

# **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

## **FOUNDATION PROGRAMME**



# **1. Skills Audit Exercise**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This will help you begin to consider some of the ‘skills’ you possess or will develop as your studies progress. They are important here, as they will help form the basis of your approach in developing your Personal Development Plan (discussed later). They are also important because skills are transferable. That is, they may be used in a variety of circumstances (and even careers). You will be asked to consider and discuss these skills in some depth and then to reflect on your own abilities. You will then carry out an audit of these skills and in doing so will place these in context with your own achievements.

## **1.2 What is a Skills Audit?**

A Skills Audit enables you to identify what skills you currently have and to what level, and which you need to develop. The advantages of carrying out a Skills Audit is that you will be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses, it will teach you to carry out self-evaluation and you will be able to identify which skills need priority for development. Throughout the program you will also be able to link these skills with other modules that you study. Ultimately, these records of Skills Audits will aid you in filling out job applications and performing in job interviews.

When completing your skills audit think about the following questions:

- What skills do I have now?
- How advanced are these skills?
- Where/how did I obtain these skills?
- What skills do I want to have?
- How do I get these skills?
- How much of a priority is gaining these skills?
- You might also like to consider; how will I know when I have these skills? What means of measurement will you apply?

## **1.3 Suggested Skills**

Below is a list of skills commonly required of graduates together with some others, which you should aim to develop whilst you are studying at university. Take these into account when completing your skills audit.

### **a) Communication**

Communication may take many forms in both written and oral communications. Written communication or messages should be clear, purposeful and concise with correct words, to avoid any misinterpretation of your message. Writing reports and essays is something that will be a regular occurrence for you. Therefore, for you to succeed, you will have to understand the techniques and importance of doing these assignments. Writing a report will help you to showcase and communicate your ideas and express how the subject matter has provoked you into thinking of certain ideals. Good and effective communication is required not only for social relations but also for good and successful business.

Communication though, is a two-way process and you both 'transmit' and 'receive' when you communicate and therefore there are several 'hidden' skills to develop such as listening when communicating.

### **b) Feedback**

Giving and receiving feedback requires an ability to distinguish between and practice 'constructive' and 'corrective' feedback. You will need to communicate effectively and to be prepared to listen to others. The skill is more demanding when providing constructive rather than simply corrective feedback as your tutors will be able to demonstrate through their own experiences.

### **c) Leadership and Negotiation**

Leadership involves providing direction for others whereby they will follow your example or your suggestions. Other qualities such as assertiveness are usually related to leadership but not necessarily needed (Gandhi is an excellent example of a leader who did not necessarily rely on assertive qualities). A leader must be assertive to get the desired results. Along with assertiveness comes the responsibility to clearly understand what followers expect from their leader. Creativity is the ability to think differently, to get outside the box that constrains solutions. Creativity gives leaders the ability to see things that others have not seen and thus lead followers.

Negotiation involves an ability to settle an issue or difference in such a way as to achieve an outcome that is acceptable to all parties. It is not simply getting your own way. In fact, this would demonstrate your inability to listen to others and to reason their argument (assuming they have a valid argument).

### **d) Presentation**

Presentation skills involve the ability to design and deliver effective presentations appropriate to a given target, in a defined situation. Giving a good presentation often relies on the ability to provide a fluent, persuasive oral account. But it needs to be appropriate for the audience and clear enough to be understood. Presentations can be interactive therefore relying on other skills such as listening or making observations about the visual cues given by the audience. Furthermore, presentations will make use of your ability to self-manage your time and make use of the time preceding the presentation to be prepared.

**e) Critical Analysis**

'Analysis' involves breaking information into its elements. 'Being critical' involves making careful judgements about information and evaluating the quality of that information. In addition, often the opposite of analysis is synthesis. This is where you begin to bring the elements together as a whole.

**f) Team Working**

Team working (often referred to as group working) involves the ability to come together with a group of other people and work purposefully with them to achieve one or more shared tasks and goals. This includes abilities to co-operate, collaborate, and co-ordinate. As with many skills, there is a body of literature and a range of theoretical approaches to team working that can help students and staff understand the processes involved. Belbin's team-roles come to mind as well as Tucker's four stages of teamwork'. You might like to find out more about these. **(Research it yourself)**

You will become involved in team working both collectively (working in the same group for the same outcome) and collaboratively (sharing and developing ideas and thoughts). Team working builds on your communication skills and again, has many 'hidden' skills such as leadership. You might like to consider how you could behave to enhance the group performance.

