

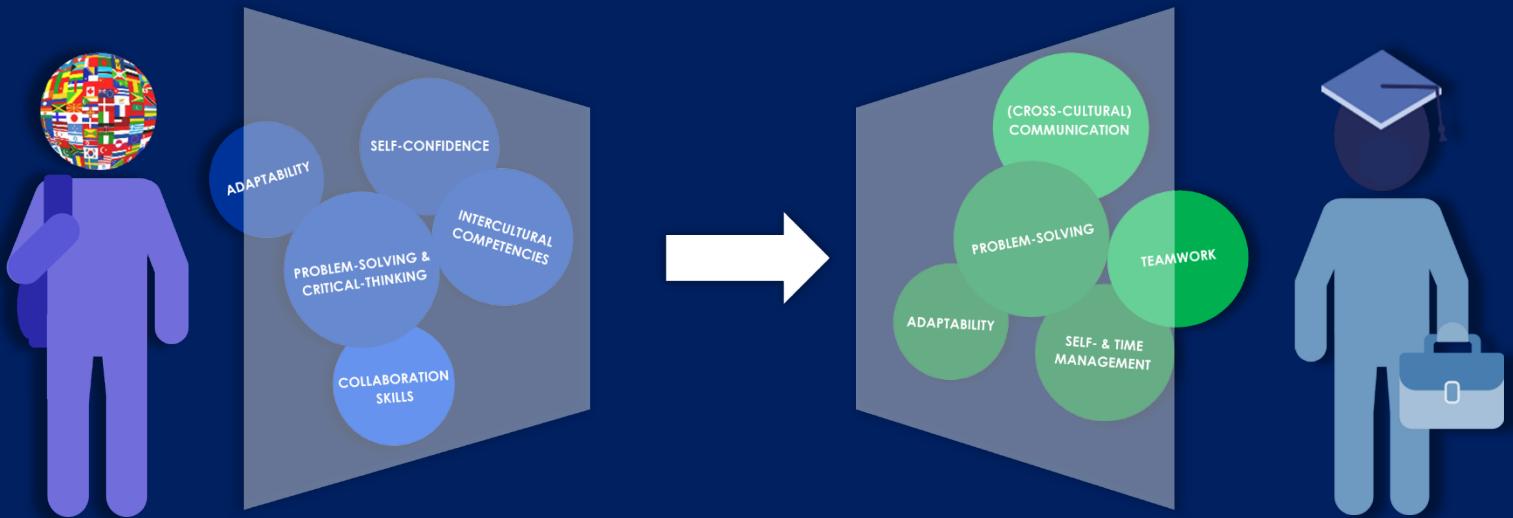
EXPERTISE IN LABOUR MOBILITY

CICAN Innovation Fund Project Report

CLOSING THE EMPLOYER GAP ON GLOBAL SKILLS GAINED THROUGH MOBILITY

Top 5 Skills **Students** Gain By Going Abroad
Source: GSO Midterm Evaluation Report

Top 5 Skills **Employers** Are Looking For
Source: GSO Project, Employer Interviews



CLOSING THE EMPLOYER GAP ON GLOBAL SKILLS GAINED THROUGH MOBILITY

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INTRODUCTION

Young people are often told '*the world is your oyster*'. How do we ensure that, as educators, employers, government, and parents, we prepare young people for a global, interconnected world where change seems to be constant? To find an answer the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) has funded the Canadian Global Skills Opportunity program (GSO). Administered by Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) the project "*Closing the Employer Gap on Global Skills Gained Through Mobility*" was brought to life. The project aimed to quantify the true impact of studying abroad on future career prospects in a Canadian context.

The project is being led by Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) with a consortium of four more higher education institutions: The Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), Humber College, Vancouver Community College (VCC), and Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Furthermore, Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM) was brought in as an independent consultant to conduct the employer survey and write the final report.

Figure 1: Overview of the Consortium Partners

Consortium Partners	Contact Parson
Nova Scotia Community College	Kellie McMullin
Marine Institute	Marlene Power
Humber College	Rebecca Fitzgerald
Vancouver Community College	Jennifer Gossen
Saskatchewan Polytechnic	Angela Wojcichowsky

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

This report investigates employer perspectives regarding study abroad and the effect mobility experiences have on the employability of graduates. To comprehensively understand the relationship between international mobility and employability, it is essential to incorporate the voice of employers into the debate. Despite being a major stakeholder as the hiring managers of graduates, employers are often imperceptible to the public eye when we discuss the value of mobility experiences for students. Our project objective was to bridge this gap by seeking concrete evidence of the value of study-abroad experiences from an employer's viewpoint. To achieve this goal, ELM conducted semi-structured interviews with a wide variety of employers, selected by the participating institutions. The views of the participating employers collected in this process provides the basis of our conclusions and lead us to highlight the value of offering guidance (before, during and after) on how students can best articulate the skills gained through their international experiences to future employers.

Data shows that studying abroad helps students and recent graduates to develop several skills, which enhances their employability whilst searching for their first job, but also - most likely - later in their career. Our research helped us to identify the top 5 skills Canadian employers search for in recent graduates:

- 1) Communication
- 2) Adaptability
- 3) Problem-solving
- 4) Teamwork
- 5) Time -and self-management

Those skills overlap with the skills students gain during international mobility experiences, but the employers we interviewed were rather clear: going abroad in itself will not get graduates hired. It is the ability to showcase how one can use the acquired skills that will get people a job – a finding in line with recent Erasmus+ research (the Erasmus Careers project).

