

Shared transferable skills

This framework comprises 13 shared transferable skills: ‘supradisciplinary’ skills, which are relevant to all Leiden University students, regardless of their field of study. The skills are divided into three categories:

- skills that we use in relating to the world around us, also known as [\(meta-\)cognitive skills](#);
- skills that we use in relating to other people, also known as [interpersonal skills](#); and
- skills that we use in relating to ourselves, also known as [intrapersonal skills](#).

Skills have many interfaces with each other and sometimes overlap. The categorisation and definition of skills is therefore somewhat subjective. Nevertheless, it is useful to have a shared understanding of the skills that are used within Leiden University. The shared transferable skills are listed in the following table:



In each of the categories, one skill can be designated as defining the category as a whole (the first skill in the category), which again shows that skills are closely interrelated.

A description has been formulated for each skill to clarify precisely what it means. Each skill has:

- A title;
- The definition applicable to the skill;
- A brief description of the skill and the purposes served by the skill;
- The behavioural indicators applicable to the skill, by which the skill can be recognised.

The definition and behavioural indicators were often formulated on the basis of the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands) [Competence Instrument](#); where this is the case, the relevant competences from that instrument are stated.



(META-)COGNITIVE: HOW YOU RELATE TO THE WORLD AROUND YOU

[Researching](#), [Analysing](#), [Generating solutions](#), [Project-based working](#), [Digital skills](#)

Researching



Definition: Acquiring knowledge by systematically and methodically inquiring into a situation or concept, making use of methods appropriate to the academic field or discipline.

Description: Academic research is the systematic inquiry into a problem, situation or concept with the goal of generating new information, knowledge or opinions; arriving at a judgement about a topic or concept on the basis of critical thinking. The norms that promote an open academic exchange are respected and disseminated. Research is the core task of the University and the primary focus of every University study programme. The skill RESEARCHING enables you to generate new insights in many different situations, tasks or contexts.

Behavioural indicators:

- Approaches issues systematically and critically.
- Formulates relevant research questions.
- Designs strategies to answer the research questions.
- Collects, interprets and evaluates specialised literature in terms of its reliability, quality and relevance.
- Evaluates methods and techniques for answering questions in terms of their relevance and applicability.
- Collects, processes and interprets data and makes observations.
- Can formulate conclusions and make judgements on the basis of data and observations.
- Acts in accordance with the norms and values that promote open academic exchange and disseminates these norms and values.

The skill RESEARCHING is the core skill within the category '(meta-)cognitive skills'.

Analysing



Definition: Analysing situations or information and deciding what is of major and lesser importance. Seeing interrelationships and getting to the core of the matter.

Description: Analysing is the systematic ‘dissection’ of a situation or problem. Distinguishing various relevant elements and identifying the relationships between those elements creates a deeper understanding of the situation or problem. The skill ANALYSING helps you get to the core of a situation or problem. This makes it possible to detect causes of a situation or problem, or to generate solutions.

Behavioural indicators:

- Divides information into items of major and lesser importance.
- Analyses an issue or problematic situation to get to the core of the matter.
- Examines a problem from different viewpoints to see whether it is the actual problem.
- Describes the internal relationship between different elements of a problem or issue.
- Asks specific questions in order to uncover the possible causes of a complex problem or issue.
- Gives a clear assessment of what the implications of a particular choice will be.

The skill ANALYSING is based on VSNU competence no. 3 Analytical capacity.

Generating solutions



Definition: Formulating new concepts, conceptual frameworks or models based on complex information and issues.

Description: Generating solutions calls for combining information, seeing similarities and differences between comparable situations, taking a variety of perspectives on a problem and weighing up strategies for tackling a problem. Sometimes you also need courage to create a solution from a completely new angle. The skill GENERATING SOLUTIONS enables you to develop appropriate strategies when confronted with a problem.

Behavioural indicators:

- Knows how to draw out the essential points from issues and find new connections within them.
- Sees similarities with previous issues and possible solutions.
- Identifies patterns and trends in information and developments.
- Is able to find connections at an abstract level.
- Integrates ideas, themes and observations into clear, practical insights.
- Combines own ideas with those of others to create new solutions.
- Experiments with possibilities, tries different approaches.
- Considers problems or situations in a more comprehensive framework, leading to broader and deeper insights.

