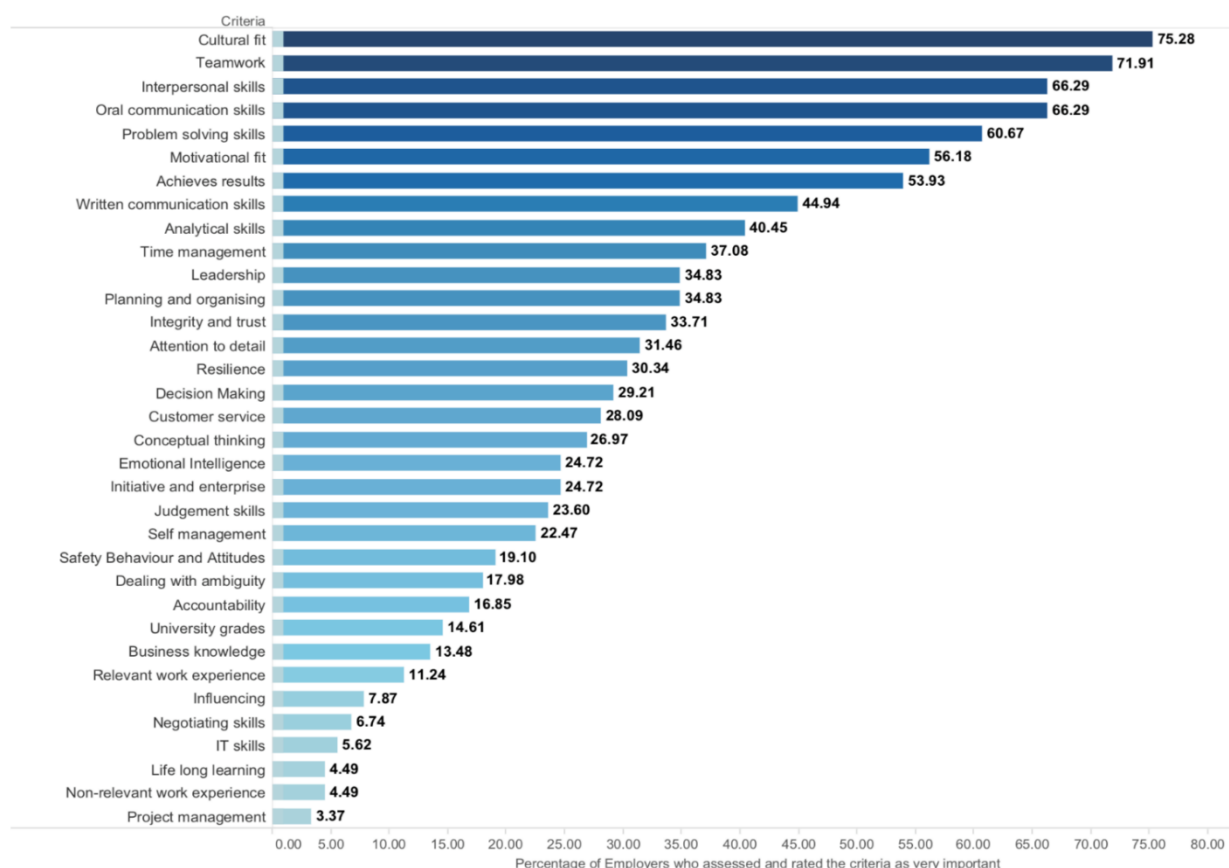


# SKILLS EMPLOYERS WANT

## Percentage of Employers who assess the following criteria and deem it to be very important



**Figure above: selection criteria including skills, personal attributes, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours indicated in the *Employer Survey 2017* as most sought after by the member organisations of the Australian Association of Graduate Employers.**

Are you on track developing the skills that will get you a job? This document explains some of the top skills listed above and suggests co-curricular activities that can help you develop them.

**Emotional Intelligence** – the capacity to be aware of one’s own emotions, how they influence our moods, behaviours, decisions and interactions with others including attention to other peoples’ emotions (empathy). This type of intelligence is at the base of all our social skills and interactions.

**Interpersonal** – the ability to read other people’s emotions (e.g. happiness, anger, confusion) and expectations by observing facial expressions, body language and tone and volume of voice and respond to them to build trust and rapport. Interpersonal skills are a prerequisite to successful oral communication, teamwork, leadership, influencing and negotiating skills.

Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal skills can be developed through participation in the [JCU Student Mentor Program](#) – both as a mentee and/or mentor, plus through volunteering in positions requiring social interaction such as a [Hospital](#) volunteer or [Lifeline](#) Telephone Crisis Supporter.

**Self-management** – involves emotional intelligence, judgment, time management skills and safety behaviours. Being aware of one’s own trigger points, negative thoughts, stress levels, amount of sleep needed etc. in order to be able to proactively maintain a positive outlook, high energy levels, healthy work/life balance, good mental health and resilience (the ability to bounce back quickly after a setback). Self-management involves planning your tasks effectively so you can deliver on your responsibilities and workplace promises; keeping focus and motivation at work and maintaining positive, productive and mutually enjoyable work relationships. All activities at the university are an opportunity to cultivate your self-management and there is a number of [resources and support services](#) to help you raise your awareness.

