



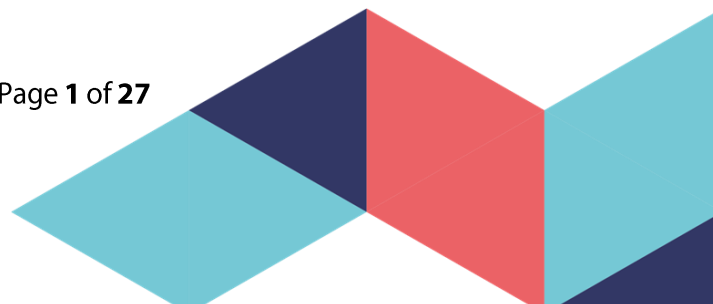
University Centre
Peterborough

Workplace skills

employerhub@ucp.ac.uk



Page 1 of 27



Contents

Workplace skills - Objectives & agenda.....	3
Supporting materials.....	3
Teamwork skills.....	4
Intercultural awareness.....	7
Communication & interpersonal skills.....	8
Literacy skills.....	9
Negotiation skills.....	10
Leadership skills.....	12
Problem-solving skills.....	14
Numeracy skills.....	16
Project management skills.....	17
IT skills.....	19
Emotional intelligence skills.....	24
Critical thinking skills.....	25
Commercial awareness.....	26
Evidencing employability skills.....	27



Workplace skills - Objectives & agenda

This course aims to provide you with the opportunity to explore and develop those employability skills employers are looking for. In this unit, we focus upon the current top skills requested.

Employability skills have been defined by the CBI (**Confederation of British Industry**) as "A set of attributes, **skills** and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy". <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2009/future-fit-preparing-graduates-for-the-world-of-work.PDF>

Understand how to

- Develop the key employability skills employers are looking for
- Evidence that you have these skills to support job applications and interviews
- Employ these skills in the workplace and at university

Supporting materials

- Employability Skills Audit: Complete this document as you work through the course
- Commercial awareness - Researching a company: This document acts as a commercial awareness checklist
- <https://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1914/cbi-skills-framework.pdf>: This is a summary of the 9 Confederation of British Industry (CBI) workskills
- Student Employability Profiles: This document highlights what employability skills your degree will develop

Notes

To make this unit easier to refer to/print, we start each employability skill on a new page.

Teamwork skills

Teams are a group of people who rely on each other to meet a common purpose, it is recommended that no more than 10 people constitute a team. Teams can be led by an individual (hierarchical), led by the group with shared decision-making responsibility (participative), or a combination of the two.

Teams can take on a variety of roles from delivering operational department activities through to bespoke activity such as planning, presenting or evaluating projects.

As teams form/change, they will go through 5 stages of development. These are:

- **Forming** - getting to know each other, identifying individual roles
- **Storming** - people push boundaries, conflict with working styles create frustrations, authorities challenged
- **Norming** - resolving of differences,
- **Performing** - minimal friction, achieving target
- **Adjourning** - the end of a project or business restructure

The following website will help you answer interview questions regarding leadership activity during the team formation stages:

www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm.

Consider if you can evidence when you have established:

- clear goals in a team
- developed trust and good working relationships
- resolved conflict
- coached others
- delegated

Norms

Norms or unspoken rules will naturally emerge such as dress code, language, attitude to targets, attitude to time management. They can be productive (e.g. always work late to hit tight deadlines), counter-productive (e.g. not helping another department) or harmless (e.g. 5 mins chat before each meeting). These unspoken norms can need encouraging or challenging by openly discussing with the group.

Team roles

The Belbin test explores the role you take in a group (behaviour and needs). It identifies 9 team roles: **People orientated roles** (coordinator, resource instigator, team worker), **Action orientated roles** (shaper, implementer, complete finisher) and **Thought orientated roles** (monitor evaluator, specialist).

- Test: www.123test.com/team-roles-test/
- More info: www.belbin.com/about/belbin-team-roles/

The Enneagram test explores 9 characteristics: perfectionist, giver, achiever, romantic, observer, loyalist, adventurer, leader, peacemaker

- Test: www.eclecticenergies.com/enneagram/test or www.9types.com/rheti/index.php
- More info: www.enneagraminstitute.com/type-descriptions/

Yet it is critical to develop the skills required within a project. Consider how you would support the following stages of a project:

- **Planning** - gather all information, define objectives & tasks, create action plan
- **Initiating** - brief team, explain why, allocate tasks, set standards
- **Controlling** - maintain standards, influence pace, review activities against objectives, move group forward
- **Supporting** - encourage, disciple, create a team spirit, reconcile disagreements
- **Informing** - clarify, provide updates, communicate, summarise, ensure clarity
- **Evaluation** - check feasibility of idea, test consequences of actions, evaluate group performance, help evaluation against standards

