



THE  
CAREERS  
SERVICE

# CAREERS COMPASS

Making plans and decisions for your future is a daunting prospect for many people. The exercises in our Careers Compass will help you make a start and provide a foundation for:

- Further careers research.
- Making informed decisions.
- Creating strongly rooted and persuasive applications.

The Oxford Careers Service will be happy to work with you to:

- provide an impartial second opinion;
- support your interpretation of your results;
- help you explore ideas and discuss how best to move forwards.

## **Take your time:**

- Do not try to crunch through the exercises in one sitting.
- Pause between exercises for reflection and review.
- You may even re-visit some exercises over time, throughout university and beyond.

## **It is NOT essential to do every exercise.**

Start with the exercises that appeal or 'speak' to you most readily as they probably reflect your preferred learning style.

# CAREERS COMPASS

## WHAT DRIVES CAREER SUCCESS?

People tend to succeed when doing work that:

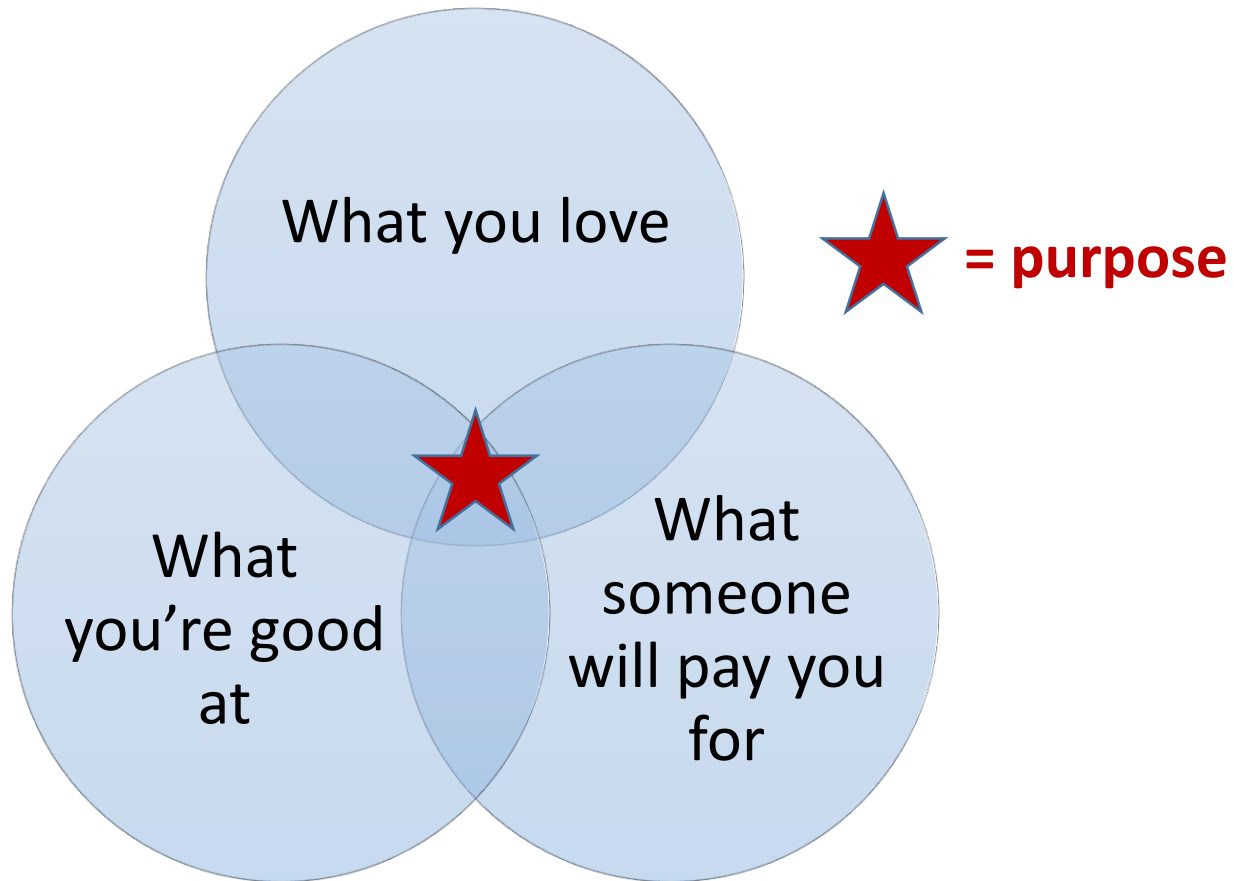
- provides meaning and purpose for them.
- they enjoy, which allows them to express their strengths, applying and developing skills and knowledge they like to use.
- provides opportunities to learn, develop and progress.

