



Australian Government

# CORE SKILLS FOR WORK DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK

## Overview

Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education  
and  
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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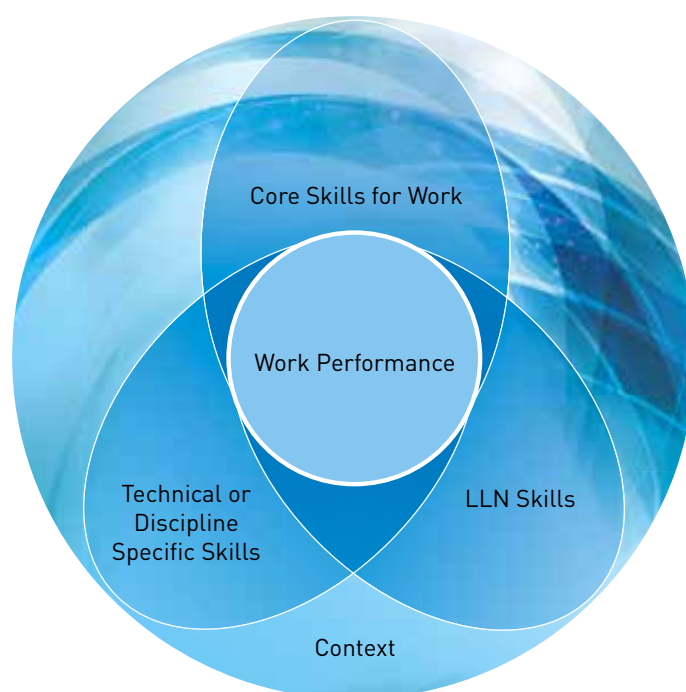
This CSfW can also be accessed via the following websites [www.deewr.gov.au/csfiw](http://www.deewr.gov.au/csfiw) and [www.innovation.gov.au/csfiw](http://www.innovation.gov.au/csfiw).

# INTRODUCTION TO THE CORE SKILLS FOR WORK DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK

The Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework (CSfW) describes **a set of non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin successful participation in work**<sup>1</sup>. Participation in work could be as an employee, as someone who is self-employed, or as a volunteer.

This set of non-technical skills, often referred to as generic or employability skills, contribute to work performance in combination with technical or discipline specific skills and core language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills<sup>2</sup>. As illustrated in Figure 1, work performance is also influenced by a range of factors relating to the context in which the skills are being applied.

**Figure 1. CORE SKILLS FOR WORK IN CONTEXT**



## Skill Areas

The CSfW describes performance in ten Skill Areas, grouped under three Skill Clusters:

### Cluster 1 - Navigate the world of work

- a. Manage career and work life
- b. Work with roles, rights and protocols

### Cluster 2 - Interact with others

- a. Communicate for work
- b. Connect and work with others
- c. Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives

<sup>1</sup> The term 'work' is used throughout the CSfW in the broadest sense of "activity that is directed at a specific purpose, which involves mental or physical effort".

<sup>2</sup> The combination of LLN skills (as detailed in the Australian Core Skills Framework) and Core Skills for Work is referred to as Foundation Skills in the Vocational Education and Training Sector. In the school sector these two types of skills are described as General Capabilities and in the higher education sector they are referred to as Graduate Attributes.

### Cluster 3 - Get the work done

- a. Plan and organise
- b. Make decisions
- c. Identify and solve problems
- d. Create and innovate
- e. Work in a digital world

Each Skill Area describes a combination of knowledge, skills and understandings and their application to work.

The CSfW recognises that these Skill Areas are relevant to all those undertaking work, not just those entering the workforce for the first time, and that they can continue to be developed across the span of an individual's working life. The CSfW describes performance in each of the Skill Areas across five stages (see page 9). It also recognises that:

- the particular skills and stages of performance required by individuals will vary according to the context in which they are operating
- there is no expectation that individuals will necessarily need all of these skills, or will need to develop them to the expert stage of performance
- an individual is likely to be operating at different stages of performance across different Skill Areas
- an individual's ability to demonstrate and develop these skills will be influenced by the context in which they are operating.