Effective & successful teams

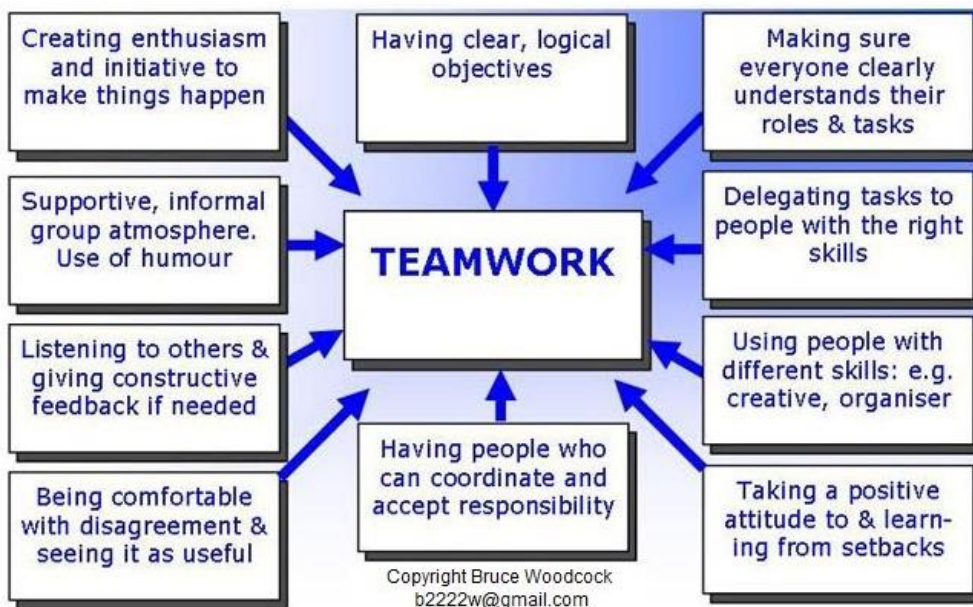


Image: <https://sites.google.com/site/b2222w/home/teamwork>

Teams require complimentary skills such as a worker, an ideas person, a leader, a people person. Rather than taking the role you are most comfortable; you should develop your other skills as you will be required to play a variety of roles within the team.

- **Range of individuals who contribute in different ways** - A good team produces more than the individual contributions of members.
- **Clear goals are agreed** on that everyone understands and is committed to.
- **Everyone understands the tasks they have to do** and helps each other.
- It has a **coordinator** who may adopt a leadership style from autocratic to democratic depending on the circumstances. Different people may assume the role of leader for different tasks.
- There is a **balance between the task** (what do we need to do?) **and the process** (how do we achieve this?)
- There is a **supportive, informal atmosphere** where members feel able to take risks and say what they think.
- The group is **comfortable with disagreement** and can successfully overcome differences in opinion.
- There is a **lot of discussion** in which everyone participates. Group members **listen** to each other and everyone's ideas are heard.
- Members **feel free to criticise** and say what they think but this is done in a **positive, constructive manner**.
- The group **learns from experience**: reviewing and improving performance in the light of both successes and failures.

Action

1. Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
2. Consider how you can evidence your teamwork skills from a variety of sources
 - Work experience, part time jobs; university group work; becoming a mentor; volunteering; extra-curricular activity, student society

Intercultural awareness

Ten Strategies for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication



Intercultural skills - the ability to effectively communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Image: <http://transitionalphaseofleadership.blogspot.com/2014/05/managing-intercultural-communication.html>

This can include language, customs, standards, and values differ between cultures, and being willing to learn and adapt to them. Many companies consider a lack of this skill may result in damaging client/customer relations or internal relations and team productivity.

You may be asked at interview about your intercultural skills, and you will be measured on your communication skills during the application and interview process.

They can also learn a great deal from how you communicate throughout the application process and during the interview: are you easy to talk to? Are you able to see things from someone else's perspective? Are you willing to learn from them?

