



Enhancing the employability of graduates:
increasing the awareness of staff and students to
the needs of the employers

<http://www.lifelonglearning.science.usyd.edu.au/>

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What did we set out to do?

Develop a skills awareness program to:

- Raise awareness of the key role of generic skills in enhancing progression & success in a science career
- Provide a mechanism for students to self-assess their awareness of the various skills
- Provide students with a framework to understand the nature of the skills
- Show students how to use a portfolio to demonstrate their skills competence
- Help students learn the language of these skills and identify them within the curricula

Methodology

- **Preliminary phase** included a literature review & investigation of ideas about graduate attributes within the higher education sector (later on we articulated our views with those of the ITL)
- **Development phase** including the articulation, definition & identification of attributes and design of web site
- **Implementation phase** working with students (pilots in 2003 and 2004)
- **Evaluation and reporting phase** in which there is ongoing evaluation of the web site by students and staff, and a final report being prepared for December 2004

*The project model can be viewed at
<http://science.uniserve.edu.au/projects/skills/>*

How did we go about it?

Our original model was very academic in orientation (typical of academics). We:

- created a matrix of skills and attributes (see matrix diagram)
- provided definitions of all skills in hierarchical groupings for the students
- created examples and portfolio developments

Students were given the definitions as the focal point and the examples and portfolio materials as secondary resources

Student Trials

The first trial in May 2003 was at the storyboard writing stage. It was paper-based and held with a student focus group. The group was sent information about the project and the materials that were being prepared and then they attended a meeting. At the meeting we looked at the interpretation of one of the higher order skills – interpersonal skills. The students were asked to discuss:

- the usefulness of the records of (student) experiences; and
- the development of student activity logs

Feedback was then used to help develop the web interface

We developed a web interface before further trials in August 2003. At this trial the students were asked to use our web interface and comment on:

- the usability of the interface still using the Interpersonal Skills information; and
- the development of a student portfolio from their perspective

From these discussions we developed the web site. The direction had been changed slightly (but with hindsight not enough)

Recent trials have changed our views

- Students found there was far too much information to read and follow
- Information not in the format they felt they would work with
- The presentation was far too academic!

Changes were drastic

- *Turned the site up side down and inside out!*
- *Changed the name*

What have we produced?

A web site

- Student-friendly
- Explains core skills/attributes
- Provides a series of scenarios of experiences that help develop the skills
- Suggests ways of creating a portfolio; shares *CV's*
- Interviews with practising scientists and employers

What are we going to do with it?

- Available to all Science students in 2005
- Promoted through *WebCT*, the Faculty T&L web site
- Promoted to all staff through College Showcase and newsletters

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