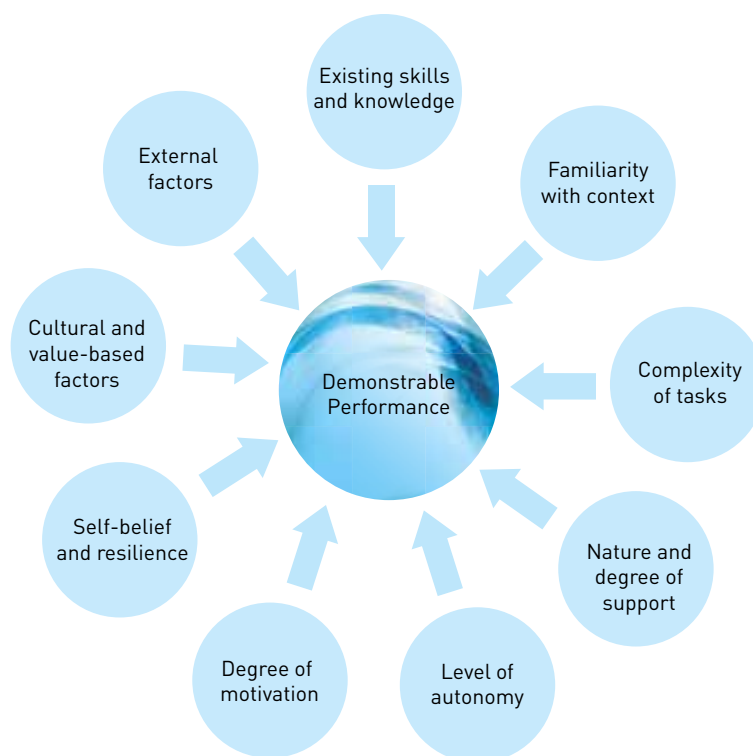
## Influencing Factors

In recognition of the fact that performance in these Skill Areas is context-dependent, the CSfW identifies a number of factors that impact upon the development and demonstration of Core Skills for Work.

Performance in a work situation is not only dependent on the skills and knowledge that an individual brings to it, but on a range of factors that may affect how well they can apply these to different tasks. Contextual factors also affect an individual's capacity to demonstrate certain skills or to develop them further. For example, someone may have highly developed decision-making skills, but if they are not given the autonomy or their job role does not require them to exercise these skills, their demonstrable performance in this Skill Area may reflect a lower stage performance.

These 'Influencing Factors' are illustrated in Figure 2 (see page 3) and described in detail in Table 4 (see pages 11–12).

Figure 2. FACTORS INFLUENCING WORK PERFORMANCE



## BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CSfW

The notion of employability has been part of education for many years. In the early 1990s, the concept of employment-related skills gained traction in Australia when the Mayer Committee examined the skills required for entry-level employment. The Mayer Key Competencies were developed to enable the incorporation of these skills into education and training.

In 2002, Australian industry took a lead role in describing the skills required to gain and progress in employment. These 'employability skills' were identified in the *Employability Skills for the Future* report, prepared by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA) with funding from the Commonwealth Government. The Employability Skills described in that report were taken up in Australia's vocational education and training sector, but concerns remained about how well these skills were being developed and understood.

Consultations in Stage One of the CSfW development identified that there was potential for a new CSfW to provide a common language that would assist all education, training and employment services sectors to address these skills more explicitly. The development of the CSfW drew upon recent research about employability and generic skills and their development, as well as analysis of a range of current approaches to addressing employability and generic skills in Australia and overseas. More than 800 people had input into the development process, including employers, unions and industry groups and a broad cross-section of organisations and sectors that have an interest in, and potential use for, the CSfW.

The CSfW, as described in this document, is intended to be reviewed after a number of years of use to check whether it would benefit from adjustment or further development.