Action

1. Educate yourself to different business customs including the greeting, how you title/refer to someone, use of business cards, communication style, dining etiquette, interruptions, pre-business chit-chat, personal space

Explore:

- <https://richtopia.com/effective-leadership/how-business-etiquette-is-different-in-different-cultures>
- www.businessinsider.com/a-guide-to-business-etiquette-around-the-world-2015-5?r=US&IR=T
- www.business.com/articles/so-international-business-etiquette-from-around-the-world/

2. Consider how you present yourself (clothing, communication, attitude).

3. Consider assumptions you may be making; what stereotypes labels you are basing your beliefs upon.

4. Be open to others, excited about exploring a new/different culture, willing to learn and adapt.

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Communication & interpersonal skills

Communication skills generally include

- Daily interactions (question, explain, listen, negotiate, highlight, facilitate) whether face to face, by phone or in writing
- Presenting
- Networking & creating rapport (use of body language)
- Writing and ability to adapt writing style
- Teaching, coaching & mentoring



Communication skills form the basis for successful cooperation. In order to develop these skills, you need to explore your strengths and areas for development against the following list. Mechanisms by which you can develop each skill:

1. Active listening - being in the moment
 - www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/11/14/improve-your-active-listening-skills-with-these-13-strategies/#3ef782855827
 - www.yourthoughtpartner.com/blog/bid/73770/the-8-steps-to-active-listening
2. Emotional intelligence - recognising and managing your own emotions, recognising and responding appropriately to others (what you say, how you say it)
 - See Emotional Intelligence page within this module
3. Cultural intelligence
 - See Cultural awareness page within this module
4. Body language - reading others, being aware of and managing your own
 - www.tutorialspoint.com/positive_body_language/positive_body_language_quick_guide.htm
5. Understanding your audience - who, what, why
 - See Presentations module
6. Clarity & conciseness - can you get to the point, keep people's attention

<https://garfinkleexecutivecoaching.com/articles/improve-your-communication-skills/seven-steps-to-clear-and-effective-communication>

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
- Consider how you can evidence your communication skills from a variety of sources
 - Work experience, part time jobs; university group work; becoming a mentor; volunteering; extracurricular activity, student society

Literacy skills

Strong literacy skills lead to improved documentation, less errors, waste and problems with safety as well as improved compliance, teamwork and communication.



Image: <https://investedwallet.com/become-financially-literate/>

You may be asked to participate in a literacy test as part of the recruitment process. This could include comprehension, verbal reasoning or verbal comprehension.

Examples of the tests:

- www.practiceaptitudetests.com/free-aptitude-tests/
- <https://psychometric-success.com/>
- www.assessmentday.co.uk/

Support

Want to go back to the basics? Try www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/zmqj2nb

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
- Consider how you can evidence your communication skills from a variety of sources
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Negotiation skills

Negotiation is the process by which one side moves away from their original standpoint in order to agree. Ideally, the result should be a win-win so that all parties are satisfied with the outcome.

You can consider it a game with high stakes as all parties want to win.



Image: <https://www.tryinteract.com/quiz/what-kind-of-negotiator-are-you/>

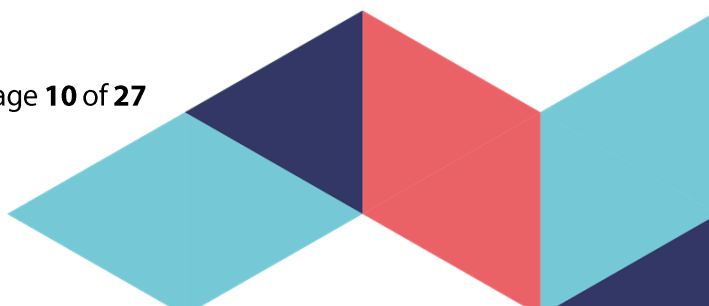
The phrases of negotiation include:

- preparation - background info, research (people, company, history etc.), analysis of strengths & weaknesses
- planning - your own objectives (essentials and desirableness), consider the other side's objectives, your strategy
- opening - building a rapport with the other parties, making opening statements
- exploring - asking questions to explore the other parties' views, listening, providing information
- testing - make a proposal, receive proposals, provide guidance on where movement is possible
- bargaining - exchange concessions, explore solutions, resolve conflict
- closing - summarise, confirm in writing, review learning

Rules of negotiation

1. Leave your emotions out of the negotiations
2. Only negotiate when you are able to bargain and have time to prepare
3. Find out as much as possible about the other side (the negotiating range) whilst limiting what you reveal of your own hand
4. Consider what questions you want to explore at each stage

Additional information: www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/marketing-sales/managing-relationships/negotiating



What kind of negotiator are you? Are you competitive, collaborative, compromising, avoiding or accommodating www.tryinteract.com/quiz/what-kind-of-negotiator-are-you/

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
- Consider how you can evidence your negotiation skills from a variety of sources
 - Work experience, part time jobs; university group work; becoming a mentor; volunteering; extra curricular activity, student society



Leadership skills

Leadership is leading or commanding a team of people, helping them perform to the best of their ability whilst balancing the needs of the team with the aims of the organisation, adapting their style to the circumstances.