The employer interviews not only helped to identify which skills are most sought after according to Canadian employers but also how they decipher those skills in the recruitment process: recruiters try to analyse the content of the resume, discerning which competences are genuinely present and how these can apply to the position they are hiring for. An important conclusion that follows, is the opportunity this offers recent graduates to showcase the skills they have gained during their international mobility experience.

In line with the above, we were keen to understand if employers hire on the basis of *potential capability* or *proven capability*. Interestingly, the employers in our sample consistently emphasized “potential” capabilities for recent graduates. The need for so-called ‘soft skills’ was also remarkable, with over 80% of the employers interviewed highlighting the fact that subject-related knowledge can be trained. Still, it is the professional skills that make someone a good candidate for a job. Enthusiasm, engagement, motivation, and communication skills seem to be more valued in recent graduates than the technical ability to do the job.

We invite you to read the full report to understand what Canadian employers seem to value most in recent graduates and how higher education institutions can support students to maximise their international experiences. We hope the employer quotes throughout the report provide evidence of the importance of mobility for the competitiveness and growth of the Canadian economy, as no country prospers without augmenting the next generation in our global and interconnected world.

Figure 2: Project overview presented at the NAFSA Conference in New Orleans

ON THE MOVE: EXPLORING IMPACT OF MOBILITY ON CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

International Mobility Provides Students With Lifelong Employability Skills.

Top 5 Skills **Students** Gain By Going Abroad

Source: GSO Midterm Evaluation Report

STUDENT MOBILITY (INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE)

Self Assessment Of Student Skills | Pre- and Post-Mobility

Skill	Pre-Mobility	Post-Mobility
Problem-solving	~3.8	~4.2
Critical Thinking	~3.8	~4.2
Collaboration	~3.8	~4.2
Intercultural Competencies	~3.8	~4.2
Adaptability	~3.8	~4.2

Source: Survey data extracted from UnivCan member institution-led pre- and post-experience reports.

State Of Preparedness For The Labour Market

Institution Type	Pre-Mobility	Post-Mobility
CICAN MEMBER INSTITUTIONS	6.93	7.11
UNIVCAN MEMBER INSTITUTIONS	3.34	3.65

Source: GSO Midterm Evaluation Report
 *From 0 to 10, with 0 being extremely unprepared and 10 being extremely prepared.
 **From 0 to 5, with 0 being extremely unprepared and 10 being extremely prepared.

EMPLOYABILITY | DO EMPLOYERS VALUE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY?

Top 5 Skills **Employers** Are Looking For

Source: GSO Project, Employers Interview

"Understanding global issues helps in my portfolio where we work with the wider community a lot. A better understanding of your own values helps to understand people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. International experience helps with a broader understanding of global issues and diverse cultures. So that is definitely a beneficial thing to any employer. And also in a city like us, with a lot of cultural diversity, we aim for candidates with cultural competence and an understanding of global issues in a holistic way, as that's definitely a priority for our city."

Binu Saradukutty, City of Brampton, Municipal Government.

"My own experience studying abroad in Scotland as 18-year old was transformative. It's an enriching personal experience, one that helps you become resilient and capable of handling any challenges. As organisation, we always recruit for attitude as we can teach you the skills so as a young person and to kick start your future career, I encourage you to take the leap, go abroad and experience being out of your comfort zone. You won't look back."

Tereza Cairns, SULMARA

"In interviews I focus on people's motivation to go abroad. To me, those candidates show that they are willing to take a risk, they are adaptable, and they are clearly thirsty to learning. Crucial skills for any team member – it shows what they can bring to the organisation."

Trevor Morash, BioVectra

"International exposure builds independence, adaptability, cultural understanding, language learning. Going abroad results in personal growth and understanding for diversity."

Catherine McBride, Cooke Aquaculture Inc.

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METHODOLOGY

Efficient utilisation of the employer's time was crucial. Therefore, ELM implemented a semi-structured interview format that allows for a combination of predetermined questions to ensure key topics are covered, while also providing flexibility to explore interesting areas through follow-up questions based on the interviewee's responses. This balanced approach enables gathering consistent data across interviews as well as rich, in-depth insights. Additionally, it was important to limit the interview duration to a maximum of 45 minutes. An extra 15 minutes were set aside for reviewing the collected information. As a result, ELM anticipated a total time commitment of a maximum of one hour from the interviewed employers. The semi-structured interviews used a set of 12 predetermined questions aimed at uncovering the most sought-after skills and investigating possible links between skill development and international mobility experiences. In total, ELM interviewed 15 employers, representing various industries, as well as company sizes, ensuring a holistic and cross-industry transferable interpretation of the results. The employer contacts were provided by the five partner institutions.

None of the employer data was used or processed in any way without obtaining explicit consent from the interviewed employer contact. Additionally, interviews were recorded solely for transcription purposes and were deleted once the report was finalised. Any quotations derived from these interviews underwent verification with the respective employer contact, and their inclusion in the report was contingent upon explicit consent.

