

MMU Professional Passport

Guidance Notes for the Application Process

Revised June 2011

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General instructions

You should be in your final or penultimate year of undergraduate study or on a taught postgraduate programme. Part one of the process consists of:

- An up-to-date Curriculum Vitae
- An Application Form

Success in part one will lead to part two which is an interview and presentation.

To ensure a successful application you must carefully follow the instructions and advice in the [Guidance Notes](#) and also take the time to look at the Marking Sheet that will be used to assess you. These are both available on the MMU Passport [website](#).

Both parts of the application for the MMU Professional Passport must be received by 5.00 pm on Friday 18 November 2011.

Email your application to passport@mmu.ac.uk putting 'Passport Application' in the title line. Please name your documents 'Your name CV' and 'Your name Application Form.' You will receive email confirmation of receipt.

Applications will be assessed and you will be informed of the outcome in the week commencing Monday 19th December.

All applicants **must** go to the following workshops and your attendance will be checked. If you are unable to attend you **MUST** telephone the Careers and Employability Service on Tel 0161 247 3483.

If you do not attend we will be unable to process your application.

Prior to submission of stage one (application form and CV) attend:

- ◆ Online Application Forms – Net That Job!
- ◆ How To Write Great CVs

Prior to stage two (interview and presentation) attend:

- ◆ Successful Interviews – How To Be the Chosen One
- ◆ How To Present Like A Professional

These workshops are run by the Careers and Employability Service. For dates go to our [website](#).

Support

You are entitled to a Careers Appointment to discuss your CV and application form. Please visit the [Careers website](#) for details on how to book an appointment.

Part one – the Application Form and CV

Curriculum Vitae

The CV must be completed as a word processed document.

In general your CV must:

- Be up-to-date
- Be written in an appropriate format
- Be no longer than two sides of A4
- Present yourself positively, but be honest
- Have perfect grammar, spelling, layout and use of English

For help writing your CV please refer to the career guide '[CVs and Covering Letters](#)' and the information provided on the [Prospects Website](#)

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Application Form – General Advice

The Application Form must be completed as a word processed document. The application form is made up of 2 sections. Make sure you answer all the questions.

Write in good English and full sentences in the application form (do not use bullet points).

The questions in the application are likely to be similar to ones you will see when applying for real jobs, so the work you do now will be valuable in the future. Producing a successful application will take time and a number of drafts. You will need to carefully evaluate your experiences to date and select evidence from a range of different experiences, e.g. paid work, volunteering and academic study to answer the questions successfully. If you have maintained a Personal Development Portfolio during your course this will be really helpful to you in completing your application form, as you should have most of what you need at your fingertips.

For general guidance regarding completing job application forms please refer to the [career guides](#) on the Careers and Employability website. Look for the 'Application Forms and On-line Applications' guide. You will also find useful information on the [Prospects website](#)

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The application form is in two parts and we will deal with each in detail.

Application Form - Section One

The information in this section provides the evidence you will use to answer the questions in section two.

The form says: ***'Academic Development – 'List the transferable skills you have gained including any specific skills training, work experience, projects and group work etc. Briefly describe how you gained them.'*** **This can be used as evidence in section two of the application form**

This section **does not** require you to list every unit in your degree but rather to consider the constituent elements that you would wish to highlight to an employer. This is asking you to think about your academic studies in a way that an employer who does not know anything about your subject area would understand. In the date column, term and year will be sufficient.

The form says: ***'Work Related and International/Cultural/Community Involvement - Please list the other activities and experiences you will be using as evidence to support this application, including dates and number of hours'***.

You are required to have undertaken a minimum of 150 hours of activities that develop your employability skills during your time at university in at least two of the areas listed on the form. Mature students may have recent employment experience immediately prior to starting their degree which it is acceptable to refer to. **Hours and Dates** must be listed but these can be approximated i.e. summer 2007, 12 hours spent teaching horse riding.

The important thing to learn about this section is to select examples that will interest a future employer. What will interest them is evidence of a wide range of activities that demonstrate your abilities, skills and attributes. **You need to list things that you will subsequently refer to in the rest of your application!** Avoid putting down everything you have ever done, but instead, select the areas that have been valuable to your personal development.

Examples could include:

- Paid part-time, full time or holiday jobs, including student ambassador work
- Internships, placements or work experience, paid or unpaid
- Voluntary work of any kind, including fundraising activities and roles such as hall rep or course rep, and helping to run clubs or societies
- Community work such as faith-based activity or caring responsibilities
- Enterprise activity such as running your own business, Flux, Flying Start
- Significant cultural or sporting activity within or outside your course
- International exchanges

It is not possible to be very prescriptive about the activities you can undertake; if you are unsure as to whether a particular activity is valid, you can discuss it at your part one [Careers Appointment](#).