Image: <https://kitaboo.com/7-tips-for-effective-leadership/>

Leaders commit to the project, demonstrating their beliefs/values, and value both the team and the individual.

A leader should be aware of the task, individual and team needs. The leader wants to achieve the task, develop the individual and build & maintain the team.

Leadership styles

- Autocratic - "Do as I say", may be appropriate with new team members
- Authoritative - "Follow me", explain, set expectations, energise people to follow
- Pace setting - "Do as I do", driven, sets a racing pace, can create stress for the team
- Democratic - "What do you think?", shares all that affects the employees, seeks opinions
- Coaching - "Consider this", wants to help individuals develop
- Affiliative - "People come first", pays attention to individual needs, collaborates
- Laissez-faire - "Do what you think is best", least interaction, may use with very experienced staff

Flexible leadership - recognising when different styles are required to meet the needs of the situation and individual needs. You need to have situational awareness (internal and external factors and information), lead by example especially during chaotic times, maintaining focus and balance.

What's your normal operation leadership style? Try these websites to find out:

www.idealists.org/en/careers/quiz-leadership-style or
www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/survstyl.html

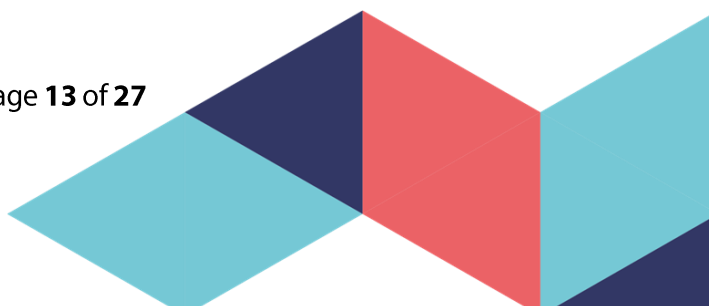
Leadership skills

Consider if you can evidence when you have guided a team confidently, using the following skills:

1. Listen and learn
2. Communicate clearly
3. Do your best work
4. Take responsibility
5. Set a strong example
6. Include everyone
7. Strive for authenticity
8. Become a thought leader
9. Seek management training
10. Make key connections
11. Find a role model

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
- Consider how you can evidence your leadership skills from a variety of sources
 - Work experience, part time jobs; university group work; becoming a mentor; volunteering; extra curricular activity, student society



Problem-solving skills

Problems are when someone or something are under performing. Clear understanding is required of the problem which will allow action to be taken to address the problem. Opportunities are the opposite of problems, and the same processes can be applied to explore opportunities to maximise their potential.

Problem solving - What are the symptoms? What is causing the problem?

Steps in problem solving

1. Define the problem.
2. Examine all potential causes for the problem.
3. Identify all alternatives to resolve the problem.
4. Carefully select an alternative.
5. Develop an orderly implementation plan to implement that best alternative.
6. Carefully monitor implementation of the plan.
7. Verify if the problem has been resolved or not.

Process of Decision Making

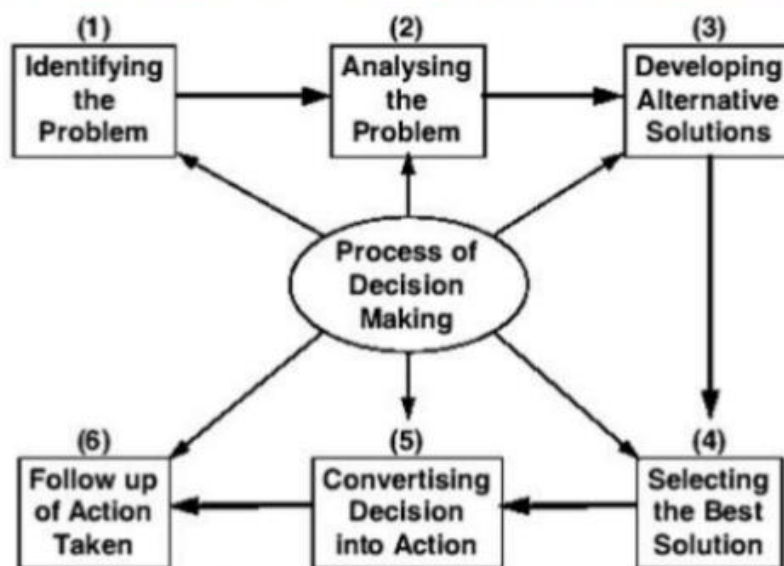


Image: <http://businessfeverng.com/business-problem-solving-decision-making-process/>

PAID - a problem solving process

1. Set a **Problem** statement e.g. profits are below target
2. **Analyse** the problem in detail - what is wrong and right?
3. **Identify** possible causes - what is different, what has changed, what are the most likely explanations?
4. **Define** the actual cause(s) - what is the most likely explanation, can I prove it?

