opportunities to skills, knowledge, values and interests. Makes informed decisions.

- **Negotiation**: Negotiate psychological contract from position of powerlessness. Win/win agreements.

- **Political awareness**: Understands hidden tensions and power struggles. Knows location of power and influence.

- **Coping with uncertainty**: Able to adapt goals in the light of changing circumstances. Able to take risks.

- **Development focus**: Committed to lifelong learning. Understands preferred method and style of learning. Reflects on learning from experiences, good and bad. Able to learn from mistakes of others.

- **Transfer skills**: Able to apply skills to new contexts.

- **Self-confidence**: Has an underlying confidence in abilities, based on past successes. Has a personal sense of self-worth, not dependent on performance.

### 2.6 Acquiring Employability skills

Meaningful reflection takes practice. As you are continually learning and experiencing new things in life, it is therefore important to continually reflect on your skills and attributes that are likely to change over time. On a regular basis, try to make some time to think about your progress. At first, you may need to guide your reflection with questions such as these:

- What did I learn today?
- What did I do well?
- What am I confused about?
- What do I need help with?
- What do I want to know more about?
- What am I going to work on improving next?
Remember that in order to succeed you need to be proactive - you are in charge of your own career. It is important that you use your time at UNSW to enhance your awareness of the changing world of work and yourself, to generate your own career options and to manage your own personal development throughout all stages of life. This will help you to become a Self Reliant Graduate. So try to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible in order to improve your skills and abilities as a starting point. Perhaps you need to upgrade your skills to advance at work or get another job. Maybe you just want to learn a new skill for your own purposes. Whatever your learning need, you have a wide variety of options to achieve your goals.

- **Find the Right Program**: Perhaps you need to finish high school or upgrade a particular skill. Maybe you want to go to college or university. Whatever your situation, there are a wide variety of programs
- **Self-Study**: you are already use this method informally to learn how to do everyday tasks. But self-study is also a way you can learn more systematically.
- **On the Job Learning**: Training at work can be as informal as finding someone to help you learn a skill to being in an apprenticeship program. Learn about different kinds of on-the-job learning methods such as:
  - specialized training
  - coaching/mentoring
  - job shadowing
  - internships
  - volunteerism
  - apprenticeship
  - professional development
- **In the Classroom**: Are you considering taking a classroom course? Many adults find that going back to school is a positive and enriching experience. Why? Because they are:
  - Highly motivated.
  - Eager to learn quickly because their time is valuable.
  - Bring useful background knowledge to classroom discussions.
  The result is that most adults find that any problems they had at school when they were young no longer exist. In fact, many instructors say that their adult students are challenging, stimulating and rewarding to teach because of their curiosity/life experiences.
- **Online Learning**: Some people live too far from a school; others have schedules that don't allow for a regular classroom program. If you fit this "picture," then learning online could be a good learning option.

Jotting down the answers to the following questions will help you create an **Action Learning Plan** for getting the learning experience you want

- **What do I want to learn?**
- **Why do I want to learn this?**
- **What are the possible ways of learning?**
- **What method will work best given the way I like to learn and how I intend to use it?**
- **What resources and supports are available to help me?**
- **How will I know I've learned?**
- **What are the things I need to do and when do I need to do them?**

### 2.7 Employability Skills Assessment

The best way to assess your skills and abilities is to consider the situations in which you have demonstrated or applied them. Some of the areas of life experience that you may want to consider include:

1. Academic experience and results
2. Work experience – paid and unpaid
3. Extra curricular involvement
These three areas are ones most typically examined by employers when they recruit graduates. This is because they usually provide an employer with the best evidence of the skills they value and all employers are looking for the Balanced Graduate. Other ways in which you can further understand and evaluate your skills and abilities is by discussing them with friends, colleagues and family members.

What Is a Self Assessment?

Self-assessment is the process of “knowing yourself.” It involves taking an inventory of your likes, dislikes, personal characteristics, values, wants, and needs. It is the first part of the career management process. Before you can decide what you want to be, you first have to discover who you are. People are constantly changing, growing, and developing. Therefore, it is necessary for everyone to re-assess themselves periodically in relation to their career goals.

Self-assessment includes:

**Interests**

Things you enjoy doing can give you important clues about work or career interests. Fixing things, using computers, cooking, and caring for children are just a few examples of everyday activities and skills that can be transferred into a career.

**Personality**

Each person’s unique combination of emotional and behavioral characteristics constitutes their personality. Different careers fit better with different personality traits. For example, an outgoing, friendly person who enjoys meeting and talking to people all day would be suited for jobs in sales, customer service, or public relations.

**Skills**

Skills are acquired not only from past work experiences, but also from community service and other roles in your life. Skills are divided into three types:

- **Transferable or functional skills** — Skills that can be transported from one job to another.
- **Self-management or adaptive skills** — Skills or strengths developed through life and work experience, or from exposure to role models. They are also behaviors learned in families and from significant others. Certain self-management skills are very important in some occupations, less important in others.
- **Technical or work content skills** — Skills that are learned through training and often can be applied only to a narrow range of occupations. Recognizing the satisfaction generated from using these skills can sometimes indicate alternative career choices.

**Abilities**

Talents and natural abilities often indicate potential in a particular area. People often take for granted the skills that come easily to them, yet those are precisely the areas that should be explored when considering careers. With training, natural aptitudes may turn into career options.

**Work Values**

The motivation or personal incentives needed for job satisfaction are unique to each person. By examining your work values, you can prioritize what role work plays in your life. However, as you grow and mature, some of your values may change. Therefore, a job or career chosen at age
20 may not match the values held at age 40 or 50.

**Lifestyle & Financial Considerations**

Your preferred living conditions can affect your career and occupational choices, and vice versa. By assessing how you want to live and considering the finances required to support that lifestyle, you can evaluate how your career decisions may impact you and the significant people in your life, and whether there are existing or potential barriers to overcome. Financial needs are an important consideration. Knowledge of monthly expenses and having realistic financial goals can help in choosing appropriate occupations.

**Preferred Work Environment**

Preferences regarding working conditions can be just as important as what you choose to do. Work environment can play a large part in how you feel about your job. Often, your comfort level with where you work can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful career choice.

**Online Self Assessment Tests**

- http://www.collegeview.com
- http://www.2h.com/personality-tests.html
- http://www.assessment.com
- http://www.acg.gi.org/acgtest
- http://www.creax.com/csa
- http://www.scientology.org/oca.htm
- http://www.colorwize.com
- http://web.tickle.com
- http://www.acareertest.com
- http://www.self-directed-search.com
- http://growcareers.zu.ac.ae/partners/zu/gen/article.adp?body=article&id=67&access=417383809&mod=1093675057

**Career tests:**

- Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ)
- Survey of interpersonal Values (SIV)
- Temperament and values inventory (TVI)
- Strong interest inventory (SII)
- Self-directed Search (SDS)
- Mayers-Briggs Type indicator (MBTI)