



Planning,  
Industry &  
Environment

# **Employability skills for the environmental sciences: what to employers want?**

**Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education 2019: Discipline Day Workshop**

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# A personal case study

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Derek Elmes, Senior Team Leader Environmental Forensics  
Environment Protection Science Branch  
Science Division



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Industry &  
Environment

# Capabilities required by the NSW public sector workforce



Personal Attributes

## Display Resilience and Courage

Be open and honest, prepared to express your views, and willing to accept and commit to change

## Act with Integrity

Be ethical and professional, and adhere to the Public Sector Values

## Manage Self

Show drive and motivation, a measured approach and a commitment to learning

## Value Diversity

Show respect for diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives



Relationships

## Communicate Effectively

Communicate clearly, actively listen to others and respond with respect

## Commit to Customer Service

Provide customer centric services in line with public service and organisational objectives

## Work Collaboratively

Collaborate with others and value their contribution

## Influence and Negotiate

Gain consensus and commitment from others and resolve issues and conflicts



Results

## Deliver Results

Achieve results through efficient use of resources and a commitment to quality outcomes

## Plan and Prioritise

Plan to achieve priority outcomes and respond flexibly to changing circumstances

## Think and Solve Problems

Think, analyse and consider the broader context to develop practical solutions

## Demonstrate Accountability

Be responsible for own actions, adhere to legislation and policy and be proactive to address risk



Business Enablers

## Finance

Understand and apply financial processes to achieve value for money and minimise financial risk

## Technology

Understand and use available technologies to maximise efficiencies and effectiveness

## Procurement and Contract Management

Understand and apply procurement processes to ensure effective purchasing and contract performance

## Project Management

Understand and apply effective planning, coordination and control methods



People Management

## Manage and Develop People

Engage and motivate staff and develop capability and potential in others

## Inspire Direction and Purpose

Communicate goals, priorities and vision and recognise achievements

## Optimise Business Outcomes

Manage resources effectively and apply sound workforce planning principles

## Manage Reform and Change

Support, promote and champion change, and assist others to engage with change



Occupation Specific

Occupation or profession specific capability sets can be used in conjunction with the core capabilities required by all employees and people managers

# Capabilities required by the NSW public sector workforce



**Personal Attributes**



**Relationships**



**Results**



**Business Enablers**



**People Management**



**Display Resilience and Courage**  
Be open and honest,

**Communicate Effectively**  
Communicate clearly, actively listen to others

**Deliver Results**  
Achieve results through efficient use of resources

**Finance**  
Understand and apply financial processes to

**Manage and Develop People**  
Engage and motivate staff and develop capability and



**Foundational**



**Intermediate**



**Adept**



**Advanced**



**Highly Advanced**

commitment to learning

**Value Diversity**  
Show respect for diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives

**Influence and Negotiate**

Gain consensus and commitment from others and resolve issues and conflicts

develop practical solutions

**Demonstrate Accountability**  
Be responsible for own actions, adhere to legislation and policy and be proactive to address risk

procurement processes to ensure effective purchasing and contract performance

**Project Management**  
Understand and apply effective planning, coordination and control methods

**Manage Reform and Change**  
Support, promote and champion change, and assist others to engage with change





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How this is expressed  
in **our** role descriptions

(Generic senior scientist)

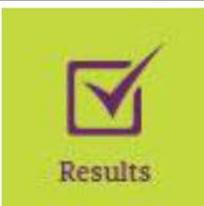
NSW Public Sector Capability Framework		
Capability Group	Capability Name	Level
 Personal Attributes	Display Resilience and Courage	Intermediate
	Act with Integrity	Intermediate
	<b>Manage Self</b>	<b>Adept</b>
	Value Diversity	Intermediate
 Relationships	<b>Communicate Effectively</b>	<b>Adept</b>
	Commit to Customer Service	Intermediate
	<b>Work Collaboratively</b>	<b>Adept</b>
	Influence and Negotiate	Intermediate
 Results	Deliver Results	Intermediate
	Plan and Prioritise	Intermediate
	<b>Think and Solve Problems</b>	<b>Adept</b>
	Demonstrate Accountability	Intermediate
 Business Enablers	Finance	Intermediate
	<b>Technology</b>	<b>Adept</b>
	Procurement and Contract Management	Intermediate
	<b>Project Management</b>	<b>Adept</b>
 People Management	Manage and Develop People	Intermediate
	Inspire Direction and Purpose	Intermediate
	Optimise Business Outcomes	Intermediate
	Manage Reform and Change	Foundational



