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# Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes Conversation Guide for Supervisors of Student Employees

## You play a role in student success.

We are all interested in seeing the students we work with succeed. Helping them to reflect on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) they are developing is a vital role you can play in supporting their success in meeting personal, professional, and academic goals.

This guide provides you with templates for framing conversations about the KSAs a student employee can develop through the work they are doing with you. Employers have regularly observed that students have difficulty articulating their knowledge, skills, and attitudes on resumes and in job interviews. You can contribute directly to bridging this gap by using the templates in this guide designed to:

* Support students in reflecting on the workplace outcomes and learning they have achieved during their employment with you.
* Invite students to make connections to their personal, academic, and professional goals.
* Consider how they might write about or talk about their experience in a resume, graduate or professional school application, or in an interview.
* Help students to recognize the value in their experience with you beyond a pay cheque.

The backbone of these conversations is a list of common employability outcomes developed to highlight knowledge, skills, and attitudes transferable to many workplaces. The full list with definitions and sources can be found on pages 7 to 9.

## KSA conversations are time well spent.

No matter how humble the job activities, taking the time for reflection and feedback can help your student employees see the purpose of the work they are doing with you. Students that see meaning and value in what they are doing tend to be more committed. This means they are less likely to request a reduction in work hours or leave a position prematurely. Regular check-ins with student employees can help you catch challenges before they become roadblocks and provide feedback to improve job performance throughout their contract.

*KSA conversations can be an important tool in getting the best out of your students.*

## Connect at least twice. Three times is better.

The frequency at which you have a KSA connection conversation will depend on the nature of the work.Regardless of contract length, make a commitment to connect with each student employee at least twice: once at the beginning of the contract, and once at the end. Adding at least one check-in mid-way through the contract is strongly encouraged. It is recommended to repeat each set of conversations each semester if a student is employed for more than one.

The suggested questions and information to share in each template can be used as standalone conversations or integrated into existing one-to-one meetings and team meetings. Check-ins can even occur over e-mail or other online platforms like Microsoft Teams. It is strongly recommended that the summarizing reflection and feedback conversation occurs face-to-face.

The Conversation Overview Table on page 3 summarizes the three different conversation templates found on pages 4 to 6.

## Keep track of connections.

Documenting each meeting is highly encouraged. This allows you and the student employee to look back on previous connections to measure progress. Providing notes of each connection to the student employee will help them when it comes to capturing their experience on a resume or graduate school application. Keeping documentation in your records will make providing a reference for the student employee much easier for you.

Documentation can be kept in a variety of ways like a word document, Microsoft Team, or logbook. For more informal connections, a summary can be sent via e-mail sent after the conversation.

## Let us help.

If you have questions or need support in integrating KSA conversations into your student employment structure, please contact the Experiential Learning Hub Team. We’re happy to help over e-mail, phone, or in-person.

We also offer learning sessions open to all supervisors of student employees. Check the events section of the Experiential Learning homepage for a list of upcoming dates. We are also happy to arrange a time to come in to a staff or department meeting.

Helpful links, tools, and templates to support you are being added to the Staff and Faculty section of the Experiential Learning website regularly, so check back often.

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[www.uoguelph.ca/experientiallearning](http://www.uoguelph.ca/experientiallearning)

# Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes Conversation Templates

## Conversation Overview Table

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Conversation | Conversation Objectives | Timing | Suggested Format | Benefits to Student, Supervisor, and Workplace |
| Establishing Commitment  (page 4) | * Share workplace context. * Set expectations. * Ask about student motivations for applying to the job. * Ask about student aspirations. * Identify KSA work goals. | Beginning of contract or semester. | One-to-one meeting (30-60 minutes).  Team meeting  (30-60 minutes). | Establishing context, expectations, and goals from the start provides clarity and structure to the student. This can lead to increased commitment, engagement, and performance. |
| Checking In  (page 5) | * Celebrate successes. * Identify challenges and supports needed. * Reflect on goals and KSA development. * Provide preliminary feedback. | At least once mid-way through contract or semester. Could be more frequent. | One-to-one meeting (15-30 minutes).  Team meeting  (15-30 minutes).  Through e-mail or online platform. | Celebrating successes can help a student feel valued, which encourages engagement and motivation. Identifying challenges early can prevent roadblocks. Reflecting on KSA development and providing feedback can help students improve performance between check-ins. |
| Summarizing Reflection and Feedback  (page 6) | * Reflect on KSAs developed. * Set goal for the future. * Provide final feedback. * Give appreciation for their work. | End of contract or semester. | One-to-one meeting (30-60 minutes). Questions could be given ahead of time and submitted prior to meeting with feedback provided at the meeting. | Giving a student the opportunity to understand their KSA development through self-reflection and feedback from you demonstrates the value students have received from their work experience. It will further support them in leveraging their experience with you for their future pursuits. |

