Academic Staff Skills Guide

This guide sets out a range of generic skills, knowledge and behaviours that academic staff are expected to have, or to develop, throughout their career.

**Introduction**

• This guide sets out a range of generic skills, knowledge and behaviours that academic staff are expected to have, or to develop, throughout their career. Although it reflects many of the core activities of academics, not all may be relevant to you, and are dependent on the stage you are currently at in your career.

• The list is not exhaustive; its aim is to help you better understand and articulate the wide range of skills academics have and use, particularly those beyond discipline specific skills.

• Your role requires a mix of the skills listed below, please read the guide in conjunction with other documentation e.g. job description, project or grant proposal, project logs, etc to assist you in understanding what is required of you in your job.

**Career Management**

Career management includes being able to research, plan, and take informed decisions in relation to your career. This is relevant to all stages of your career, whether you are developing in your current role, preparing for promotion or seeking new career options. This includes the ability to:

• Take ultimate responsibility for your career planning and direction, whilst understanding and capitalising on external opportunities.

• Understand your own unique work and career motivators, values and goals and using them to inform your choices.

• Undertake relevant and planned continuing professional development for career development purposes.

• Understand how to research career options, plan, and present yourself effectively through CVs, applications and interviews.

• Understand the nature of your own transferable skill set and how you can apply these in multiple career options.

**Research Skills**

This skill area covers the practical aspects of conducting valid, ethical and useable research. This includes your ability to:

• Evolve your understanding of your wider research and discipline area including trends, techniques, people and practices.

• Progress your own understanding of appropriate research methodologies.

• Collect, collate, critically analyse, synthesise, summarise, report and disseminate information.

• Understand and abide by all relevant legislation and guidelines applicable to academic research in general and to your own discipline.

• Work in cross and multi-disciplinary fields.

• Research, understand and capitalise on relevant funding streams in your discipline and related disciplines.

• Understand that expertise in research and knowledge-handling skills are vital in the wider ‘knowledge economy’, and are highly covetable and applicable in careers inside and outside academia.

**Personal and Interpersonal Skills**

How you handle yourself and how you interact with others is key to achieving results at work. This covers the following:

**Personal**

• Manage yourself, your time, your workload and work life balance.

• Be self-aware and recognise your own needs, motivators, values and goals.

• Be creative, flexible, and innovative in approaching tasks.

• Manage and adapt to change.

**With others**

• Develop and maintain working relationships and wider networks to exchange information, secure support for your work, and build your reputation.

• Understand how your behaviour impacts on and influences others.

• Communicate openly, directly and fairly with others.

• Influence upwards to achieve results.

• Negotiate successfully with others to reach constructive outcomes.

• Actively listen when seeking and giving feedback.

**Communication and Dissemination**

Effectively communicating the results of your work, ideas and the work of your discipline can have a far-reaching impact, inside and well beyond academia. This includes the ability to:

• Identify and capitalise on the multiple options for publication (both traditional and new media) and write appropriately for each vehicle.

• Demonstrate effective verbal presentation skills by presenting confidently, appropriately and persuasively to differing audiences.

• Construct coherent arguments, defend outcomes and listen and respond appropriately to feedback.

• Support and contribute to the wider public understanding of your field through appropriate public engagement work.

• Contribute to meetings, conferences etc. to gain exposure.

• Disseminate your results and communicate with key stakeholders in a manner that best supports and realises the impact of your work within your discipline and wider society.

**Business and Management Skills**

This skill area covers managing the people, resources, processes and practices that enable you to get your job done. This includes your ability to:

**Manage people**

• Effectively co-operate with others in your team to enhance consensus and collaboration.

• Manage and develop the relationship with your own manager.

• Manage others (staff and students) by ensuring roles and responsibilities are clear and individuals’ strengths are used.

• Support your team members’ development by reviewing their progress with them.

**Manage resources**

• Use financial management principles to cost out work, budget and monitor spend.

• Manage the *‘things’* (supplies, space, information, etc.) you need to do your job.

• Know risk areas and safety requirements in your workplace, and follow safe working procedures at all times.

• Effectively produce the tangible outputs of your work within achievable timescales.

**Manage process and practice**

Plan and prioritise measurable objectives and set realistic goals within achievable timescales, for yourself and others.

• Effectively plan, review and monitor project progress and develop contingency plans where required.

• Use relevant project management techniques.

• Understand and apply relevant procedures and guidelines.

• Manage meetings by setting a clear purpose and agenda, identify roles and action plans, and agree and follow up outputs.

**Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and learning encompasses the development of others, particularly taught and research students with whom you may work or supervise. It covers the following:

• Prepare and deliver appropriate student learning opportunities: small group discussions, tutorials, seminars and lectures.

• Develop key skills needed to deliver learning activities: public speaking, media skills, facilitation and online learning facilitation skills and feedback skills to learners.

• Develop coaching and mentoring skills for 1:1s with students and project supervision.

• Knowledge of learning and teaching theory, e.g. learning styles and barriers to learning.

• Understand how to effectively support diverse groups of learners.

• Review and evaluate your students’ learning to help improve your own performance.

**Commercialisation, Knowledge Transfer and Exchange**

Understanding how to capitalise on the commercial potential of your research and enhance the marketability of your own skills, knowledge and expertise. This includes the ability to:

• Influence and inform policy makers and policy decisions.

