

Making Transferable Skills Explicit in the Curricula

What are "transferable skills"?

Transferable skills can be defined as *skills developed in one situation which can be transferred to another situation.*

They are sometimes called generic, soft or key skills.

They are necessary for effective performance, not only in the workplace and in postgraduate study, but in life in general. Some examples of such skills include team working, communication skills, problem solving, planning and time management.

What's so important about these skills?

- Selectors are seeking a very broad skill-set from their employees, beyond technical expertise or specialist knowledge.
- This increases the necessity for graduates to be aware of the skills they develop during their time in higher education and to be given opportunities to develop such skills even further.
- An increasing emphasis is being placed by education at a national (IUA 2005, HEA 2004, IBEC et al 2001) and European level (Commission of the European Communities 2003) on the employability of graduates, of which the development of transferable skills is a key component.

Skills development in the curriculum

- Many will say they are doing this already, indeed there are examples across the colleges of skills development.
- Many students are aware of these skills and their relevance but a significant number are not making a link between their academic study and what they have to offer selectors.
- The Transferable Skills Project was established to increase students' awareness of their transferable skills gained through their academic study. This was a partnership project between DCU, TCD & WIT.

The Top Five important skills identified:

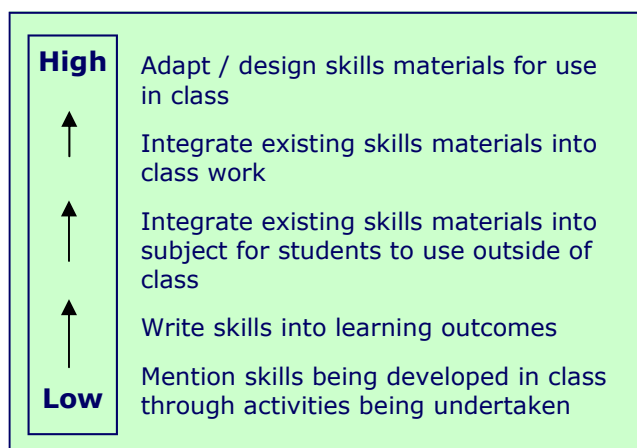
- Oral communication
- Time management
- Team work
- Presentation skills
- Coping with multiple tasks

Approaches to skills development within the curriculum

Total embedding of skills <i>Current</i>	Explicit embedding & integration of skills <i>Target</i>	Parallel development of skills <i>Not ideal</i>
Lose skills without trace	Visible skills	'Bolt on' development
Skills disappear in context	Skills in context	Limited contextualisation
No explicit assessment	Explicit assessment	Separate assessment
Low impact on curriculum	High impact on curriculum	Low curriculum impact
Delivery by lecturer	Delivery by lecturer	Delivery by teaching assistant/ student services/ e-learning
Lesser understanding of relevance of studies	Understanding of relevance of studies	Lesser understanding of relevance of studies
No extra time commitment from student	No extra time commitment from student	Extra time commitment from student

Adapted from Guile, D. & Leney, T. 1997

Different 'levels' of integration into academic courses:



The Transferable Skills Project is a recipient of the European Award for Languages (the Language Label) 2005

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A simple step by step guide to integrating skills:

1. Identify the skills and qualities of a graduate required by your School / Department.
2. "Audit" or examine the courses you teach to determine the extent to which these skills are currently being developed.
3. Identify any skills "gaps" and opportunities that exist for development.
4. Consider the level at which you wish to develop your chosen skill.
5. Identify suitable skills materials, resources or exercises for integration into the curriculum.
6. Consider if assessment of the skills is appropriate.

What resources are available?

- www.skillsproject.ie contains:
 - Tips and resources on integrating skills into courses.
 - Materials on skills such as managing one's own learning, teamwork, time management and planning, IT ...
 - Case studies of skills integrated into language curricula.
- Teaching & Learning centre in your institution supports learning and teaching initiatives including the integration of skills into the curriculum e.g. identifying learning outcomes, using interactive teaching methods ...

What can I do now?

- Attend the learning and teaching workshops on offer at your institution's Teaching & Learning centre.
- Bring this idea to your School/Departmental meeting.
- Contact your Careers Service to help you get started.

What students said:

In university today, the level of workload is such that time management is an increasingly important aspect of any course.



For anybody passing the type of exams needed at university...you need to focus on these skills, separate from, or to be incorporated as part of a course.

Because I'm more organised, I have more time to do extra study, so I do more study because of planning.



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Further information is available on www.skillsproject.ie

HEA funded project January 2003—January 2006
Partnership between Careers Services and Language Departments

May 2006



Trinity College
Dublin



Waterford Institute
of Technology