An important outcome of our research was the creation of a ranked list of skills that employers prioritise in recent graduates. The employers were provided with a document of example questions ahead of the interview, including a list of skills (see [Figure 2](#)) in which the Top 10 were to be rated on a scale from least to most important. After all the interviews were completed, the mean of all the ratings was taken to conclude the top skills most sought-after by employers in recent graduates. It should be noted that during the interviews “1” was often used to describe the most important, while “10” was the least important, contrary to the above-mentioned approach. In these cases, after a follow-up with the interviewee, their list was changed to match the rest of the data.

Figure 3: List of Skills to be ranked by Employers

Adaptability	Empathy
Communication Skills	Digital Skills
Teamwork Skills	Intercultural Competence
Creativity	Collaboration with others
Problem-solving Skills	Time- and Self-Management Skills
Professional/Career Orientation	Project Management Skills
Proactivity	Ability to understand own strengths and weaknesses



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF STUDYING ABROAD FOR CANADIAN STUDENTS?

While having study abroad experience is often described by employers as a ‘plus’ or a ‘bonus’, one of the primary findings during our research, which aligns with a newly published study by the Erasmus Careers project, has been that studying abroad does not necessarily positively impact on job applications. However, this changes significantly once the skills gained abroad are shown to apply to the job or position in question. Additionally, while employers do not see studying abroad as pivotal in their decision-making when hiring new candidates, they affirm that skills which are gained through mobility are usually a positive indicator and readily applicable in the job market. It is important to note that employers who have had international mobility experience themselves during their studies or whilst working are often more likely to notice international experience as an outstanding advantage.

“One aspect that I believe international exposure fosters is the development of self-confidence and independence. It cultivates social skills through immersion in different cultures, significantly enhancing interpersonal abilities. I've noticed that individuals with international experience not only seek communication cues but also pay attention to nonverbal signals.”

- Catherine McBride

“When I see international travel gap years or international experience on the resume, those people are more likely to be adaptable to new environments, new challenges, and stepping out of their comfort zone in places they haven't visited before. So yes, definitely positive to see international experience on a resume.”

- Tereza Cairns

“International experience helps in understanding global issues. It provides you with a lens to understand different people and different needs. It teaches self-awareness and open-mindedness. It enhances people skills.”

- Binu Saradakutty

This is why teaching students about their gained skills during an exchange should be a top priority for higher education institutions to increase the students’ employability. There are different ways to showcase skills gained through mobility in written applications as well as during the job interview process as will be discussed later in this

report. Moreover, by increasing the number of graduates with international mobility experience a larger pool of candidates with the necessary skills and competencies that meet the evolving demands of Canadian businesses will emerge, enhancing productivity and competitiveness.

“Having spent time abroad is certainly a benefit, but not a prerequisite for us to hire a candidate. Having had different experiences is important though. But what we value most is good work ethic and the willingness to learn and participate in activities.”

- Nick MacGregor

“Just having lived outside of the country, will have little effect on our selection process, but if you have gathered experience that suit our company that's great. We usually train someone in-house for 10 months, we look for people that are engaged, enthusiastic and fit the team.”

- Trevor Morash

In July 2023, ELM submitted a literature review study for internal use at CICan and UnivCan looking at “Understanding the role of mobility in relation to Canada’s skills needs”. The literature review supported the hypothesis that studying abroad provides skills for the future. As students develop an appreciation for cultural differences, which can enhance their ability to work effectively in diverse teams, providing students with lifelong employability skills. Moreover, the ROI of study abroad appeals to students; career prospects are a major driver for study choice. Erasmus+ studies show there are multiple benefits for an individual to study abroad, in terms of both personal and professional advantages. Benefits include personal development, language acquisition, intercultural communication skills and academic achievement.

Going to another country means experiencing a different culture and gaining an understanding of different perspectives. Skills gained, according to this literature review, are intercultural skills, adaptability, self-confidence, and self-awareness. Hence, international mobility experiences contribute to the employability of students which enhances their job market competitiveness and (longer-term) career prospects.

“I think it definitely helps to spend time abroad, especially in terms of confidence. You might have a certain perspective on things, but studying abroad allows you to see how comparable your skills are globally. It's significant in terms of both confidence and life experience.”

- Kara Firman

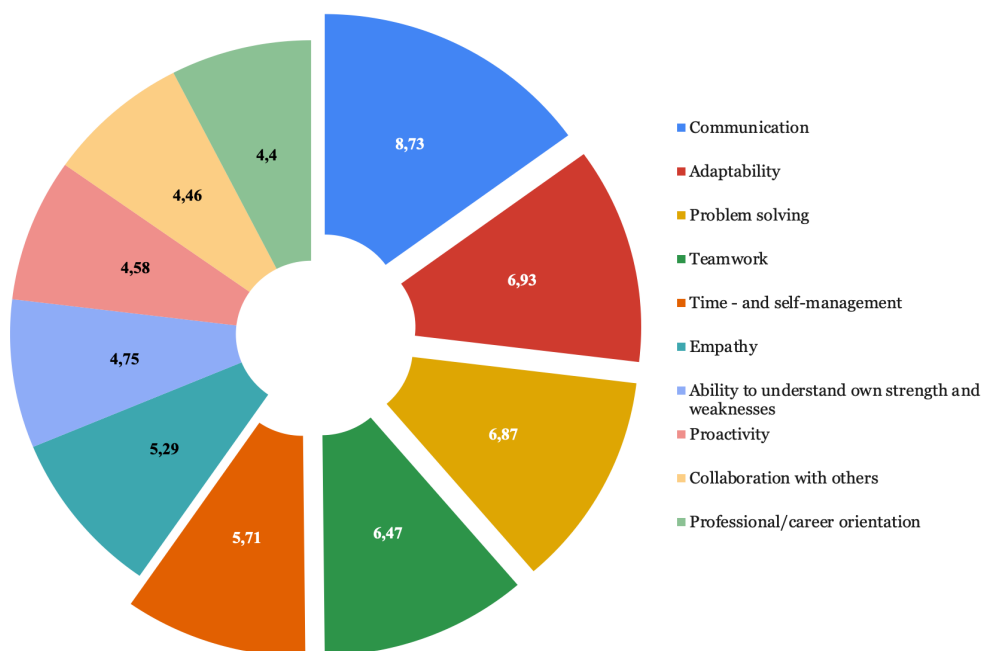
In short, in the various data sources reviewed for the literature review, the importance of skills development for students and the need to prepare them for the world of work was apparent. Employability skills are seen as key, and higher education institutions are urged to reflect on how they are preparing students for employment. Employability skills are seen as teachable, transferable, and choice enabling.



