

Essential Skills

Tutor guide for video – the interview

Developing, recognising and utilising essential skills



Table of contents

Introduction	7
WHAT are essential skills?	9
Why are these skills important?	11
Research – employability, skills and lifelong learning	13
How to use this tutor guide	15
Part one: getting ready.....	17
Part two: travelling and reflecting.....	23
Part three: scene six, seven, eight – the interview.....	27
Part four: afterwards... ..	31
Overarching questions/extension activities	34



Introduction

This video was developed during summer 2013 by College Development Network and Cumbernauld College on behalf of the Essential Skills and Volunteering Network.

These tutor notes are to support staff in using the video as effectively as possible with learners. This is not a definitive document, but a guide for staff to interpret appropriately for the students they are working with. As with any generic resource, take into consideration the abilities of your students and the context of their learning, ensuring that you adapt to your subject area and/or the preferred employment sector(s), or anticipated destinations of the students.

The Essential Skills and Volunteering Network seek suggestions for additional questions, activities and approaches which could influence and guide the usage of this resource still further, please contact ann.kirkwood@collegedevelopmentnetwork.ac.uk who will collate ideas, examples of activities and discussions and update this guide.

Essential Skills are discussed widely in education, the media and by employers and there are many relevant reports, resources and models, many of which are listed on the essential skills pages of the CDN website: <http://www.collegedevelopmentnetwork.ac.uk/sub-net/essential-skills/essential-skills.html>

Some models are included in the appendices.

If your college has developed its own Essential Skills model it would be beneficial to use that alongside these materials. In addition, you may find it helpful to refer to the Curriculum for Excellence Four Capacities model which is included in this guide.

WHAT are essential skills?

The *Skills Strategy for Scotland* (2007, p8) states that there are 'several overlapping clusters of skills'. These include:

- **personal and learning skills** that enable individuals to become effective lifelong learners
- **literacy and numeracy**;
- the five **core skills** of communication, numeracy, problem solving, information technology and working with others
- **employability skills** that prepare individuals for employment rather than for a specific occupation
- **essential skills** that include all of those above
- **vocational skills** that are specific to a particular occupation or sector.

Why are these skills important?

WHY are these skills important to tutors and learners in Scottish colleges?

The Skills Strategy for Scotland (2007) states that 'Provision must not be just about subject-specific knowledge and understanding – the development of essential skills must be embedded at all levels of post-compulsory learning' (2007, p 25). The Educational Skills in Scotland's Colleges Aspect Report (21st September 2012) states that 'Colleges have a key role to play in delivering adult literacies, in working with young people within the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence and in having a positive impact on family life through developing confidence and skills in all learners' (2012, p2).

It is often reported that there is a significant number of adults in Scotland who do not meet employers' essential skills criteria and this is a key employability focus for colleges and the Community Learning and Development sector, in particular. Equally, employers want people with the 'softer', less definable skills that are vital for the success of their organisation. There is no definitive list of these (which depend on type of job, level of responsibility and organisational culture) but include:

- effective time management
- planning and organising
- effective oral and written communication skills
- the ability to solve problems
- being able to undertake tasks or make submissions at short notice
- the ability to work with others to achieve common goals
- the ability to think critically and creatively
- the ability to learn and to continue learning
- the ability to take responsibility for professional development
- having the skills needed to manage, or be managed by, others (which draws on many of the other skills in this list).

Research – employability, skills and lifelong learning

Research – **Employability, Skills and Lifelong Learning Analysis** Education Analytical Services Division Scottish Government Social Research 2011

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/344028/0114449.pdf>

This research identified skills gaps (where employers have judged that their employees are not fully proficient) as affecting 6% of all employees in 2010, and skills shortages which refer to applicants for a job. The most commonly cited skills lacking (as stated by over 50% of employers) in both employees and applicants were:

- planning and organising
- problem solving
- customer handling
- team working skills

In addition, applicants were considered deficient in oral and written communication skills.

How to use this tutor guide

The guide to suggested activities and discussions is organised into five sections:

- video – part one: getting ready activities and discussions
- video – part two: travelling and reflecting activities and discussions
- video – part three: the interview activities and discussions
- video – part four: afterwards activities and discussions
- overarching/extension activities.

The tables include discussion points and exemplar responses and are based on the video. Also available are blank templates that you could adapt and use with learners.