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Application Form - Section Two

Overview

These questions are asking you to provide a specific example to illustrate a particular fundamental skill which employers seek. The skill could have been developed in another context, for example, in academic study or volunteering but can be transferred into the workplace. These are known by a variety of names such as transferable skills, key skills, high level skills, graduate skills or employability skills and are the core skills employers look for.

Generally when looking at the questions you will realise that most of your activities can fit into more than one category. It is your choice where you place particular bits of evidence as long as you clearly demonstrate how it supports your application. Remember, it is the art of selling your skills with concrete examples that is important, so it is up to you as to which ones you wish to highlight in any particular area.

Word Count

A word count is given for each question. This should guide the length of your answer. You should not exceed it, nor be dramatically under it. The greater the word count, the more in-depth your answer should be. Ensure you insert your word count in the space provided.

There are detailed guidance notes below for each question.

Targeting your answers

If you have a particular career in mind it is helpful to highlight this in your responses.

If you have a clear career idea:

You will be able to identify the skills required for that career by looking at the [occupational profiles](#) on the Prospects website. This will give a focus to your application and will really boost your chances of success.

If you have a general idea (e.g. the health service, or media):

Use the [Industry Insights](#) on the Prospects website to consider the main features of the sector and use the links to several job roles to get an idea of key skills you will need.

If you have no career idea at all:

You can still apply for the Passport; see the [option sheet](#) for your subject on the Prospects website. This will highlight the key skills developed within a degree area. Choose skills which are required in almost any employment situation and work with those. You could also look at [‘What do employers want?’](#)

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STAR Model – how to sell your skills using concrete examples

On the application form you are asked to answer the questions using the STAR model:

Situation

Task

Action

Result

Example Question

‘Give an example of a time when you have had to lead or co-ordinate the work of other people.’

Example Answer:

Last year, I was captain of the MMU Ladies’ Hockey Team (**Situation**). I had to both organise the fixtures and also motivate the players to come to training sessions and perform well in matches (**Task**). I decided to delegate the fixtures to my vice-captain, who is a good organiser, and concentrate on building and inspiring my team. I found a coach to give a couple of specific sessions around successful match play strategies and, having got their agreement, tried some of my team in different positions to maximise the skills of the players. I was always positive and confident about our chances (**Action**). We came top of the University Hockey League in the North West for the first time in ten years (**Result**).

(Word count 120)

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The Questions

Questions 1-5 ask you to give evidence for skills in five areas. We have given you a broad definition of each skill area under each question. Think about the definition and then how you can use the evidence you supplied in section one to demonstrate it. Try to use a balance of examples with evidence from academic study, work experience and extra curricular activities and try to use a different example for each question. In questions 6 and 7 you can choose your own skill to demonstrate your competency. **Remember to use the STAR model when answering questions.**

In the past we have found that some students struggle to draw evidence from their academic studies, so we have added some extra suggestions related to academic study below each definition to give you the idea.

Guidance for individual questions

Question 1 'Describe a time when you have worked in a team. What was the task, what was your role, and what was the outcome?'

The skill being asked for here is **teamwork**:

A definition of **teamwork** is: 'working effectively with other people and being constructive as a team member. Knowing your role, such as leading, organising, co-ordinating, generating ideas or supporting and contributing practically to the success of the team.' In terms of academic study this could be demonstrated by a project you have undertaken with others. Try to illustrate your specific role within the team and how you co-operated with the rest of your team

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Question 2 'Problem solving is highly valued by employers. Tell us about a time when you solved a problem. What did you do and what was the benefit?'

The skill being asked for here is **problem solving**:

A definition of **problem solving** is: 'having a "can do" attitude by finding solutions to problems; thinking things through in a logical way in order to determine key issues, often also including creative thinking; weighing up different solutions and considering different options before making a decision; being resourceful in the way you find a solution.' Academic work also asks you to solve problems creatively e.g. brainstorming ideas, doing things a different way, being influenced by new stimuli such as new music, being open to ideas when they are still new, asking questions such as 'what if?'. It could also mean approaching a project or dissertation in a logical, planned way.

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Question 3 'Tell us about a time when you had many competing demands. What were these and what strategies did you use to cope successfully?'

The skill being asked for here is **time management**:

A definition of **time management** is: 'being able to use time constructively, being able to juggle and prioritise tasks and to meet deadlines. This question is asking you how you structure your time and adopt particular strategies to use it effectively. In academic terms this could mean keeping only one diary in which you write all deadlines for assessments and forward plan when you start working towards them, or creating a time-line or term planner with activities for the full term ahead. Think about the practical steps you take to organise your time.'

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Question 4 'There are many different aspects to successful communication, such as writing factually or creatively, using IT, presenting to a group or negotiating with an individual. There are many others. Give us examples of **two** ways in which you communicate effectively.'

The skill being asked for here is **communication**:

A definition of **communication** is: 'ensuring you are understood by writing or speaking in a clear and articulate manner which is appropriate to the audience; could include listening, persuading or influencing.'