Planning,  
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Environment

How this is expressed  
in **our** role descriptions

(Generic assistant scientist)

NSW Public Sector Capability Framework		
Capability Group	Capability Name	Level
 Personal Attributes	Display Resilience and Courage	Foundational
	Act with Integrity	Foundational
	<b>Manage Self</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>
	Value Diversity	Foundational
 Relationships	<b>Communicate Effectively</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>
	Commit to Customer Service	Foundational
	<b>Work Collaboratively</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>
	Influence and Negotiate	Foundational
 Results	<b>Deliver Results</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>
	Plan and Prioritise	Intermediate
	Think and Solve Problems	Intermediate
	Demonstrate Accountability	Intermediate
 Business Enablers	Finance	Foundational
	Technology	Foundational
	Procurement and Contract Management	Foundational
	<b>Project Management</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>

# Focus capabilities

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“the capabilities in which occupants must demonstrate immediate competence”



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## Example: project management - intermediate “behavioural indicators”

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- **Perform** basic research and analysis which others will use to inform project directions
- **Understand** project goals, steps to be undertaken and expected outcomes
- **Prepare** accurate documentation to support cost or resource estimates
- **Participate and contribute** to reviews of progress, outcomes and future improvements
- **Identify and escalate** any possible variance from project plans



## Role Description Assistant Scientist



Cluster	Planning & Environment
Agency	Office of Environment and Heritage
Division/Branch/Unit	Science Division
Location	Various
Classification/Grade/Band	Environment Officer Class 5
Role Number	Generic
ANZSCO Code	311411
FCAT Code	119192
Date of Approval	June 2016
Agency Website	<a href="http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au">www.environment.nsw.gov.au</a>

### Agency overview

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage aims to enrich life in NSW by helping the community to conserve and enjoy our environment and heritage. For more information go to [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

### Primary purpose of the role

The Assistant Scientist is responsible for the delivery of programs/projects by providing scientific/technical skills and analysis.

### Key accountabilities

- Support senior scientific/technical staff in undertaking scientific/technical projects and activities to deliver high quality science that meets organisational objectives and appropriate standards of scientific rigor.
- Use established collaborative networks to support more senior staff to deliver science programs to support the effective delivery of science programs.
- Provide timely advice and communication to project team members regarding project status and implementation issues to support the effective delivery of science programs.
- Support science knowledge management within the OEH to support effective knowledge capture and sharing.
- Assist project team members to prepare a range of project related information as instructed to support successful project delivery.
- Implement project management methodologies and processes to enhance the delivery of science across the OEH.
- Provide advice and support to project team members in undertaking tasks and implementing project plans as required to support successful project delivery.
- Complies with WHS obligations and maintains awareness of OEH WHS procedures and time or budget constraints of the team or project to ensure projects are completed safely and within resource constraints.

1



### Key challenges

- Efficiently assist project scientists to deliver high quality information, meeting expected milestones and deliverables.
- Building and maintaining an effective working knowledge of techniques and technologies with increasing awareness of relevant best practice and standards.
- Providing timely advice to more senior staff about progress on or barriers to the delivery of the specific projects or programs.

### Key relationships

Who	Why
<b>Internal</b>	
Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Escalate issues, keep informed, advise and receive direction</li> <li>Prepare briefings, advice and correspondence for consideration by the Manager</li> </ul>
Work Team / Other Internal Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain cooperative and productive working relationships; collaborate</li> <li>Ensure that communication channels are appropriate, efficient and effective</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	
External Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain relationships</li> <li>Obtain information and feedback on targeted projects and programs</li> </ul>

### Role dimensions

#### Decision making

Set own priorities within the parameters and directions of the project, maintaining a degree of independence in developing a suitable approach in assisting on allocated projects and providing regular progress reports to the Manager.

#### Reporting line

The role reports to the delegated Supervisor/ Manager.