Alternative methods of exploring the issues could involve:

- flipchart exercise with two headings/drawings/visuals of the characters – Aidan and Danny – and learners document similarities and differences, essential skills evidenced, etc using post-its
- or use smart boards in similar way
- with the exercises above, learners should then identify their own essential skills profiles, consider how and where they developed these skills and in what ways they can be/have been used in different settings.

The overarching/extension activities and discussions are suggestions for using the video as an introduction and background to explore aspects of essential skills in different ways.

Part one: getting ready

Scene description	The two characters – Danny and Aidan wake on morning of interview	
Discussion points	Character – Aidan 	Character – Danny 
Essential Skills demonstrated or discussed	Problem solver (e.g. finding a shirt to wear)	Prepared Conscientious People skills Relationship-builder Funny (Amy's comment) Team skills Help others (mentoring/coaching) Loyalty Work ethic Professionalism Honesty Seeks others views – open to ideas
Examples of where <i>you</i> have developed/utilised these skills E.g. paid job, volunteering, hobbies, gaming, family or community life, in college, at school		
Other skills that are not evident but which the two characters have	Literacy and ICT skills to complete application	Literacy and ICT skills to complete application.
Any potentially negative points noted?	Not sufficiently organised/prepared??	Over-anxious? Over-rehearsed?
The role of the female characters – their essential skills	Tried to help but had to leave On time for her job	Supportive Has a job
Character traits	Gung-ho attitude? Easy going?	Lack of self-confidence? Cope with pressure? Risk taking?

How well prepared for a job interview do you consider each character to be? And why?	Taking it in his stride to extent that he is running short of time, clothing not ready, no notes apparent	Very well prepared – notes, sufficient time to get ready, concerned about personal appearance
Comment on how you believe a prospective employer would consider the presentation of the characters?	Could be seen as scruffy/unkempt	Presentable – clean, tidy, wearing a suit, clean shaven
What personal attributes does each character appear to have?	Confident Resourceful Imaginative	Self-management Self-aware regarding appearance Responsible
What kinds of jobs do you think each character would be best suited for?	Jobs that involve risk taking, working under pressure and thinking on your feet	Jobs that involve team working, planning, managing
Further questions/discussions	Aidan is a gamer – what essential skills might he have developed through engaging in this hobby? How could these be transferred to the workplace? Team work, leadership, negotiation, planning, communication, creativity	
Further questions/discussions	Could you be over-prepared for interview? (think about Amy's advice to Danny) Amy advised 'you have already gone over this umpteen times...the danger is you might come across a bit robotic if you start rhyming off the stuff you have prepared'	
Further questions/discussions	What might the home scenes reflect? Different personality types? Aidan – dis-organised, chaotic, thinks on his feet Danny – organised, methodical, serious, prepared	

Part one: getting ready

<p>Scene description</p>	<p>The two characters – Danny and Aidan wake on morning of interview</p>	
<p>Discussion points</p>	<p>Character – Aidan</p> 	<p>Character – Danny</p> 
<p>Essential Skills demonstrated or discussed</p>		
<p>Examples of where <i>you</i> have developed/utilised these skills</p> <p>E.g. paid job, volunteering, hobbies, gaming, family or community life, in college, at school</p>		
<p>Other skills that are not evident but which the two characters have</p>		
<p>Any potentially negative points noted?</p>		

<p>The role of the female characters – their essential skills</p>		
<p>Character traits</p>		
<p>How well prepared for a job interview do you consider each character to be?</p> <p>And why?</p>		
<p>Comment on how you believe a prospective employer would consider the presentation of the characters?</p>		
<p>What personal attributes does each character appear to have?</p>		
<p>What kinds of jobs do you think each character would be best suited for?</p>		

<p>Further questions/ discussions</p>	<p>Aidan is a gamer – what essential skills might he have developed through engaging in this hobby?</p> <p>How could these be transferred to the workplace?</p>
<p>Further questions/ discussions</p>	<p>Could you be over-prepared for interview? (think about Amy’s advice to Danny)</p> <p>Amy advised ‘you have already gone over this umpteen times...the danger is you might come across a bit robotic if you start rhyming off the stuff you have prepared’</p>
<p>Further questions/ discussions</p>	<p>What might the home scenes reflect? Different personality types?</p>

