Newcastle University

SENATE

Title of paper: Education for Life Skills and Attributes approach

Main purpose of the paper: For information

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Purpose of the paper:

To present for information the new Education for Life skills and attributes approach.

Recommendations:
To note the Education for Life skills and attributes for University-wide implementation alongside the Leading Edge Curriculum Framework.

Consultation to date (including any previous committee consideration and its outcome):

Wider stakeholder engagement on the Education for Life Skills and Attributes approach has been informed by sector research, educational scholarship, and extensive consultation with academic colleague workshops, students, alumni and governance forums (FECs, DoE forum and the Heads of Academic Unit Forum).

UEC endorsed the Education for Life Skills and Attributes approach for onward transmission to Senate (UEC 14 May 2025).

Education for Life Skills and Attributes Approach

Background and rationale

1. As part of our Education Strategy, *Education for Life 2030+: a vision for education and skills*, we set out the challenge to develop a Leading Edge Curriculum that equips all our graduates with the skills and attributes to thrive in an increasingly complex and fast-changing world. Central to this vision is a coherent and purposeful approach to the development of skills and attributes that are embedded across all degree programmes.

2. This paper proposes our new institutional approach: the *Education for Life Skills and Attributes* (EfL SA). Its been developed through discovery including: extensive horizon scanning of competitor institutions, employee organisation publications on the future of work, a review of academic literature on future skills, and engagement with students, alumni, employers, and academic and PS colleagues. It builds on our previous graduate framework and TEF 2023 submission to support our ambition to foster a distinctive Newcastle graduate aligned with our values of excellence, creativity, and impact.

3. EfL SA is the keystone that connects the Leading Edge Curriculum with the broader objectives of *Education for Life 2030+:* Student Launchpad and Newcastle Beyond the Curriculum – to give a shared language of attributes and skills for use across student experience domains. It provides the parameters for students to evidence their skills and attributes development 'distance travelled' and for the institution to be able to evidence and measure educational gain.

4. The EfL SA responds to a problematic lack of clarity around the university's graduate skills framework. Currently we have a graduate attributes framework and an education for life framework (developed for TEF 2023). These co-exist and cause confusion for colleagues and students seeking to engage with skills and attributes development. Further, the current graduate framework was developed 5+ years ago and is now out of step with academic and employer literature on the future of work and the skills and attributes our graduates will need to achieve excellence and impact after graduation. The EfL SA provides a simplified, coherent approach that will support colleagues to enable students to identify, explore, apply and reflect upon the development of skills and attributes that will ensure they are fit for their futures.

Guiding principles

5. In developing the EfL SA we sought to consider the following guiding principles

   - Provide clarity on the skills and attributes students should be enabled to develop
   - Connect skills and attributes development to meaningful learning experiences within and beyond of the curriculum
   - Enable students to reflect on, evidence, and articulate their skills and attributes development over time
   - Ensure a coherent, flexible structure to support programme teams to effectively embed relevant skills and attributes across the curriculum
   - Support inclusive, future-facing curriculum design
   - Provide capacity to identify, evidence and measure educational gain throughout the student journey

Evidence Base and Design Process

Horizon Scanning

6. The design of the EfL SA was informed by comprehensive horizon scanning to identify emerging trends in global education, labour markets, and the evolving demands for graduate skills. To address the complexity and diversity of existing skills frameworks, a rigorous literature review was undertaken. Key activities and findings include:
    - Global Employer Expectations: Analysis of; World Economic Forum (2023) Future of Jobs Report and QS World future Skills Index (2024) highlighted significant shifts in priority skills, notably analytical thinking, creativity, and leadership
    - Engagement with scholarship on future skills, identified Ehlers' (2024) Future Skills Triple Helix Model: Integrating 17 essential skills for enabling individuals to navigate and shape a rapidly changing world
    - Framework Analysis: Ninety-nine frameworks from higher education institutions, governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations, and professional bodies (e.g. Advance HE) were analysed, identifying 341 distinct skill descriptors.
    - Technological Advancement: The acceleration of AI, automation, and digitalisation is shortening skills lifecycles, requiring graduates to be more agile.
    - Disruption and Uncertainty: Projections indicate that 44% of current workforce skills may be disrupted by 2027, highlighting the imperative for graduates to develop future-proof capabilities.