The important drivers for career success are different for each of us. Your career drivers will reflect your personal pattern of:

- **Career interests**, which will reflect your personal **values, preferences and work style**.
- **Motivations** and the **rewards and recognition** which are important to you.
- **Skills and Strengths** and whether you are developing and using the skills which you enjoy using most.

# Defining your Purpose

Successfully navigating the world of work suggests finding roles where 3 elements converge.



A nod to Jane Austen?:

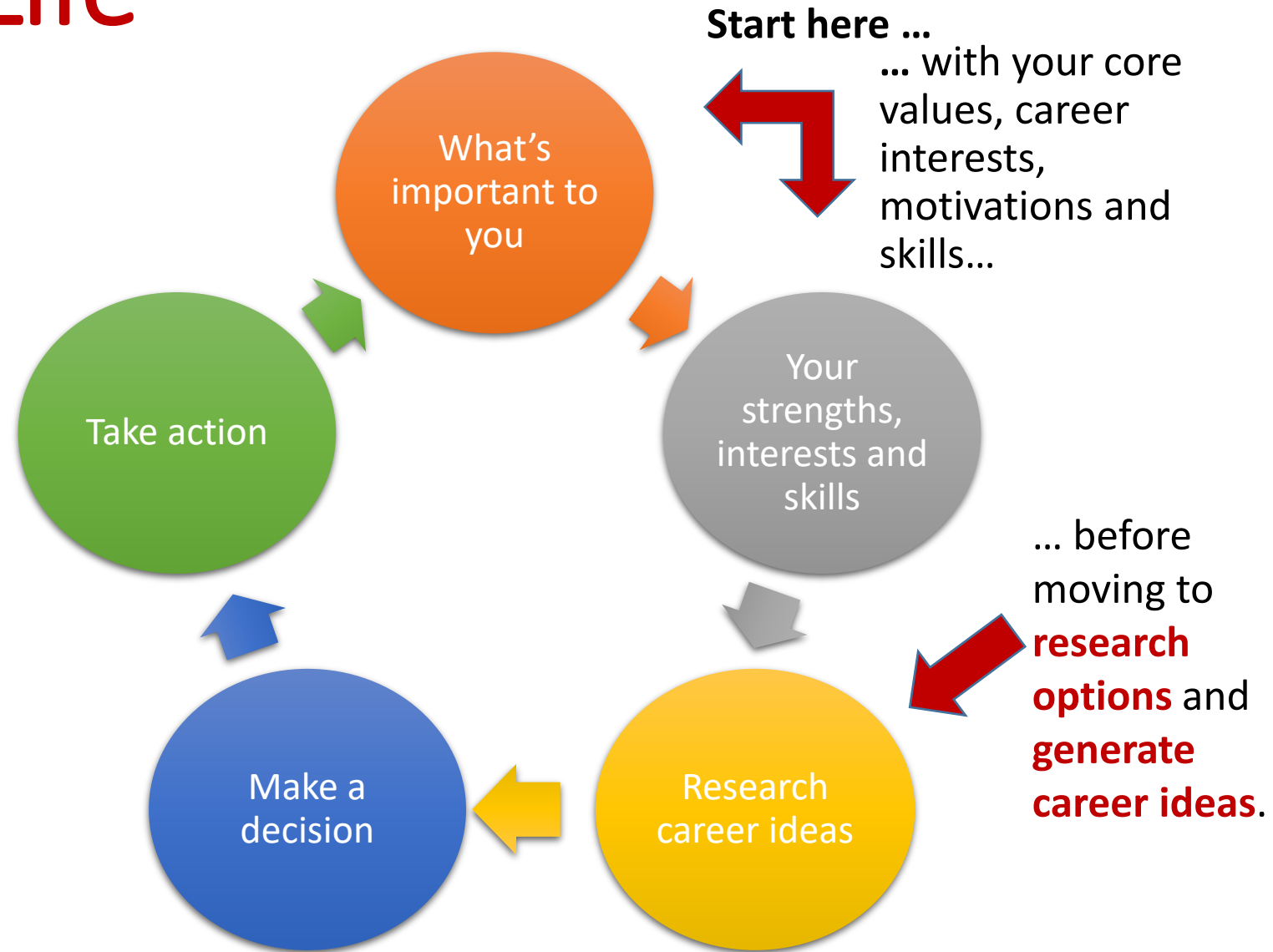
*It is a truth universally acknowledged, that anyone not yet in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a job from which they can derive a sufficient income.*