#### Direct reports

Nil

#### Budget/Expenditure

Nil

### Essential requirements

- Scientific qualifications and knowledge of ecology and ecological science.
- Ability to assist in the delivery of rigorous science projects in ecology and assist with ecological field surveys.
- Ability to work in collaboration with research partners to deliver customer focused results from science projects.

Role Description: Project Administrator

2



### Capabilities for the role

The NSW Public Sector Capability Framework applies to all NSW public sector employees. The Capability Framework is available at [www.psc.nsw.gov.au/capabilityframework](http://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/capabilityframework)

### Capability summary

Below is the full list of capabilities and the level required for this role. The capabilities in bold are the focus capabilities for this role. Refer to the next section for further information about the focus capabilities.

NSW Public Sector Capability Framework		
Capability Group	Capability Name	Level
	Display Resilience and Courage	Foundational
	Act with Integrity	Foundational
	<b>Manage Self</b>	Intermediate
	Value Diversity	Foundational
	<b>Communicate Effectively</b>	Intermediate
	Commit to Customer Service	Foundational
	<b>Work Collaboratively</b>	Intermediate
	Influence and Negotiate	Foundational
	<b>Deliver Results</b>	Intermediate
	Plan and Prioritise	Intermediate
	Think and Solve Problems	Intermediate
	Demonstrate Accountability	Intermediate
	Finance	Foundational
	Technology	Foundational
	Procurement and Contract Management	Foundational
	Project Management	Intermediate

### Focus capabilities

The focus capabilities for the role are the capabilities in which occupants must demonstrate immediate competence. The behavioural indicators provide examples of the types of behaviours that would be expected at that level and should be reviewed in conjunction with the role's key accountabilities.

NSW Public Sector Capability Framework		
Group and Capability	Level	Behavioural Indicators
Personal Attributes	Intermediate	Adapt existing skills to new situations
		Show commitment to achieving work goals
Manage Self	Intermediate	Show awareness of own strengths and areas for growth and develop and apply new skills
		Seek feedback from colleagues and stakeholders
		Maintain own motivation when tasks become difficult

Role Description: Project Administrator

3



NSW Public Sector Capability Framework		
Group and Capability	Level	Behavioural Indicators
Relationships	Intermediate	Focus on key points and speak in 'Plain English'
		Clearly explain and present ideas and arguments
Communicate Effectively	Intermediate	Listen to others when they are speaking and ask appropriate, respectful questions
		Monitor own and others' non-verbal cues and adapt where necessary
Relationships	Intermediate	Prepare written material that is well structured and easy to follow by the intended audience
		Communicate routine technical information clearly
Work Collaboratively	Intermediate	Build a supportive and co-operative team environment
		Share information and learning across teams
Results	Intermediate	Acknowledge outcomes which were achieved by effective collaboration
		Engage other teams/units to share information and solve issues and problems jointly
Deliver Results	Intermediate	Support others in challenging situations
		Complete work tasks to agreed budgets, timeframes and standards
Business Enablers	Intermediate	Take the initiative to progress and deliver own and team/unit work
		Contribute to allocation of responsibilities and resources to ensure achievement of team/unit goals
Project Management	Intermediate	Seek and apply specialist advice when required
		Perform basic research and analysis which others will use to inform project directions
Business Enablers	Intermediate	Understand project goals, steps to be undertaken and expected outcomes
		Prepare accurate documentation to support cost or resource estimates
Project Management	Intermediate	Participate and contribute to reviews of progress, outcomes and future improvements
		Identify and escalate any possible variance from project plans

Role Description: Project Administrator

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## Role Description Assistant Scientist



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Division/Branch/Unit	Science Division
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Classification/Grade/Band	Environment Officer Class 5
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ANZSCO Code	311411
FCAT Code	119192
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### Agency overview

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### Primary purpose of the role

The Assistant Scientist is responsible for the delivery of programs/projects by providing scientific/technical skills and analysis.