TOP SKILLS

The current employer survey ranks these skills as top 5: (1) Communication (2) Adaptability (3) Problem-solving (4) Teamwork (5) Time -and self-management. *“Communication”* emerged as the highest-rated skill, scoring 8.73 out of 10, indicating its paramount importance. The next three skills were very close in importance, with *“Adaptability”* scoring 6.93 and *“Problem-solving”* not much further behind at 6.87. *“Teamwork”*, also sitting closely at 6.47, is followed by *“Time -and self-management”* at 5.71, which rounds off the top skills, highlighting their significance in employer preferences.

Figure 4: Top Skills ranked by employers



"For us in our industry, adaptability is key. You must learn and adapt to changes. Things change, constantly, so that is a key skill for our new hires."

- Gatchel Griffin

It is important to note, that these (soft) skills, all have been proven to develop during a study abroad experience, throughout the different stages of the stay. Through in-depth focus groups with Erasmus mobility participants and surveys with employers, the Erasmus Careers consortium created a research report on employer competence recognition of mobility experience. They found the same skills present in the participants following their mobility experience and highlighted by employers as the current Canadian research.

The subsequent skills following the top 5 are as follows: (6) Empathy, (7) Ability to understand own strengths and weaknesses, (8) Proactivity, (9) Collaboration with others, and (10) Professional/career orientation. While not in the top 5, their significance should not be understated, especially as our interviews revealed a competitive landscape among the most valued skills, with minimal differentiation between the top contenders. The list closes off with (11) Intercultural competence, followed by (12) Project Management, and last but not least, (13) Digital skills. It is worth noting that two of these skills can be considered as “hard skills”, underlining the fact, that soft skills are more valued in a recent graduate compared to hard skills – a topic which will be discussed in more depth later in the report.

Next to the listed skills in the briefing for the interviewees, the interviewees also mentioned skills which were not provided in the briefing document. These can be put into three categories. Foremost, personal qualities and work ethic must be shown in the interview process with the recruiter. Because new graduates often have little to no work experience, employers like seeing qualities such as resilience, self-motivation and self-driven learning in possible candidates. Studies, such as the Erasmus Jobs project, have shown that one of the acquired skills during exchange is “self-efficacy”, or in other words: Students become self-aware by reflecting on goals and needs, as well as assessing strengths and weaknesses, both individually and in groups. They build confidence and resilience, navigating challenges and setbacks with determination, making it another skill which, if correctly mentioned by the graduate in the application process, could turn into an asset and increase their employability.

“The main priority is attitude. While technical expertise is important, poor people skills can be a significant drawback in our customer-focused environment. It's not just about technical ability; who you are as a person, what you bring to the table, and your values are paramount.”

- Binu Saradakutty

“We recruit for attitude as we can teach the hard skills. But attitude is key for us! Communication, enthusiasm, and drive are what we look for.”

- Tereza Cairns

“I think both hard and soft skills are always needed. People navigate between them every single day. You might have the hard skills, but if you can't communicate and collaborate with your team to convey your ideas, it's not very helpful.”

- Paula Cutler

"An open mind and flexibility are important for recent graduates. And of course, communication, problem-solving ability, professional attitude, digital skills, time and self-management, teamwork, and being proactive, but it all starts with an open mind and flexibility."

- Deepak Arora

"Communication is definitely a top priority. It's something we look for in candidates regardless of the position. Next, I would say teamwork and the ability to collaborate with others are crucial, no matter what position they're in. Even with a lot of independent work, cross-departmental communication is essential. Lastly, I would highlight adaptability and a willingness to learn and problem-solve. Especially when hiring for entry-level positions, I'm looking for someone who can think on their feet and quickly pick up new skills, even if they don't have the exact experience."

- Kendal Senko

"Communication is THE major skill in our field and that cannot be emphasized enough in the training. Empathy is another one that is of major importance. But nowadays also mental health. I pay attention to our newbies to make sure they can handle the pressure and know how to deal with it."

- Kara Firman

"In our company, we focus on three key professional skills when hiring recent graduates: cognitive abilities and handling direct feedback, problem-solving skills, and a willingness to learn and share genuine values. Although we don't require international experience, I believe that intercultural exposure can be important."

