

Guidelines for Essential Employability Skills



Introduction

Algonquin College recognizes the importance of preparing its graduates for their careers and ensuring that they are well situated to meet the expectations of their future employers. Essential Employability Skills (EES), as integrated components of post-secondary programs of study, are a tangible sign of Algonquin's academic commitment to relevant, practical and career-oriented education. While it is the case that the inclusion of Essential Employability Skills outcomes is a mandatory requirement for the granting of Ontario College credentials, Algonquin's decision to level the outcomes in a manner consistent with the credential being granted further augments the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students will be required to demonstrate reliably prior to graduation.



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To support these goals, Essential Employability Skills learning outcomes will be integrated in vocational courses and form the foundation for appropriate stand-alone courses.

Documenting Essential Employability Skills Learning Outcomes at the Course Level

When developing or updating courses, faculty will ensure that EES learning outcomes are embedded in the course curriculum. The inclusion of EES learning outcomes will be documented both in course outlines and in the course section information.

Faculty will ensure that both course outlines and course section information document the inclusion of EES. Academic managers will validate that relevant EES have been included before approving course outlines and course section information documents.

When course outlines are entered into COMMS the following information related to EES will be provided:

- EES learning outcomes that are embedded in the course curriculum
- how the outcome is mapped in the course. It may be mapped as taught, assessed or as a culminating performance. See below for definitions of these terms.

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When EES are taught in a course, the course learning requirements will reflect the inclusion of the EES learning outcome(s) or a subset of that outcome. Learning activities will be planned that allow learners to develop the identified EES.

When EES are assessed in a course, the evaluation plan for the course will be linked to the appropriate EES outcome(s) (or to its/their subsets).

When the course provides for a culminating performance in an EES, the evaluation process will allow students to demonstrate a performance of the outcome at the level expected of graduates and in as authentic a situation as possible.

The Role of the Essential Employability Skills Committee

As a sub-committee of the Curriculum Review Committee, the Essential Employability Skills Committee is responsible for making recommendations for policies and practices related to the implementation of the EES component of Programs of Study. Committee members are also responsible for providing support and resources to faculty who are developing curriculum that integrates the EES outcomes at either the course or program level.

In addition, the Essential Employability Skills Committee supports the development of new program proposals to ensure that College programming meets the provincial guidelines related to Essential Employability Skills learning outcomes. The Essential Employability Skills Committee also contributes to the Program Quality Review process by reviewing curriculum to validate ongoing compliance with EES policies and guidelines.

The Essential Employability Skills Learning Outcomes and the Defining Skills¹

SKILL CATEGORY	DEFINING SKILLS: Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:	LEARNING OUTCOMES: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Speaking • Listening • Presenting • Visual literacy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken, and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience.</i> 2. <i>respond to written, spoken, or visual messages in a manner that ensures effective communication.</i>
NUMERACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and applying mathematical concepts and reasoning • Analyzing and using numerical data • Conceptualizing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <i>execute mathematical operations accurately.</i>
CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysing • Synthesising • Evaluating • Decision making • Creative and innovative thinking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <i>apply a systematic approach to solve problems.</i> 5. <i>use a variety of thinking skills to anticipate and solve problems.</i>
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering and managing information • Selecting and using appropriate tools and technology for a task or a project • Computer literacy • Internet skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. <i>locate, select, organize, and document information using appropriate technology and information systems.</i> 7. <i>analyze, evaluate, and apply relevant information from a variety of sources.</i>
INTERPERSONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team work • Relationship management • Conflict resolution • Leadership • Networking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. <i>show respect for the diverse opinions, values, belief systems, and contributions of others.</i> 9. <i>interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.</i>
PERSONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing self • Managing change and being flexible and adaptable • Engaging in reflective practices • Demonstrating personal responsibility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. <i>manage the use of time and other resources to complete projects.</i> 11. <i>take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions, and consequences.</i>

NOTE: Algonquin's levelled Essential Employability Learning Outcomes can be found on Algonquin's EES web site.

¹ The material in this section comes verbatim from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' *Essential Employability Skills* web site, which was last modified on February 22, 2006.

The Use of Levelled EES Learning Outcomes at Algonquin College

At Algonquin, work has been done to level the Essential Employability skills outcomes to reflect the breadth and depth of the credential into which they are integrated. As such, there are three sets of levelled EES learning outcomes, one for each of the following credentials:

- Ontario College Certificate,
- Ontario College Diploma, and
- Ontario College Advanced Diploma.

When undertaking any process involving EES learning outcomes, participants should ensure that they have the correct set of levelled outcomes in their possession.

The purpose of the levelled outcomes is to clarify the expectations of students demonstrating the outcomes at a graduate level. The EES learning outcomes to be met remain the same. The additional descriptors provided in the levelled EES learning outcomes may also enable a wider sense of opportunities for teaching and assessing the foundational skills that are consistent with the complexity, breadth, and depth the credentials listed above.