# The Circle of Life

Throughout your working life there will be times when you will want to pause and review your career to date. The reflection supported by Careers Compass will provide a foundation for these moments now and in future.

The exercises in Careers Compass will help you to **understand yourself**, providing insights that can be used to:

- Identify your core drivers and find career directions and ideas to explore further.
- Name your strengths and skills and decide which you might want to develop further.
- Improve your ability to showcase your skills, knowledge and motivations and improve job applications;
- Support decision making now and in future about your next career move.



# The Exercises in this Workbook

The exercises in this workbook will help you to explore the core themes that relate to your **Values and Motivations**, and how these might affect your career choices and future success.

Expect some to take perhaps 20-40 minutes, whilst other will be much quicker. Set aside enough time to complete each exercise in one sitting, but take breaks between exercises.

Most exercises have a short introduction and instructions. They finish with a summarising step or we ask you to write out ideas that best illustrate your relevant experience. These should both:

- Help you to distil your understanding related to your values and motivations; and
- Start to build up a set of personal experiences that you can use in persuasive applications.

## **Reflect on past experiences and choices.**

- LifeLine
- My Degree: Pleasure or Pain?
- Work and Play
- Dream a little

## **Identify values, career interests and motivations.**

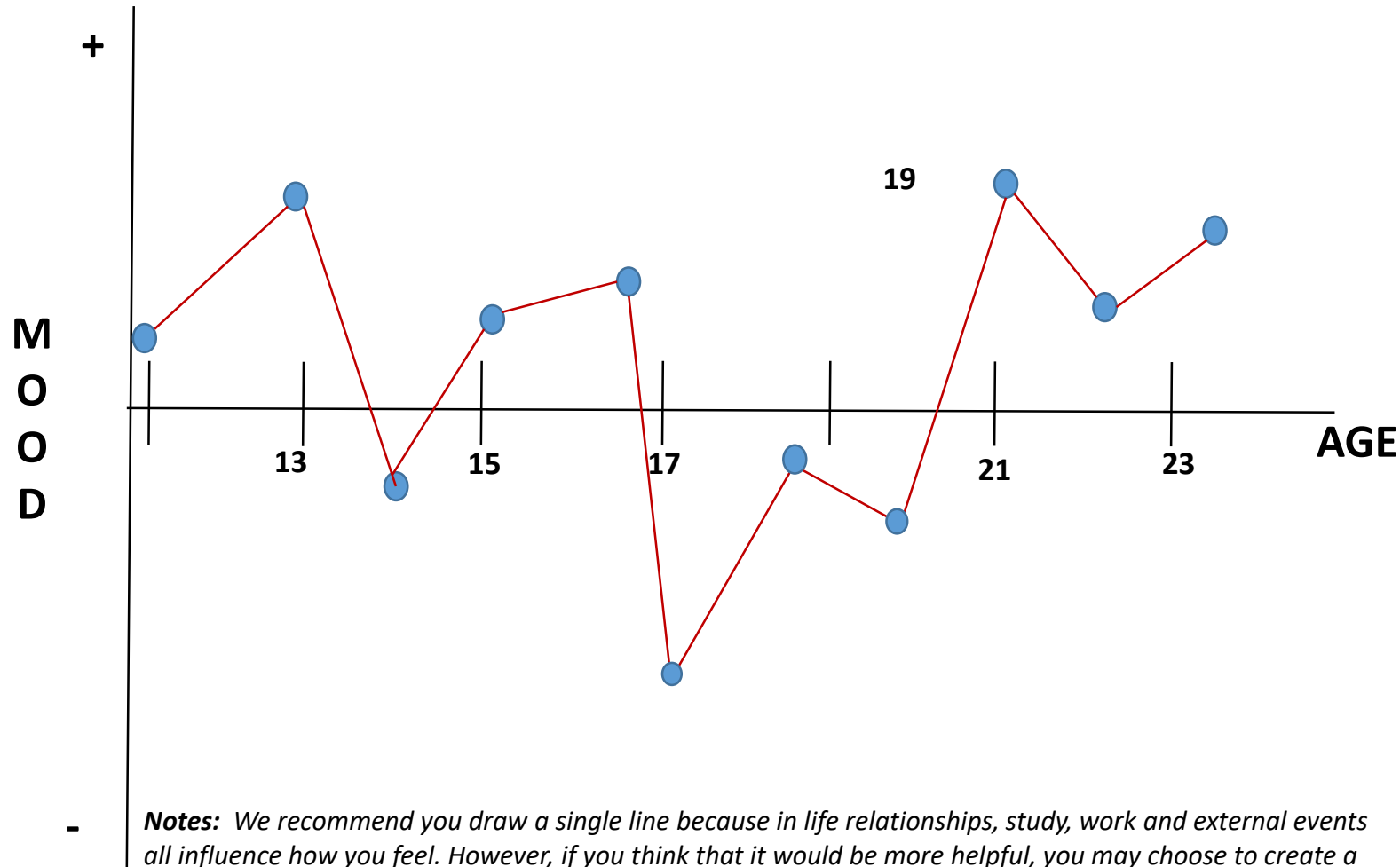
These can underpin your choices and empower yourself to make better decisions in future:

