

Personal Development

Transferable Skills Profile and Action Plan

1. Introduction

The aim of this exercise is to get you to think about the skills and knowledge you have already acquired – both inside and outside the lecture theatre – as well as from any other life experiences, such as a previous occupation or bringing up a family.

Often, students leave university believing that they have acquired no skills that will be relevant to future employment. A typical statement from a recent graduate is “Well, I’ve learned how to write essays – but that’s no good when you start working!” However, a degree course provides students with much more than the ability to write essays or reports – it provides you with a repertoire of *‘Personal Transferable Skills’*.

But what exactly are transferable skills?

Transferable skills are developed in many ways and can be used in a variety of situations, across the whole spectrum of employment. They can include skills such as the ability *to communicate, to work in a team and to organise other people*. There are many other skills, which can be transferred from one situation to another.

Useful Information:

A. Assiter, *Transferable Skills in Higher Education*. Kogan Page (1995)

D. Hind, *Transferable Personal Skills – a student guide*. Business Education Publishers Limited (1989)

People with good transferable skills are in demand. When applying for a job, it will be necessary to know which of these skills you possess, so that you can ‘sell yourself’ to prospective employers.

The following exercise provides you with the chance to identify some of your skills by thinking of situations where you may have acquired them and put them into practice.

2. Skills Profile Exercise

The table on the following page provides a list of 21 transferable skills that you may have acquired during your time at university (academic or extra-curricular), while working, or through other experience.

For each of the skills in the table, give yourself a score, ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high), indicating what your level of competence is for that skill.

When you have scored yourself, look at 5 of the skills that are your strongest. Try to think of an occasion when you have acquired that skill, or put it into practice. Don't limit yourself to course work – try to think of other activities and interests – e.g. being involved in the running of a society or travelling abroad. If you can think of any other skills, add them to the table, using the blank boxes.

Finally, look at the 5 skills with the lowest score – or five skills that you think you should develop - and consider how you can do to improve.

Skill	Definition	Level of my competence 1 (low) to 5 (high)				
		1	2	3	4	5
Team work	Can work effectively with a group of people to complete tasks.					
Written communication	Can communicate ideas and information effectively by writing.					
Spoken communication	Can communicate ideas and information effectively by speech.					
Listening	Can pick out important information when others are speaking and be seen to be listening with care.					
Logical argument	Can get a point across in a logical, ordered and concise manner.					
Problem solving	Can identify obstacles to the completion of tasks and devise solutions to overcome them.					
Analytical skills	Can analyse and critically evaluate information.					
Creativity	Can create/design objects or systems , using originality, imagination and inventiveness.					
Flexibility	Can adjust and adapt to changing situations, and turn easily from one subject to another.					
Leadership	Can get other people to					

Skill	Definition	Level of my competence 1 (low) to 5 (high)				
		1	2	3	4	5
	work together to accomplish an objective.					
Organisation	Can structure/arrange resources and time to accomplish objectives.					
Decision making	Can make a calculated decision between two or more alternatives.					
Numeracy	Can work with figures, make calculations, and pick out important numerical information.					
Physical	Can undertake physically demanding tasks involving muscular co-ordination.					
Practical	Can use hands, tools and machinery, can solve problems by practical approaches.					
Time management	Can perform several tasks at the same time and achieve goals within the allotted period.					
Self confidence	Can express own ideas clearly and diplomatically when working with a range of other people.					
Commercial Awareness	Knows how organisations work, and can work within systems and constraints operated by employers.					

Skill	Definition	Level of my competence 1 (low) to 5 (high)				
		1	2	3	4	5
Self-development	Can evaluate own performance and take action to improve/learn new things.					
Information technology	Can use IT to create, present and organise data.					
Tact	Can identify and handle sensitive situations, showing tact, diplomacy and honesty appropriately.					

Skill	Definition	Level of my competence 1 (low) to 5 (high)				
		1	2	3	4	5

From the list above, pick out 5 skills in which you feel you are most competent and give **evidence** to support this claim.

Skill	Evidence for possessing this skill

3. What could I do to improve my transferable skills?

Select your 5 lowest scores – or the five skills you think it is most important to develop - and use this table to try to work out what you could do to improve those skills (i.e. write the skill in the left hand box and the method of improvement in the right.)

Skill	What I could do