

Selling your skills: How your degree has made you employable

Careers & Employability Service

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**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

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Selling your Skills: How your Degree has made you Employable

When you complete an application form for employment or a course, or write a CV, you will need to consider your skills (sometimes called employability skills, or competencies). You will need to demonstrate you have the skills required for the job by giving examples of where you have developed and practised those skills, using examples from a range of situations, such as work experience, hobbies and interests, voluntary work, your personal life, or academic study.

This handout is intended to:

- 1. Help you identify the employability skills you have developed and practised through your academic study and wider university life whilst at MMU.**
- 2. Provide you with a prompt list to help you identify your own examples of your skills to use on applications and your CV.**

How your academic work has given you employability skills.

MMU encourages all students to become “autonomous learners”. This means teaching is structured to encourage you to take responsibility for your own learning i.e.

- Work independently
- Prioritise
- Manage your time efficiently
- Be self-motivating
- Know how to find and use resources effectively
- Reflect on your personal development and understand the importance of continuing to develop your skills beyond university and throughout life. (PDP helps with this process)

You have developed and practised skills through the teaching methods used at MMU:

In Lectures:

- Listening and concentrating for extended periods
- Sorting, sifting and summarising information
- Recording and organising information efficiently

In Classes, Seminars and Tutorials:

- Speaking clearly and fluently
- Arguing a case in a reasoned manner
- Making presentations
- Thinking on your feet
- Considering differing viewpoints and responding appropriately

In Essay and Report Writing:

- Finding relevant information from a range of sources
- Identifying key issues
- Writing clearly and to the point
- Understanding complex arguments and theories
- Keeping an open mind
- Thinking logically
- Structuring and developing an argument
- Critically analysing and evaluating evidence and arguments

In Project Work

- Creating and following a plan
- Maintaining motivation
- Keeping to a time schedule
- Anticipating problems

In Group Work

- Managing your time
- Delegating
- Taking responsibility
- Supporting other team members
- Understanding team dynamics and responding appropriately
- Understanding your own role, strengths and weaknesses in a team
- Holding your ground
- Being persuasive
- Negotiating
- Respecting and being sensitive to others

Employers frequently ask for some or all of the following skills. Listed are examples of situations where you may have used them in academic study or wider university life. Use it as a prompt list to identify your own examples to use in applications.

Commercial awareness – understanding the key factors that contribute to an organisation's success e.g. providing a quality product; good customer service; well-trained, motivated staff; controlling costs.

Examples of evidence:

- Quantify any role you have had in raising or handling money e.g. fundraising for an event or charity, acting as treasurer for a society. For example, "I acted as treasurer for an event that raised £1000 to help support"
- Reading the business sections of the press on a regular basis
- Work experience in customer service
- Raising sponsorship for any purpose from commercial organisations
- In work experience, making suggestions that have improved a service or increased efficiency
- Dissertation – any references to commercial applications or relevance.

Key words for the application form:

Forward thinker; risk taker; entrepreneurial; professional; strategic

Teamwork - working effectively with other people

Examples of evidence:

- Any situation where you work alongside others to achieve an agreed outcome e.g. committees, events organising, music-making (bands, choirs etc), drama, sports
- Just about any paid/voluntary work involves working in a team.
- Academic group work – see above

Key words for the application form:

Supportive; facilitator; open-minded; diplomatic; tolerant; reasonable; constructive

Commitment/motivation – demonstrating a determination to be successful.

Examples of evidence:

- Overcoming difficulties to come to university
- Using PDP effectively to improve your skills – academic skills or preparing for a particular career or employment sector would be good examples to use.
- Duke of Edinburgh: Young Enterprise: any competition successes or prizes.
- Campaigning/fundraising
- Training, or working on a skill, over the long term to achieve an ambition or goal e.g. training from scratch to run a marathon.

Key words for the application form:

Reliable; conscientious; proactive; initiative; flexible; adaptable; determined; positive

Problem solving/creativity – having a “can do” attitude by finding solutions to problems.

Examples of evidence:

- Anticipating problems and resolving them through planning e.g. project work, planning travel overseas,
- Resolving financial problems – personal, or fundraising for a club, raising money to fund an activity e.g. to participate in charity work overseas.
- Solving problems through negotiation or representation – acting as student rep; resolving problems over accommodation with landlord or flatmates; resolving disagreements in group work
- Finding novel or innovative solutions to problems e.g. devising new methods of fundraising; new ideas for promoting an activity, or encouraging participation in an academic activity; ideas leading to greater efficiency in your workplace (paid or voluntary); novel ways of promoting yourself to find work placements.

Key words for the application form:

Achiever; practical; astute; open-minded; resilient; imaginative; reflective; initiator

Communication – ensuring you are understood by writing or speaking in a clear and articulate manner.

Examples of evidence:

- Making presentations; introducing speakers or self; reading out loud in class
- Teaching; training; selling; dealing with the public at work; campaigning
- Caring or mentoring activities
- Written – student journalism; producing publicity materials; designing a web-site; projects/dissertations
- Acting as a student ambassador

Key words for application forms:

Presenter; influencer; articulate; empathetic; persuasive;

Leadership/ taking responsibility for others

Examples of evidence:

- chairing a committee
- running a campaign
- organising an activity – producing a play; co-ordinating a team; editing a paper
- working with young people – summer camps; running/organising a youth activity
- leading a team – sport's team captain;
- teaching or training others e.g. at work; teaching music/art/gym etc

Key words for the application form:

Motivator; capable; dynamic; assertive; approachable; decisive; proactive

Numeracy – having the ability to handle everyday arithmetic calculations, and being competent in using the numerical concepts necessary for the job you are doing.

The Careers Service gives you the opportunity to practise an on-line numeracy test (and also other psychometric and personality tests). Visit www.mmu.ac.uk/careers and click on “Finding a job”, then “How we can help”, and then the psychometric tests link.

Examples;

- charts/graphs/tables/percentages/statistics you have produced in academic work
- Handling money, balancing up or handling any numeric data as part of a part-time job.

Key words for the application form:

Accurate; analytical; thorough; methodical; attention to detail; logical; proficient;

Organised/Self-directed – able to plan and carry out a workload efficiently and effectively

Examples of evidence:

- A holiday, field trip, or independent travel, you organised for yourself or a group.
- An event, such as a fundraiser or social, that you initiated and/organised yourself.
- Any project that involved making, and keeping to, a plan, and staying motivated, over an extended period e.g. your dissertation; an action plan for PDP.

Key words for the application form:

Forward thinker; planner; negotiator; uses initiative; motivated; efficient; punctual; self starter

Self reliant/Confident – being positive about your abilities and relationships.

Examples of evidence;

- Situations which you have found difficult, but persevered and have grown in confidence as a result e.g. making presentations, networking with strangers; independent travel
- Examples where you have persisted and overcome a problem e.g. giving up smoking
- Overcoming a significant set-back e.g. an injury; bereavement; low exam grades

Key words for the application form:

Focused; self-belief; resilient; reflective; tenacity; persistence; perseverance

Flexible/Adaptable – willing to respond positively to changing circumstances

Examples of evidence:

- Adapting to a new system or working practice in your job
- Persuading others to be positive in a changing or uncertain situation.
- Acknowledging another person's particular ability by taking a subordinate role when you are used to being the team leader

Key words for the application form:

Willing; versatile; positive; enthusiastic;

Initiative/Proactive – can spot opportunities and potential problems, and take action to get the best outcome: Works without constant supervision.

Examples of evidence:

- Setting up a club, society, or business from scratch
- Raising a matter of concern, or potential concern, at a Course Committee, and persuading staff to take action.
- Finding people already working in your chosen job and networking with them to get advice and information.

Key words for the application form:

Self-starter; proactive; focused; self-reliant; problem solver; versatile

Interpersonal Skills – the ability to work for, with and alongside others.

Examples of evidence:

- Jobs that involve customer relations e.g. telephone sales, reception/ waiting on tables/ bar work; student ambassador.
- Activities that involve building and maintaining relationships e.g. mentoring, manning a help desk; manning a phone helpline; negotiating or acting as an advocate on behalf of someone else.

Key words for the application forms:

Relationship builder; constructive; listener; initiator; mediator; communicator; personable.

We hope you have found this guide useful. The Careers & Employability Service offer a wide range of different support to help you make a career choice, prepare for your future, improve your employability skills and find employment. Explore our extensive web-site at www.mmu.ac.uk/careers, or ring us on 0161 247 3483.