- Your top Values & Motivations
- Work Environments that help me to succeed
- Preferred Work Styles
- Personal pattern of Motivations and Rewards

## **Evaluate skills and create development goals:**

- Skills: Inventory
- Skills: Your Evidence

# 1. LifeLine Exercise



**Notes:** We recommend you draw a single line because in life relationships, study, work and external events all influence how you feel. However, if you think that it would be more helpful, you may choose to create a separate PERSONAL lifeline and STUDY/WORK lifeline. Alternatively, you could just plot the points and not join them up.

## 1. DRAW YOUR LIFELINE:

Do not think about details at this stage.

Quickly and intuitively draw a line to reflect your overall mood or plot your personal highs and lows: experiences that feel meaningful to you, such as Achievements; Life events; Social successes or failures; Work experience or achievements.

## 2. ANOTATE YOUR LIFELINE:

For each high and low, or turning point in your Lifeline.

- IDENTIFY and NAME the event.
- Describe WHAT happened: the situation and the goal, process and/or outcome.
- Identify WHO else was involved in what happened and your personal context.
- Describe HOW you were involved.

## 3. ANALYSE WHY YOU FELT AS YOU DID:

- HOW did you FEEL about what happened?
- How much CONTROL and INFLUENCE did you have over the event or the decision?
- At high points, what made it so positive? How did it fulfil a need or desire?
- At low points, what did you do that made things better?