This question is asking you to analyse your communication skills and identify the strongest element, such as negotiating, persuading, giving feedback or presenting. It could include communicating visually, graphically or using ICT. Make it clear which two ways you have chosen.

In academic terms, this could be:

- ◆ Writing essays
- ◆ Making notes
- ◆ Understanding referencing and plagiarism
- ◆ Researching, planning, interpreting the questions
- ◆ Presenting information, knowing your audience, preparation using visual aids, speed and pacing and leaving times for questioning
- ◆ Giving and receiving criticism effectively
- ◆ Assertiveness
- ◆ Skilful Listening

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Question 5 'Tell us about an activity or project you have planned (either alone or in a group). What did you do to make it a success?'

The skill being asked for here is **planning**:

A definition of **planning** is: 'able to plan and carry out a workload or project logically, efficiently and effectively; having energy and enthusiasm in pursuing projects; able to prioritise and multi-task. Managing your own learning and developing yourself.' You may well be able to find examples here from your work or personal life, e.g. planning a major travel trip. In academic terms this could be choosing options or choosing a

placement and what you want to get out of it. It involves research, decision making and weighing up the options to make sure you make the right decision.

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Question 6 'Using not more than 250 words tell us about a skill which you have developed within your degree. Describe, with examples, how you developed it and evaluate how it will be useful to you from an employment perspective in the future' Choose one skill only; it is acceptable to choose a skill already referred to in previous questions, but you should describe it in more detail and use different evidence.

Question 7 'Using not more than 250 words tell us about a different skill which you have developed through work-related experience/volunteering or cultural/community/international involvement. Describe, with examples, how you developed this one skill and evaluate how it will be useful to you from an employment perspective in the future: It is acceptable to choose a skill already referred to in questions 1-5, but you should describe it in more detail and use different evidence.

General help for questions 6 and 7

Questions 6 and 7 are both longer (250 words) and so require a deeper analysis. They ask you to describe a process of development. This involves the idea of something which happens over a period of time and which gradually gets better or more skilful; so, for example, if you were using note-taking as your skill, you might start by saying 'In my first year at university, I realised that my notes were inadequate as I couldn't understand them when I came to look at them again'. You might then describe what strategies you used to improve your note-taking, using at least two different examples, so that eventually (perhaps by your third year) you can show that you have become a very skilled note-taker. Talking about the strategies you adopted or tried could be important, or you could describe how your skills have been developed by experiences you have had. You are still using the STAR model to answer these two questions, but you are looking for more than one example to illustrate your answer and describing the process carefully. Clearly state which skill you are choosing to write about!

Your choice of each of the two skills will be important, as you need to find several concrete examples and you then need to evaluate how each skill will be valuable to you in the context of employment. It is helpful to refer to the career you have in mind when you are discussing the skills you have developed (see section above: 'Targeting your answer'). Do not choose skills which are too broad, vague or woolly, e.g. 'communication', as it will be difficult to write a good answer – choose a more specific communication skill, such as negotiation or presentation. Ask yourself if it is clear to the markers which skill you have chosen to write about.

You could select skills already used in previous answers but there are many others that you might want to consider using. Skills which you have developed in your academic studies, work experience and extra-curricular activities are the same ones that employers look for in the workplace, just in a different context.

Broad skill areas could be as follows, but you don't have to use this list: these suggestions however, may help you with ideas:

- Learning strategies – memory, motivation, time management, learning from lectures, independent study, reading and research strategies, getting support
- Writing – making notes, essay writing, interpretation of the question, research, planning revision, referencing, creating a portfolio
- Thinking – critical and analytical – identifying the main line of reasoning in what you read, critically evaluating this, identifying hidden agendas in your sources and in your own writing, evaluating evidence in the text, looking for bias, identifying the writer's conclusions
- Exam strategies – planning rooms, spare pens, times. Reading the question slowly, highlighting key points, structuring answers with a clear line of reasoning, introduction and conclusion, dealing with stress
- Specific skills such as laboratory, studio or practical skills, developed by some courses
- Leadership – making decisions, being able to motivate and encourage others while taking the lead, having energy and vision
- Self Reliance – knowing your strengths and skills and having the confidence to put these across: being positive, persistent and conscientious
- Flexibility or Adaptability - responding to changing circumstances, being versatile, willing and multi skilled
- Organisational and Commercial Awareness – understanding the key factors that contribute to an organisation's success (whether public, private or not for profit e.g. providing a quality product, good customer service, well trained motivated staff, controlling costs in a profit-making environment, being entrepreneurial, taking risks)
- Working with other people – understanding your role in a team, building relationships or using networks effectively
- Use of ICT – practical skills such as key board skills and software packages. Also potential applications e.g. social networking sites, research and remote working
- Customer Service skills – understanding what customers or clients want and adapting your behaviour accordingly

Don't forget that you are entitled to a [Careers appointment](#) before you submit your application.

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