This levelling process was undertaken by the Essential Employability Skills Working Group and reviewed by various faculty and administrative stakeholder groups within the Algonquin College community.

Teach, Assess & Culminating Performance

EES learning outcomes are **taught** in a course when the skill appears in one or more of the course learning requirements, and learning activities are planned that allow the learners to develop the identified skill(s). A significant amount of time must be devoted to the development of the skills and knowledge embedded in the outcome for it to be considered to be taught.

To **assess** EES, you must have assignments, tests or projects that allow you to evaluate student performance of this outcome or some of its elements. In your evaluation of student performance, you must verify that this particular outcome (or a significant component of it) has been achieved.

Culminating performances are tasks or activities designed to assess a learner's ability to demonstrate one or more learning outcomes in their totality. The demonstration of this learning should be reliable (i.e., performed more than once in a program), in as authentic a situation as possible, and at a level expected of graduates. Culminating Performances often occur near the end of a program of study.

Answers to a Few Common EES Questions

The list that follows addresses a few frequently asked questions (FAQs) related to EES learning outcomes.

Q. *My program standards contain generic skills. How are they different from Essential Employability Skills?*

A. Prior to 2004, the part of the program standard that identified transferable skills needed for success in the workplace and in other areas of life referred to these skills as generic skills.

In 2004 the generic skills were reviewed and revised. The updated list of transferable skills expected of all college graduates refers to these skills as Essential Employability Skills (EES).

Previously there were 13 generic skill learning outcomes expected of diploma graduates (graduates of both 2 and 3 year programs) and 11 generic skill learning outcomes expected of graduates from certificate programs. Now there are 11 EES learning outcomes expected of all graduates of programs that lead to any of the Ontario College credentials. The way the graduate will be expected to demonstrate these EES has been described differently for each of the credential levels.

Q. *How many of the Essential Employability Skills outcomes do we have to include in the programs?*

A. Programs must show evidence that graduates of their program can reliably demonstrate all 11 Essential Employability Skills. As a result, all 11 outcomes must be included in the program and must have two culminating performance opportunities.

For a longer list of frequently asked questions, including the questions found here, visit the EES web site.

Recommendations for Including EES in a Course

Once the correct set of levelled outcomes that apply to the program have been determined, identify the EES learning outcome or outcomes to be included in the course.

As a general rule of thumb, vocational courses that are embedding EES learning outcomes should limit

QUESTIONS??

For more information, contact your School EES Representative or Learning & Teaching Services. School Representatives can be found on the EES web site: <http://www.algonquincollege.com/ees>

PROFESSOR OF THE 21ST CENTURY

The content of this Lifesaver is related to the following Professor of the 21st Century Teaching Competency:

7. Designing Courses and Programs.

themselves to a maximum of three (3) outcomes. Discrete courses focussing on EES learning outcomes should aim for no more than 5 or 6 outcomes.

Once the outcomes have been identified, it may be useful to create a table that lists the outcomes in the left column with *teach*, *assess*, *culminating performance* as headings along the top.

In the *teach* column, indicate the topic, or week, during which the teaching related to the outcome will take place.

In the *assess* column, indicate the assignment or assignments that will allow students to demonstrate the EES learning outcome and receive feedback.

In the *culminating performance* column indicate the assignment, if any, that will allow the student to demonstrate the EES outcome at the level of a graduate of that credential.

The following table provides an example of this initial planning tool.

When the table is complete and satisfactory, the content must be built back into the course outline and other section specific information (i.e., material being taught must be reflected in the Course Learning Requirements section; assessments and culminating performances

EES Outcomes	Teach	Assess	Culminating Performance
3. Execute mathematical operations	Data Gathering & Analysis (week 3)	Personal Grade Tracker & Case Study 3	Invoice for Final Project
9. Team work	Workplace Collaboration (week 7)	Meeting Minutes & Group Meeting Observation	N/A
10. Time management	Working hard or Working right? (week 5)	Personal Priority Matrix & Project Log Book	N/A

must be reflected in the Evaluation/Earning Credit section).

Positive answers to the following questions will ensure that many of the requirements for inclusion have been met:

- Are the EES learning outcomes properly documented in the Course Outline, including in the RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES section?
- Are the assessments predominantly active (e.g., case studies, presentations, projects, and role plays)?
- Do students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate the related Learning Requirements within the course?

RESOURCES

Individuals looking for more information about Essential Employability Skills may find the following resources useful:

- The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities Program Standards Site: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/college/progstan/intro.html>
- The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities Essential Employability Skills page: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/college/progstan/essential.html>
- Algonquin's Academic Directive E44 – Essential Employability Skills <http://www.algonquincollege.com/directives/sectionE/index.htm>
- Algonquin's Levelled Essential Employability Skills Outcomes (available from your School EES Representative or the EES web site and in the Academic Directive)
- Algonquin's Essential Employability Skills (EES) web site: <http://www.algonquincollege.com/ees>
- The Professor's Resource Site: <http://elearning.algonquincollege.com/profes/>
- School EES Representatives—available on Algonquin's EES web site.