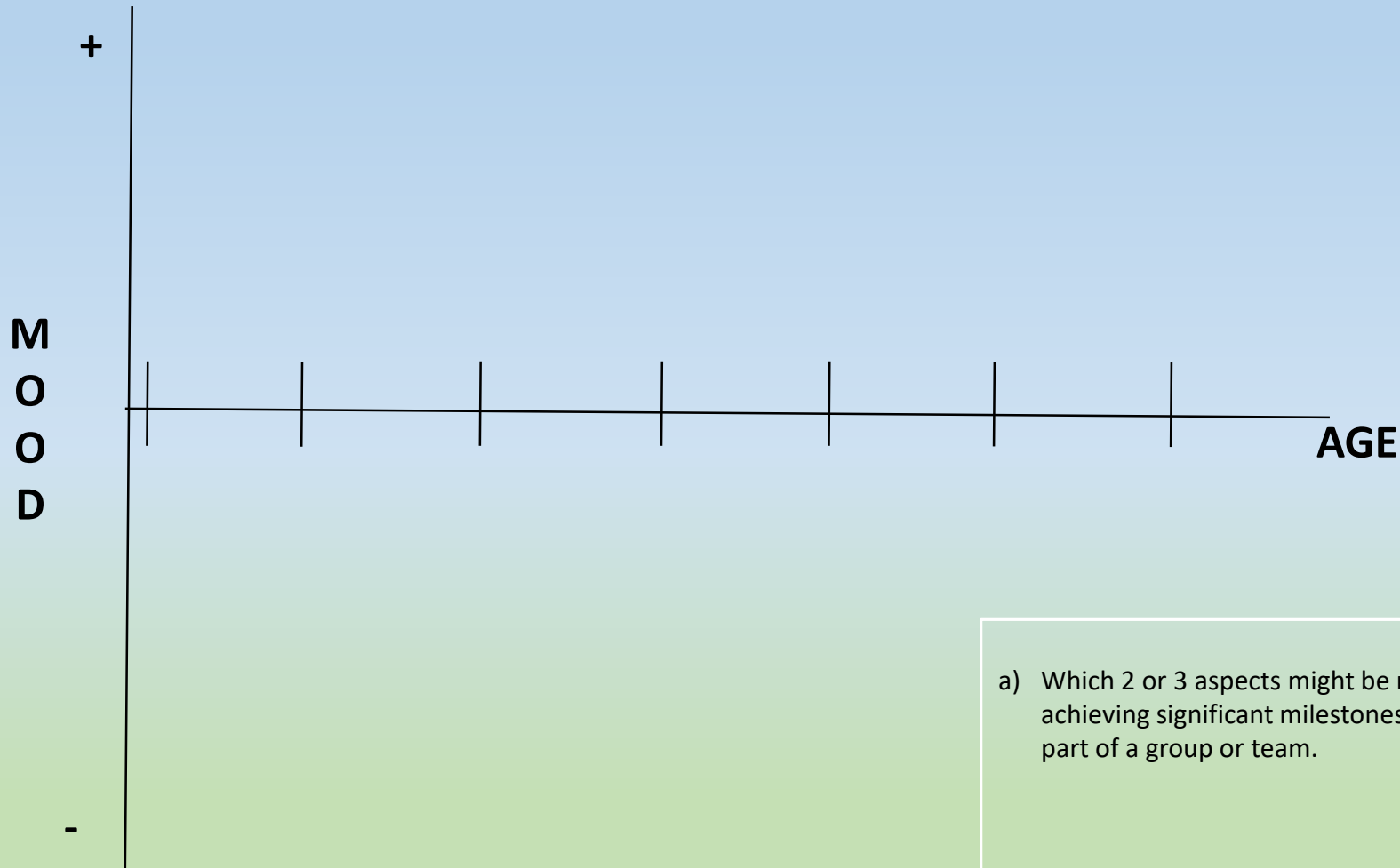
## 4. REFLECT:

- IDENTIFY any THEMES that recur or link your highs and/or lows.
- What are the two most important events that have had the biggest impact on you? How have these influenced you?
- Is there a particular person, or social context, that seems to be linked to a strong positive influence for you?

# 1. My LifeLine

## PROCESS

1. DRAW YOUR LIFELINE
2. ANNOTATE: Describe What? How? and Who?
3. ANALYSE:
4. REFLECT: identify and note key themes below



## **MY THEMES:**

- a) When I've felt happy / successful / positive I notice that .....
- b) When I've felt unhappy / when things have not gone well / been 'down' I notice that .....

