**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 these qualities 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 how they will be an asset to potential employers.

For more help on working out your personal skills and styles, have a look at the free modules *Self Understanding 1, 2 and 3* — available from the Careers and Employment website by clicking on Career Development Programs. For help with application documents, see the *Resume, Application Letter* and *Selection Criteria* information available from [www.careers.qut.edu.au](http://www.careers.qut.edu.au).

**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 settings 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

**Examples of skills and activities**

### Communication

**Effective writing**
- report writing
- essay writing
- reviewing
- editing
- critiques
- preparing talks
- research
- documenting
- referencing
- articles

**Effective speaking**
- making speeches
- leading tutorials
- instructing
- debating
- leading a group
- interviewing
- advising
- counselling
- persuading
- presenting a case

**Listening**
- active listening
- checking for understanding
- reflecting
- summarising
- clarifying
- encouraging

**Languages other than English**
- conversing
- being understood
- writing
- reading
- understanding
- thinking
- translating
- recognising cultural clues

**Computing facility**
- data entry
- word processing
- desktop publishing
- analysing
- interpreting
- calculating
- developing
- designing
- simulating

### 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 your 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 is provided to assist you in identifying times you have used various skills and/or ways you can develop them. Skills can be learnt, whereas qualities relate more to your personality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Skills</th>
<th>Personal Qualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Initiative/Entrepreneurial</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you obtained good marks in seminar presentations, or been a debater?</td>
<td>- Have you been involved in any business venture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you had to deal, under pressure, face-to-face with the public?</td>
<td>- Did you re-organise some aspect of your job or projects to make them easier?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you been involved in community activities?</td>
<td>- Have you generated any new ideas or suggestions at work/school or university?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you done any research projects during your courses and written them up using a specific format?</td>
<td>- Have you informally or formally trained new workers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teamwork</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What sports have you played? For how long?</td>
<td>- In your part-time job were you left in charge of the section/business in the manager’s absence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did you initiate projects whilst on committees?</td>
<td>- At school were you a class captain, house captain, or on the student council?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What were the outcomes?</td>
<td>- Have you successfully persuaded a group or a senior person to support your idea or point of view?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What roles did you take in team project work?</td>
<td>- During a group study project have you taken the initiative and organised your fellow students, so that the deadlines were met?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you supervised other workers?</td>
<td><strong>Goals setting/Competitiveness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem solving</strong></td>
<td>- Have you won sports competitions? In which years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you designed an experiment, plan or model that systematically addresses a problem?</td>
<td>- Have you won academic prizes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you identified information sources appropriate to special needs or problems?</td>
<td>- Were you selected for leadership training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In your part-time work were you quickly shifted through a variety of tasks, whereas most other workers/students stayed on the one task?</td>
<td>- How long have you been pursuing your career goal? What steps have you already taken?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did you learn tasks faster than the average worker/student?</td>
<td><strong>Professional ethics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you dealt with people from a variety of backgrounds (culturally different, different age groups, or special needs)?</td>
<td>- Do you regularly read any professional journals, or do extra work in your subject area, over and above your required academic study?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing &amp; organisation skills</strong></td>
<td>- Do you belong to any relevant professional associations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you been on committees in sporting, hobby or community service areas?</td>
<td><strong>Temperament</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you been on Academic Consultative Committees whilst in tertiary study?</td>
<td>- Do you tend to work on many activities simultaneously or pursue a few in depth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What was your role in any clubs or societies?</td>
<td>- Do you tend to focus on the big picture or the fine detail?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you carried out clerical duties in paid or voluntary work?</td>
<td>- Do you tend to plan well ahead or be spontaneous and flexible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you used a cash register?</td>
<td>- Have you supported yourself through university?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have you been involved in fund raising?</td>
<td>- Did you get promotions within your employment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do you do the accounts for the family business?</td>
<td>- Were you put in charge of a particular facet of the job?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 clearly 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In your essays / assignments, you...</th>
<th>In your tutorials, you...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• formulate and test hypotheses</td>
<td>• explain, persuade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• assess and evaluate information</td>
<td>• negotiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop and use inductive/deductive reasoning</td>
<td>• handle controversy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use skills in the area of technical presentation</td>
<td>• constructively disagree, confront, resolve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exercise your ability to think laterally</td>
<td>• non verbally communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• extrapolate/summarise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are self-motivated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• operate independently and work without supervision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop self esteem/self confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• manage and cope with stress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• work under pressure and meet deadlines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• question, reflect, and attempt to clarify</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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