### Key accountabilities

- Support senior scientific/technical staff in undertaking scientific/technical projects and activities to deliver high quality science that meets organisational objectives and appropriate standards of scientific rigor.
- Use established collaborative networks to support more senior staff to deliver science programs to support the effective delivery of science programs.
- Provide timely advice and communication to project team members regarding project status and implementation issues to support the effective delivery of science programs.
- Support science knowledge management within the OEH to support effective knowledge capture and sharing.
- Assist project team members to prepare a range of project related information as instructed to support successful project delivery.
- Implement project management methodologies and processes to enhance the delivery of science across the OEH.
- Provide advice and support to project team members in undertaking tasks and implementing project plans as required to support successful project delivery.
- Complies with WHS obligations and maintains awareness of OEH WHS procedures and time or budget constraints of the team or project to ensure projects are completed safely and within resource constraints.

### Key challenges

- Efficiently assist project scientists to deliver high quality information, meeting expected milestones and deliverables.
- Building and maintaining an effective working knowledge of techniques and technologies with increasing awareness of relevant best practice and standards.
- Providing timely advice to more senior staff about progress on or barriers to the delivery of the specific projects or programs.

### Key relationships

Who	Why
<b>Internal</b>	
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<b>External</b>	
External Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain relationships</li> <li>Obtain information and feedback on targeted projects and programs</li> </ul>

### Role dimensions

#### Decision making

Set own priorities within the parameters and directions of the project, maintaining a degree of independence in developing a suitable approach in assisting on allocated projects and providing regular progress reports to the Manager.

#### Reporting line

The role reports to the delegated Supervisor/ Manager.

#### Direct reports

Nil.

#### Budget/Expenditure

Nil.

### Essential requirements

- Scientific qualifications and knowledge of ecology and ecological science.
- Ability to assist in the delivery of rigorous science projects in ecology and assist with ecological field surveys.
- Ability to work in collaboration with research partners to deliver customer focused results from science projects.



### Capabilities for the role

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Results	<b>Work Collaboratively</b>	Intermediate
	Influence and Negotiate	Foundational
	Deliver Results	Intermediate
Business Enablers	Plan and Prioritise	Intermediate
	Think and Solve Problems	Intermediate
	Demonstrate Accountability	Intermediate
	Finance	Foundational
	Technology	Foundational
Business Enablers	Procurement and Contract Management	Foundational
	Project Management	Intermediate

### Focus capabilities

The focus capabilities for the role are the capabilities in which occupants must demonstrate immediate competence. The behavioural indicators provide examples of the types of behaviours that would be expected at that level and should be reviewed in conjunction with the role's key accountabilities.

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Business Enablers	Intermediate	Show awareness of own strengths and areas for growth and develop and apply new skills
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Business Enablers	Intermediate	Listen to others when they are speaking and ask appropriate, respectful questions
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		Prepare written material that is well structured and easy to follow by the intended audience
Business Enablers	Intermediate	Communicate routine technical information clearly
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		Share information and learning across teams
Business Enablers	Intermediate	Acknowledge outcomes which were achieved by effective collaboration
		Engage other teams/units to share information and solve issues and problems jointly
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## Role Description Assistant Scientist



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### Primary purpose of the role

The Assistant Scientist is responsible for the delivery of programs/projects by providing scientific/technical skills and analysis.

### Key accountabilities

- Support senior scientific/technical staff in undertaking scientific/technical projects and activities to deliver high quality science that meets organisational objectives and appropriate standards of scientific rigor.
- Use established collaborative networks to support more senior staff to deliver science programs to support the effective delivery of science programs.
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- Implement project management methodologies and processes to enhance the delivery of science across the OEH.
- Provide advice and support to project team members in undertaking tasks and implementing project plans as required to support successful project delivery.
- Comply with WHS obligations and maintains awareness of OEH WHS procedures and time or budget constraints of the team or project to ensure projects are completed safely and within resource constraints.

1



Role Description: Project Administrator

2



### Key challenges

- Efficiently assist project scientists to deliver high quality information, meeting expected milestones and deliverables.
- Building and maintaining an effective working knowledge of techniques and technologies with increasing awareness of relevant best practice and standards.
- Providing timely advice to more senior staff about progress on or barriers to the delivery of the specific projects or programs.