Part two: travelling and reflecting



Scene description	The two characters – Danny and Aidan meet at the train station	
Discussion points	Character – Aidan	Character – Danny
They discuss what they have been doing since leaving college	Has had 2 temporary jobs	Completed 40 applications and attended five interviews
Discussion areas	<p>Which essential skills and personal attributes could Aidan have developed and utilised in temporary jobs?</p> <p>E.g. time management, work ethic</p>	<p>What essential skills and personal attributes has Danny developed in his job search?</p> <p>E.g. resilience, perseverance, job search skills</p> <p>But – is he seeking feedback, learning from his experience, discussing with job centre/careers advisor etc?</p> <p>Is he sufficiently aware of his essential skills, where he developed these and examples of when he utilised them and is he able to demonstrate that to recruiter?</p>
	<p>What could Aidan learn from Danny?</p> <p>To plan more Organisational skills Self-management</p>	<p>What could Danny learn from Aidan?</p> <p>To relax more To belief in himself</p>
Essential skills that are evident	Reacts, thinks on his feet – winging it	Prepared – dress sense, still reading notes

<p>They reflect back to essential skills lecture in college</p>	<p>Using smartphone – on social networking? (assumptions) Or taking notes on phone? Or researching essential skills?</p>	<p>Conscientiously taking notes, listening</p>
<p>Response to lecturer questions:</p>	<p>Question – Aidan, how are we defining essential skills?</p> <p>Response: Five cores skills of communication, numeracy, problem solving, ICT and working with others Personal and learning skills Employability skills Creative skills (used ICT to solve problem – research skills, thinking skills – discussion question – what do we need to know and do we need to know where to access the right information?)</p>	<p>Question – Danny what are some of the things colleges should be doing to develop and promote essential skills?</p> <p>Response: Ensure that college staff have an understanding and clarity of the definition of essential skills</p>
<p>What essential skills are employers looking for?</p>	<p>Creative skills People skills Leadership Networking Enterprise Risk taking</p>	<p>Team skills Cognitive skills Reliability Flexibility Team working</p>
<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Do you feel the list each character has identified reflects their own character strengths?</p> <p>What kinds of employees would each character make?</p>	
<p>Response to trains cancelled</p>	<p>Aidan Thumb a lift – creative/enterprising/risk?</p>	<p>Danny Take a cab – has money for plan B</p>
<p>Discussion points</p>	<p>How comfortable was Danny with Aidan taking control and thumbing a lift?</p>	

Their journey continues...



Part two: travelling and reflecting



Scene description	The two characters – Danny and Aidan meet at the train station	
Discussion points	Character – Aidan	Character – Danny
They discuss what they have been doing since leaving college		
Discussion areas	Which essential skills and personal attributes could Aidan have developed and utilised in temporary jobs?	<p>What essential skills and personal attributes has Danny developed in his job search?</p> <p>But – is he seeking feedback, learning from his experience, discussing with job centre/careers advisor etc?</p> <p>Is he sufficiently aware of his essential skills, where he developed these and examples of when he utilised them and is he able to demonstrate that to recruiter?</p>

	What could Aidan learn from Danny?	What could Danny learn from Aidan?
Essential skills that are evident		
They reflect back to essential skills lecture in college, what were they doing?		
Response to lecturer questions:	Question – Aidan, how are we defining essential skills?	Question – Danny what are some of the things colleges should be doing to develop and promote essential skills?
What essential skills are employers looking for?		
Discussion	<p>Do you feel the list each character has identified reflects their own character strengths?</p> <p>What kinds of employees would each character make?</p>	
Response to trains cancelled		

Discussion points	How comfortable was Danny with Aidan taking control and thumbing a lift?
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Their journey continues...



Part three: scene six, seven, eight – the interview



Scene description	Aidan and Danny in the car	
What are their perceptions of the job – Call centre – outbound sales advisor	Aidan: Hits targets Closes sales Makes money	Danny: Works as part of a team Builds relationships with customers
Discussion	Both responses will be an accurate description of the role Could the elements of the job that each focus on suggest different approaches to the job? Discuss – team working and the need to have variety of skills and approaches in the workplace	
Scene description	Aidan and Danny waiting for interview	What does Aidan and Danny's body language convey about them? How important do you think body language is regarding the impression you make?