The skill GENERATING SOLUTIONS is based on VSNU competences no. 2 Conceptual capacity and no. 4 Inventiveness.

Project-based working



Definition: Achieving a result by effectively and systematically utilising and overseeing activities, time and resources.

Description: A project is an activity designed to achieve a specific result, within a set time and with limited resources (for example, deployment of people, use of materials and available budget). To successfully execute a project, it is necessary to set correct, attainable goals and to effectively plan and organise the tasks that must be performed in order to achieve these goals. The skill PROJECT-BASED WORKING enables you to work effectively and efficiently on individual and shared goals in a team setting.

Behavioural indicators:

- Can divide goals into smaller elements, making it possible to set priorities in activities and planning.
- Creates priorities by classifying issues into matters of major and lesser importance.
- Considers carefully how to tackle an issue systematically before taking action.
- Realistically estimates the time and activities needed to achieve a goal.
- Anticipates unexpected events by allowing time for them in the schedule.
- Facilitates open and timely discussion of unachieved or disappointing results.
- Makes efficient use of the time and resources available.
- Achieves results on schedule.

The skill PROJECT-BASED WORKING is based on VSNU competences no. 16 Planning & organising and no. 18 Result orientation.

Digital skills



*Definition:*¹ Using digital technology, methods, sources or databases to achieve results.

Description: Digital communication, sources, data, methods and networks have become essential aspects of our society, and having digital skills is a precondition for full participation. In the context of the shared transferable skills, DIGITAL SKILLS refer to understanding and using digital sources, databases and algorithms that contribute to the knowledge of the discipline and are needed in order to conduct research within that discipline. This can mean using digital resources not only to generate knowledge but also to share and combine available knowledge.

Behavioural indicators:

- Can find, select, process and evaluate digital sources.
- Can evaluate, select, query and use digital databases.
- Produces high-quality content using digital technology and methods; can publish and share this content.
- Uses relevant digital sources and databases to answer questions.
- Uses digital methods, applications and networks to develop relationships and to exchange and combine knowledge.

¹Based on Van Deursen, A.J.A.M. & Helsper, E.J. (2020). *Digitale vaardigheden: een onderzoeks- en beleidsagenda* [Digital skills: a research and policy agenda]. Enschede: Centre for Digital Inclusion, University of Twente. A distinction is made in this document between functional and critical digital skills.

- Functional skills are needed for effective use of a digital medium. Functional skills range from basic skills (which are more or less a prerequisite for obtaining a VWO (pre-university education) diploma) to skills such as programming and developing software and applications. This shared framework does not include the basic skills because we can assume that students have mastered them before starting their study programme. **The digital skills included in the shared transferable skills pertains explicitly to the functional skills required for using the digital technology, methods, sources or databases with which results are obtained within the discipline.**
- Critical skills contribute to a kind of digital awareness. They relate to the ethical aspects of internet use, having a critical attitude to interpreting digital information and using social media, being able to recognise and avoid scams and fake news, and understanding the economic and ideological interests that drive the design of technologies. The critical skills that contribute to this digital awareness are expressed within the shared transferable skills in competences such as ‘analysing’ and ‘societal awareness’.



INTERPERSONAL: HOW YOU RELATE TO OTHER PEOPLE

[Collaborating](#), [Oral communication](#), [Written communication](#), [Presenting](#), [Societal awareness](#)

Collaborating



Definition: Contributing to a joint result with other people or groups, even when this is not in your own personal interest.

Description: Collaborating is the process where two or more people have to perform a task. This may be required because the capacity, knowledge, skills and experience of different individuals must be combined or shared in order to achieve the goal. Collaborating calls for a collective goal, a shared time schedule and coordination between different people. The norms that promote an open academic exchange are respected and disseminated. The skill COLLABORATING allows you to work on a wider range of issues and topics because you can contribute to different teams.

Behavioural indicators:

- Contributes ideas, proposals and other input designed to achieve a group result.
- Responds actively and constructively to the ideas of others.
- Shares information and experiences with others.
- Offers help to others when they need it.
- Takes other people's wishes, interests and feelings into account.
- Reflects on the effect of own behaviour on other people and, if necessary, adjusts the behaviour accordingly.
- Supports previously agreed commitments and obligations.
- Contributes to an atmosphere and relationships that promote an open academic exchange.