### Key relationships

Who	Why
<b>Internal</b>	
Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Escalate issues, keep informed, advise and receive direction</li> <li>Prepare briefings, advice and correspondence for consideration by the Manager</li> </ul>
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<b>External</b>	
External Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain relationships</li> <li>Obtain information and feedback on targeted projects and programs</li> </ul>

### Role dimensions

#### Decision making

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#### Reporting line

The role reports to the delegated Supervisor/ Manager.

#### Direct reports

Nil.

#### Budget/Expenditure

Nil.

### Essential requirements

- Scientific qualifications and knowledge of ecology and ecological science.
- Ability to assist in the delivery of rigorous science projects in ecology and assist with ecological field surveys.
- Ability to work in collaboration with research partners to deliver customer focused results from science projects.

Role Description: Project Administrator

3



### Capabilities for the role

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	Act with Integrity	Foundational
	<b>Manage Self</b>	Intermediate
Relationships	Value Diversity	Foundational
	<b>Communicate Effectively</b>	Intermediate
	Commit to Customer Service	Foundational
Results	<b>Work Collaboratively</b>	Intermediate
	Influence and Negotiate	Foundational
	Deliver Results	Intermediate
Business Enablers	Plan and Prioritise	Intermediate
	Think and Solve Problems	Intermediate
	Demonstrate Accountability	Intermediate
	Finance	Foundational
	Technology	Foundational
Business Enablers	Procurement and Contract Management	Foundational
	Project Management	Intermediate

### Focus capabilities

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Personal Attributes	Intermediate	Adapt existing skills to new situations
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Business Enablers	Intermediate	Show awareness of own strengths and areas for growth and develop and apply new skills
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		Maintain own motivation when tasks become difficult

Role Description: Project Administrator

4



NSW Public Sector Capability Framework		
Group and Capability	Level	Behavioural Indicators
Relationships	Intermediate	Focus on key points and speak in 'Plain English'
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Work Collaboratively	Intermediate	Monitor own and others' non-verbal cues and adapt where necessary
		Prepare written material that is well structured and easy to follow by the intended audience
		Communicate routine technical information clearly
Results	Intermediate	Build a supportive and co-operative team environment
		Share information and learning across teams
		Acknowledge outcomes which were achieved by effective collaboration
Business Enablers	Intermediate	Engage other team/unit to share information and solve issues and problems jointly
		Support others in challenging situations
		Complete work tasks to agreed budgets, timeframes and standards
Business Enablers	Intermediate	Take the initiative to progress and deliver own and team/unit work
		Contribute to allocation of responsibilities and resources to ensure achievement of team/unit goals
		Seek and apply specialist advice when required
Business Enablers	Intermediate	Perform basic research and analysis which others will use to inform project directions
		Understand project goals, steps to be undertaken and expected outcomes
		Prepare accurate documentation to support cost or resource estimates
Business Enablers	Intermediate	Participate and contribute to reviews of progress, outcomes and future improvements
		Identify and escalate any possible variance from project plans

Role Description: Project Administrator

5



## Essential requirements

- Scientific qualifications and knowledge of ecology and ecological science.
- Ability to assist in the delivery of rigorous science projects in ecology and assist with ecological field surveys.
- Ability to work in collaboration with research partners to deliver customer focused results from science projects.

## All parts of the recruitment process are based around the capability framework

- **Application:** assessed against the framework – even though there are two targeted questions that may relate to science
- **Psychometric analysis:** depending on the type is linked to the framework
- **Interview:** structured and assessed against the framework –though these may be embedded in questions that relate to science or technical capabilities
- **Work samples:** may typically assess a technical capability though may also (or solely) address a focus capability
- **Referees reports:** structured and assessed against the framework but may also cover scientific or technical capabilities



# All parts of the recruitment process is based around the capability framework

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- **Application:** assessed against the framework – even though there are two targeted questions that **may relate to science**
- **Psychometric analysis:** depending on the type is linked to the framework
- **Interview:** structured and assessed against the framework –**though these may be embedded in questions that relate to science or technical capabilities**
- **Work samples:** may typically assess a **technical capability** though may also (or solely) address a focus capability
- **Referees reports:** structured and assessed against the framework **but may also cover scientific or technical capabilities**

## CONTEXT - INTERGRATION



## Interviews are

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*“We will be asking you capability-based behavioural questions. Please provide a response outlining the specific situation you found yourself in, your task, what action you took, and the result of your actions”*