## Template: Establishing Commitment

This template should be used near the beginning of the contract period. It allows you to help student employees understand their responsibilities, what is expected, and how their role contributes to greater departmental and university goals. It is also an important opportunity to demonstrate your interest in the student’s learning by asking about their goals and making connections between their tasks and the KSAs.

**Student Name:** Click to add name.

### Share

* Review the responsibilities and duties of the role.
* Review any relevant departmental policies and outline any specific expectations.
* Describe how the role contributes to departmental and institutional objectives.
* Identify the KSAs you anticipate the student will develop in this position and the job activities connected to each.

### Ask

1. What motivated you to apply for this position? What motivates you to do your best work?

Click to record notes.

1. What are your aspirations for the future (i.e. future academic goals, career goals, personal goals)? In what ways does this job connect to those goals?

Click to record notes.

1. What knowledge, skills, or attitudes are you hoping to develop through this position? Why? How might you accomplish this?

Click to record notes.

This is a good time to set one or more work goals. Don’t forget to make goals SMART:

**S** - specific, significant, stretching

**M** - measurable, meaningful, motivational

**A** - agreed upon, attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented

**R** - realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented

**T** - time-based, time-bound, timely, tangible, trackable

## Template: Checking in

At least one check-in should occur at the midpoint of the contract, although they can be more frequent. Check-ins allow you and your student employee an opportunity to reconvene and clarify expectations, review progress, and reflect on learning to date.

**Student Name:** Click to add name.

### Ask

1. What specific knowledge, skill, or attitude are you actively applying during your work? In what ways is it being applied? Was that what you anticipated?

Click to record notes.

1. How is your goal progressing? Do you have any questions for me or need guidance?

Click to record notes.

1. What has been a success for you so far? What have you learned from that success?

Click to record notes.

1. What has been surprising or challenging in the work you have done so far?

Click to record notes.

### Share

* Connect what the student has accomplished so far to departmental goals and objectives. What has been possible because of their contribution?

Click to record notes.

* Identify at least one KSA you have observed to be a strength of the student employee. When you share, provide a specific example of how it has been demonstrated.

Click to record notes.

* Identify one KSA that could be an area of growth for the student employee. Provide feedback on where you could see potential for growth in that KSA within their work and identify any resources (mentors, other student staff, workshops, literature) that could support them in doing so.

Click to record notes.

## Template: Summarizing Reflection and Feedback

This template can be used to guide a final conversation. This gives you and your student employee the opportunity to reflect on the goals achieved, experiences gained, and feedback for the future.

**Student Name:** Click to add name.

### Ask

1. Which knowledge, skill, or attitude do you feel you developed the most through your work? What specifically did you do to achieve that development?

Click to record notes.

1. Which knowledge, skill, or attitude would you like to focus on developing in the future? Why did you choose that one? *Follow-up for a student returning to the position next semester:* What goal could we set to support that development?

Click to record notes.

1. In what ways has this work experience contributed to your personal, professional, or career goals?

Click to record notes.

1. How might you talk about this experience on a resume or in an interview?

Click to record notes.

### Share

* Identify at least one KSA you have observed to be a strength of the student employee. When you share, provide a specific example of how it has been demonstrated.

Click to record notes.

* Identify one KSA that could be an area of growth. Provide feedback on how that KSA could be developed within their work and/or identify additional resources (mentors, other student staff, workshops, literature) that could support the student in learning more.

Click to record notes.

* Connect what the student has accomplished so far to departmental goals and objectives. What has been possible because of their contribution?

Click to record notes.

* Show appreciation for their work and contributions to your department.

