The Added Value of Undertaking A Co-operative Education Year: The Measurement of Student Attributes

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It is becoming evident that employers in the recruitment of University graduates, are placing a growing emphasis on the candidates’ non degree specific or generic skills as a source of differentiation in the selection process. A similar trend is occurring in the hiring of co-operative education (co-op) students and indeed, it has been found that these generic skills are said to be of greater importance to co-op employers than academic results. This paper focuses on the measurement of these generic skills and the implications that the ability to generate these measures will have on the co-op preparation and recruitment processes.

1. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
RMIT’s Teaching and Learning Strategy 1995 states that employability is one of the six graduate attributes that students should possess after completing their course. RMIT Business has included co-operative education (co-op) as an integral part of seven (out of nine) degree programs that it currently offers in the belief that these programs add to graduate employability. This belief is supported by the results of the most recent Graduate Destination Survey of 1996 which indicated that the graduates of these seven degree programs had an employment rate of above 92% which was higher than competitor courses that did not include a co-op program.

Universities have traditionally focussed on their students achieving academic excellence and it has been argued that students returning to study after co-op achieve higher academic results than those who did not participate in the co-op program (Weisz, 1998). This, however, may not be enough to guarantee employment given that “recruiters believe the specific discipline is often not as important as all-round abilities and attributes” (Lelliott, 1995). Research undertaken on behalf of the Australian Association of Graduate Employers (Hughett & Skringar, 1997) found that the four most important personal attributes in graduates as rated by employers were:

• willingness to work
• interpersonal/relational skills
• enthusiasm/motivation/initiative
• career planning

It has also been found that the co-op experience contributed to the development of communication and interpersonal skills in students (Eames, Kumar, Rowe & Hitchcock, 1996; Smith-Eggeman & Scott, 1994) and enhanced their career knowledge (Van Gyn & Ricks, 1997). Given that the development of these personal attributes is consistent with graduate employment requirements, it follows that co-op graduates have enhanced prospects of employability. This is supported by studies (Clarke & Zuhair, 1995; Van Gyn & Ricks, 1997) that have shown that co-op students have a higher rate of full-time graduate employment and are more likely to be employed in a field related to their studies.

These studies have however focused on graduate employment and there is little research relating to the critical success factors for a student seeking a co-op placement. If co-op develops the personal attributes that graduate employers are seeking and “…industry…is demanding experience before the experience itself takes place.” (Atchison & Weisz, 1996) then what are the criteria used by employers in their selection of co-op students and what importance do they place on personal attributes? Once this has been determined, it is then important to find a way of measuring:

• what personal attributes do students seeking placement have.
• how the Universities can make a contribution to the development of these attributes in students.

2. BACKGROUND
This study forms part of a much larger research project which has emanated from the discussions based on RMIT’s Teaching and Learning Strategy, about the University’s role in the development of student attributes. In this strategy document, RMIT defines these “attributes” in terms of students being “knowledgeable, creative, critical, responsible, employable and leaders”. While there is a process in place for the identification of the attributes that are targeted by each course or subject, this process still needs more development. Furthermore, there is no such process is in place for the co-op programs or for its alternative Professional Skills Program. The research project aims to profile incoming RMIT students, measure the development of targeted attributes through the course work, co-op programs and any alternative professional development programs that students undertake, and match these developed attributes with graduate attribute requirements. The challenge is to find or develop an appropriate measuring tool that can monitor the attribute developments overtime.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY
This paper reports on the use of the Performance Management Process tool, designed, developed and implemented by RMIT Assessment Centre, to measure attributes of a pilot group of students. 1 The

1 At this point I would like to acknowledge and thank Ms. Louise Phelan, Ms. Maria Nagy, Ms. Natalie Ford and Ms. Nadine Castle from the RMIT Assessment Centre for their generous support of this project and for their hours of work in developing, administering and adjusting the Performance Management Process tool. I would also like to acknowledge the extensive
objectives of the study are to:

• explore whether there is a relationship between the attributes measured and those sought after by employers of co-op students.
• evaluate the effectiveness of this tool in measuring student attributes and to make any necessary adjustments.

4. METHODOLOGY

1. The Questionnaire

The RMIT Assessment Centre identified twelve attributes which formed the basis of the competency profile that the Centre believed employers wanted in co-op students whom they recruited (see Appendix 1).