• Understand and identify aspects of your work that may have commercial potential, and use the appropriate support channels to protect and develop these.

• Have skills in, and knowledge of, entrepreneurship and business enterprise, including company formation and ‘spin out’ processes and practice.

• Understand ‘knowledge transfer’ (KT) in the widest sense, how it relates to your discipline area, and identify and use appropriate KT vehicles and practices.

• Develop skills in personal consultancy and identify and capitalise on consultancy and wider outreach opportunities.

**Digital Skills**

This covers proficiency using existing technologies and the ability to learn new technologies to be up-to-date with modern techniques and methodologies in the field.

• Use a range of technical ICT-based devices and software for research as required by the field of study.

• Undertake secondary research/literature reviews by searching a range of digital databases, journals, archives, indexes, portals and sites, as appropriate.

• Collect data securely and responsibly using appropriate digital methods.

• Analyse data using qualitative and quantitative tools suitable to the field of study and methodology.

• Use digital tools to record events in the research process for planning, reflection and review; for self-analysis, reflection and monitoring progress.

• Use a range of digital techniques—text, images, presentations, podcasts infographics, blogs, web pages- to communicate research findings.

• Develop and project a positive researcher identity online and use technology to network with researchers in your field.

• Stay up to date with new devices/applications as they evolve and understand how digital technologies are influencing research.

*Continue to page 6 to complete the Academic Staff Skills Audit Template*

Academic Staff Skills Audit Template

This template is designed to help you evaluate your own skills, identify what strengths you have, and what areas you may need to develop. It is based around the skills categories defined in the Academic Staff Skills Guide.

As well as the Skills Guide, you may wish to gather any additional supporting information available to you regarding the skills required for your job. It may be helpful to use a job description or a project grant proposal.



**How do I start?**

There are many reasons why you might want to review your skills: to prepare for an appraisal or review meeting; apply for a new job; or positively present your skills, knowledge and experience on paper as preparation for an interview.

Firstly, think of the purpose for doing your review.

Think about your work history to date and make notes about your achievements. For example, you might want to think about skills developed through the following:

* Projects, tasks, objectives and goals you have completed.
* What you specifically did and/or what your role was in an activity.
* What you achieved and the impact of your work.
* What has gone well, what has gone not so well and what you’d like to change?

Many people, when completing such an audit, also like to consider what skills they need to further their own career, i.e. skills that may be needed when applying for future job roles. You may wish to make notes on this too to help you complete the audit template.

**Completing the audit template**

Each skill area aligns to the headings in the Skills Guide. This is to give you some initial structure: you don’t have to have or show every skills area in the guide. Take some time to go through this audit and reflect on your skill areas. For each section, complete the following:

**For Skill Area**: We’d encourage you to think of any additional skills areas not covered, specifically technical skills that are relevant to you. Add extra skills area headings at the end.

**For Skill Description**: Use the Skills Guide and/or your supporting information to define each specific skill that you need in your job, and/or to support your career progression.

**For Evidence of Skill**: Record activities, experiences or events that show your ability in each particular skill. You may have lots of experience in an area. You may have little experience in other areas i.e. for those areas consider further development.

*It is important to think broadly, don’t focus just on skills you already have and do well.*

**How am I doing:** Try to define what level you think you’re at, i.e. basic/good/high level understanding/competence, is a priority for improvement.

*Be honest and don’t underestimate yourself.*

**After you’ve completed the skills audit**

Having completed your self-assessment, you’ll have a good written overview of skills you’ve developed and of the real breadth of skills you hold. This is a useful record to have.

Highlight development areas to action on. Skills that you feel you need to improve and are important for a potential new job role and/or career progression.

Please view the [LDF website](https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/staff/ldf) to see relevant development opportunities available to you and contact our team to request individual support and further support.

**Example Audit Template**

Skills, knowledge and attributes I need for my job and future career.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill area** | **Description of specific skill** | **Evidence of skill** | **How am I doing?** |
| Communication and Dissemination | Demonstrate effective verbal presentation skills | I have presented a number of well-received conference talks, delivered internal seminars to fairly large audiences. Received mostly positive feedback; would like to tackle nerves though! | I do this well; room for some improvement |
| Personal and interpersonal | Manage yourself, your time, your workload and work-life balance | I aim to set some basic ‘to do’ lists every day; aim to set blocks of time aside to work on specific tasks (though doesn’t always happen!) | I wish to improve |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill area** | **Description of specific skill** | **Evidence of skill** | **How am I doing?** |
| Personal and interpersonal |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill area** | **Description of specific skill** | **Evidence of skill** | **How am I doing?** |
| Communication and Dissemination |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill area** | **Description of specific skill** | **Evidence of skill** | **How am I doing?** |
| Business and Management |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill area** | **Description of specific skill** | **Evidence of skill** | **How am I doing?** |
| Teaching and Learning |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill area** | **Description of specific skill** | **Evidence of skill** | **How am I doing?** |
| Commercialisation, Knowledge Transfer and Exchange |  |  |  |
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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill area** | **Description of specific skill** | **Evidence of skill** | **How am I doing?** |
| Other Skills (complete as needed) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |