

**KNOWLEDGE +
CREATIVITY
ADAPTABILITY
PROBLEM SOLVING
COLLABORATION
DRIVE**

Universities
Scotland



Scotland's employers attach a great deal of value to the dual benefits of a four-year undergraduate degree: 1) subject-specific knowledge and 2) a suite of graduate attributes also known as behavioural or "meta" skills.

We're calling this knowledge+.

Employers in every sector of our economy are increasingly prioritising the behavioural or "meta" skills of their employees. Technical know-how, job-specific content and business operating environments change quickly. Meta skills offer organisations greater adaptability and responsiveness to change, whether that's driven by the pandemic or lasting

disruption like automation or the climate emergency. Whilst it may be impossible for employers to predict exactly what specific job roles will be needed one, three or five years from now, a strong set of meta skills means employees are better placed to respond positively to that change and evolve with it, offering continued value to employers.

Scotland is not alone.

The growing significance of meta skills is an international pattern in a time of constant change.

"Automation, in tandem with the COVID-19 recession, is creating a 'double-disruption' scenario for workers."

World Economic Forum, 2020

"Competition for the right talent is fierce. And 'talent' no longer means the same as ten years ago; many of the roles, skills and job titles of tomorrow are unknown to us today. How can organisations prepare for a future that few of us can define?"

PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2018

"...executives are now tasked with continuously innovating and succeeding in this constantly evolving landscape. And they recognize that navigating it requires individuals who can communicate effectively, apply problem-solving and critical-thinking skills to drive innovation using new technologies, and draw and act on insights from vast amounts of data. It also calls for creativity and empathy, an ability to change course quickly, and a propensity to seek out personal growth.... ..In 2018, soft skills dominated the top four core competencies global executives seek ..."

The Institute for Business Value, 2019

"Our findings... confirm the importance of higher-order cognitive skills such as originality, fluency of ideas and active learning. The results point to a particularly strong relationship between higher-order cognitive skills and future occupational demand."

NESTA, 2017.

"The message for leaders: the future isn't a fixed destination. Plan for a dynamic rather than a static future."

PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2018

Key meta skills prioritised in the international evidence:

What employers here in Scotland are telling us:

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“Many formerly purely technical occupations are expected to show a new demand for creative and interpersonal skills... a wide range of occupations will require a higher degree of cognitive abilities—such as creativity as part of their core skill set.”

World Economic Forum, 2020

“Those behavioural skills become far more important to the way in which we think: the creative, the problem-solving, the agility of thinking.”

Graeme Dodds
Director of Strategic Foresight, Jacobs

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“94 percent of today’s workforce lack the full suite of skills they will require in 2030 to perform their jobs well.”

McKinsey & Company, 2020

“Our new graduates have been adaptable and resilient and we’ve been able to allocate them into a whole variety of workstreams depending on priorities.”

Scott Heald
Head of Statistics, Public Health Scotland

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“The top skills employers see as rising in prominence in the lead up to 2025 include problem-solving and skills in self-management.”

World Economic Forum, 2020

“Demonstrating the ability to adapt, learn and grow ensures that you are well placed to flourish within your future.”

Eve Wallace
Executive Director, Morgan Stanley

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“Teamwork and organizational flexibility top executives’ list of most important attributes for successful innovation”

Institute for Business Value, 2019

“A Scottish four-year degree is high valued because of the different skills and collaboration that are taught. New graduates have the skills that business and industry are crying out for.”

Sara Thiam
Chief Executive, Scottish Council
for Development and Industry

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“When recruiting graduates, attitude and aptitudes for work ranks consistently higher than any other factor – far above factors such as degree classification.”

CBI/Pearson, 2019

“Graduates will come out with skills and life experience that will help them to be strong individuals, who know their minds/ and know whether they align with the employer they want to go to. In terms of graduate talent – there are some fantastic people.”

Andrew Bissell
CEO, Sunamp