The skill COLLABORATING is the core skill within the category 'interpersonal skills' and is based on VSNU competences no. 9 Cooperating, no. 7 Empathy and no. 30 Integrity.

Oral communication



Definition: Making ideas and information clear to others through spoken words, using comprehensible language and checking that the message has been understood.

Description: When interacting with the people in your living and working environment, oral (or ‘spoken’) communication is an important way of exchanging information and ideas. It involves clearly conveying a message to others and correctly understanding the message that others are conveying to you. In addition to what is actually said, non-verbal signals are also very important. The skill ORAL COMMUNICATION can contribute to effective, constructive and pleasant interaction among people.

Behavioural indicators:

- Speaks in comprehensible language and adapts the language to the person(s) being addressed.
- Checks that the person being addressed has understood the message.
- Also responds to non-verbal signals during a conversation.
- Uses short phrases to make own viewpoint clear to others.
- Puts forward relevant arguments at the right time.
- Deploys a range of arguments and behavioural styles in order to win others over.
- Discusses and addresses any questions or doubts in the person(s) being addressed.
- Responds constructively to negative reactions by continuing to ask questions so as to uncover the underlying arguments.
- Keeps checking in order to fathom unclear statements or signals.
- Uses intonation or gestures to underline the content of the message.

The skill VERBAL COMMUNICATION is based on VSNU competences no. 13 Verbal communication, no. 7 Empathy and no. 8 Persuasiveness.

Written communication



Definition: Setting out ideas and information clearly in writing, taking account of the relevant target group and in such a way that the message is received and understood.

Description: Written communication via digital media, such as email, has become an integral part of our everyday interactions with one another. Information is also set down in writing for the purpose of distribution to a broad public (for example, an academic publication) or ensuring that agreed arrangements can be read again later (for example, regulations or a contract). The skill WRITTEN COMMUNICATION enables you to write clear texts that are appropriate for the purpose and target group of the text.

Behavioural indicators:

- Uses correct language that is appropriate for the purpose and target group of the text.
- Uses short, clear sentences in texts.
- Formulates complex issues clearly and precisely.
- Uses form and structure to organise a written message clearly.
- Puts forward relevant arguments in a logical line of reasoning.
- Formulates sensitive issues tactfully, and adapts the choice of words to the objective and target group.

The skill WRITTEN COMMUNICATION is based on VSNU competences no. 12 Written fluency and no. 8 Persuasiveness.

Presenting



Definition: Conveying ideas and information clearly to an audience, taking account of the target group and using appropriate supporting materials and platforms.

Description: Presenting is conveying information or speaking about ideas to an audience. Important factors here are the content and structure of the narrative, the supporting materials that are used and the speaker's style and enthusiasm. The skill PRESENTING can help you to persuade people about your plans and to engage them in your activities.

Behavioural indicators:

- Briefly lists the essential points of a complicated matter.
- Gives attention to the form, individual elements and structure of a communicated message.
- Aligns the content of the presentation closely to the target group's expectations.
- Puts forward relevant arguments at precisely the right time.
- During presentations, makes contact with the audience by inviting people to ask questions and give responses.
- Discusses and addresses any questions or doubts in the audience.
- Varies the presentational approach.
- Uses attractive language and examples so that others listen attentively.
- Puts forward own narrative, proposal or perspective with enthusiasm.

The skill PRESENTING is based on VSNU competences no. 14 Presenting and no. 8 Persuasiveness.

Societal awareness



Definition: Being well-informed about societal, political and discipline-related developments and being aware of own role and influence within these developments.

Description: This skill involves being up-to-date with the developments within the society, discipline and community to which you belong, and understanding how your background and activities relate to these. This allows you to situate information and ideas in a wider context. Through SOCIETAL AWARENESS you become familiar with current problems and issues, and how you may be able to contribute to solutions.

Behavioural indicators:

- Is well-informed about the current news issues relevant to the professional field or discipline.
- Keeps up-to-date with economic, societal, discipline-related and other developments.
- Is up-to-date with important developments in disciplines that have interfaces with own discipline.
- Handles cultural differences correctly.
- Recognises own cultural and societal background and how this relates to the surrounding community.
- Relates developments in society to own professional field.
- Recognises and takes account of the interests, opinions and sensitivities that are present in society.
- Maintains a variety of contacts to keep informed about societal trends and developments relevant to own professional field or discipline.
- Uses existing contacts effectively.
- Is able to make new contacts.