Tools to help identify solutions

SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) is a great tool for problem solving strategic planning problems or problems with a variety of stakeholders. www.liveplan.com/blog/what-is-a-swot-analysis-and-how-to-do-it-right-with-examples/

Actioning strategies

- **TOWS analysis** (threats, opportunities, weaknesses and strengths) is an extension of SWOT analysis and can help you develop your action plan. <https://getlucidity.com/strategy-resources/how-to-do-a-tows-analysis>
- **Lean business planning** - focuses upon reducing waste. More information is available at <https://theleadershipnetwork.com/article/the-secret-problem-solving-weapon-of-lean-organisations-and-why-it-s-unbelievably-effective-1>
- **Six Sigma** - focuses upon improving quality of goods or services.

A combination of strategies may be best, depending upon the situation.

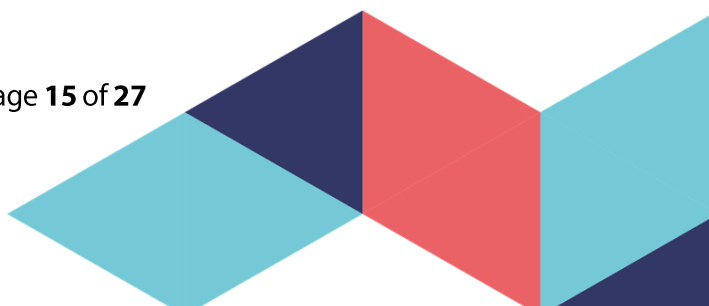
What is your personal decision-making style?

There are many styles of making decisions, ranging from very rational and linear to organic and unfolding. These are classed as spontaneous or systematic, external or internal.

Take this online assessment to determine your own style: www.kent.edu/career/discover-your-decision-making-style

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
- Consider how you can evidence your problem-solving skills from a variety of sources
 - Work experience, part time jobs; university group work; becoming a mentor; volunteering; extra curricular activity, student society



Numeracy skills

Strong numeracy skills lead to improved analysis and reporting that can lead to greater efficiencies and effectiveness.



Image: <https://investedwallet.com/become-financially-literate/>

You may be asked to participate in a numeracy test as part of the recruitment process. This could include basic numeracy, financial reasoning, numerical reasoning, spatial reasoning or diagrammatic reasoning.

Examples of the tests:

www.practiceaptitudetests.com/free-aptitude-tests/

<https://psychometric-success.com/>

www.assessmentday.co.uk/

Support

Back to basics? www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/zjd8jty

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
- Consider how you can evidence your numeracy skills from a variety of sources
 - Work experience, part time jobs; university group work; becoming a mentor; volunteering; extracurricular activity, student society

Project management skills

Role of the project manager is to bring a project in on time, within budget and to an agreed quality standard that meets its objectives. It will have a limited life span, with specialist skills.

Project management

The overall project role will include the following:

- Building the plan - project scope, timeline, budget, tools
- Assemble the team - specialists and experts (internal and external to company)
- Assign tasks - clearly define tasks, deadlines, responsibilities
- Lead the team - motivating, negotiating, managing conflict, training, status updates
- Managing budgets - expenses, monitoring estimates against actual, adjusting plan
- Managing timelines - setting realistic deadlines, maintaining detailed schedules, monitoring deadlines, communicating
- Engaging stakeholders - relationship building, negotiating, managing conflict, communicating with
- Handover - communicate all project information to the continuing team
- Documentation of process - identifying strengths, lessons learnt etc. to share

<https://www.wrike.com/project-management-guide/>

Project management skills



Image: www.workamajig.com/blog/project-management-skills

The above image and below list are the skills considered essential to project management. Consider which skills you already have and which you need to develop.

- Effective communication is the bedrock of project management.
- Being able to influence others and resolve conflicts is a vital PM skill.
- Managing risks and project costs is crucial.
- Creating project schedules and managing tasks will improve project success.
- Being able to coach new team members to get the best out of them will make you a more effective project manager.

If you wish to further develop your skills, explore www.workamajig.com/blog/project-management-skills or <https://thedigitalprojectmanager.com/project-management-skills/>

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
- Consider how you can evidence your project management skills from a variety of source
 - Work experience, part time jobs; university group work; becoming a mentor; volunteering; extracurricular activity, student society

IT skills

“Digital literacy skills” - having the skills you require to live, learn and work effectively in a digital society.

There are some basic packages you need to be proficient in such as Word, Excel, Outlook. There are other packages that will help your management and organisation skills such as OneNote and referencing tools . We will explore them here.