The competency profile consisted of six units, each of which was further defined by two, three or four performance criteria or elements (see Appendix 2). These were consistent with the management competencies defined by the Australian National Training Authority (1998). Fifty-five questions were then designed to measure the behaviours that would reflect the desired performance. The relationship between attributes, core competencies, performance criteria and questions, is diagrammatically represented in Figure 1 below.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

4.2.1 THE PILOT GROUP OF COOP STUDENTS & QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTRATION

The questionnaire was administered to 35 RMIT Economics and Finance or Financial Planning students who had recently taken up their co-op placements. This ensured that the cohort of students would have the attributes required for employment but would not have had sufficient time to significantly develop these in the workplace.

The students were then asked to rate themselves, using a 5-point Likert scale, on how often they displayed the specified behaviours, perceptions and beliefs reflected in the questions. This method of self assessment has been established as appropriate in the area of measuring competency development as a result of student participation in co-op programs. (Deves, 1998; Walo, 1998).

The responses to the questions were collated and summarised so that each student was provided with:

• his/her average score for each of the core competencies that reflected the underlying attributes.
• his/her average score for each of the performance criteria that made up the core competencies.
• the cohort average for each of the questions, performance criteria and the core competencies.

Figure 1: The Relationship Between Attributes, Competencies, Performance Criteria & Behaviours

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work done on the larger project by Dr. Mary Atchison, Ms. Sandra Smith and Ms. Celia Moriarty from RMIT Business and express my appreciation for their feedback and input into this section of the work.
4.2.2 THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS AS A TOOL FOR STUDENTS PREPARING FOR CO-OP

It was expected that the results from the data collection would form a useful basis for developing a profile of attributes required for co-op job placement. It was also intended that a later study would compare this profile of a successful student with one for students who had not been successful in obtaining a co-op placement.

Students within RMIT Business undertake some form of co-op preparation work however each school approaches this preparation in a unique way. If a profile of attributes for successful placement was developed then this would help RMIT develop these attributes in students during the first two years of their degree. It would also provide valuable information for co-op program managers who could evaluate students preparing for co-op, so that emphasis could be placed on enhancing or developing those attributes necessary for job placement. If students are better able to demonstrate their personal attributes, then this would provide a more appropriate basis for job selection particularly for employers who often interview students from several schools.

4.2.3 DATA PERTAINING TO CO-OP JOB SPECIFICATIONS

The job descriptions relating to the positions held by the current co-op students, were analysed to identify which attributes had been specified by the employers.

It was expected that the core competencies that were identified in the questionnaire would also be those specified by co-op employers. Furthermore, where employers stated that specific attributes were a job requirement, it was expected that the students who were placed in these jobs would have a higher attribute rating than students who were accepted to jobs that had no specific attribute requirements.

4.2.4 THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS AS A TOOL TO MONITOR ATTRIBUTE DEVELOPMENT IN STUDENTS THROUGHOUT THE CO-OP PLACEMENT

There was an expectation that the attributes required for obtaining a job placement were not necessarily the same as those attributes associated with successful job performance. While a high job placement rate is certainly an objective of the work preparation program, this objective becomes meaningless unless there is a good match between an employer's job requirements and a student's abilities to do that job well. The importance of on-the-job performance measures, was therefore recognised.

Once the questionnaire has been trialed and adjusted where necessary, the intention is, that the Performance Management Process will be used as a mechanism to give co-op students 360 degree feedback. This will enable the development of the student's attributes to be monitored throughout the co-op placement. The 360 degree process involves a student's self assessment of his/her performance to be compared with feedback from the workplace supervisor, the academic mentor and a workplace colleague. This process of feedback together with the trialing of new behaviours and the opportunity for guided reflection, is essential to a student-based learning experience which also converts a co-op job into an educational opportunity (Ricks, 1996).

5. RESULTS

5.1 THE INITIAL PROFILE DEVELOPED FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The first grouping of the 55 questions into the 18 performance criteria and then the 6 core competencies bore little relationship to the personal attribute requirements specified by co-op employers in their job descriptions. In an effort to understand the absence of this relationship a review of the attributes, competencies and performance criteria was undertaken. The responses to questions were then re-grouped to accord with the needs of the majority of the co-op employers.