Co-Design and Stakeholder Engagement

7. The EfL SA was co-developed through an iterative process of engagement and consultation with key stakeholders:
    - Colleague Engagement: More than 50 academic and professional services colleagues contributed through workshops and surveys.
    - Student and Alumni Insights: Feedback was gathered from student focus groups, Faculty Education Committees, and alumni.
    - Governance Input: Proposals were shaped and refined through discussions at the Directors of Education Forum and the Heads of Academic Unit Forum, ensuring collaborative development and operational viability.

8. The EfL SA draws on Ehlers' (2024) triple helix model as a conceptual foundation, reframing it through Newcastle's aspirational values, expressed as growth mindset clusters of Excellence, Creativity and Impact, to provide a coherent, student-facing approach to the development of knowledge, skills and attributes across academic, personal and professional domains.

9. This co-design process combined sector research, institutional data, and wide-ranging stakeholder insights to create an evidence-informed, contextually relevant approach that can be applied consistently across disciplines.

Benefits

10. The following are planned benefits of the changes as part of the overall Leading Edge Curriculum:
    - Identification of skills and attributes that are more suited to the future graduate workplace
    - Clear, yet flexible, implementation strategy that enables programme teams to embed opportunities for all students to engage with skills and attributes across their degree programme
    - Opportunity for extra-curricular activities to be recognised as integral to the EfL SA development journey
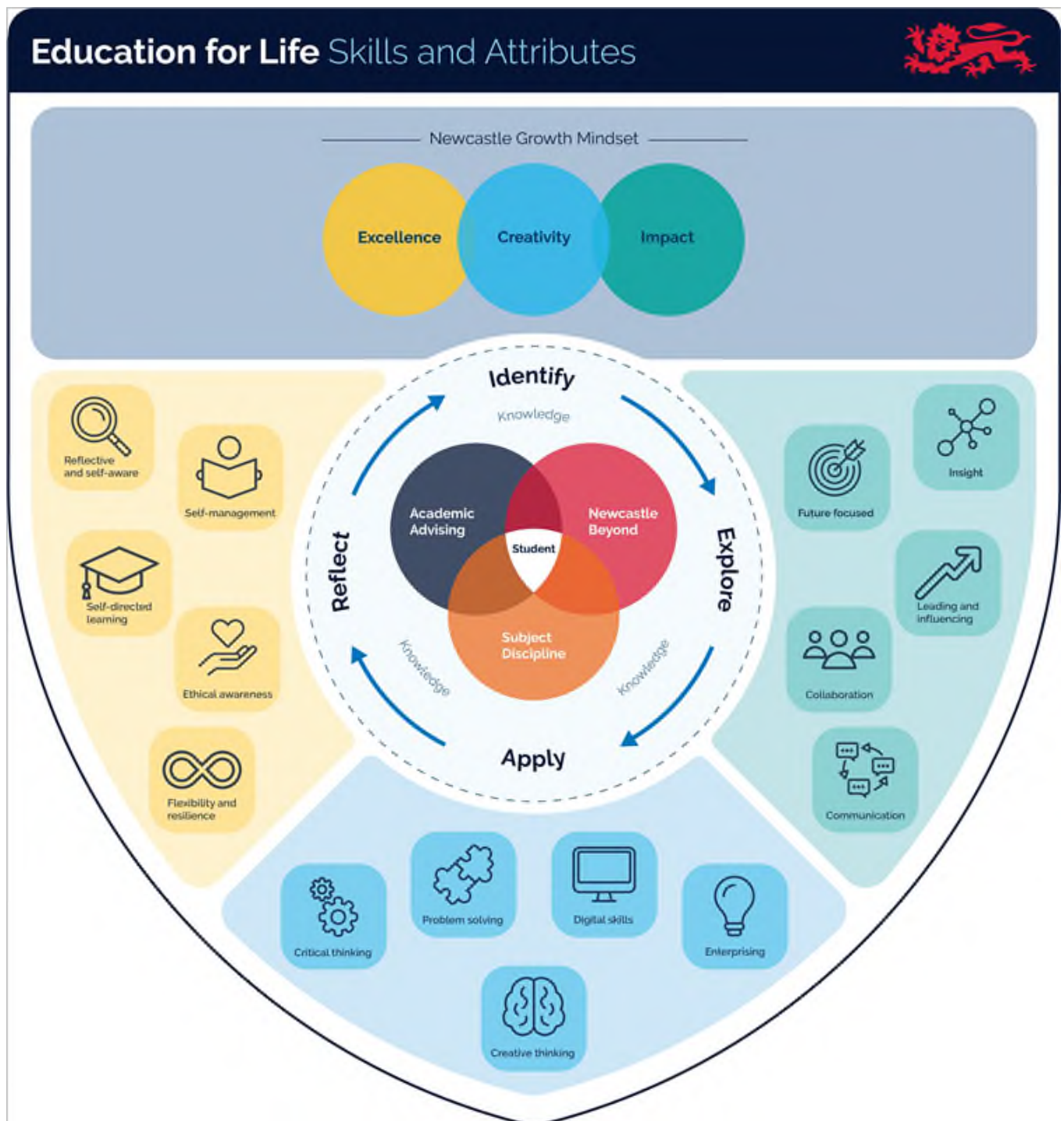
- Clarity of engagement through the 'identify, explore, apply, reflect' process, but flexibility to apply those as best fits individual programmes
- Flexibility to embed that engagement process through a range of Leading Edge Curriculum elements, including Learning and Teaching, Assessment, Encounters with the Leading Edge creating equity of opportunity without restricting subject-specific skills requirements
- Capacity to embed identification and placement of EfL SA within programme design process to enable clarity for programme teams
- Provides structure to enable students to identify and reflect on skills and attributes development, and for students and the institution to evidence and measure this distance travelled as Educational Gain.