Scene description	Aidan and Danny in their interview		
Discussion points Interviewer asks:	Aidan 	Danny 	What would your response be?
Example of where you have demonstrated initiative	Well funny you should ask...		Concrete examples:
Can you think of how the company can introduce innovative methods to record and monitor performance in the workplace?		Introduce employee portfolios to record and evaluate employee performance as well as build an online archive	
What makes an effective contributor in the workplace?	Someone who is adaptable, who can communicate in different ways in different settings		
What would you say are your strongest personal attributes or qualities?	I am resilient I am positive I am fairly ambitious	I am highly self motivated I have got an excellent work ethic I am honest and reliable	

Part three: scene six, seven, eight – the interview



Scene description	Aidan and Danny in the car	
What are their perceptions of the job – Call centre – outbound sales advisor	Aidan:	Danny:
Discussion	<p>Both responses will be an accurate description of the role</p> <p>Could the elements of the job that each focus on suggest different approaches to the job?</p> <p>Discuss – team working and the need to have variety of skills and approaches in the workplace</p>	
Scene description	<p>Aidan and Danny waiting for interview</p> 	<p>What does Aidan and Danny's body language convey about them?</p> <p>How important do you think body language is regarding the impression you make?</p>

Scene description	Aidan and Danny in their interview		
Discussion points Interviewer asks:	Aidan 	Danny 	What would your response be to each of the question and could you provide examples of your skills utilisation or where you developed them?
Example of where you have demonstrated initiative	Well funny you should ask...		
Can you think of how the company can introduce innovative methods to record and monitor performance in the workplace?		Introduce employee portfolios to record and evaluate employee performance as well as build an online archive	
What makes an effective contributor in the workplace?	Someone who is adaptable, who can communicate in different ways in different settings		
What would you say are your strongest personal attributes or qualities?	I am resilient I am positive I am fairly ambitious	I am highly self motivated I have got an excellent work ethic I am honest and reliable	

Part four: afterwards...



Scene description	Aidan and Danny in the pub	
	Aidan	Danny
In what ways does each character reflect on their interview?	<p>'Personally I think it went well...being chauffeur driven by the MD was a little novel mind you? Now that is what you call an icebreaker...'</p> <p>Is Aidan positive/optimistic?</p> <p>Is he a pragmatist?</p>	<p>'I do not know. I can never tell with interviews. Takes me a couple of days to run through everything in my head...usually left with an empty feeling'</p> <p>Is Danny positive/optimistic?</p> <p>Is Danny a reflector?</p>
Their further reflections	<p>'I felt I spoke too much in general terms...I do not think my answers were detailed enough...so I am guessing I do not have a chance'</p>	<p>'It was a little weird to be honest. I kept thinking about how I must have come across in the car...first impressions and that.'</p>
Discussion:	<p>How might you create a positive/favourable first impression in an interview setting?</p> <p>In what ways might this differ from other settings e.g. social?</p> <p>What essential skills are demonstrated in creating positive first impressions?</p> <p>In terms of employment interviews how do you assess the first impressions you make of the prospective employer? E.g. the place of work, its culture, how you were greeted, the questioning in the interview.</p>	
Asking prospective employer questions		<p>'I asked about opportunities for further training and the prospects of progressing within the company'</p>
Discussion	<p>How important is it for prospective employees to ask relevant questions in an interview setting?</p> <p>In what ways would you determine what kinds of questions to ask?</p>	

	Which essential skills would you deploy? (E.g. research of the company in advance? Thinking about your own ambition in the short/medium/long terms)
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Overarching questions/extension activities

Core skills

Note instances where each of the five core skills were evidenced or implied in video (either positively or negatively):

Numeracy	Calculating time needed to get ready and to interview on time Reading train timetable Ensuring sufficient budget for travel to venue Costs of suitable dress for interview – budgeting
Communication	Spoken – articulate, confident Reading – Understanding and evaluating written information Non-verbal – body language, eye contact, etc Written – CV, application form Active listening – at college regarding essential skills, to interviewers questions
Problem solving	Working out journey and how to get there What to do when train cancelled – an alternative plan Thinking on your feet when faced with a challenging question
ICT	Researching the position online Preparing the CV and application form Accessing information on Essential Skills
Working with others	Examples of this – team working (quote specifics from video) The two characters working together to get to interview on time