5.1.1 A REVIEW OF THE FRAMEWORK

While an "attribute" can be defined as a fundamental characteristic of a person (consistent with the definition given by Chaplin, 1975), the term "competency" links an attribute to performance outcomes of a high standard. A competency within the context of this study is:

"…an underlying characteristic … causally related to … superior performance in a job" (Boyatzis, 1982).

The definition of competency, therefore, infers a quantifiable measure that will distinguish average or poor performance from that which is superior. Core competencies are those which are regarded as important or essential to the job.

The breakdown of the core competencies into elements of performance which in turn are measured by questions, provides a valid theoretical framework (Boyatzis, 1982). This framework has been used successfully by the RMIT Assessment Centre in their various consulting projects to industry as well as by other organisations such as Norwich Union Financial Services Group (Box, 1995). Why then, was there no evident relationship between the core competencies identified in the questionnaire and those specified by the co-op employers in their job descriptions?

In analysing these co-op job descriptions, it appears that employers are more general about the non discipline-specific skill requirements of their co-op recruits. The terms "attributes" "competencies" and "personal skills" are used interchangeably and it would appear that most employers do not place their selection process in the theoretical framework that is described above. There are however a few exceptions.

It has become evident that some very large companies have adopted, or are in the process of adopting, this theoretical...
framework for all their recruitment and promotion. Attribute profiles of successful people at the various levels within the organisation, are developed and these profiles are translated into the necessary behaviours that will lead to the desired performance outcomes. This is also consistent with the Hay McBer Job Competence Assessment Methodology (Spencer, McClelland & Spencer, 1994)

Interview style, consistent with this framework is known as “Behavioural Events Interviewing” where candidates are asked to describe situations in which various behaviours have been demonstrated and interviewers are skilled in recording the competencies that are measured by these behaviours and identifying the attributes that underlie these competencies.

While this certainly appears to be the basis on which future recruitment and promotion decisions will be made, methodologies based on competence assessment will only be meaningful in the context of co-op recruitment if co-op employers apply the same methodology in their selection process. As this is not the case with many co-op employers, adjustments were made to the terminology and questionnaire used in this study.

5.2 ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO THE COLLATION OF STUDENT RESPONSES

It was believed that instead of using the theoretical framework that distinguishes between attributes, competencies and behaviours, results of this study would be more meaningful and would reflect the recruitment practice of the majority of the School of Economics and Finance co-op employers if the measurements of “generic” skills were made. The term “generic” skills is used here to refer to those skills in students which are not discipline specific.

The questionnaire developed by the RMIT Assessment Centre was reviewed and the responses to 15 out of the 55 questions were removed. Responses to the remaining questions were re-grouped to reflect twelve generic skills that were believed to be important to employers. This list was compared to the ranking of generic skills in co-op students, in order of importance to employers (Young 1997) as well as to the results of a survey that was undertaken of 15 graduate employers visiting RMIT (see Appendix 3).

5.3 AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT SELF-RATING AND EMPLOYER RANKINGS OF GENERIC SKILLS

There seemed to be a high level of consistency in the generic skills sought by employers even though there were a few areas of disagreement. It was also expected that the generic skills that employers see as important for co-op students to have, would be same as those with a high self-rated given by the co-op students who had recently been placed successfully in jobs (see Appendix 4).

The two performance areas that the co-op students as a group, rated highest in terms of most frequently occurring, were the ability to meet quality requirements and the ability to manage time. Two of the weakest areas of self-rating were those of communication skills, and the ability to take initiative. Team work and interpersonal skills were rated somewhere in the middle.

For co-op employers, teamwork, the ability to take initiative and communication skills, were all ranked highly in importance.

The results give some support to the contention that the generic skills rated highly by students align with those that relate to skills developed by studying at university while the low rating skills, which are of highest importance to employers, are the areas that still need to be addressed by university courses. The problem however, is that the skills expected most to align to university courses—the technical and computer skills—which had the expected low ranking by employers were not in the highest student self-rating group of skills.

This area was further explored by analysing each job description and comparing the generic skills specified by the employer and the self-rating on the skills by the student who had been selected for that job. It was expected that the employers who had included specific generic skills requirements in the job description would select students with higher self-ratings in these skills compared to employers who did not specify any generic skill requirements.

A t-test was applied to those generic skills that were included in job descriptions by employers to see whether the average student self-rating on each of the generic skills is the same, whether or not the employers stated the skill as being important to the job. The results showed no significant differences between the average self-rating on each skill for the group of co-op students working for employers who had stated this skill as being important compared to the group of co-op students working for employers who had not included this skill in the job requirements.