Implementation

11. The EfL SA would be implemented within programmes alongside the Leading Edge Curriculum Framework as part of the curriculum transformation programme from 2025-26 onwards (pilot planned for Spring 2026).

Education for Life Skills and Attributes

Newcastle University's approach to developing the whole person to navigate and shape a changing world through integrated academic, professional, and personal growth.

Education for Life Skills and Attributes

Newcastle Growth Mindset

Excellence · Creativity · Impact

Identify — Knowledge
Explore — Knowledge
Apply — Knowledge
Reflect — Knowledge

Academic Advising · Student · Newcastle Beyond · Subject Discipline

Reflect:
- Reflective and self-aware
- Self-management
- Self-directed learning
- Ethical awareness
- Flexibility and resilience

Apply:
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Digital skills
- Enterprising
- Creative thinking

Explore:
- Future focused
- Insight
- Leading and influencing
- Collaboration
- Communication

Aspirational Values **Newcastle Growth Mindset**	Our graduates will: 1. Pursue **excellence** in all that they do 2. Apply **creativity** to solving the problems of today and tomorrow 3. Make an **impact** on whatever path they follow
Introduction	**Anchored in our aspiration-driven focus on excellence, creativity, and impact,** this university-wide approach aims to prepare students for their futures by embedding essential skills and attributes into both their academic studies and wider student experience. It aims to ensure all students engage meaningfully with opportunities for academic, personal, and professional development throughout their time at Newcastle. This approach reflects our shared commitment to future-focused learning while respecting the diversity of disciplines. It provides a common foundation for degree programme design, co-curricular opportunities, and academic advising, enabling students to engage with their development in intentional and reflective ways. At the heart of this approach is a structured cycle of learning: students are supported to **identify, explore, apply, and reflect** on the knowledge, skills and attributes they develop. Through this process, they are encouraged to consider who they aspire to become, what they want to be able to do, and how they might contribute to the world.
Curriculum Design	*[As part of implementation, parameters for including the skills and attributes are being developed; these have not yet been to UEC so will come to Senate later in the year]*
Newcastle Beyond – extracurricular	*[As part of implementation, the approach for using the skills and attributes in activities beyond the curriculum is in development working with Objective 4: Newcastle Beyond the Curriculum]*
Personal Tutoring (Academic Advising)	*[As part of implementation, the approach for using the skills and attributes within the academic advising approach are in development working with Objective 3: Student Launchpad]*

