

PGR Tips on articulating your skills for employers outside HE

According to the [What do researchers do?](#) research about half of you leave academia after your doctorate. For employers outside higher education you may need to explain what skills you have gained during your doctorate, especially in these challenging times. Employers value doctoral graduates' up-to-date specialist knowledge, maturity, ability to work independently, analytical and problem solving skills and innovation. Make sure you emphasise these points in your application. They may worry about lack of industrial experience, commercial acumen and that researchers may be increasingly 'narrow'. Could you address these concerns? If you start looking into employment you would like to move into and identify any gaps in your skills, you could fill these, through training, taking on additional responsibilities or volunteering. The [Researcher development framework](#) is a really useful tool, providing the language you will need to describe your skills. Vitae's has produced an [Employer's briefing](#) and a '[Researcher skills and competencies](#)' flyer, both containing great outlines of the skills researchers can offer employers.

When you apply for a job, let yourself be guided by the competencies that are listed in the advert. Use that language in your application. Consider writing a [skills-based CV](#), specifically tailored to the skills that are asked for. For each skill, identify what aspect of your doctorate, or other experience, has given you that skill. Evidence it and where possible quantify it. Below are some skills that are sought. Can you evidence that you possess these skills?

Project management

Your doctorate is an enormous project and you have really gained project management experience (as well as perseverance, tenacity and proving your drive and motivation. You may want to become familiar with the language used in [project management](#).

Risk taking and enterprise

Did you take any risks in your research? Did these pay off? If not, did you learn from them?

Problem solving, creativity and innovation

These should not pose any problems, as a doctorate involves a lot of problem solving, [creativity](#) and innovation. Make sure you make this explicit with examples and give these plenty of thought.

Customer-facing and client-focused skills

If your research involved doing interviews, name these as similar to such skills. Have you had to justify your funding to sponsors? Teaching experience can be used as customer focused.

Commercial awareness

You do not have to have taken out patents to have commercial awareness. It is important to have a broad view of the potential use of your research and knowledge of the sector you apply in.

Managing learning and career

Can you put forward a coherent argument how your doctorate fits into a [career plan](#)? Your learning should be more apparent, how are you hoping to continue learning?

Leadership

Have you taken a leading role in setting up any association/ journal club/ website/ volunteering? Additional training can also come in useful, such as [Leadership in action](#).

Flexibility and adapting to change

The 'business world' is seen to be faster paced and more prone to interruptions than academia, requiring people to be flexible and adaptable.