Office 365

Office 365 is a cloud* based suite of resources that include Microsoft Office packages you are probably familiar with such as Word, Outlook, PowerPoint and Excel but also includes the ability to chat, broadcast meetings, collaborate, create content and collaborate in real time, take notes.



These packages include Teams, Forms and OneNote. Office 365 can be installed on your phone, tablet and PC/MAC and, because it is cloud based, your information is backed up, accessible anywhere, and is always using the most up-to-date software.

*“The cloud” refers to information (through servers) that can be accessed over the internet. It means that you do not have to be tied to one computer but can work on any device with a wifi connection.

Teach yourself: <https://support.office.com/en-us/office-training-center>. You can click on the images of each item to explore it in more depth.

OneNote

Microsoft OneNote is a digital note-taking app that provides a single place for keeping all of your notes, research, plans, and information — everything you need to remember and manage in your life at home, at work, or at university.

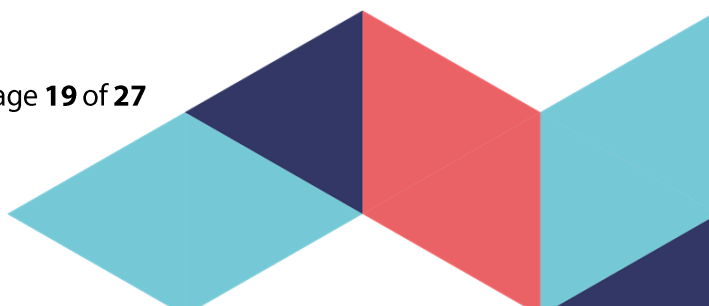
It is a program for free-form information gathering and multi-user collaboration. It gathers users' notes, drawings, screen clippings, and audio commentaries. Notes can be shared with other OneNote users over the Internet or a network.



Intro videos:

<https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/video-what-is-onenote-be6cc6cc-3ca7-4f46-8876-5000f013c563>
www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEJZbjcMkeU

How university students can use OneNote:<https://educationblog.microsoft.com/en-us/2018/09/onenote-tips-college-student-back-to-school/>



Referencing tools

Reference management software aids students and employees collate and cite research materials accurately and efficiently. Reference management software is used in both academic and business situations, many reports and presentations require accurate reference citation. Reference management tools are often Cloud based, making it easier for you to access from any location and allow you to save resources as they're found in the moment instead of struggling to locate them later on. Common features of reference management software include advanced searching, reference libraries, and version history.

Mendeley

Intro video: https://youtu.be/Gv6_HuCYExM



Zotero

Intro video: <https://youtu.be/Zv-ymPeUn-M>



Refworks

There is a free trial but costs apply for a full student license



Intro video: <https://youtu.be/YFnobZuCPy0>

ENDNOTE

EndNote

There is a free version but costs apply for a full student license

Intro video: <https://youtu.be/S3xo6ZjBV6U>

Other free IT software training

- <https://alison.com/courses/software-tools> (Links to an external site.)
- <https://www.reed.co.uk/courses/data-analytics-for-decision-making-an-introduction-to-using-excel/273992#/courses/free/microsoft>

Qualifications

If you do not have an IT qualification, it can be more difficult to evidence your proficiency. You may wish to consider the ICDL qualification or a level 2.

- <https://icdleurope.org/> (Links to an external site.)
- <https://www.reed.co.uk/courses/essential-it-skills-level-2/31701#/courses/free/microsoft>

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
- Consider how you can evidence your IT skills
 - You may wish to explore the 'Creating presentations' module

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Self-management

Employers look for self-management, the ability to:

- take the initiative - to work without being told what to do, think for yourself and take action, are self-motivated
- be organised - plan time and actions, prioritise, are prepared, are efficient
- be accountable - take ownership of the responsibility, take pride in your work, look for better ways to complete a task, go that extra mile














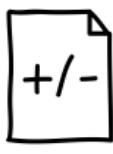
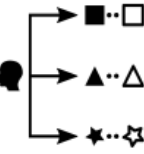



APPROACHES TO LEARNING: SELF-MANAGEMENT					
ORGANIZATION SKILLS Managing time and tasks effectively					
Plan	Set goals, identify strategies, & take action	Manage Materials	Organize Files & Complex information	Manage Time	Select & use technology effectively & productively
					
AFFECTIVE SKILLS Managing state of mind					
Be Mindful	Demonstrate perseverance	Manage emotions	Be self-motivated	Show Resilience	Think Positively
					
REFLECTIVE SKILLS (Re-) considering the process of learning; choosing and using ATL skills					
Develop new skills, techniques and strategies	Identify areas of growth and areas for improvement	Be a flexible learner	Try and evaluate new ATL skills	Consider implications of choices	Use Multiple Techniques for Reflection
					