## PURPOSE OF THE CSfW

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The CSfW has been designed to make more clear and explicit a set of non-technical skills and knowledge that underpin successful participation in work. This provides a common reference point and language that will assist:

- those who develop standards, curriculum, programs and learning and assessment resources to more clearly articulate the Core Skills for Work required for certain occupations or at particular points in career development
- trainers, educators and those who work with job seekers to more explicitly address the development of these skills in learners, and to assist those they work with to more clearly articulate the skills they do possess and identify those that they would like to develop.

The CSfW is not a set of standards, nor an assessment tool. It is a framework for conceptualising and articulating skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin work performance over time, and for guiding further development. It is not intended to replace approaches to developing these skills that are already in place, but to provide a common underpinning that is relevant across sectors.

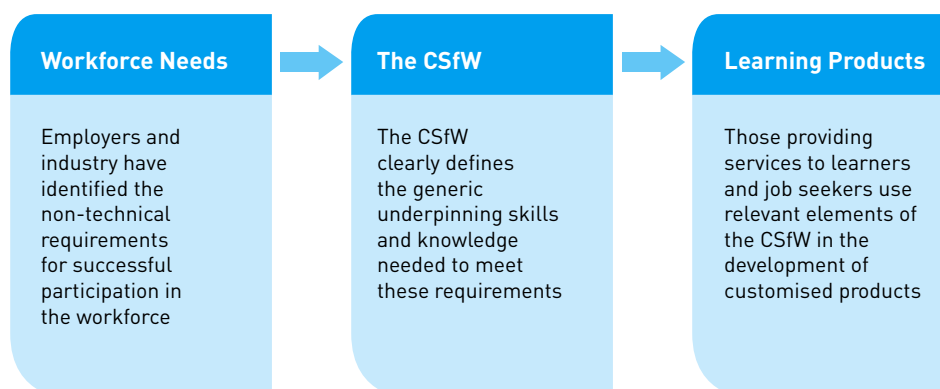
The CSfW takes the skills and behaviours that have been identified by Australian employers as important for successful participation in work and identifies the underpinning skills and knowledge involved. For example, employers say that they value individuals who can work in teams. This has been 'unpacked' across a range of skills, such as:

- work with roles, rights and protocols
- respect and utilise diverse perspectives
- connect and work with others.

Knowledge, skills and understandings that are often taken for granted in expectations around work performance, such as those needed to recognise the protocols of a workplace, and those that facilitate the adaptation of prior knowledge and skills to new contexts, are also made explicit in the CSfW.

The CSfW presents the underpinning skills, knowledge and understandings in terms that make them describable, teachable and/or learnable, and able to be demonstrated. This approach provides education, training and employment services sectors with a foundation from which to develop relevant learning products (e.g. Training Packages, curriculum, programs, tools or resources) for addressing the elements of the CSfW most relevant to their sector (see Figure 3 below). There is also potential for tools and resources to be developed from the CSfW for use in the workplace.

**Figure 3. THE PURPOSE OF THE CSfW**



# CONCEPTS UNDERPINNING THE CSFW

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## A developmental approach

The CSfW utilises a developmental approach, informed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus' *Novice to Expert Model of Skills Acquisition*<sup>3</sup> and other research on skill development and performance. It encompasses five stages of performance - Novice, Advanced Beginner, Capable<sup>4</sup>, Proficient and Expert.

As was recognised in Dreyfus and Dreyfus' work, the CSfW recognises that:

- as an individual progresses from the "novice" stage through to later stages of development, their reliance upon explicit 'rules' governing action (e.g. instructions, processes, procedures, guidelines, models,) and systematic approaches to work tasks decreases, and their understanding of implicit 'rules' (e.g. conventions, expectations), use of judgement and more flexible, intuitive approaches increases
- practical experience, reflection, motivation and support influence the degree and rate of progress through the stages
- when an individual moves into a new context (e.g. a new role, organisation or industry/field, or from study into paid employment), while they will not 'lose' their skills, their ability to apply them will be diminished until they understand the new context.

