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**FOURTH
EDITION**

**THE STUDY
SKILLS
HANDBOOK**

STELLA COTTRELL

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR



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The Study Skills Handbook

Fourth Edition

Stella Cottrell

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Self-evaluations, checklists, planners and record sheets may be photocopied by individual students for their personal use only.

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Personal profiles

What is a profile?

A profile is simply a snapshot of yourself as you are now – your skills, qualities, attributes and achievements. It is useful for:

- giving you a sense of where you are now, to guide your personal development plan
- developing habits of reflection and self-analysis
- experience in evaluating and describing yourself – this is valuable preparation for job interviews.

In this chapter you have already started to profile your skills, qualities and experience. That will help when writing a curriculum vitae (CV) for job applications. Add in achievements and skills from other areas of your life.

What are recruiters looking for?

The Association of Graduate Employers reports that almost one-third of large employers find it difficult to find students with the right skills to fill graduate vacancies. Although employers still value academic and specialist skills, they also look for a wider range of experience and generic skills, especially 'soft skills'.

Which 'soft' skills?

Employers value soft skills in the following areas:

1 *Managing yourself: intra-personal skills*

Self-reliance, self-awareness and focus; the capacity to learn, plan action and take the initiative; resourcefulness, motivation and realism.

2 *Managing people: people skills*

Networking; teamworking; communication skills in negotiating, persuading and influencing; customer focus; leadership and ability to support and motivate others; cultural awareness; languages.

3 *Managing projects: task management skills*

Ability to get on with tasks without close supervision; devising and implementing an action plan; attention to detail; being logical, methodical and systematic; applying technology; numerical

reasoning; problem-solving; versatility, flexibility and multi-skilling; willingness to take risks; being results-orientated and solution-focused; business awareness; work ethic.

Sources

- Graduate Recruitment Survey (AGR: 2012)
- www.prospects.ac.uk (accessed 26 August 2012)
- L. Bachelor, 'Graduate careers: the importance of employability skills', *The Guardian*, www.guardian.co.uk/money/2012/jun/08/graduate-careers-employability-skills (accessed 26 August 2012)

Identify your 'soft' skills

Just as you identified how skills from life can translate into academic skills, so you can also consider how academic study develops 'soft' skills transferable to employment. Some examples are listed on the next page – you will be able to think of others. Use page 54 to map out for yourself the soft skills you develop whilst a student.

Give thought to where you can develop soft skills, either on your course or by taking up opportunities open to you whilst a student. The 'Soft skills' evaluation can be used to develop a skills profile (page 54) for employment.

For more about developing soft skills, see:

- Stella Cottrell (2010), *Skills for Success: Personal Development and Employability*, 2nd edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)
- Free resources on www.palgravestudyskills.com

Activity

Which skills do employers value?

- Browse advertisements for graduate jobs, and websites such as www.prospects.ac.uk, noting the skills employers ask for.
- Which of these skills could you develop whilst a student?