**Oral communication** – is a cluster of skills such as: acknowledging and greeting everyone in the workplace in a friendly and frequent manner; matching the vocabulary and level of formality depending on the situation and your audience. It is also expressing your view or agenda clearly, succinctly and assertively while acknowledging others' contributions; using active listening techniques (questioning, rephrasing, paraphrasing etc.) to ascertain the information you need; being mindful of how your use of language can impact others including perceptions of aggression, bullying and harassment (unwanted attention) that could put reputation of yours or your employer at risk.

Oral communication can be developed or demonstrated through: course formal presentations, group discussions, debates, mootings, part time work and [volunteering positions](#) dealing with individuals such as helping positions or information/helpdesk, [mentoring](#), also [student challenges and competitions](#), [student clubs and societies](#), [Toastmasters](#) club (public speaking).

**Influencing** – involves a range of [rhetorical devices](#), [rhetorical strategies](#) or manipulation techniques such as [nudging](#) in oral and written communication to either bring certain point of view to your audience's awareness or help them change their position towards the point of view or agenda you represent. A great opportunity to develop your influencing skills are the course presentations, mootings, debates and discussions within [student clubs](#), [Toastmasters](#) club, [student challenges and competitions](#) and other entrepreneurship opportunities where you pitch your solution to a problem to the decision makers.

**Negotiating** – involves using your analytical, planning and oral communication skills to ascertain the problem or differences and similarities in positions and using them to build a win-win. [Negotiating](#) skills can be practiced in course group work, part time work, student clubs, [student challenges and competitions](#) or [some volunteering positions](#) where you get to interact with external stakeholders.

**Teamwork** – involves working towards achieving a common goal, by building trust through open communication, stepping in to support your team members when needed, offering your expertise and skills in your areas of strength and carrying out a fair share of responsibilities.

**Leadership** – is the ability to step in and make a contribution that will bring the team closer to achieving a common goal ([emergent leadership](#)) and then step back to allow others to do the same. It can also be the ability to articulate a vision that inspires and motivates others to work towards a common goal, plus the ability to support and motivate others to realise the goal. Effective leaders exhibit high level of emotional intelligence, interpersonal, oral communication and influencing skills.

Teamwork and leadership can be developed through university coursework group project work, [student challenges and competitions](#), team sports, active roles in student clubs and societies, part time/casual work such as fast food where you work in a team to meet sales targets or assume team leader or training roles.

Leadership skills can be developed through your involvement in university group assessment tasks, sporting teams, committee positions within student clubs, societies or groups, organising events, teams at part time work, taking lead in a [student challenge or competition](#). Taking on the roles of group leader, supervisor, captain, chair etc. will enable you to develop skills and experience in [assigned leadership](#) the type of leadership in the more traditional sense.

**Written communication** – in addition to accurate punctuation, correct grammar and spelling, written communication involves the ability to convey maximum relevant content with a minimum word count while adjusting your style and level of formality according to the type of audience and purpose of your communication piece (e.g. a formal letter, memo, professional report, group email, email to a client, press release, a social media post or passage on the website). It is essential to always remember that you are representing the organisation as much as your professional persona, and that written communication detached from the context can be misunderstood, misconstrued and used against you or your organisation. Think twice before you commit a hilarious joke or facetious comment about your colleague or client, or a fleeting moment of anger or a grievance with your employer to any form of writing such as email, or a Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn post. Many people have missed out or lost their jobs after the employer had seen an inappropriate in their eyes post on social media.

**Analytical skills** – allow you to break down a piece of information into understandable components; make sense; identify the information that really matters; identify the connections or patterns; distinguish facts from opinions; truth from falsehood; identify underlying connections. Effective judgment and critical thinking rely on the quality of your analytical skills.

**Conceptual thinking** – the ability to grasp and create complex, abstract, big picture mental constructs. Also, an ability to recombine or piece together various, seemingly unrelated bits of information in a novel way that reveals new insights. Dreaming up new ideas/concepts/rough outlines. Creative synthesis. Conceptual thinking is useful in creating new concepts, designs, strategies, visions.

**Judgment** – involves analytical skills assessing information from a variety of points of view; identifying where you need more objective information; having awareness of how your own personal biases or other people's opinions may influence you, thus avoiding jumping to premature conclusions. Judgement also involves drawing on your knowledge and experience in order to achieve a well-balanced, reliable, objective, multifaceted understanding of the situation. Judgement is essential for making quality professional or business decisions.

**Decision making** – the process of using your judgment skills, the data and evidence available to identify and weigh up options, consider the flow on effects, and where applicable consult or get your stakeholders on board. Decision making involves devising an implementation plan that includes well timed and targeted communication so that the decision can be as effective as possible.

Analytical and conceptual thinking, judgment and decision making are developed through your studies and can be further developed in [vacation work](#), internships, leadership positions within student clubs and societies, student challenges and competitions, entrepreneurship and some types of volunteering.