The CSfW applies these principles to performance in each Skill Area, rather than to work performance as a whole. Therefore, someone could be a novice in paid employment but still demonstrate a higher stage of performance in particular aspects of Skill Areas. For example, someone starting their first paid job may be at the Capable stage in aspects of Communicating for Work related to 'speaking and listening' and 'getting the message across', but at Novice stage in 'responding to communication system, practices and protocols' because they don't yet understand the systems and practices of the workplace. It is quite possible that an individual will have a 'spiky profile' such as this within a Skill Area, and also across Skill Areas.

Table 1 (see page 7) provides a generic description of performance at each stage, which is the basis for describing specific performance across each of the five stages in each Skill Area.

## Context-dependency

The context-dependent nature of Core Skills for Work means that the stage of performance at which an individual will operate is highly dependent on their understanding of the situation in which they are applying their skills. For example, someone who is 'proficient' at solving problems in one organisation will require some time to build relationships and learn the protocols of a new organisation before they have the situational knowledge and understanding they require to demonstrate proficient performance in the new situation. In the interim, they may need to revert to the formal problem solving processes of a 'capable' performer.

This means that when using the CSfW, the context in which an individual is operating and their level of familiarity with the context need to be recognised. For example the stage of performance that an individual can demonstrate in an education and training setting is likely to be different from the stage at which they can initially function in a workplace setting. However, as their understanding of the workplace context grows, so will their ability to function at their former level.

A number of the skills described in the CSfW assist individuals to adapt and apply their existing skills and knowledge in new contexts. These include skills such as reflection, learning, adopting different viewpoints and developing new ideas.

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3 Dreyfus, H. and Dreyfus, S. (1985) *Mind over machine: the power of human intuition and expertise in the era of the computer*. Free Press, New York

4 The term 'capable' has been substituted for the term 'competent' used by Dreyfus and Dreyfus because of the specific meaning and use of the term 'competent' in the Vocational Education and Training sector.

## Relevance to a range of contexts

The CSfW's descriptors are designed to be applicable across different contexts, including different industries and fields and work settings. The term 'work' is intended to be applicable not only to employment contexts, but also in education and training, and broader community contexts. For example, the Performance Feature from Skill Area 2c, Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives, says: "Begins to recognise how some personal values and beliefs align with, or differ from those of others in the immediate work context, and may consider how this impacts on interactions and work performance", can equally apply to working with others:

- on an activity in a classroom setting
- to complete a group assessment task
- in an organisation or project team in paid employment
- in the form of a client/customer relationship
- on a committee for a community group.

However, performance is not automatically transferrable to new contexts, as application of skills, knowledge and understandings in a new context requires an understanding of that context. Hence, an individual who has only ever applied their skills in a classroom setting will need to learn about the protocols and expectations of a work situation, and gain practical experience in applying their skills in a work environment before they can demonstrate their skills at the same stage of performance within that work context.



■ Table 1. GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS OF STAGES OF PERFORMANCE

# STAGES

1 A Novice performer	2 An Advanced Beginner	3 A Capable performer	4 A Proficient performer	5 An Expert performer
<p>Has little or no practical experience of the Skill Area on which to base actions.</p> <p>Is highly reliant on explicit 'rules' (e.g. instructions, processes, procedures, models), guidance and support and priorities determined by others, to guide activities.</p>	<p>Has some practical experience of the Skill Area and is beginning to recognise patterns (e.g. routines, regular responses, links and connections) that help understanding and influence action.</p> <p>Is still reliant on explicit 'rules' and on assistance to identify priorities, but can apply these more autonomously in familiar, routine situations.</p>	<p>Has sufficient practical experience of the Skill Area to identify patterns and organising principles and establish priorities for action.</p> <p>Can comfortably apply the explicit and implicit 'rules' associated with familiar situations.</p> <p>Adopts a systematic, analytical approach to tasks, especially in unfamiliar situations.</p>	<p>Has considerable practical experience of the Skill Area in a range of contexts and is moving from reliance on externally prescribed rules to recognition of principles that guide actions.</p> <p>Organises knowledge and practical experience as patterns, concepts and principles, which makes it possible to assess, and respond to situations in an increasingly intuitive and flexible way.</p> <p>Reverts to analysis and seeks guidance when making important decisions.</p>	<p>Has extensive practical experience of the Skill Area, with both a big picture understanding and an eye for relevant fine detail.</p> <p>Operates fluidly, intuitively and flexibly in highly complex situations, drawing on knowledge and practical experience organised into highly refined patterns, concepts and principles.</p> <p>Uses a combination of informed intuition and analysis in different situations, recognising that 'it all depends'.</p> <p>Will often reconceptualise approaches and practices to produce more effective outcomes, while also recognising which rules and principles are always applicable.</p>