Extension activities – the core skills

- Numeracy: how to find suitable clothes for interview or access to funds to buy new smart clothes, also personal appearance, haircut, etc.
- Numeracy: futures thinking – calculate typical salary of job against monthly living costs. This can involve class discussion facilitated by the tutor to ensure a wide range of options are considered.
- Communication: discuss body language and appearance and its significance – for making an impression, how others might view this, culture of college, of workplace you aspire to be part of.
- Problem solving: individuals identifying examples of their problem solving skills from variety of areas of their life – part time employment, work placements, formal education (school and college courses), volunteering, sport, clubs/organisations they are a part of, hobbies, holidays.
- ICT: social networking, on-line gaming, college course.
- Working with others: examples from college course, and life in general, sport, volunteering etc.

An Interview role play

Devise a fictitious job with the class group and using the interview chapter from the film, perhaps with volunteers, encourage learners (one at a time) to face the screen and respond directly to the interviewers questions. The tutor can pause the video after each question to hear the response and discuss the response with the class.

Wider essential skills

Ask learners – using the essential skills information from the pack (or the college essential skills poster or one from the Essential Skills pages of College Development Network website) to note down the essential skills that are crucial to the career of their choice. Next identify the essential skills that need the most development for them personally. Finally, identify opportunities within and outside of college where they could both develop and utilise essential skills, particularly those that require the most development.

What happened next for Aidan and Danny?

Who you believe succeeded in gaining the job? (Either, neither, both?)

Provide reasons for this answer.

Now share your responses in groups or as a class – discussion.

Reflecting on essential skills in preparation for interview

Using the two main characters' names as headings, note down under each name strengths and areas of improvement in terms of their preparation and performance for interview.

List their essential skills and personal attributes.

Employees are part of a team – different skills/capabilities/personal attributes needed across the team, place for different personality types – which kinds of roles would each character fulfil in your opinion?

Jigsaw activity – cards with individual skills

1. Split the class into four groups, numbering individuals one–four.
2. Give each group a few essential skills each – with no repetition across groups.
3. In each group ask the learners to identify opportunities to develop and document these skills within and outside of college.
4. Ask each group to produce an image as an aide memoir to capture their conclusions (drawing, flow chart etc.).
5. Now split up each group so that there are individuals from groups one, two, three and four are facing each other together in another four groups.
6. Starting with the rep from group one – give five minutes uninterrupted time for the member from group one to discuss the aide memoir and group findings to reps from two, three and four. The tutor should indicate when the five minutes is up.
7. There should be a couple of minutes for questions and discussion then the member from group two should begin their five minutes (and so on until group four have responded to questions).
8. There could be additional time for general discussion within the group or as a class.

Curriculum for Excellence: examining the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities to enhance essential skills and attributes