**g) Project management and Time Management**

Project management involves the ability to define, work to and deliver a project brief within the changing requirements and constraints of scope, time and cost. These constraints ultimately contribute to the quality of the project. It is very much about taking responsibility for the people and events that are under your purview.

Time management involves an ability to organize one's time to maximize personal reliability and effectiveness, identify and focus on the activities that provide the greatest returns, and set goals to achieve desired outcome. In that sense, and in the context of this program, it will be very much about organizing yourself. Attendance and punctuality may be considered as qualities rather than skills and should be considered here.

**h) Reflection**

Reflection involves the ability to look back on experience, make sense of it and identify what to do in the future. It involves being able to repeat what worked well and learn from mistakes. This isn't the same as providing a narrative of the experience. To be reflective, you need to focus on the 'why' and not the 'what you did' for the exercise to be worthwhile.

## **i) Problem Solving and Decision Making**

Problem solving involves the ability to define the task, look at it from different angles, define the nature of any difficulties or challenges, decide on what information is required, consider alternative solutions, and reach a decision on action to be taken. It also involves the ability to re-examine solutions that did not work. Creativity is worth considering here also, as a creative mind can often see a solution that others miss (the ability to think laterally) – it is the ‘why didn’t I think of that’ syndrome.

## **j) VARKS Learning Style**

The acronym “VARK” is used to describe four modalities of student learning that were described in a 1992 study by Neil D. Fleming and Coleen E. Mills.<sup>1</sup> These different learning styles—visual, auditory, reading/writing and kinesthetic (hands-on learning with a high level of active involvement). There is value in identifying which learning method works best for you and then utilizing this as your primary learning technique.

## **k) Identifying your Personality**

We are all different to one another and have traits that make us unique. Parts of our personality that make us who we are and impact the way we behave, react to one another, and respond to different circumstances.

By taking a personality test such as the *Myers-Briggs Personality Test*, **(Research it yourself)** you could identify your own personality and gather insight as to why you respond to certain situations the way you do. This would also help understand the personalities of those around you and your team members which could lead to better interactions and higher levels of empathy.

## **l) Other Skills?**

The examples provided here are not in any order, nor is the list exhaustive. You could consider skills such as note taking and reading as important – or do you consider them as a subset of those given. Information searching and the evaluation of information could also be appropriate. Self-motivation may be considered a human quality, but could we consider this as a skill? Can you think of any others?

## **...and finally?**

What affects us in gaining or restricting our skills? You might like to consider this in some detail as the answers could help you to overcome your own difficulties in the future.

## Skills Audit Form (Developed from Drew and Bingham)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]





## **2. Personal Development Planning**

Part of this program focuses on you preparing and maintaining a Personal Development Plan (PDP).

### **So, what is this planning and what is it for?**

It is a process where you begin to map out your own wishes and aspirations by way of setting goals and you begin to address what it is you have, by way of personal qualities and skills. You then start a method, which is personal to you, whereby you monitor your achievements - through reflection - and begin to plan what you need to do in order to achieve those set goals.

### **...and why is your PDP important?**

By creating a PDP you will need to reflect on your experience in this program (and, we hope, eventually in other modules). The act of reflection will help you to understand what you have learnt from an experience and will help you modify your actions in the future.

Many other universities have begun a process of introducing PDP (or perhaps a similar activity under a different heading) to enable students to fulfill this action. Employees and professional bodies that accredit courses are also influencing universities to adopt this activity.

In a professional sense, it will help you not only to make improvements in your performance, but it will help you when you plan a portfolio of your activities for a potential employer. By maintaining a PDP in some form throughout your career, it could help you when it comes to promotion.

**How skills are developed according to the priority listed above.**

Skill	Methods to develop the skill				Success Criteria	Time Frame
	Academic	Work Experience	Leisure, Student Union Activities	Community or Voluntary Work		
Team working	Assignments –working in teams	Working in a Department / Group project	Sports Meet  Member of Student Union	Involved in Rotary club or Welfare societies	Number of friends made  Number of group project successfully completed	4 weeks

# PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Level ..... Personal Tutor's Remarks

Semester 1

Signature.....

Date:.....

Semester 2

Signature..... Date:.....