The skill SOCIETAL AWARENESS is based on VSNU competences no. 6 Environment orientation, no. 11 Organisational sensitivity and no. 10 Networking skills.



INTRAPERSONAL: HOW YOU RELATE TO YOURSELF

[Reflecting](#), [Independent learning](#), [Resilience](#)

Reflecting



Definition: Critically evaluating own and others' behaviour, viewpoints or methods, and being open to evaluation by others. Being able to learn from these evaluations by changing own behaviour, viewpoints or methods.

Description: Reflecting is evaluating events, behaviour and ideas. This reflection may be about yourself (self-reflection) or about another person, a group of people, a discipline or a community. Reflection can help you discover whether currently used strategies and ideas are effective or not. Self-reflection can be assisted by other people giving personal feedback on your behaviour or ideas. The skill REFLECTING is valuable not only in academic research but also in the process of personal development, where you gain insight into your strengths and learn from setbacks and failure.

Behavioural indicators:

- Takes the time to reflect in a broader perspective and the longer term.
- Shows real understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the behaviour, viewpoints or methods of oneself, groups of people and own discipline.
- Is open to receiving personal feedback.
- Shows evidence of sufficient self-criticism.
- Regularly evaluates own approach and considers what could be done differently or better and what can be retained.
- Regularly evaluates the strategy of activities or projects and considers what could be done differently or better and what can be retained.
- Tries to improve weaknesses by modifying own behaviour, viewpoint or method.
- Tries to utilise strengths by making use of opportunities and possibilities to employ these strengths.
- Reflects on where future opportunities and possibilities can be found.

The skill REFLECTING is the core skill within the category 'intrapersonal skills' and is based on VSNU competences no. 32 Self-reflection and no. 1 Vision.

Independent learning



Definition: Self-directing own process of absorbing and applying new knowledge and information.

Description: Learning is absorbing and processing knowledge and information and is the core of every study programme. It can call for different strategies or methods, depending on the particular assignment or question, and an important component of independent learning is being able to recognise which approach is needed in a specific context. The skill INDEPENDENT LEARNING is not only relevant during your studies but also remains essential throughout your entire career, because circumstances in work and life are constantly changing.

Behavioural indicators:

- Shows eagerness to seek, expand and deepen knowledge and experience.
- Takes the initiative to seek and ask for additional information.
- Takes initiatives in own work.
- Examines good ideas or methods to see why they work.
- Shows learning from previous errors, successes and points identified in feedback.
- Integrates newly acquired knowledge and experiences into own approach.
- Tests and evaluates own way of working in order to learn from this.
- Takes action in order to create an opportunity or prevent future problems.

The skill INDEPENDENT LEARNING is based on VSNU competences no. 5 Capacity to learn and no. 22 Initiative.



Resilience



Definition: The ability to continue performing effectively in changing and challenging circumstances; to cope with setbacks and recover from them.

Description: Resilience is a combination of flexibility and self-confidence, which enables you to cope with change, unpredictability, stress and setbacks and to recover from them. It shows the balance between coping capacity in the face of unwelcome results or changes and defensive capacity in guarding personal boundaries. The skill RESILIENCE helps you cope with setbacks and recover from them, without becoming exhausted.

Behavioural indicators:

- Retains an overview and works systematically, even when different activities demand attention at the same time.
- Continues to work effectively when deadlines approach.
- Responds with self-confidence to unexpected events, setbacks and personal feedback.
- Can cope flexibly with changes in the environment or tasks.
- Is able to communicate personal boundaries and needs to people in the environment.
- Knows how to recover from setbacks or disappointment.
- Maintains social contacts in which support is received and given.

The skill RESILIENCE is based on VSNU competences no. 29 Flexibility and no. 31 Stress-resistance.



Example of Dublin Descriptors and skills

The 13 shared transferable skills can be linked to the Dublin Descriptors:

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Researching
- Analysing
- Generating solutions
- Digital skills

Making judgements

- Researching
- Analysing
- Generating solutions
- Societal awareness
- Reflecting

Communication skills

- Collaborating
- Verbal communication
- Written communication
- Presenting

Learning skills

- Project-based working
- Independent learning
- Resilience