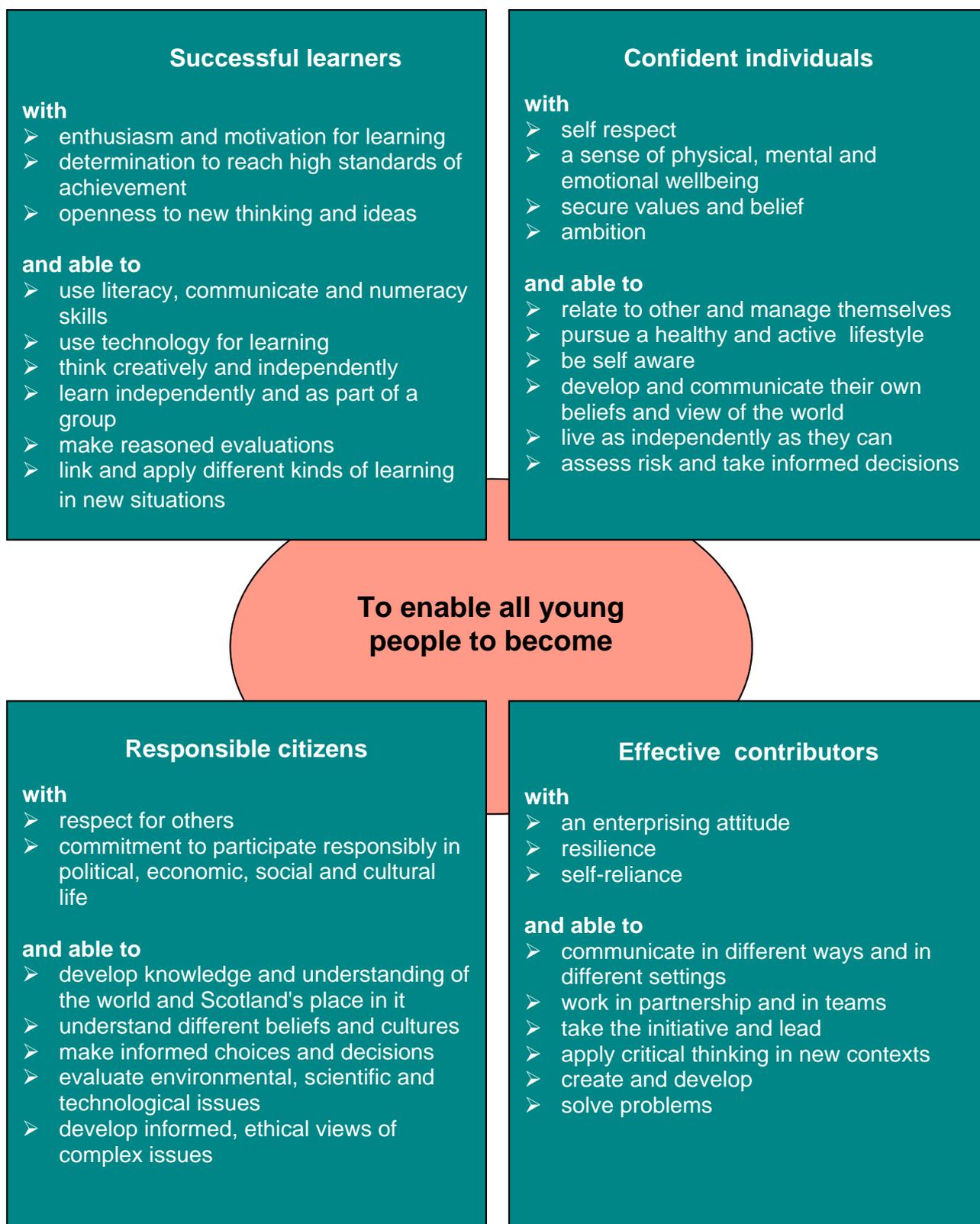
Successful learners	Examples of how I can demonstrate this
With enthusiasm and motivation for learning	
With determination to reach high standards of achievement	
With openness to new thinking and ideas	
Able to use literacy, communication and numeracy skills	
Able to use technology for learning	
Able to think creatively and independently	
Able to learn independently and as part of a group	
Able to make reasoned evaluations	
Able to link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations	

Confident Individuals	Examples of how I can demonstrate this
With self-respect	
With a sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing	
With secure values and belief	
With ambition	
Able to relate to others and manage themselves	
Able to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle	
Able to be self-aware	
Able to develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world	
Able to live as independently as they can	
Able to assess risk and take informed decisions	
Able to achieve success in different areas of activity	