## STRUCTURE OF THE CSFW

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The CSfW is comprised of the elements described below. The way in which they are used within the CSfW is illustrated in Table 2 (see page 9).

### Skill Clusters

The Skill Areas that interact most closely with each other are grouped into three broad categories. While Skill Areas within a cluster have a particular affinity, there is also interaction across clusters.

### Skill Areas

The ten Skill Areas are a combination of:

- Knowledge — what someone knows about in a theoretical or abstract sense,
- Understanding — how they link it to their personal experience, and
- Skills — how they put their knowledge and understanding into practice in work settings.

The Skill Areas are defined in Table 3 (see page 10).

### Focus Areas

A set of Focus Areas has been identified for each Skill Area. These represent the priority aspects to be considered, and were identified from the literature and consultation.

### Performance Features

Organised by Focus Area, Performance Features describe the kinds of things someone knows, understands and can do at each stage of performance. Although not intended to be treated as a finite list of capabilities, they capture the key characteristics that distinguish one Stage of Performance from another.

The Performance Features are described in the separate *Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework- The Framework* document.

### Influencing Factors

At any point in time, performance may also be affected by one or more of a range of factors relevant to the individual concerned and to the context in which they are situated. These Influencing Factors are described in Table 4 (see pages 11-12).

# FRAMEWORK

■ Table 2. STRUCTURE OF THE CSFW

Skill Cluster	Skill Area	Focus Areas	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Capable	Proficient	Expert
<b>Navigate the world of work</b>	1a. Manage career and work life	Identify work options; Gain work; Develop relevant skills and knowledge	See relevant Performance Features tables for details				
	1b. Work with roles, rights and protocols	Work with roles and responsibilities; Operate within legal rights and responsibilities; Recognise and respond to protocols					
	2a. Communicate for work	Respond to communication systems, practices and protocols; Speak and listen; Understand, interpret and act; Get the message across					
<b>Interact with others</b>	2b. Connect and work with others	Understand self; Build rapport; Cooperate and collaborate	See relevant Performance Features tables for details				
	2c. Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives	Recognise different perspectives; Respond to and utilise diverse perspectives; Manage conflict					
	<b>Get the work done</b>	3a. Plan and organise					
3b. Make decisions		Establish decision making scope; Apply decision-making processes; Review impact					
3c. Identify and solve problems		Identify problems; Apply problem-solving processes; Review outcomes					
3d. Create and innovate		Recognise opportunities to develop and apply new ideas; Generate ideas; Select ideas for implementation					
3e. Work in a digital world		Use digitally based technologies and systems; Connect with others; Access, organise, and present information; Manage risk					
<b>Influencing Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>existing skills and knowledge</li> <li>familiarity with the context</li> <li>complexity of tasks</li> <li>nature and degree of support</li> <li>level of autonomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>degree of motivation</li> <li>self-belief and resilience</li> <li>cultural and value-based factors</li> <li>external factors</li> </ul>					