While this could be an indication that co-op employers do not necessarily select students according to the criteria that they specify in job descriptions it may also indicate that a student’s self perception is not necessarily consistent with the way in which s/he is perceived by others.

5.3.1 THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The Performance Management Process tool was not designed to evaluate the extent to which employers recruited co-op students according to their specified selection criteria. This however, is a very important area to explore. If the selection criteria are not those on which the recruitment decision is made, then it is more difficult for co-op program managers to effectively prepare their students for co-op.

Some adjustments can be made to the Performance Management Process tool so that relevant information related to this area, can be gathered. This process will be discussed in the section dealing with future directions. If an alignment can be established between the stated selection criteria and those that the employer uses, then one confounding factor in the recruitment process can be eliminated.

This alignment however, doesn’t address the issue that the same selection criterion may be interpreted differently by different companies: for example, one co-op student’s “communication skills” may be regarded as suitable by one company but
not by another. Furthermore, the final recruitment decision involving a choice between candidates of similar strengths, may be based on the non quantifiable factors such as the "gut feeling" of the interviewer or an assessment by the interviewer of which candidate will result in the best organisational fit.

The greater the accuracy of insight that the employer has into the students' skills, the more likely it is that the recruitment process will be successful. This success will therefore also be influenced not only by the students awareness of their own skills but by their ability to convince their prospective employers that they have these skills.

5.3.2 STUDENTS' SELF PERCEPTION

If a gap exists between a student's self perception and the way in which s/he is perceived by others, then there are implications for co-op recruitment. It raises the distinction between the skills necessary for successful interviewing and those necessary for high on the job performance. Ideally, a student is aware of his/her strengths and has the confidence to demonstrate the concomitant skills. The employer is then able to make a realistic assessment whether or not this student will be suitable for the job. There are however several aberrations to this that may interfere with the effective placement of co-op students. A student with low self-esteem may be lucky enough to be employed because the employer can detect the presence of the desired generic skill whether or not the student recognises its presence. It is possible however, that a student who will perform well on the job, misses out on the position because the employer cannot see past this low self esteem. An even worse scenario is if the student with good interview skills, gets the job but does not have the skills necessary to do the job well.

Co-op program managers who prepare students for placement, need to help students develop their self awareness as well as the ability to show potential employers, what skills they have. This competency has been identified as the ability to have impact and influence (Spencer, Mc.Clelland & Spencer, 1994) while it has been absent from any employer lists of desired generic skills in co-op students, it will need to be included in the adjustments to the questionnaire used to measure these skills.

5.4 AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC RESULTS AND SELF-RATING OF GENERIC SKILLS

The last area that was explored focussed on the relationship between academic results and student self-ratings. There are some employer groups who state that high academic results are a key selection criterion and that generic skills are not even considered unless the company's required academic standard has been achieved. Other groups of employers state that academic results are not important and their selection focus is on the generic skills that the students possess. Since all the students in the group were employed and some students had very poor academic results, it was expected that these students would have the confidence to convince their employer that they had other skills pertaining to the job. It was then expected that these students would have rated themselves high on the Performance Management Process tool. In more general terms, this would mean that a negative correlation between academic scores and generic skills scores was expected.

A performance scale for academic results was generated by using the following weights:

- High Distinction = 4 points
- Distinction = 3 points
- Credit = 2 points
- Pass = 1 point
- Fail = -1 point

The points for each student was totalled and scaled to a score out of 64 (the maximum possible score for the "model" student with no accelerations or fails) thereby establishing a basis of comparison between students at various stages in their course. Academic scores were divided into two categories; one for students with academic scores 26 and above (at least a credit average) and one for students with academic scores below 26.

There was a moderately low negative association between academic scores and generic skills rating for the high academic group (r = -0.32, p<0.1) whereas the results for the lower performing academic group showed a much stronger result (r = -0.56, p<0.025). The implication of these results is that the trade-off between a student's academic achievement and their level of generic skills, becomes far more important for the academically lower performing group of students.

While these results need to be interpreted with a great deal of caution, there seems to be some support for the contention that those students with the lowest academic results can still obtain jobs if they can demonstrate high generic skill levels. These students' resumes certainly confirmed a strong previous employment history and a wide variety of community activities that would be consistent with high generic skill levels. The students with a credit average seem to have a high level of self esteem and a balance between their academic and generic skill levels. Those with a pass average, don't seem to have as high a level of self-esteem; however, this may well have been influenced by the format of the questionnaire. The anchors used focussed on the frequency of undertaking
a desired behaviour rather than on measuring how well the behaviour was demonstrated.