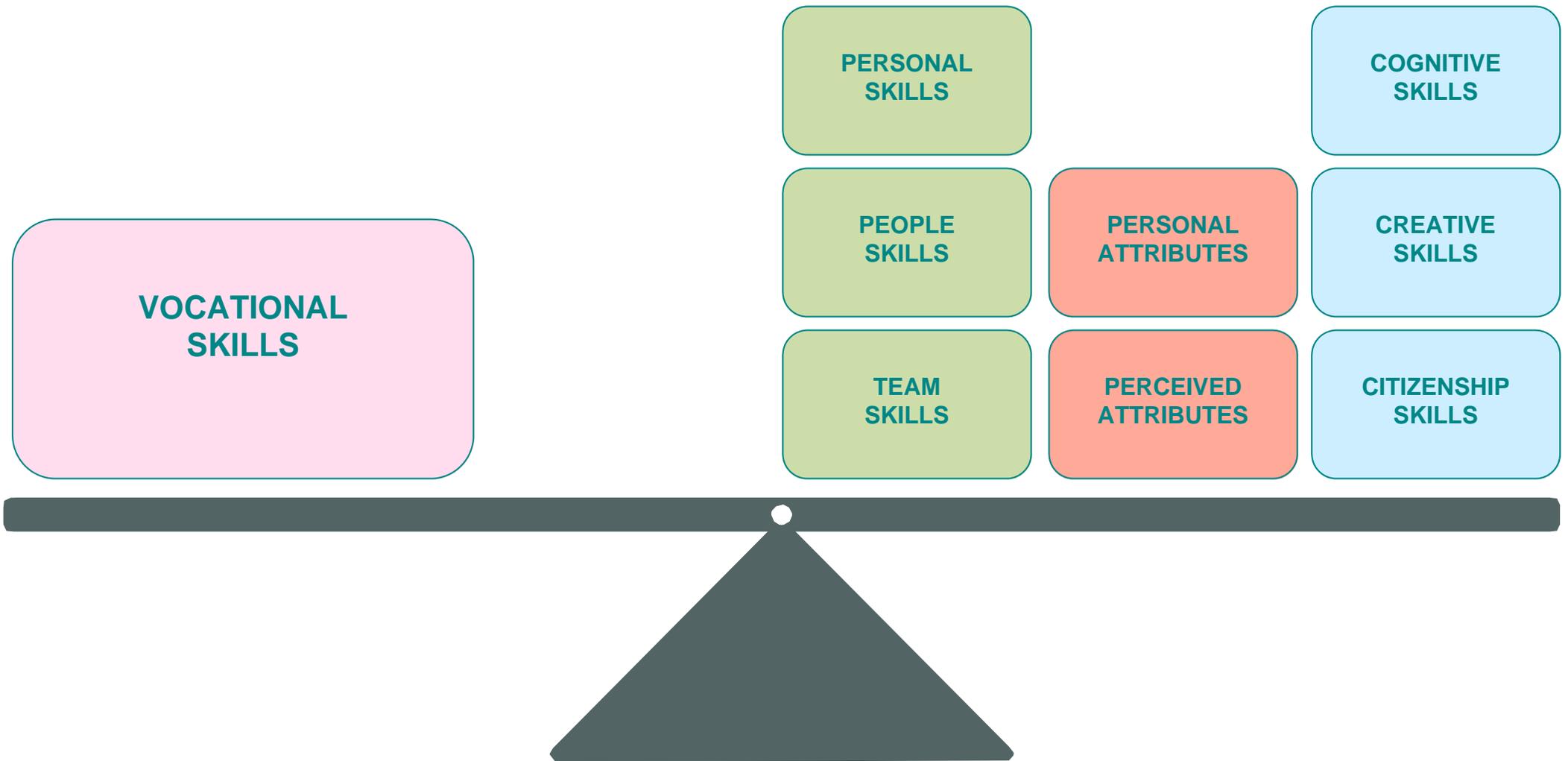
Responsible Citizens	Examples of how I can demonstrate this
With respect for others	
With commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life	
Able to develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it	
Able to understand different beliefs and cultures	
Able to make informed choices and decisions	
Able to evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues	
Able to develop informed, ethical views of complex issues	

Effective Contributors	Examples of how I can demonstrate this
With an enterprising attitude	
With resilience	
With self-reliance	
Able to communicate in different ways and in different settings	
Able to work in partnership and in teams	
Able to take the initiative and lead	
Able to apply critical thinking in new contexts	
Able to create and develop	
Able to solve problems	

Curriculum for Excellence: the four capacities



Achieving a balanced curriculum



Cognitive skills

Critical thinking
Problem solving
Reasoning
Perceptive
Interpretive
Analytical

People skills

Negotiating
Presentation
Communication
Respect
Influencing
Building relationships
Empathy
Manners
Helpfulness

Team skills

Helping others
Organising & planning
Co-operative learning
Management & leadership
Mentoring & coaching
Delegating
Inspiring
Enterprising

Personal attributes

Demeanour
Time keeping & attendance
Personal appearance
Self awareness
Work ethic
Time management
Commitment to learning
Wellbeing

Personal skills

Self-motivated
Conscientious
Adaptable
Resilient
Determined
Patient
Honest
Responsible
Reliable
Diligent

Creative skills

Innovative
Resourceful
Imaginative
Visionary
Risk management

Citizenship skills

Cultural awareness
Community spirit
Political awareness
Environmental awareness
Global awareness
General knowledge

Essential skills

Perceived attributes

Professionalism
Confidence
Self-esteem
Positive attitude
Integrity
Character



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