# SKILLS

■ Table 3. DEFINITIONS OF THE SKILL AREAS

1 Navigate the world of work	2 Interact with others	3 Get the work done
<p><b>1a. Manage career and work life</b></p> <p>This Skill Area is about managing decisions throughout life about how, when and where to work. It involves the capacity to identify work and career options, to gain work or career advancement, and to undertake learning appropriate to work needs and goals.</p> <p><b>1b. Work with roles, rights and protocols</b></p> <p>This Skill Area is about understanding work roles and workplace rights and expectations. It involves the capacity to identify and manage responsibilities, recognise and respond to legal rights and responsibilities, and to recognise and respond to expectations and accepted practices of work situations.</p>	<p><b>2a. Communicate for work</b></p> <p>This Skill Area is about using communication skills to achieve work outcomes. It involves the capacity to recognise communication protocols and etiquette, use communication systems and processes, understand messages and get messages across to others.</p> <p><b>2b. Connect and work with others</b></p> <p>This Skill Area is about building the work-related relationships needed to achieve an outcome within a workgroup, or achieve goals through team based collaborations. It involves the capacity to understand others and build rapport, which in turn involves understanding one's own values, goals, expectations and emotions, and making choices about regulating one's own behaviour, taking the needs of others, and the often implicit social rules of the context, into account.</p> <p><b>2c. Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives</b></p> <p>This Skill Area is about the capacity to recognise and respond to differing values, beliefs and behaviours, to draw on diverse perspectives for work purposes and to manage conflict when it arises.</p>	<p><b>3a. Plan and organise</b></p> <p>This Skill Area is about identifying and completing the steps needed to undertake tasks and manage workloads. This involves the capacity to organise self and information, plan and implement tasks, and plan and organise workloads.</p> <p><b>3b. Make decisions</b></p> <p>This Skill Area is about making a choice from a range of possibilities. It involves the capacity to use different decision-making approaches and to reflect on the outcomes of decisions.</p> <p><b>3c. Identify and solve problems</b></p> <p>This Skill Area is about identifying and addressing routine and non-routine problems in order to achieve work objectives. This involves the capacity to anticipate or identify problems, take steps to solve problems and reflect on the outcomes.</p> <p><b>3d. Create and innovate</b></p> <p>This Skill Area is about creating, applying and recognising the value of new ideas to solve problems, improve or develop new processes, products or strategies, or deliver new benefits. It involves the capacity to challenge perceptions of how things are, and how they might be, and to recognise a potential opportunity. It also involves the use of formal processes to challenge and extend initial perceptions of a situation, and generate, and select from, a range of new ideas.</p> <p><b>3e. Work in a digital world</b></p> <p>This Skill Area refers to the capacity to connect to other people, information and contexts for work-related purposes using digital systems and technology. It involves understanding concepts and language associated with the digital world and the capacity to understand and work with emerging/accepted etiquette and risks associated with online environments. It also involves identifying how digital technology and digitally based systems can extend, enhance or make possible specific aspects of a role or task, and create new opportunities.</p>

## ■ Table 4. INFLUENCING FACTORS

### **Existing skills and knowledge**

At any point in time, an individual's capacity to apply any of the Core Skills for Work may be influenced by their technical skills and LLN skills. For example, developing and using skills in the Skill Area 'Communicate for Work' will be dependent on having the associated LLN skills, and capacity to 'Identify and Solve problems' in a work context may also require relevant technical knowledge, skills and understandings.

Individuals may also be able to draw on skills and understandings developed in a non-work context. For example, someone with extensive experience of planning and organising complex community events may be able to adapt principles and concepts learnt through that experience to a work context, and may move through the stages of development more quickly than someone who has limited practical experience of that Skill Area on which to draw.

### **Familiarity with the context**

Just as overall work performance is highly dependent upon an individual's level of familiarity with the context, performance in a specific Skill Area will also be influenced by context familiarity.

**Context** could include a particular environment (such as a workplace or study environment), an industry or field, an organisation or part of an organisation, a role type, a specific role or a task.

**Familiarity** might include knowledge and understanding of aspects of the context such as the language, conventions and expectations, as well as the people and workplace culture, role requirements and tasks.

When an individual changes context, their performance in a Skill Area may alter significantly. For example, a capable problem solver in one organisation automatically implements appropriate measures to resolve familiar, routine issues. In a new organisation, many aspects of the situation will also be new, and they may find themselves operating at the novice or advanced beginner stage of problem solving for a time until they develop an understanding of how things are supposed to work in the new context and skills in applying the new rules.

