

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

**USASK COLLEGE OF
GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES**

2023



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Graduate
and Postdoctoral Studies

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"Graduates make substantial and essential contributions to society in innumerable ways, both within and outside the academy, and the purpose – from a societal perspective – has broadened. Accordingly, there has been an ongoing process of reconsidering the doctoral curriculum and experience to ensure it is relevant to the variety of work graduates will undertake." The Doctoral Dissertation (August 2016)

To meet the needs of graduate students within academia and beyond, it is essential to be intentional in supporting students to build and articulate their professional skills throughout their program. Graduate students who are confident and competent in their transferable professional skills can leverage their degrees for maximum impact within their personal and professional communities.

USask Student

Graduate students come to USask with prior knowledge, skills, and experiences that enrich the USask community.

USask Opportunities

USask, they have the opportunity to build and articulate their transferrable professional skills.

USask and Beyond

USask students are able to leverage their degrees beyond academia and are known for their discipline-specific leadership as well as their transferable professional skills.



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Professional Skills



Upon completion of their programming, USask graduate students should have evidence of the following transferrable professional skills:

1. Demonstrating Strong Intercultural Engagement
2. Demonstrating Strong Interpersonal Relations
3. Demonstrating Effective Project Management
4. Demonstrating Ideation and Entrepreneurial Thinking
5. Demonstrating Professional Communication Skills
6. Demonstrating Effective Leadership



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1. Demonstrating Strong Intercultural Engagement

People who are competent in intercultural engagement can handle diversity in perspective, position, and approach adeptly. They communicate and collaborate effectively within diverse groups and an increasingly global society.

To claim competence in intercultural communication, students should have evidence of:

- **Building genuine connections and meaningful interactions with people and organizations from diverse identity groups**

Professionals who actively build relationships with people and organizations from diverse identity groups are open to putting themselves in unfamiliar situations, asking questions to clarify understanding, and reflecting on any discomfort that may arise from being around diversity.

- **Create cultures that actively strive for equity, diversity, and inclusion**

Professionals who promote equity, diversity, and inclusion are better able to navigate diverse cultural norms and promote a culture where everyone is valued and has a meaningful voice in decision-making.

- **Recognizing and responding to myths and misconceptions about diverse identity groups and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people**

Professionals who can recognize and respond to myths and misconceptions can support equitable, diverse, and inclusive personal and professional spaces.

- **Demonstrating cultural competence and cultural humility**

A commitment to the continuous process of cultural competence and cultural humility supports one's ability to work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. This requires not only knowledge of different cultural norms, values, and practices but also the ability to reflect on one's own assumptions and biases and to adapt one's behaviour and communication style accordingly.





2. Demonstrating Strong Interpersonal Relations

People who are competent at interpersonal relations can build and maintain successful relationships among academics and other community members. Interpersonal skills are critical for facilitating collegial processes in the academy and industry such as collaboration on research projects, peer review processes, team teaching, building and "maintaining partnerships and relationships with multiple stakeholders" (CAGS. p. 8).

To claim competence in this area students should have evidence of:

- **Working Effectively in Groups and Teams**

Working effectively in groups and teams requires building rapport, ethical collaboration, and the ability to resolve conflict in mutually beneficial ways.

- **Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence requires self-awareness, managing emotions, understanding others' perspectives, seeking clarification, and taking action in response to feedback.

- **Active Listening Skills**

Active listening skills help individuals build rapport, avoid misunderstandings, gather information, provide support, and improve leadership. By listening actively, individuals can improve communication and relationships with supervisors and in the workplace, which can lead to better performance, increased productivity, and overall success.

- **Continuous Self-Reflection for Self-Awareness**

The practice of continuous self-reflection is an important professional skill to increase self-awareness, support self-regulation, encourage personal change, improve decision-making, and foster resilience. By engaging in self-reflection regularly, individuals can improve their performance, build stronger relationships, and achieve greater success in their careers.





3. Demonstrating Effective Project Management

People who are competent at project management can create and effectively keep a project on task, even in the face of competing interests and complex group dynamics. Those who are competent at project management are able to use organizational skills, timelines, and management of collaboration from concept to implementation and evaluate the project plan's effectiveness.

To claim competence in this area students should have evidence of:

- **Applying a project management framework to a relevant project**

When graduate students apply project management frameworks to their research it teaches them to plan, execute, and monitor their research project effectively. Four key aspects of a project management framework include a project charter, a risk management plan, a RACI tool, and timeline management.

- **Leveraging technology to improve communication, organization, and timeline management throughout a project**

Technology can help graduate students communicate more effectively with their supervisors, colleagues, and other stakeholders. This can help ensure that everyone is on the same page and that important information is shared in a timely and effective manner.