High level developmental clusters	Excellence (students' personal and professional development related skills)			Creativity (students' design and innovation skills)			Impact (student skills for shaping their social environment and relationship with the world)		
Making sense of the clusters (useful framing for students)	What skills will help you pursue **excellence**?			What **creative** approaches can you bring to solve problems?			How can you make an **impact** in your relationship with other and the world?		
Breaking down the clusters – next layer	Know yourself and keep growing	Learn how to learn	Understand how you think and improve	Solve real world problems	Build practical skills and knowledge	Think creatively about solutions	Work well with others	Build strong connections	Make a positive difference to teams and communities
Newcastle skills and attributes	Reflective and self-aware			Critical thinking			Communication		
	Self-management			Problem-solving			Collaboration		
	Self-directed learning			Creative thinking			Leading and influencing		
	Ethical awareness			Digital skills			Insight		
	Flexibility and resilience			Enterprising			Future focused		
	Subject Knowledge Application								

Newcastle skills and attributes definitions

Reflective and self-aware	This would include attributes focused on understanding yourself, your motivations, values, skills and strengths; having a growth mindset and being able to recognise areas you need to develop; having emotional intelligence, seeking to understand yourself and others; having the ability to reflect on your experiences and learn from them; being able to articulate your skills and attributes to others
Self-management	This would include a range of attributes focused around personal professionalism, including time management, respectful behaviour, organisational capabilities, working independently, meeting deadlines
Self-directed learning	This would include attributes focused on developing an enthusiasm for learning, and a desire to continuously improve knowledge and skills; being interested in how the world and society works; an understanding of future opportunities and how to develop yourself to be well placed to respond to those
Ethical awareness	This would include attributes focused on being able to consider the moral implications of your choices and actions; having integrity at the core of your engagement with the world; understanding the implications of your decisions, and how decision-making impacts others; developing an equity-focused mindset
Flexibility and resilience	This would include attributes focused on developing the ability to deal with problems and setbacks constructively, and being able to learn through failure as well as success; perseverance; adaptability; coping with ambiguity; capable of managing change effectively and positively; dealing with uncertainty
Critical thinking	This would include attributes focused on developing the ability to identify questions or problems to evaluate and consider the accuracy of information; being investigative and using evidence-based decision-making; applying subject knowledge to think through and beyond discipline expertise; unpacking information and critically analysing its validity
Problem-solving	This would include attributes focused on identifying, understanding and generating ideas to solve problems; being strategic in identifying opportunities to generate answers to challenges; offering different perspectives to engage with issues and questions
Creative thinking	This would include attributes focusing on your ability to use your imagination to create and develop original ideas and methods; being good at thinking and doing new and sometimes challenging things
Digital skills	This would include being able to learn, work and live in an increasingly digital world; building and applying knowledge of a range of digital applications; being proficient in the ethical use and critique of AI tools
Enterprising	This would include attributes focusing on your ability to be innovative in your approach to questions or challenges; being resourceful and demonstrating initiative, taking calculated risks; identifying opportunities.
Communication	This would include attributes focused on being able to express your ideas well; being an empathetic and active listener; being able to network effectively and negotiate and influence others; being able to engage effectively with people from different backgrounds and countries
Collaboration	This would include attributes focusing on working well with others to achieve a shared goal; contributing effectively within a team, sharing responsibilities and contributing ideas; valuing other peoples' ideas and contributions
Leading and influencing	This would include attributes focusing on being able to manage a project to completion; organising a group to achieve a shared aim; creating arguments that enable others to understand your perspective; enabling others to learn

	from you and work alongside you; taking responsibility to ensure your impact on others and the world is positive
Insight	This would include attributes focused on developing an awareness of how the world is changing, how technological progress and innovation are impacting society and the environment; being able to recognise opportunities to adapt and respond to external challenges and change; appreciating and respecting different cultures and perspectives
Future focused	This would include attributes focusing on having the capacity to look forward and prepare yourself for opportunities; understanding how world issues, whether economic, political, social or environmental can affect society and peoples lives and how you can respond to those challenges positively