## Common Employability Outcomes (Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes)

To support a student's ability to identify knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through experiential learning, University of Guelph experiences are tagged with common employability outcomes.

Divided into three domains (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) the 26 outcomes are derived from a variety of employability resources including the [Conference Board of Canada](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/spse/employability-skills.aspx), [National Association of Colleges and Employers](http://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/), and the [World Economic Forum (PDF)](http://widgets.weforum.org/nve-2015/%20or%20http:/www3.weforum.org/docs/WEFUSA_NewVisionforEducation_Report2015.pdf). This list is not meant to be representative of everything that could be an employability outcome, but rather those that were mentioned frequently across sources.

### Knowledge Domain

Relates to information and its application.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Knowledge** | **Includes the ability to…** |
| **Business and Financial** | Make sense of and apply concepts, theories, and practices of business, management, and finance. |
| **Cultural and Civic** | Make sense of and apply concepts, theories, and practices from the arts and humanities. |
| **Digital and Technical** | Make sense of and apply concepts, theories, and practices from communication, scientific, mechanical, and design technologies. |
| **Mathematical** | Make sense of and apply mathematical concepts, theories, and practices. |
| **Scientific** | Make sense of and apply scientific concepts, theories, and practices from the natural, social, and applied sciences. |

### Skills Domain

Relates to the ability to do. Divided into 4 skill clusters.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Communication Skills** | **Includes the ability to…** |
| **Oral Communication** | Exchange information and ideas with other people through speech, active listening, and non-verbal cues. |
| **Visual Communication** | Find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media. |
| **Written Communication** | Communicate information and ideas through written or typed text. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Critical & Creative Thinking Skills** | **Includes the ability to…** |
| **Creativity and Innovation** | Imagine and devise new ways of addressing problems, answering questions, or expressing meaning through the application, synthesis, or repurposing of knowledge. |
| **Critical and Analytical Thinking** | Identify, analyze, and evaluate situations, ideas and information. |
| **Knowledge Integration** | Integrate and apply relevant information from a variety of sources into new or broader contexts. |
| **Problem-Solving** | Assess, prioritize, and evaluate potential solutions to problems by asking relevant questions, identifying root causes, and gathering facts. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Interpersonal Skills** | **Includes the ability to…** |
| **Conflict Management** | Identify sources of conflict and take steps to minimize or overcome disharmony. |
| **Leadership** | Direct, guide, and motivate others to accomplish a common goal or purpose. |
| **Social and Cultural Agility** | Communicate, interrelate, and function well in diverse social and cultural settings. |
| **Teamwork and Collaboration** | Contribute to the shared purpose of a group, network or partnership through a commitment to sharing power, resources, expertise, and perspectives. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project Management Skills** | **Includes the ability to…** |
| **Decision-Making** | Make timely decisions based on thorough assessment of short- and long-term effects, recognizing political and ethical implications on those affected. |
| **Information Management** | Locate, select, organize, and document information from a variety of sources using appropriate technology and information systems. |
| **Planning and Organizing** | Establish tasks and allocate resources to meet objectives, monitor progress, and revise plans to reflect new information. |
| **Time Management** | Manage several tasks at once, being able to set priorities and allocate time efficiently to meet deadlines. |

### Attitudes Domain

Relates to personal characteristics and traits.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Attitudes** | **Includes the ability to…** |
| **Adaptability** | Show flexibility and openness to changing plans, methods, opinions or goals in light of new information and changing circumstances. Ability to work both independently and part of a team. |
| **Curiosity** | Ask questions and demonstrate open-mindedness and inquisitiveness. |
| **Initiative** | Willingness to proactively take on responsibilities and challenges. |
| **Persistence** | Sustain interest, effort and motivation to persevere in accomplishing a task or goal. |
| **Responsibility** | Set personal and professional goals, be accountable for actions, consider the needs of others, attend proactively to one’s mental and physical wellbeing, and work safely. |
| **Self-Awareness** | Acknowledge and reflect on personal strengths, areas for development, values, limits, feelings, motivations, and biases. |

### **Contributing Employability Resources**

Employment and Social Development Canada. (2015). *Guide to essential skills profiles*. Retrieved February 22, 2018, from https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/essential-skills/profiles/guide.html

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