It is suggested that to get a better profile of both the academic and generic skill levels of successful co-op students, a comparison to a group of students who have been unsuccessful in gaining co-op employment, will need to be made.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS
There are several issues that need to be addressed in order to generate more meaningful results in the next stage of the project. These issues can be divided into the following areas:

6.1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND ITS ADMINISTRATION
• Discussions have already taken place with the RMIT Assessment Centre to adjust the questions so that all questions are behaviour based and related to the generic skills that have been identified as important to co-op employers. A greater emphasis will be placed on using the theoretical framework of the Hay Mc.Ber Assessment Methodology (Spencer, McClelland & Spencer, 1994) as more employers apply this framework to their recruitment strategy.

• The anchors used in the questions will be changed to measure the extent of agreement or disagreement with the statement rather than asking the respondent to make a judgement on how frequently the behaviour is performed. This will enable the identification of whether or not a student has the specified skill rather than focussing on the frequency of its use.

• The questionnaire needs to have fewer than 55 questions. The pilot group of students have reported that they did not give their full attention to all the questions thereby limiting the value of their responses. The revised questionnaire will therefore have no more than 30 questions.

• Students will be asked to rate themselves on the revised questionnaire during their co-op preparation classes. A second set of anchors will be developed so that co-op employers will be able to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, the importance of each generic skill to the job. This information will be sought at the time when the employer provides the students with information about the job and any other job selection criteria. The two sets of results will allow students to make more informed decisions about the jobs they wish to apply for and enable co-op program staff to better prepare students for co-op job interviews.

• Workplace supervisors will be asked to rate the importance of each generic skill to the job. They will also be asked to use the revised questionnaire to assess their co-op students within the first two months of the placement, at the end of six months and a third time at the end of the placement. Co-op students will also be asked to complete self ratings at the same points in time and feedback may also be sought from co-op student’s academic mentor.

In current co-op assessment measures used, it has been found that there is little variation between the employer’s mid placement performance evaluation of the co-op student and the evaluation undertaken at the end of the placement. Rather than indicate that there has been no de-
development in the student's skill levels, these results may indeed indicate that the co-op student has progressed in line with the expected development. For example, in early placement, the co-op student may be performing 4 on a 5 point scale relating to what the co-op employer expects a co-op student to be able to do early in the placement. Six months later the same student may be performing 4 on a 5 point scale relating to what the co-op employer expects a co-op student to be able to do six months into the placement.

The questionnaire will be further revised so that employers will be able to distinguish between the level of skill they expect the co-op student to have at each of the three points in time and their assessment of what skill level they perceive the student to have.

These adjustments should enable the following to occur.

- The importance rating of each generic skill to the job given by the recruiter can be compared to that given by the workplace supervisor. Any differences need to be fed back to the employers so that they align the selection criteria with the job requirements. This information will also provide a clearer profile of generic skills that co-op students are required to have.

- The development of the generic skills in each co-op student can be assessed in the light of the feedback received from workplace supervisors and academic mentors. This enables co-op students to develop learning that will focus on specific skills that each student may wish to develop. This starts to build the learning cycle into the co-op program so that personal development becomes a focus of the program rather than just a coincidental event.

6.2 COMPARING CO-OP STUDENTS WITH PSP STUDENTS

In order to undertake some inferential statistics a group of employed students needs to be compared to a group which is unemployed. This was not undertaken in this pilot study since the gender balance and residential status of the two groups was so different. Given that there is some evidence that gender and attribute self-rating is not independent, the results of a comparison could be confounded by gender issues. A study where the two groups are more closely matched on these variables may contribute to the understanding of what factors are important in determining the employability of co-op students.

6.3 COMPARING ACADEMIC SCORES WITH GENERIC SKILL RATINGS

The adjusted questionnaire may also throw more light on the relationship between academic results and student self-ratings of generic skills. This is of particular interest in the median group of students where the results of the pilot showed that students low credit results had high self-ratings whereas students with high pass results had low self-ratings.