- Chris Cey

Similar to this, the interviewees also mentioned interpersonal skills and social responsibility as a plus in new hires. They want to know if the candidate possesses the ability to interact effectively with others and contribute to a positive work environment. Specifically, being perceptive towards feedback, networking abilities and open-mindedness are mentioned, as well as participation in community tasks. Candidates who have been abroad and have joined social clubs or done voluntary work to meet new people from the host country as well as other exchange students, can use this to their advantage. While employers also value professional skills like organisation and critical thinking – and these can be demonstrated by being prepared for an interview as well as knowing what the company and job position are about – they are often best demonstrated through real-life experiences, think internships, voluntary work or side-jobs.

A graduate student with mobility experience can highlight the diverse range of skills acquired throughout various stages of their exchange. Many employers tend to recognise only the more evident skills, such as language proficiency, which we found are not among the top skills that employers seek. However, skills such as problem-solving and adaptability are typically acquired at both the beginning and end of an exchange, as students adapt to new environments and reintegrate their international experiences into their everyday lives, drawing upon lessons learned abroad to inform their decision-making and worldview. As pointed out above, this counts as some of the most desired skills in a new candidate, according to our conversations with employers.

It is important to note, that companies which work internationally, place a greater emphasis on intercultural understanding compared to those confined to a single country and predominantly hiring locally. As graduates with mobility experience are equipped with the skills needed to navigate global markets effectively, they could facilitate international business expansion, foreign market entry, and increased trade opportunities for Canadian businesses.

All in all, we believe that by aligning supply and demand, the skills gap can be minimised, reducing the time and resources required for on-the-job training. This can lead to increased efficiency and reduced costs for hiring and can support Canada's economy with a ready 'to-hit-the-ground-running', young and globally-aware workforce.

Figure 5: Adapted from Employer Manual & Competence Framework (Erasmus Careers)

TOP SKILLS	HOW ARE THESE SKILLS GAINED WHILE STUDYING ABROAD?
COMMUNICATION	Students develop the attitudes and behaviours necessary for respectful interactions with diverse individuals and communities. They gain cross-cultural competency, fostering understanding, empathy, inclusivity, and collaboration.
ADAPTABILITY	Students gain the ability to assess their short-, medium-, and long-term goals, recognising their strengths and weaknesses both individually and as part of a team. They cultivate resilience and confidence, empowering them to navigate uncertainties and challenges with determination.
PROBLEM-SOLVING	Students assess the effectiveness of their own and others' solutions to research problems. They formulate and verify hypotheses, tackle complex and interdisciplinary challenges, and propose new hypotheses based on evidence, contributing significantly to solving complex problems.
TEAMWORK	Students acquire essential collaborative skills, working effectively to brainstorm ideas and create actionable plans. They develop strong networking and conflict resolution abilities, embracing healthy competition and turning challenges into growth opportunities.
TIME - AND SELF-MANAGEMENT	Students define goals for value-creating activities, create action plans with priorities and milestones, adjust plans to changing circumstances, efficiently execute them, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes for future improvements.



WHAT DO EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR IN A RESUME?

The primary focus of employers in reviewing resumes is often to evaluate the results achieved by the potential hire in their previous work experience. However, in the case of recent graduates, employers are also receptive to identifying alternative avenues through which the candidate may have acquired relevant skills.

"[In their application] I'd focus on their motivation to go abroad, as it shows they are willing to take risks, are adaptable, and eager to learn. During the interview process, I'd also ask what they learned abroad that they can bring and share with us."

- Trevor Morash

"I've seen many resumes in my career and the best ones are the ones that articulate the candidate's skills in conjunction with the job posting."

- Paula Cutler

While simple aspects, such as a well-organised resume, can indicate communication and organisational skills, most recruiters recognise the inherent limitations of relying solely on resumes as indicators of competence. They see it as their job to analyse the content of the resume, discerning which proficiencies are genuinely present and applicable to the position in question. This is a great window of opportunity for graduates with mobility experience, as there are different ways to showcase the skills they have gained abroad in their job application.

When new graduates apply for positions, they are frequently perceived as blank slates. Given that many candidates possess similar theoretical backgrounds and degrees, distinguishing between them can be challenging. What sets a recent graduate apart in this context is their demonstrated enthusiasm and motivation for the role and the field of work they are pursuing. It is important to note that the interviewed employers value a tailored application to their position. Applied to a student with international experience, this means, they should connect their gained skills to the specifically listed requirements in the job description, instead of simply stating that they spent time abroad.

"It's hard to judge a resume. AI can give you the best resume nowadays. Going abroad in itself is not doing the trick for me. You differentiate yourself if during the interview you can make me understand why you have chosen a particular degree and if I see your enthusiasm and love for the field you have chosen."

- Tereza Cairns

This can take different forms depending on which skill should be demonstrated. International experiences often present unique challenges that require creative problem-solving. Students can highlight instances in their application where they proposed and implemented innovative solutions to overcome obstacles. Furthermore, graduates can emphasise their accomplishments during their time abroad to demonstrate their ability to thrive in new environments as well as provide examples of taking initiative and overcoming challenges. Independence and initiative are crucial skills gained through international experiences. Graduates should additionally not hesitate to demonstrate successful teamwork in multicultural environments, which is a common aspect of international experiences. They can provide detailed examples of how they effectively collaborated with peers from various cultural backgrounds. This could involve participating in international group projects, contributing to a diverse team in a multinational company during an internship, or being an active member of a student organisation that included members from different countries.

"You can sometimes see clear communication skills through a resume. A well-organized resume that outlines their background and projects clearly is important because you don't have much real estate on a piece of paper."

- Jim Louie

"Our focus is on attitude, customer service and the ability to work with others. Sales is another skill we look for - combined with the ability to be able to speak to people in person (!), to network, to build connections."

- Anita Huberman

"During a job interview, I test real-world scenarios to see how people respond to real challenges. I believe in acquiring skills through experience and important for me is value-driven people."

- Chris Cey

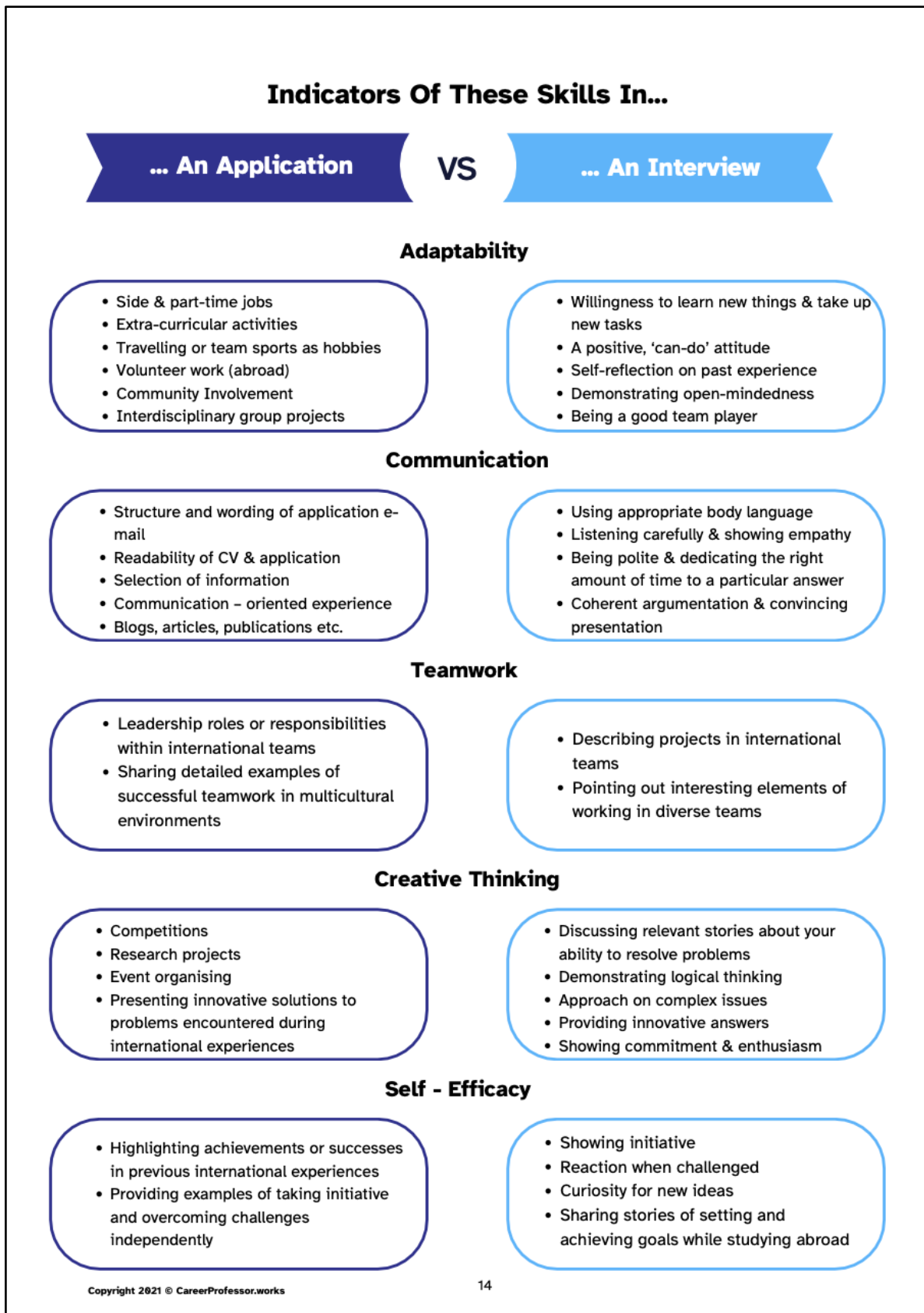
"My advice to young people looking for work is to definitely do your research on the company. Tailor your resume to the role you are applying for. And don't give up. Even if you did not make it to the cut, follow up and show a real interest. It means a lot to recruiters ..."

- Kendal Senko

"Mobility abroad experience signifies to me that you are keen to learn about others. In a resume I like to see community skills such as volunteer work, it helps people to understand what it means to be a human and to look after one another as that is the main ingredient in the hospitality sector."

- Mark Finn

Figure 6: Adapted from CareerProfessor.works & the Erasmus Careers Employer Manual





PROVEN VS POTENTIAL CAPABILITY

As we find ourselves within a changing landscape in the world of work, characterised by an escalating demand for re- and upskilling, as well as a growing preference for remote work, a promising opportunity emerges for recent graduates.