**Time management** – is related to your self-management skills. It is the habit of planning your activities, taking in consideration energy levels across the day/week (the need for rest, leisure social activities, work and extra-curricular activities), splitting large pieces of work into daily manageable chunks (assessing time necessary to

complete: usually we tend to underestimate the time required to complete tasks so adding 50% more time to the original estimation may be a good idea), and then sticking to your plans, so things get done on time without compromising your and your team's performance and wellbeing.

**Planning and organising** – or project management skills involves approaching study, work, events and projects in a planned and systematic manner; identifying and consulting who will be involved; setting up a realistic time frame and milestones; identifying other resources needed and budgeting for them; monitoring the delivery and flexibly adjusting and supporting the process; debriefing and reflecting on future improvements; and finally reporting to parties that have a stake in the project.

**Dealing with ambiguity** – includes dealing with unprecedented events, new situations, novel tasks and environments, [wicked problems](#). For example lack of clear career plan; lack of guidance and instructions; unclear expectations from your boss; a team mate, client or stakeholder vague about what they want. An ambiguous environment or situation prompts us to develop our initiative and enterprise as well as problem solving skills and confidence as a result. [Study abroad](#) and travelling is a great way to improve our capacity to deal with ambiguity. Another great way to become comfortable with ambiguity is partaking in student challenges and competitions where you will be often working on solving complex or wicked problems that you haven't tackled before. Volunteering in helping positions can also help develop this skill.

**Initiative and enterprise** – You show initiative when you come up with ideas or take actions without being asked or without seeking permission. Enterprise consists of two distinct skill clusters: first – the **enterprising skills** - seeing a problem as an opportunity; generating ideas to address the problem; choosing the most viable idea; identifying experts and supporters who can help you develop it into a usable solution and implement it. The second skill cluster - the **business skill set** (e.g. developing a business plan, marketing, financial management, logistics etc.) is used to turn your solution into a commercial success. The two skillsets combined with such character attributes as risk taking and resilience (90% of new ventures end in failure) make an **entrepreneur**.

Most employers value initiative and enterprising skills very highly. Employees who are entrepreneurial and show initiative often [improve workplace processes](#) and develop ideas for new products and services. Therefore, while not everyone may want to become an entrepreneur, everyone can and should develop enterprising skills and initiative.

A good way to do so is setting up a [new student club](#), participating in multidisciplinary [student challenges and competitions](#) or in JCU's [Science and IT Design Sprint](#) or if you are an Arts student creating a blog or website through which you [showcase your work](#) and offer services. You may investigate setting up a [tutoring](#), copy writing or graphic design service and advertising it through Airtasker, Fiverr, Gumtree or your own website. You can show initiative and enterprising skills in your part-time job or volunteering position as well. Make sure you record details in a journal and keep any physical evidence if applicable.

**Business knowledge** – also known as business acumen, business awareness or commercial awareness - is an essential skill to employees in all fields of employment. Put in a simple way, it is the awareness that everything that is happening in the world, everything you do or fail to do, can have a profound flow on effect on the operations, the financial results of your organisation and its ability to thrive or survive. Using time and resources effectively, providing exemplary service, developing new services or process improvements in your work can have a positive effect on the bottom line of your organisation.

**Safety behaviour and attributes** – is often referred to as Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) or Work Health and Safety (WHS). Every employer is obliged by law to provide you with relevant training and it is your obligation to always ensure the safety of yourself, your co-workers, clients, contractors and visitors. If you see a banana skin on the floor, you need to connect the dots and remove it before someone slips on it, suffers an injury and sues your employer. This skill can be developed and practiced in all your activities – at the university in the chemical or biomed lab, at your part time work with a fast-food restaurant, in your volunteering positions etc.

**Information Technology** – command of IT skills is no longer limited to operating Microsoft Office software but means a general IT literacy, understanding the UX (user experience), and the ability to identify the relevant IT skills specific to your career and continuously seek to master them (as the longevity of many IT skills is only about 5 years). A good way to keep on top of IT in your field is to identify and follow relevant websites, join professional organisations, LinkedIn groups, complete [Lynda.com](#) training modules or [MOOC](#) micro-courses.

**Problem solving** – involves all the skills listed here to identify the issues, the stakeholders and their interests, brain storming solutions and identifying the best ones, developing clear objectives and an implementation plan. The plan includes anticipating risks and contingencies, mobilizing supporters, flexibly managing the implementation, debriefing and evaluation upon completion, documenting all the above and finally reporting to stakeholders. A step by step approach to problem solving includes that developed by the consulting firm [McKinsey](#).

**Keeping records for your future reference.** It is essential that you keep records of your experiences, evidencing your activities, the results delivered and what skills they involved. Each activity can be broken down into tasks which can be connected to the skills required to deliver on those tasks. The video below shows how you can analyse each of your past experiences. It will make your job applications and job interview preparations easier.

Take a minute to view “Let’s Talk About Skills” Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqsNdwFtxTM>