Personal Transferable Skills

Employers take a keen interest in the personal qualities and personal skills of potential employees. Together with academic discipline knowledge and skills they will be used to distinguish and select candidates. In some positions, personal qualities and skills are the only selection criteria used by employers.

You need to be able to identify your personal skills and qualities, assess how well you can demonstrate them, determine how you can enhance them before you graduate, and communicate them to employers.

To assist you with career planning it is recommended that you access the **Planning Your Next Career Move** Blackboard site, under **Plan your career** in the **Course/career planning** section of the C&E website. For more information, go to **Applications** and/or **Workshops & workbooks** under the **Getting a job** section of the C&E website.

Personal Qualities and Attributes

Recent Australian research has identified the following list of personal qualities and attributes which employers consider when developing criteria to select graduates. The first two, initiative and leadership are by far the most commonly used.

- initiative
- leadership
- enthusiasm
- innovation/lateral thinking
- goal direction: long and short term

- aptitudes (e.g. numeracy/literacy)
- commitment
- entrepreneurship
- motivation
- ambition
- temperament (e.g. extravert/introvert)

- special talents (e.g. music, computing)
- self assurance/confidence
- determination
- values
- adaptability
- intellectual capacity

Personal Skills

Extensive research has also identified clusters of personal skills called Personal Transferable Skills (PTS). These are skills developed through your education, work, hobby, social, and other life experiences, which can be recognised, developed, and applied across a number of setting and contexts. These skills are unique to each person and have a particularly valuable contribution to make in career planning and getting a job. Recent research has consistently identified four underlying clusters of PTS, which are vital in graduate recruitment.

Communication skills
The ability to communicate effectively through reading, writing, speaking, listening, using communications technology, and through non-verbal techniques, with individuals, and/or groups in a variety of personal, social, and problem-solving situations.

Teamwork skills
The ability to operate effectively as a member of a team in completing tasks, solving problems or working towards agreed goals.

Managing and organising skills
The ability to plan and devise a framework and timetable for action and carry these out systematically, either for individual purposes or in a group context.

Problem solving skills
The ability to identify, analyse, and describe a problem or group of problems, to consider the context and impact of the problem, to apply knowledge in proposing and reviewing various solutions, decide on the most appropriate ones, and work out ways of putting these into effect.

PTS are developed in a wide variety of settings and contexts, which include – lectures, tutorials, seminars, projects debates, social clubs, accommodation arrangements, budgeting, friendships, groups, hobbies, sports, and recreational activities. The skills can be transferred and applied in other settings. You need to identify and assess how good your PTS are and how you are going to build up the range of skills relevant to your industry or job search before you graduate.

Four Main Clusters of PTS's

Communication

Effective writing	Effective speaking	Listening	Languages other than English	Computing facility
• report writing	• making speeches	• active listening	• conversing	• data entry
• essay writing	• leading tutorials	• checking for understanding	• being understood	• word processing
• reviewing	• instructing	• reflecting	• writing	• desktop publishing
• editing	• debating	• summarising	• reading	• analysing
• critiques	• leading a group	• clarifying	• understanding	• interpreting
• preparing talks	• interviewing	• encouraging	• thinking	• calculating
• research	• advising		• translating	• developing
• documenting	• counselling		• recognising cultural clues	• designing
• referencing	• persuading			• simulating
• articles	• presenting a case			

Teamwork

Cooperation

- helping in a crisis
- facilitating
- waiting your turn
- trusting members
- accepting differences
- contributing
- sharing tasks
- collaborating

Inspiring/Motivating others

- explaining
- being approachable
- empathising
- praising
- rewarding
- supporting
- mediating
- supervising
- leading

Managing & Organising

Organising ability

- planning ahead
- contingency planning
- adapting to change
- setting realistic timelines
- reviewing progress
- learning from experience
- delegating

Ability to work independently

- being self motivated
- being self disciplined
- knowing own limitations
- trusting your own judgement
- taking responsibility
- coping with stress
- managing time effectively
- concentrating on the task at hand

Problem Solving (Creatively)

Identifying & analysing
- literature searching
- collecting data
- collating information
- prioritising
- classifying
- hypothesising
- speculating
- drawing conclusions

Applying knowledge
- reworking
- reorganising
- testing new conditions
- making connections
- applying formulae

Research
- locating information
- organising material
- sourcing information
- using retrieval systems
- evaluating data identifying facts
- gathering data
- drawing inferences

Aware of social & political contexts
- keeping up with current issues
- being sensitive to the environment
- awareness of current needs
- seeing issues in a broad context

Appreciation of values & ethics
- experiencing other cultures
- having an open mind
- recognising prejudices
- keeping personal integrity

Decision making & follow through
- allocating time
- allocating money
- choosing a course
- choosing subjects
- being realistic
- considering the long term
- making decisions under pressure
- judging likely consequences

Identifying Skills and Experiences

The list of questions below are provided to assist you in identifying the marketable skills and experiences you may have and/or wish to develop.

Personal Skills

Communication skills

➢ Have you obtained good marks in seminar presentations, or been a debater?
➢ Have you had to deal, under pressure, face-to-face with the public?
➢ Have you been involved in community activities?
➢ Have you done any research projects during your courses and written them up using a specific format?

Teamwork

➢ What sports have you played? For how long?
➢ Did you initiate projects whilst on committees?
➢ What were the outcomes?
➢ What roles did you take in team project work?
➢ Have you supervised other workers?

Problem solving

➢ Have you designed an experiment, plan or model that systematically addresses a problem?
➢ Have you identified information sources appropriate to special needs or problems?
➢ Did you learn the tasks faster than the average worker/student?
➢ In your part-time work were you quickly shifted through a variety of tasks, whereas most other workers/students stayed on the one task?
➢ Have you dealt with people from a variety of backgrounds (culturally different, different age groups, or special needs)?

Managing & organisation skills

➢ Have you been on committees in sporting, hobby or community service areas?
➢ Have you been on Academic Consultative Committees whilst in tertiary study?
➢ What was your role in any clubs or societies?
➢ Have you carried out clerical duties in paid or voluntary work?
➢ Have you used a cash register?
➢ Have you been involved in fund raising?
➢ Do you do the accounts for the family business?
➢ Have you supported yourself through university?
➢ Did you get promotions within your employment?
➢ Were you put in charge of a particular facet of the job?

Personal Qualities

Initiative/Entrepreneurial

➢ Have you been involved in any business venture?
➢ Did you re-organise some aspect of your job or projects to make them easier?
➢ Have you generated any new ideas or suggestions at work/school or university?
➢ Have you informally or formally trained new workers?

Leadership

➢ In your part-time job were you left in charge of the section/business in the manager's absence?
➢ At school were you a class captain, house captain, or on the student council?
➢ Have you successfully persuaded a group or a senior person to support your idea or point of view?
➢ During a group study project have you taken the initiative and organised your fellow students, so that the deadlines were met?

Goals setting/Competitiveness

➢ Have you won sports competitions? In which years?
➢ Have you won academic prizes?
➢ Were you selected for leadership training?
➢ How long have you been pursuing your career goal? What steps have you already taken?

Professional ethics

➢ Do you regularly read any professional journals, or do extra work in your subject area, over and above your required academic study?
➢ Do you belong to any relevant professional associations?

Temperament

➢ Do you tend to work on many activities simultaneously or pursue a few in depth?
➢ Do you tend to focus on the big picture or the fine detail?
➢ Do you tend to plan well ahead or be spontaneous and flexible?

Expressing Transferable Skills

You cannot expect prospective employers to read between the lines or spend time trying to work out your skills. You need to list them using action words to introduce each of them.

University Experience

Use action words to spell out the skills you have developed through university activities.

In your essays / assignments, you...

- formulate hypotheses and test them
- assess and evaluate information
- develop and use inductive/deductive reasoning
- acquire skills in the area of technical presentation
- exercise your ability to think laterally
- extrapolate/summarise
- learn to be self motivated
- operate independently and work without supervision
- develop self esteem/self confidence
- manage and cope with stress
- learn to work under pressure and meet deadlines
- question, reflect, and attempt to clarify

In your tutorials, you...

- explain, persuade
- negotiate
- handle controversy
- constructively disagree, confront, resolve
- non verbally communicate

As a committee member, you...

- deal with conflict, negativity, apathy, passivity
- communicate orally in large groups
- build on others' ideas
- demonstrate leadership
- manage a budget
- write and produce reports and newsletters
- cope with the unexpected
- show capacity to improvise

Work Experience

Task and responsibility undertaken in work environments need to be translated into PTS, which employers can readily identify. See below for an example of working as a waiter/waitress. The **Student Portfolio** on QUT Virtual is also a great way for you to organise your experiences and identify your PTS.

Tasks	➜	Skills Developed
Wait a table	➜	attending to clients
Serve food and drinks to many tables	➜	prioritising and managing tasks
Take food from kitchen	➜	taking instructions
Look after the bills	➜	handling money
Talk to customer/try to satisfy needs	➜	effective communications with customers, handling conflict, resolving problems
Handle many tasks quickly	➜	time and task management
Working with restaurant manager, chef, kitchen staff & other waiters	➜	working in a team, taking instructions, collaborating with members
Cleaning tables and floor plan set up	➜	developing professional presentations
Personally neat, tidy, groomed	➜	professional grooming