

Future Skills Questionnaire: A Guide for Schools and Colleges

The Careers & Enterprise Company works across England to help prepare young people for the world of work. We test new approaches, gain an understanding of what works, and share this knowledge with schools, colleges, employers and providers. This includes measuring the impact of careers-related activities on young people and their preparedness for the world of work.

The Future Skills Questionnaire is a tool created for young people to measure progress in the skills and personal attributes needed to make the transition to the world of work. It is designed to be used before and after taking part in careers-related activities. We are now making the tool available for education providers. This guide explains the questions in Future Skills and how to use the questionnaire.

What is the Future Skills Questionnaire?

The Careers & Enterprise Company believes that it is important for young people to develop a range of skills to support them in the world of work. The Careers & Enterprise Company is committed to building consensus on what these attributes are and providing young people and educators with the tools to measure such attributes to support their improvement.

The key domains measured by Future Skills are personal effectiveness, career readiness and employability skills. The questionnaire also covers young people's perceptions of the value of activities as previous research shows this to be related to outcomes. The evidence shows that improvements across these attributes will support young people to secure better educational and career outcomes. Future Skills can be used to understand the value of different career-related activities and to evaluate career programmes. At an individual level, the data can help young people to develop awareness, to identify skills gaps and to track progress.

Satisfaction	Whether young people find interventions useful and relevant.
Personal effectiveness	Self belief, motivation, purpose and persistence
Career readiness	Career planning, transitions, information seeking and work-readiness
Employability skills	Listening, presenting, problem solving, creativity, staying positive, aiming high, leadership, teamwork

Development of the questionnaire

The Company commissioned the University of Derby to review and propose the most appropriate self-report scales to measure each of the personal attributes, taking into account brevity, relevance, scientific validity and availability. The personal effectiveness and career readiness scales have been used widely in academic research and the results provide robust statistical evidence for progress over time. The employability skill questions have been developed by the Company in collaboration with the Skills Builder Partnership based on the Skills Builder Framework¹ which has been used with over 200,000 children and young people.

The questionnaire was used with over 2,000 young people in the 2018/19 academic year. The analysis showed that young people made progress across each of the key skill areas. Results are due to be reported in Autumn 2019 with more detail on the background to the questions and the findings. Following this first year of use, some refinements were made to questions.

How should the questionnaire be used?

We have provided the questions in PDF form on the CEC website. We encourage you to programme these questions into a digital tool as this will make the process of analysing the results more efficient. If you distribute paper copies, the results will need to be entered manually into a spreadsheet for analysis.

The questions are designed for use with students aged 13+ but we ask you to judge the appropriacy of the questions for your students.

¹ <https://www.skillsbuilder.org/framework>

The whole questionnaire takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participants are asked to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement.

You may wish to use one set of questions rather than the whole tool depending on your purposes. We encourage you to use each question set in its entirety (rather than selecting individual questions) to provide a more robust insight into the skill areas.

Future Skills is designed to be used before and after a careers activity to measure change in skills. The set of questions called 'how have you changed' asks for the young person's view on this activity. Depending on the length and focus of the activity, you may wish to select different question sets. Using Future Skills in this way gives you an insight into how the careers activity may have helped develop skills, but bear in mind that other learning opportunities may also contribute to the development of skills.

You may wish to use the tool before and after a set of activities Alternatively, Future Skills could be used annually with students. This approach will be useful for tracking student progress and identifying gaps, but less useful for understanding the contribution of individual career activities.

How should the data be analysed?

The questionnaire document provides a number for each response. For example, for the career readiness questions, a value of 1 means 'I don't agree' and 5 means 'I completely agree'. All the data from the questionnaires should be scored in this numerical format for analysis. It is important to make sure the questions are all scored correctly.

To analyse the results for a group of students, you need to compare the results from the pre-activity questionnaire with the results from the post-activity questionnaire to assess the level of change for each skill area. You do not have to match up each individual student's pre-activity questionnaire to their post-activity questionnaire however, it is important that you compare the same group of students at each time point.

The next step is to select the approach to analysis that best suits your needs.

1. Calculate the mean average score for each skill area (career readiness, effectiveness, each of the essential skills) and compare the means for the pre-activity and post-activity questionnaires to identify the level of improvement.

Example: The mean average score for career readiness increased from 2.8 to 3.9.

2. Compare the responses to each question in the pre-activity and post-activity questionnaires. This gives you a more detailed insight on where skills have changed.

Example: The percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing 'I can help others be creative' increased from 57% to 69%.

Further analysis could include:

- Comparison of different careers activities according to the skills developed.
- Comparison of change results for different groups of students.

To analyse the results for individual students, you can compare their mean score for each skill area and their responses to each question with the wider group. You can also track their scores over time to identify areas of improvement and skill gaps.