"I believe that for a starting position, it would be acceptable to have a 25% to 75% split between hard and soft skills. We can certainly build the hard skills, as long as the candidate has a base understanding of the field-specific concepts and is moldable. Our focus should be on finding someone with an abundance of soft skills, which are more difficult to teach. The 75/25 split in favour of soft skills reflects this thinking. We will train the candidate on how to do their job, but the soft skills need to be there from the start."

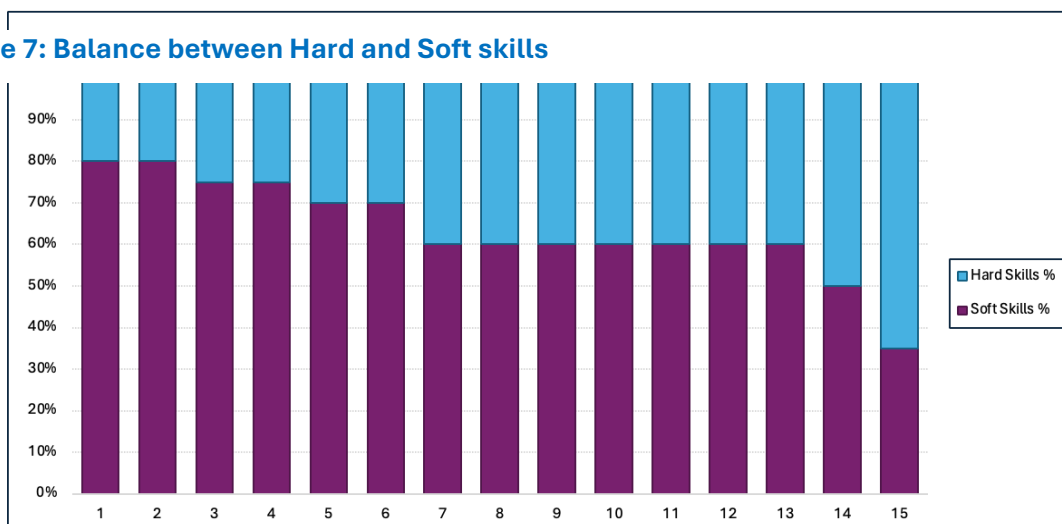
- Catherine McBride

"You know, it's certainly a balance, but I would place more emphasis on potential capability. It really depends. For entry-level hires, it's definitely about that potential capability."

- Nick MacGregor

When asked "Do you hire on the basis of *potential capability* or *proven capability*?" employers consistently put emphasis on "potential" capabilities, disproving the common conception of a trend amongst employers towards more specialised 'hard' skills, focused on the 'ability to deliver'. In the context of our study, we use Laker & Powell's (2011) definition of hard and soft skills. Hard skills, which are technical and procedural knowledge needed to perform specific tasks or jobs, are typically easier to

Figure 7: Balance between Hard and Soft skills



observe, measure, and train compared to soft skills, which are interpersonal and people-oriented abilities that are more intangible.

Consistent with this, 87% of interviewed employers, stated a preference for soft skills, usually listing the fact that while hard skills can be taught, soft skills are something one has to acquire throughout the potential hire's experience trajectory. Employers mentioned, *"We can teach science, but we can't teach personality skills."* Our findings indicate that employers have rather minimal expectations for hard skills in new graduates. It was even mentioned by several employers that for most placements and new hires, specialised field-specific training is provided regardless of their existing skill set. Instead, enthusiasm and the "right attitude", such as high engagement, motivation, and communication skills are more highly valued in recent graduates.

"We can teach the hard skills but the soft skills are very hard to teach. We love people who have great communication skills, a willingness to learn and the ability to take feedback."

- Jim Louie

"We've had plenty of instances where we see a shining star who just needs a bit of coaching and direction. With that support, they'll do the work, pursue the necessary education, and do whatever it takes to achieve their goals. We've had quite a few success stories like that."

- Jamie Cole

"It's really hard to measure graduates because it's almost like they're a blank sheet of paper – they all come with a degree and theoretical knowledge, but it's challenging to differentiate them. As a talent acquisition manager or recruiter, the most important part of an interview for me is uncovering their motivation for choosing their particular degree or career. I'm looking for enthusiasm and a genuine love for the profession they've chosen."

- Tereza Cairns

A proven degree in the relevant field, coupled with an aptitude for developing the necessary hard skills, often increases the likelihood of an employer hiring a recent graduate. Furthermore, soft skills are recognised as the foundation for continuous learning and development and are applicable across various industries. In contrast, although hard skills are sometimes a prerequisite in certain companies, they are often viewed as areas where employers will provide training.

"You may hear some leaders say, "Fake it till you make it." You've heard that, right? People usually say, "Yeah, but I don't want to be fake." I respond to them by saying, how about using this phrase instead: "Practice it until you become it." The next step is to keep this in mind and make a conscious effort every day to practice."

- Mark Finn

"We're happy to train them up, you know, put them through the Bio Vector University, is what we call it. So, in those cases, we can teach science, but we can't teach personality skills. Yeah, it's a lot easier to hire good teammates than it is to hire someone who's got past experience in pharmaceutical manufacturing."

- Trevor Morash

"What I find important to mention to young people we recruit, is that this isn't a dead-end job, but there's a career path, as long as you are willing to invest and follow the courses we offer."