7. CONCLUSION

RMIT has already recognised the importance that is being placed by industry on evaluating the attributes of graduates seeking employment. It is therefore placing a greater emphasis on assessing its role in the development of these attributes in students. This is a strategic direction for RMIT and its successful implementation will depend on the development of a valid and reliable method of measuring student attribute levels. The concept of attributes has been a difficult one to grapple with and insights have been gained by using the theoretical framework developed by Boyatzis (1982). Some companies are indeed using this framework as a basis of their recruitment process and while RMIT should meet the needs of these companies it also has an obligation to its other employers whose assessment of attributes may be less formalised. The Performance Management Process tool, evaluated in this study, has been developed to identify behaviours that measure competencies that underlie the targeted attributes. There are some changes however, that have been recommended so that the tool will have a wider applicability to industry. The next step will be to test and evaluate these changes in their ability to provide greater insight into the field of developing graduate attributes.

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Appendix 1: RMIT Graduate Attributes and Attributes for Employment

Following is the list of attributes that formed the basis for the competency profile for the Cooperative Education Program and Professional Skills Program students, created by the RMIT Assessment Centre.

RMIT Graduate attributes as per the RMIT Teaching and Learning Strategy, 1998-2000

“RMIT Graduates will be knowledgeable, creative, critical, responsible and employable (in a broad sense), as well as being life-long learners and potential leaders.”

Attributes which employers look for are as follows:

The ability to:
- influence or convince others
- make sound judgements
- learn quickly and apply information, knowledge and skills
- be thorough and accurate
- analyse (identify key issues and develop solutions)
- seek information
- adapt to change
- show initiative
- strive for high standards of performance
- communicate
- demonstrate customer orientation
- demonstrate regard for safety and environment
Appendix 2: The Core Competencies and Performance Criteria Used

- Manage Self
  - Manage Self
  - Set Work Priorities
  - Maintain Professional Competence

- Manage Workplace Information
  - Identify Info Needs
  - Collect Information
  - Use Info System
  - Solve Problems

- Establish/Manage Effective Workplace Relationships
  - Gather Information
  - Develop Trust
  - Manage Difficulties

- Manage Quality Customer Service
  - Ensure Quality
  - Monitor Customer Service
These two skills were found to be specified requirements by employers. They were included in the Chi-Squared Tests to determine whether there were significant differences between the stated requirements of employers and students' self-assessments. The responses to these questions were, however, excluded when the correlations between academic results and generic skills assessment were undertaken. Since the development of both technical and computer skills are objectives of academic courses, and achieved skill levels are reflected in academic results, it was believed that to include them in the generic skill pool for the correlation analysis would be inappropriate and would lead to the results being confounded.

APPENDIX 3: The Generic Skills Identified by the Re-grouped Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification of Generic Skills</th>
<th>Ranking of Attributes by Employers (Young, 1997)</th>
<th>Employer Feedback 12 March 1999</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>5. Communication skills</td>
<td>Good communication</td>
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<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>5. Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
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<td>Team skills</td>
<td>2. Teamwork</td>
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<td>Ability to work independently</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to take initiative or be self-motivated</td>
<td>4. Initiative</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
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<td>Time management skills</td>
<td>10. Time management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem solving skills</td>
<td>7. Problem solving skills</td>
<td>Problem solving analytical skills judgment &amp; logical skills</td>
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<td>Being decisive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being customer service responsive</td>
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<td>Customer focus</td>
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<td>Ability to meet quality requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Required technical Skills</td>
<td>7. Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Computer skills</td>
<td>7. Computer skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Capacity to learn</td>
<td>Leadership potential</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Adaptability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ranked Self Assessment by Students</td>
<td>Ranking of Attributes by Employers (Young, 1997)</td>
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</table>
| 1. Ability to meet quality requirements | 1. Capacity to learn  
2. Adaptability |
| 2. Being decisive                   |                                               |
| 3. Time management skills          | 6. Time management                             |
| 4. Being customer service responsive |                                               |
| 5. Team skills                     | 2. Teamwork                                    |
| 6. Ability to work independently   |                                               |
| 7. Interpersonal skills            | 4. Interpersonal skills                        |
| 8. Computer skills                 | 5. Computer skills                             |
| 9. Required technical Skills       | 5. Knowledge                                   |
| 10. Communication skills           | 4. Communication skills                        |
| 11. Problem solving skills         | 5. problem solving skills                      |
| 12. Ability to take initiative or be self-motivated | 3. Initiative |