### **Complexity of tasks**

Work performance will diminish if the complexity of the tasks an individual is required to undertake is beyond their level of capability and confidence. Novices in a specific Skill Area will perform best if they apply their skills within well defined, highly predictable concrete tasks of one or two steps, whereas a distinguishing feature of expert performance in any Skill Area is the capacity to apply the relevant skills and knowledge in complex situations involving multiple variables, interpretations and options for action.

### **Nature and degree of support**

Appropriate support has been shown to have a significant influence on work performance, facilitating the nature, degree and efficiency of an individual's learning, assisting them to gain information and insights, identify critical issues and set priorities, and providing feedback that contributes to their continuing development.

Support can take many forms e.g. guidance, supervision, mentoring, peer support, organisation manuals, training and development activities, online and external information sources, external expertise and networks. The type and source of support that is most likely to be beneficial depends on a range of variables, including an individual's stage of development in any of the Skill Areas. For example, an Advanced Beginner in a specific Skill Area may benefit from a combination of clear guidelines, close supervision and some specified areas of autonomy, while a proficient performer is likely to become frustrated by close supervision and limited autonomy, but will be highly motivated, and extend their skills when given challenges and opportunities to work closely with, and receive coaching from, an expert performer in that Skill Area.

## ■ Table 4. INFLUENCING FACTORS (Continued)

### **Level of autonomy**

Autonomy can encompass choices about what to do, when to do it, how to do it and who to do it with, and has been identified as a key factor in motivation to learn. It may be linked to the degree of responsibility and accountability an individual takes, or is given, for outcomes. It can also impact on the extent to which an individual is able to demonstrate the full extent of skills such as creativity, flexibility, problem-solving and decision making. Therefore providing opportunities to make choices and reflect on their effectiveness can assist an individual to develop new skills and understandings. However, while individuals at any stage of development may benefit from some form of autonomy, the appropriate nature and degree of autonomy depends on the stage of performance. For example, novices and advanced beginners need clear structures, guidelines and high support with clearly defined areas of autonomy whereas proficient and expert performers benefit from a high degree of autonomy.

### **Degree of motivation**

Motivation may be intrinsic (internally driven) or extrinsic (externally driven). Extrinsic motivation is driven by an individual's awareness of external rewards and potential adverse consequences. Intrinsic motivation is influenced by an individual's own areas of interest and by their perception of whether something matters. Intrinsic motivation to develop in a particular Skill Area will therefore be stronger when an individual can see how this will assist in achieving something they value or where they perceive that performance in the Skill Area itself is important in its own right.

### **Self-belief and resilience**

The belief that one can perform a task or further develop a skill, and the capacity to be resilient when faced with challenges, strongly influence the ways in which individuals perform and further develop their skills and knowledge. Individuals with high self-belief and resilience are more likely to look forward to, and be successful in work performance, and this in turn contributes to increased self-belief and resilience, and the desire to take on new challenges and improve skills further. Self belief and resilience also affect an individual's empathy and sensitivity to others, ability to cope under pressure and to deal with work-related politics.

### **Cultural and value-based factors**

Workplace culture and values underpin the types of attitudes and attributes valued in work contexts, such as enthusiasm, initiative and commitment. They can also support or inhibit the creation of an environment that fosters learning, collaboration, creativity and innovation. Workplace culture and values can be explicit, such as those promoted in codes of conduct or workplace policies, or implicit in the accepted behaviour, reward systems and power structures of the workplace.

Individuals' values and cultural background affect the attitudes they bring with them to work, as well as their ability to understand and operate within the culture of a workplace.

The culture and values of both the individual and the work situation affect the ability of an individual to demonstrate and develop the behaviours required for success in work, and will influence expectations about the nature of specific Core Skills for Work, e.g. accepted ways of interacting, communicating and managing conflict in the work context.

### **External factors**

Circumstances outside of the work context may have a significant influence on individuals' ability to successfully participate in work, their work performance overall and/or their capacity to develop and apply Core Skills for Work. External factors include health, transport, housing arrangements, family responsibilities, social networks and other personal circumstances. They also include broader environmental factors such as the economic climate and labour market conditions.