*“For each question, we will tell you what capability we are assessing then read out the behavioural question”*



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# Assistant scientist (common entry level roles)

Capability Name
Display Resilience and Courage
Act with Integrity
<b>Manage Self</b>
Value Diversity
<b>Communicate Effectively</b>
Commit to Customer Service
<b>Work Collaboratively</b>
Influence and Negotiate
<b>Deliver Results</b>
Plan and Prioritise
Think and Solve Problems
Demonstrate Accountability
Finance
Technology
Procurement and Contract Management
<b>Project Management</b>

AS (Generic)

Capability Name
Display Resilience and Courage
Act with Integrity
<b>Manage Self</b>
Value Diversity
<b>Communicate Effectively</b>
Commit to Customer Service
<b>Work Collaboratively</b>
Influence and Negotiate
<b>Deliver Results</b>
Plan and Prioritise
Think and Solve Problems
Demonstrate Accountability
Finance
Technology
Procurement and Contract Management
<b>Project Management</b>

AS Island Ecology

Capability Name
Display Resilience and Courage
Act with Integrity
<b>Manage Self</b>
Value Diversity
<b>Communicate Effectively</b>
Commit to Customer Service
<b>Work Collaboratively</b>
Influence and Negotiate
Deliver Results
Plan and Prioritise
<b>Think and Solve Problems</b>
Demonstrate Accountability
Finance
<b>Technology</b>
Procurement and Contract Management
Project Management

AS Spatial Imagery

Capability Name
Display Resilience and Courage
Act with Integrity
<b>Manage Self</b>
Value Diversity
Communicate Effectively
Commit to Customer Service
<b>Work Collaboratively</b>
Influence and Negotiate
Deliver Results
Plan and Prioritise
<b>Think and Solve Problems</b>
Demonstrate Accountability
Finance
<b>Technology</b>
Procurement and Contract Management
Project Management

AS Env. Forensics



## Environmental Graduate Skills and Employer Needs Survey (Section 7.2, Bruce (2018))

“Employers were seeking graduates that can write project proposals and project reports in a clear, concise and persuasive manner.”

“A second important skill set that emerged was associated with critical thinking, problem solving and analysis, including their role in project management.”

“For those jobs that required field data collection, employers expected skills ... in efficient digital collection, ingestion and analysis of field data.”

“In addition they desired knowledge of safe work practices”.



## Environmental Graduate Skills and Employer Needs Survey (Section 7.2, Bruce (2018))

“Employers were seeking graduates that can write project proposals and project reports in a clear, concise and persuasive manner.”

**Communicate Effectively**

“A second important skill set that emerged was associated with critical thinking, problem solving and analysis, including their role in project management.”

**Think and Solve Problems**

**Project Management**

“For those jobs that required field data collection, employers expected skills ... in efficient digital collection, ingestion and analysis of field data.”

**Technology**

“In addition they desired knowledge of safe work practices”.

**Demonstrate Accountability**

*R4: Considering the latter two skill sets there is great potential for Universities to exploit Environmental learning outcomes though the use of experiential learning and WIL.*



## Skills v capabilities

- Old position descriptions talked about “knowledge, skills and experience”
- New role descriptions talk about capabilities and behavioural indicators
- Need to consider this difference (in intention) when considering: “employability skills for the environmental sciences: what to employers want?”

### Levels of capability

Each capability has five levels, depicting a growing set of knowledge, skills and abilities in the capability area.

The degree of knowledge, skill and ability at each level is illustrated by the behavioural indicators. The behavioural indicators are indicative behaviours that illustrate effective performance. They are not an exhaustive list, nor is every indicator necessarily relevant to every role.



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### Behavioural Interview prompts and follow up questions

Please use the following questions to elicit complete behavioural responses when required:

#### For Situation/Task

Describe a situation when...

Why did you...?

What were the circumstances surrounding...?

What were you reacting to?

#### For Action

Exactly what did you do?

Describe specifically how you did that.

Walk me through the steps you took

What did you do first? Second?

Describe your specific role

#### For Results

What was the result?

How did it work out?

What happened as a result?

What feedback have you gotten?



Planning,  
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