- Jamie Cole

"Proven or potential capability varies depending on the role, especially when specific qualifications are required. For management positions, relevant experience or recent training that aligns with the role is often essential. However, in many global contexts, it's advantageous to hire individuals with less prior experience to avoid ingrained habits. This allows for onsite training to ensure tasks are performed according to the desired standards from the very beginning. Additionally, candidates with global employability skills bring cultural awareness, adaptability, language proficiency, and a broader perspective, all of which enhance their ability to thrive in diverse and dynamic work environments."

- Gatchel Griffin

SOURCES

www.project.erasmuscareers.org/

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ANNEXES

Annex A: Stakeholder Interview Guideline



EXPERTISE IN LABOUR MOBILITY

First of all, thank you for making the time available for this conversation to help us understand the importance of skills for future career success and the impact of mobility on skills gained. The questions below are merely meant to guide our conversation. The interview will last max 30 mins.

1. Interviewee name?

2. Organisation Name?
Sector/Industry?
What level of position do you typically hire? (Entry level; mid-career; executive?)

3. What are your top 3 (professional/soft) skills you believe employers focus on when hiring recent graduates?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

4. Do you think prior international exposure matters to employers when hiring recent graduates? If so; what skills do you believe are learnt through such international experiences?

5. Could you please comment on how important the following skills listed below are according to you when consider hiring a recent graduate?
If possible, please rank your top 10 (please rate 10/most important and 1/least important)?
 - Adaptability
 - Communication skills
 - Teamwork skills
 - Creativity
 - Problem solving skills
 - Professional/career orientation?
 - Proactivity
 - Empathy
 - Digital skills
 - Intercultural competence
 - Collaboration with others
 - Time - and self-management skills
 - Project management skills
 - Ability to understand own strength and weaknesses.



EXPERTISE IN LABOUR MOBILITY

6. Are there other skills, than those listed above, you believe are important when recruiting recent graduates?

7. What in your opinion should be the balance between hard skills (specific field related skills) and soft (or professional) skills?

8. As employer, what signifies to you that a recent graduate has learned certain skills during a mobility abroad period and how does a resume indicate this to you?

9. During a job interview, what questions help you best to understand the skills a recent graduate can bring to your organization?

10. Do you hire on the basis of *potential capability* or *proven capability*? Please comment?

11. Have you yourself studied or worked abroad?

12. Can you describe the benefits of study abroad in your own words? *Key words will do.*

Many thanks! Any other comment you would like to share?

Annex B: Employer Data Collection Brief



EXPERTISE IN LABOUR MOBILITY

CiCan Funded Innovation Fund Project CLOSING THE EMPLOYER GAP ON GLOBAL SKILLS GAINED THROUGH MOBILITY

Project Description

International mobility for students is seen as building the employability skills deemed vital for success in the job market. To build concrete evidence whether study abroad helps students get jobs, the employer voice needs to be included. This project report will focus on what skills employers are looking for, whether these skills can be gained through mobility, and how students can best articulate their international experiences.

Projection Aims

This project will allow employers to have a say on how beneficial (or not) the skills are that students gain during an outbound mobility experience and how students can best articulate those skills when applying for a job.

How we will use the employer data

- The data collected through the employer contacts will form the basis of a report on the employer voice in relation to closing the gap on global skills gained through mobility.
- None of the employer data will be used or processed in any way without explicit consent from the interviewed employer contact.
- The interview will be recorded for transcribing purposes only and will be deleted after the completion of the report.
- If a quote will be used this will be verified with the appropriate employer contact first and only after explicit consent the quote will be used in the report.

Time involvement for the selected employer contact

To ensure we use the employer's available time as efficient as possible, we will conduct a 'semi-structured' interview, which will take 20-30 minutes of their time. Reviewing how we use the information, may take up another 10-15 minutes. In total, it is less than an hour time investment that will hopefully make a positive impact on the careers of many young Canadian graduates.

Semi-structured interviews

We use 12 questions that act as a guide for a 20-minute conversation discussing the 'most wanted' skills and the possible relation between skills acquisition and an international mobility experience.

Next steps

Based on the connection made by the higher education institution, ELM will share a Calendly link to allow the employer contact to pick a time that suits best to conduct the semi-structured interview. We will use GoToMeeting as platform for the actual interview. The write-up of the interview will be shared with the employer contact within 8 working days.

More info needed?

For more information, feel free to connect with Nannette Ripmeester (n.ripmeester@labourmobility.com)

Annex C: Employer Overview

Name	Company	Date of Interview
Trevor Morash	Biovectra	16.11.23
Paula Cutler	ASI Marine	16.11.23
Gatchel Griffin	Kelly Cove Salmon	05.12.23
Tereza Cairns	Sulmara	12.12.23
Binu Saradakutty	City of Brampton	19.12.23
Anita Huberman	Surrey Borard of Trade	11.01.24
Nick MacGregor	MacGregor's Industrial	15.01.24
Jamie Cole	Vancouver Parks and Recreation	16.01.24
Deepak Arora	D Arora and Co CPA	23.01.24
Jim Louie	Belron Canada	26.03.24
Kara Firman	Guide Hair Salon	04.04.24
Catherine McBride	Cooke Aquaculture Inc.	04.04.24
Chris Cey	Morris Interactive	05.04.24
Kendal Senko	Nutrien	10.04.24
Mark Finn	Vancouver Aquarium	13.05.24



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