- **Creating health and wellness goals for healthy persistence in the face of ongoing change or obstacles throughout a project**

Research projects can be long, challenging, and unpredictable. Developing strategies to stay motivated and overcome obstacles can help individuals navigate these challenges and maintain their focus and productivity, ultimately leading to greater success in their research and future endeavours.

- **Applying diverse strategies for communicating and responding to conflict within project management**

Conflicts and disagreements are inevitable in any collaborative project. Using diverse strategies for communication and conflict resolution can help individuals avoid misunderstandings, reduce tension, and maintain positive relationships with their colleagues, leading to more successful and productive collaborations.





4. Demonstrating Ideation and Entrepreneurial Thinking

People who effectively employ ideation and entrepreneurial thinking can initiate, communicate, and implement creative strategies to solve complex problems that advance professional and personal goals.

To claim competence in this area students should have evidence of:

- **Creating effective solutions to complex problems using a design thinking process.**

Using design-thinking processes helps individuals develop innovative solutions to complex problems, enhance their critical thinking skills and foster a collaborative and inclusive work environment. Design thinking involves empathizing with users, defining problems, generating potential solutions, prototyping and testing, and iterating on solutions based on feedback.

- **Planning for and responding to responsible risk taking.**

Planning for and responding to responsible risk-taking is crucial as it fuels innovation and learning. This skill allows for strategic decision-making and resilience, transforming potential failures into opportunities for growth. By managing risks effectively, individuals can capitalize on setbacks, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and success.

- **Strategic planning in the pursuit of personal and professional goals.**

Taking initiative in pursuit of goals entails proactively identifying opportunities, formulating strategies, and taking decisive action. It showcases self-driven determination, anticipatory problem-solving, and perseverance. Ultimately, taking initiative is a key component of success in any professional, career, or entrepreneurial endeavour as it reflects an individual's ability to lead, innovate, and drive progress.

- **Using flexible methods and modes of communication and cultivating mutually beneficial relationships to influence, negotiate, persuade and promote ideas.**

Flexible communication supports individuals' ability to convey ideas across diverse contexts and audiences. Cultivating reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships enhances influence and negotiation capabilities, and aids in the effective promotion and persuasion of innovative concepts. Mutually beneficial relationships offer connections, partnerships, and shared resources.





5. Demonstrating Professional Communication Skills

It is important to communicate one's skills and knowledge gained in academia to academic and non-academic audiences so one's scholarly experiences can have a broad reach.

To claim competence in this area, students should have evidence of:

- **Building professional networks**

Building professional networks will help individuals broaden the impact of their knowledge and skills and create a community where they can learn from and with others.

- **Adapting communication for diverse audiences**

Professionals who can adapt communication for diverse audiences will ensure that their audience can clearly understand why their knowledge and skills are important and how they might be used.

- **Creating influential content**

Professionals who create influential content can effectively broaden the impact of their knowledge and skills.

- **Leveraging technology to enhance communication**

Leveraging technology increases one's ability to communicate through multiple modes so that one's intended messages will resonate with diverse audience learning preferences.





6. Demonstrating Effective Leadership

Visioning and leadership are needed across various strategic collaborative partnerships. Demonstrating effective leadership is not just about thinking critically and problem-solving but is also about "articulating a shared vision while motivating support for the vision and empowering others to achieve excellence" (CAGS, p. 7).

To claim competence in this area, students should have evidence of:

- **Leading with empathy and a strengths-based approach**

Leading with empathy fosters trust and open communication, enabling leaders to better understand and support their team's needs. A strengths-based approach capitalizes on individual talents, promoting engagement and productivity. Together, they create a positive work environment, driving both individual growth and organizational success.

- **Providing, receiving, and reflecting on constructive feedback that is essential to achieving desired results**

Effective leaders can provide, receive, and reflect on constructive feedback. This not only helps leaders identify areas for improvement but also fosters a culture of open communication and collaboration, which can lead to increased trust and respect among team members.

- **Using strategic thinking strategies to achieve desired results**

Strategic thinking involves analyzing situations to anticipate potential challenges or opportunities. Additionally, strategic thinking can promote innovation, encourage creative problem-solving, and inspire a sense of purpose and direction among team members.

- **Recognizing and responding to the strengths and needs of a supervisor**

Recognizing and responding to the strengths and needs of a supervisor, or "managing up", involves understanding a supervisor's work style, preferences, and areas of expertise, and adapting accordingly. This can lead to better communication, more productive interactions, and ultimately, greater success in achieving shared goals.