Image: https://materchristi.libguides.com/personal_project/self_management_skills

Developing self-management skills

Enhance your self-management skills by actively focusing on ways you can direct, evaluate and improve upon your daily tasks. Here are a few ways you can improve your self-management skills:

1. **Assess your strengths.** Determine what professional tasks you're best at, and focus on ways to maximise your abilities in these areas (The 'Who are you?' module may help).
2. **Prioritise your responsibilities.** Clearly define which responsibilities are most important, and focus your attention on the most critical jobs, avoiding distractions/procrastination.
3. **Develop organisational systems.** Manage your time, streamline your daily activities and keep important items in easy-to-find places. Using a calendar and to-do list? Consider exploring other software such as OneNote or a referencing system such as Mendeley.
4. **Create strict deadlines.** Assign deadlines to each stage of a project, and maintain your schedule. Break up your module assignment into manageable chunks/manageable tasks and check points.
5. **Perform one task at a time.** Focus on a single task at any given moment. Complete each task fully before moving on to another to maximise efficiency.
6. **Practice patience.** Maintain a sense of calm so you can think clearly and objectively.
7. **Take care of your health and wellness.** Maintain a proper diet, exercise regularly, care for your mental well-being and actively focus on lowering your stress levels. Take breaks to stretch and clear your mind.
8. **Evaluate your progress.** Objectively assess the progress you've made toward your goals by setting checkpoints along the way and tracking your accomplishments to see if you've met them. Ask a mentor for assistance to get a well-rounded appraisal.
9. **Overcoming procrastination.** Identify why you are procrastinating in a scientific manner. Break the project/task into stages & time frames, visualise what it looks like completed, tackle it for 20 minutes, talk to someone about the task, remind yourself that you can do this, get help.

Further information regarding the above and how to demonstrate these skills go to: www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/self-management-skills

Evidencing self-management skills

Self-management may be demonstrated through a variety of mechanisms. Applications and interviews may ask you to discuss:

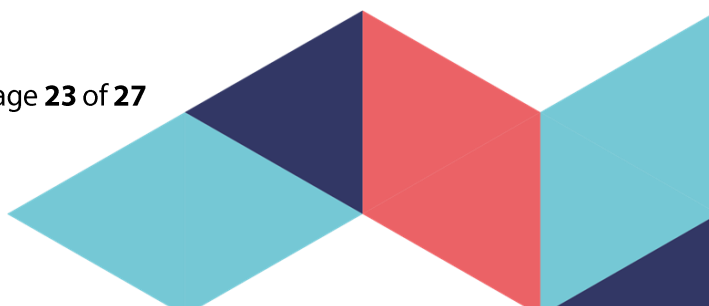
- Goal setting skills
- Time management skills
- Decision making skills
- Communication skills
- Managing complex work loads
- Problem solving
- Resilience & managing stress

For more information, look at: www.youthemployment.org.uk/young-professional-training/self-management-skills-young-professional/

The 80:20 rule for prioritising: www.youthemployment.org.uk/young-prof-article/self-management-skills-apply-the-80-20-rule-to-everything-you-do/

Action

1. Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
2. Consider how you can evidence your self-management skills from a variety of sources
 - Work experience, part time jobs; university group work; becoming a mentor; volunteering; extracurricular activity, student society



Emotional intelligence skills

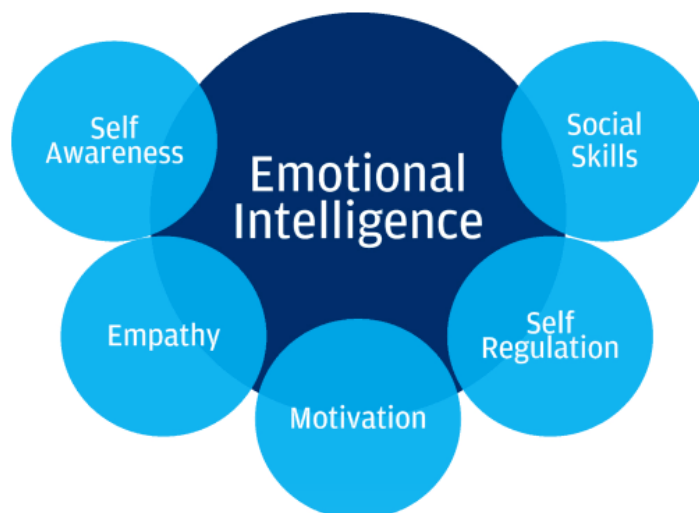
Emotional intelligence refers to your ability to recognise, understand, manage, and reason with emotions.

