

BC STUDENT OUTCOMES

fact sheet

Skills for Employment: What Are the Most Useful Skills Post-Secondary Students Acquire?

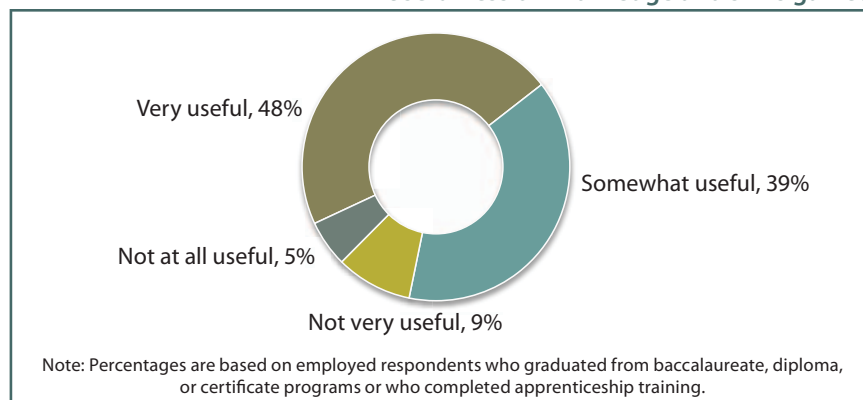
What are skills for employment? For many years, the [Conference Board of Canada](#) has published a list of employability skills, which they define as, “the skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work...” Their list begins with fundamental skills, such as the ability to *communicate* (e.g., read and understand information) and the ability to *think and solve problems* then moves to personal management skills, such as the desire to *learn continuously*, and to teamwork skills, which includes *work with others*.

The Student Outcomes surveys include a series of questions that focus on the specific skills acquired by former students. Many of the skills are employability skills, like the ones described by the Conference Board of Canada: for example, the skill to *work effectively with others* or to *analyse and think critically*. Respondents are asked to rate how well their education helped them develop these skills.

Knowledge and Skills

All employed Student Outcomes survey respondents were asked how useful the knowledge and skills they gained through their education were in performing their jobs.

Usefulness of knowledge and skills gained



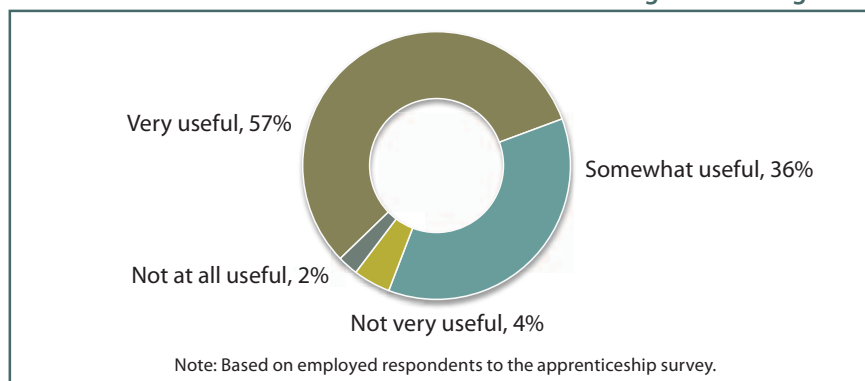
In 2015, over 86% of employed respondents said the knowledge and skills they gained were useful for their work.

Skills for Employment

Employed former students were very likely to say that the knowledge and skills they learned were useful for performing their jobs. By focussing on those who said *very useful*, it was possible to identify the specific skills former students thought were most useful for employment. The ratings for each skill were averaged and those with the highest scores are listed as the “Top-rated skills” below.

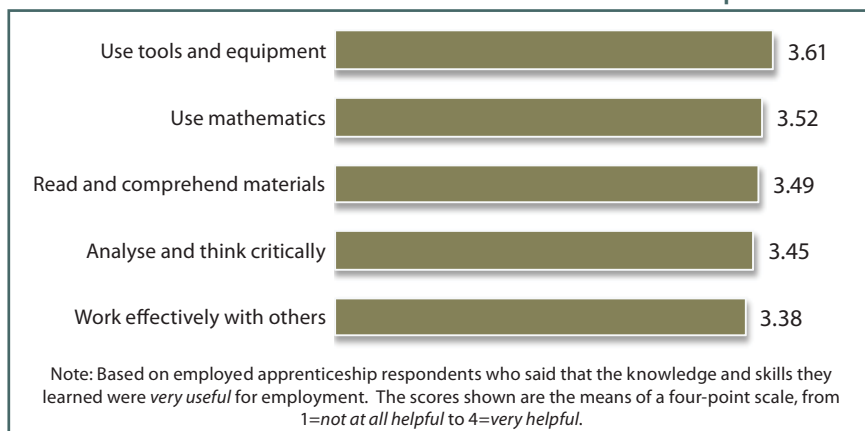
Former Apprentices

Usefulness of knowledge and skills gained



Most (93%) former apprentices said the knowledge and skills they gained were useful for their work.

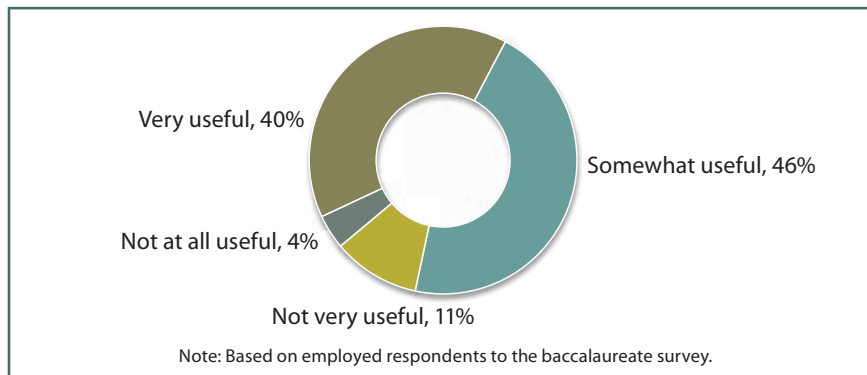
Top-rated skills



Using tools and equipment was rated highly by former apprentices.

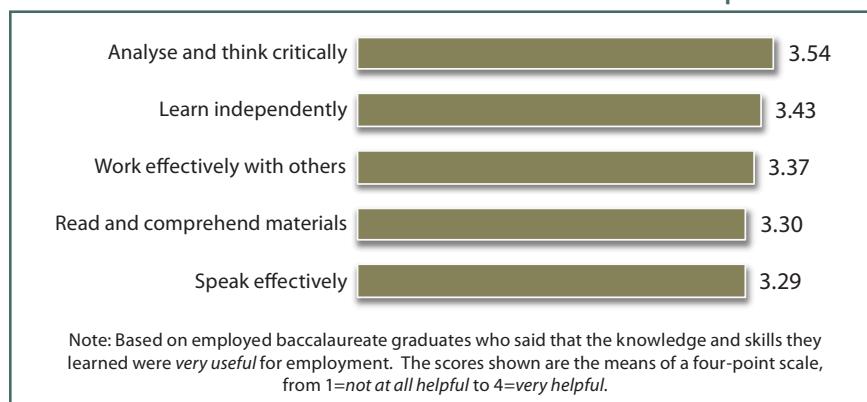
Baccalaureate Graduates

Usefulness of knowledge and skills gained



Over 85% of baccalaureate graduates said the knowledge and skills they learned were useful for employment.

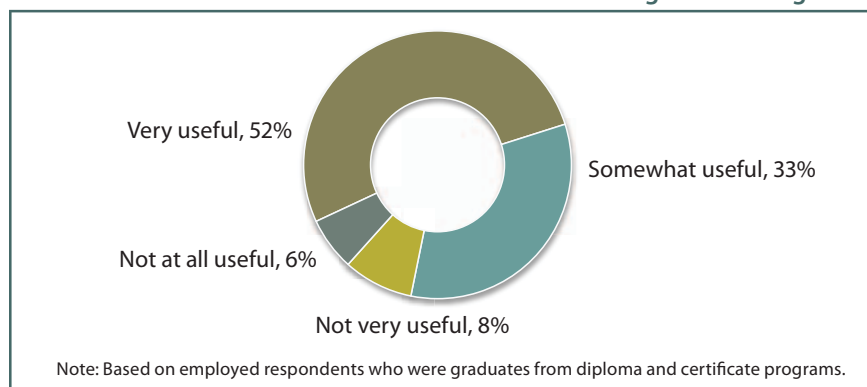
Top-rated skills



The skill to analyse and think critically was given the top rating by baccalaureate graduates.

Diploma and Certificate Graduates

Usefulness of knowledge and skills gained



Of the employed diploma and certificate graduates surveyed, 85% said the knowledge and skills learned were useful.

Top-rated skills



Diploma and certificate graduates gave top ratings to reading and comprehending materials and to working effectively with others.

Conclusion

The former students who responded to the Student Outcomes surveys were very likely to say their institutions helped them develop skills and that those skills were useful for employment. The skills that were rated highest varied by credential type, with the variation reflecting the focus of the studies.

Respondents from apprenticeship programs gave their highest ratings to the skills most useful to performing trades occupations: *using tools and equipment* and *using mathematics*. Respondents from baccalaureate programs focused more on their academic experience, and gave their highest ratings to the abilities to *analyse and think critically* and *learn independently*.

The respondents who graduated from diploma and certificate programs gave high ratings to most of the skills, but the abilities to *read and comprehend materials (appropriate to the field of study)* and to *work effectively with others* were at the top. This reflects the focus of most diploma and certificate studies, which is to prepare students for work in a specific field.

About BC Student Outcomes

Information for this fact sheet came from the 2015 Apprenticeship Student Outcomes Survey; the 2015 Baccalaureate Graduates Survey; and the 2015 Diploma, Associate Degree, and Certificate Student Outcomes Survey.

The annual BC Student Outcomes surveys collect information from former post-secondary students, who are asked to evaluate their educational experiences and to talk about their employment and further education. For more information, see the [BC Student Outcomes website](#).

The BC Student Outcomes surveys are conducted with funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education, the participating British Columbia post-secondary institutions, and the Industry Training Authority.

In 2015, approximately 28,000 post-secondary students responded to a BC Student Outcomes survey.