- Perceiving emotions
- Reasoning with emotions
- Understanding emotions
- Managing emotions

The 5 components of emotional intelligence

Image: www.neurosurgicalatlas.com/volumes/non-technical-skills-in-neurosurgery/emotional-intelligence

1. **Self-awareness** - are you able to recognise and understand your own emotions? Are you aware of the effect of your actions, moods and emotions on others? Do you know how others perceive you? The 'Who am I?' module will help.
2. **Self-regulation** - If you are aware of your emotions & their impact, do you express your emotions appropriately? Are you flexible, able to adapt to change, can you manage conflict or diffuse difficult situations? Are you calm, clear, positive?
3. **Social skills** - Can you build relations and connections, develop rapport?
4. **Empathy** - Can you understand why others feel how they do?
5. **Intrinsic motivation** - Do you rely on external rewards (money, accolade, recognition) or have inner goals?



How emotionally intelligent are you?

Try this test: www.verywellmind.com/how-emotionally-intelligent-are-you-2796099

Ask others (friends, family, peers, managers) how they view you against the 5 components.

Action

1. Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
2. Consider how you can evidence your emotional intelligence skills from a variety of sources
 - Work experience, part time jobs; university group work; becoming a mentor; volunteering; extracurricular activity, student society

Critical thinking skills

Critical thinking is the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement. It can act as a guide, allowing you to consider what else you need to explore, how the information should be interpreted and identifying alternative view points.

Employers want to see critical thinking skills in order to help them develop and grow their business.



Critical Thinking is:

A way of thinking about particular things at a particular time; it is not the accumulation of facts and knowledge or something that you can learn once and then use in that form forever, such as the nine times table you learn and use in school.

Image: www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/critical-thinking.html

Critical thinking requires

1. an honest awareness of your own personal biases, and then actively identifying different views/opinions/approaches without judgement.
2. clearly set objectives
3. research skills
4. analytical skills
5. a creative mindset

Ways to develop critical thinking skills

- Become aware of your beliefs, preferences, learnt behaviours and biases
- Consider the objective(s)
- Explore the un-obvious, go beyond face value
- Examine other perspectives

Further information:

www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-improve-critical-thinking
www.skillsyouneed.com/learn/critical-thinking.html

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this skill
- Consider how you can evidence your critical thinking skills (university research; work place: customer service, dealing with complaints)

Commercial awareness

Commercial awareness is being conscious of developments in the business world. It is an understanding of how industries and businesses work. It's about knowing what's going on in the world and analysing the way it might impact on your chosen sector and company. It is not a skill but a way of thinking.



Image: www.thayerlightinginc.com/lighting-industry-changes-and-what-they-mean-for-you/

Being commercially aware

1. Understand **the employer's business** - activities, products, services, how it is managed, how the role you are interested in fits into the organisation
2. Understand **the market place** - know the employer's competitors, know how the employer differentiates itself from the competitors, know how political and economic trends/events are affecting the employer
3. **Major players** - know who the big companies are in the sector, who has won major contracts or bids recently
4. **Speculation** - be up to date with general news, politics, economics and how these could affect the developments and the strategies for the employer
5. Know the **past** - be aware of cyclical patterns in the sector/economy, consider the impact of the financial year on the employer
6. Know the effect of your role - understand how your actions can affect a employer's bottom line

Developing commercial awareness

Follow industry news, read industry magazines, follow professional bodies on LinkedIn, network, join professional groups and organisations, attend conferences.

More information:

www.skillsyouneed.com/general/commercial-awareness.html

<https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/skills-and-competencies/300944-commercial-awareness-its-how-the-industry-fits-together>

Try this

Select a company that represents the sector you wish to go in/one you are intending to apply to. Answer the questions in the "Commercial awareness – Researching a company" document.

Action

- Identify areas you need to develop and the action you will take to improve this knowledge
- Consider how you can evidence your commercial awareness

Evidencing employability skills

Employability skills have been defined by the CBI (**Confederation of British Industry**) as “A set of attributes, **skills** and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy”. <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2009/future-fit-preparing-graduates-for-the-world-of-work.PDF>

- Team work
- Intercultural awareness
- Communication & interpersonal skills
 - Literacy
- Negotiating & influencing
- Leadership
- Complex problem solving
 - Numeracy
- Project management
- IT Skills
- Self-management
- Emotional intelligence
- Critical thinking
- Business/Commercial Awareness

We have gone through each of the above.

Consider how you would evidence these areas in an interview. Identify those that need additional development and how you will develop these skills.

Action

Summarise your evidence and actions in the document: [Employability Skills Audit](#)