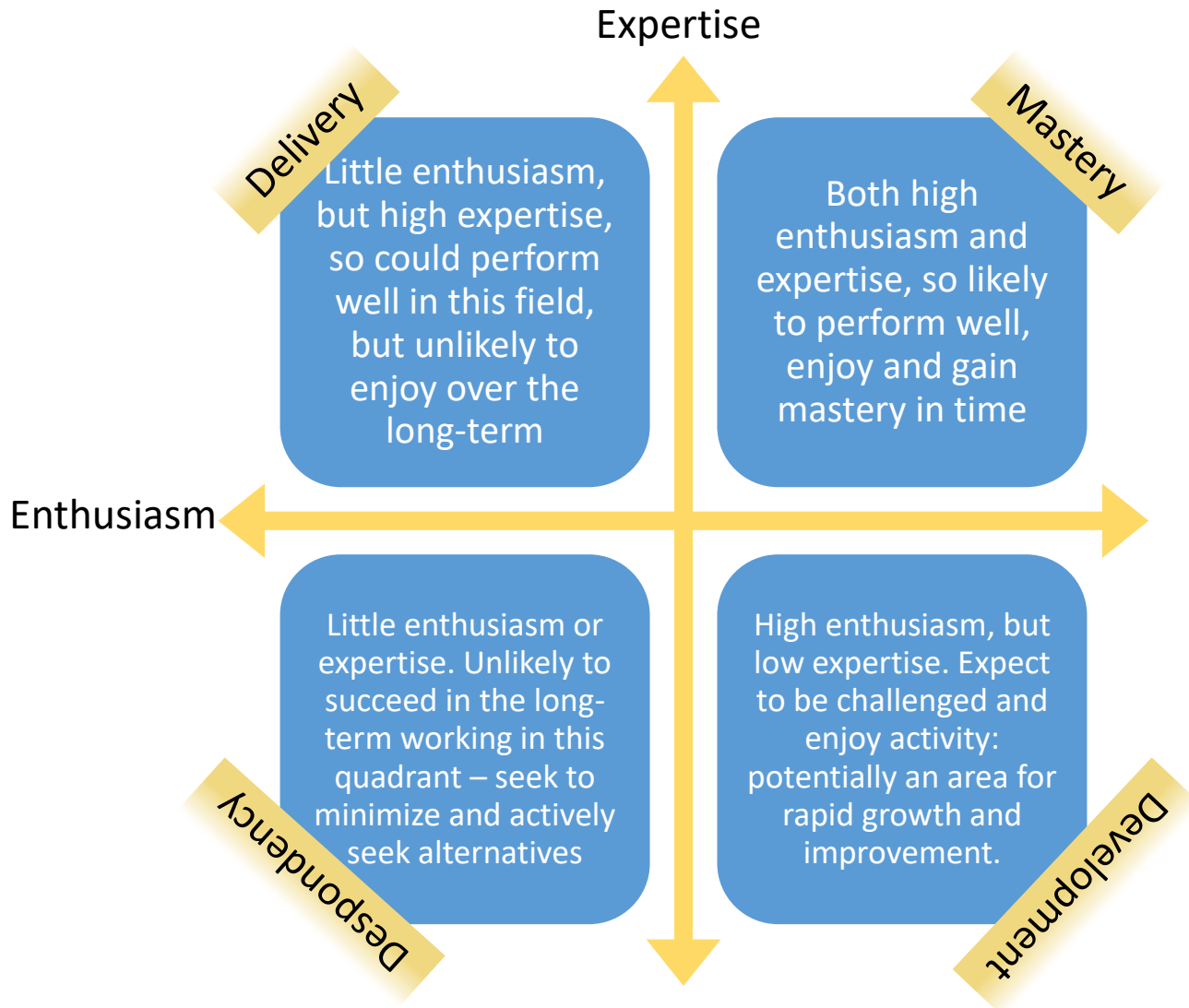
## **REFELCT FURTHER:**

- a) Which 2 or 3 aspects might be most influential for you – e.g, strength of friendships/relationships; achieving significant milestones; being recognised for excellence; a sense of belonging or being part of a group or team.

## **CHALLENGE:**

Can you think of other times/examples where the presence – or absence – of a core theme has been important in how you felt about something you have done or that has happened to you?

# First step on the ladder?



To what extent do you agree with the following?

- I believe that expertise develops from engaged practice. I will be more likely to be engaged where I have a genuine enthusiasm for the subject or task at hand.*
- Assuming I will not be an expert when I start working, I would prefer to enter a field where I will feel competent or secure but perhaps less enthusiastic rather than face a bigger challenge and steeper learning curve in a field I'd find intrinsically rewarding or rewarding?*

It is possible to succeed, learn and contribute in fields for which you have little enthusiasm – and even low expertise. However, this is rarely a recipe for long term success and happiness. One goal for Career Planning is to help each individual find their personal sweet-spot and a career that is a good match for their strengths, interests and motivated skills.

# For Students: My Degree - Pleasure or pain?

Choosing what to study for 3 or 4 years is quite a big decision. This page prompts you to think about:

- How you made that decision - what you gave importance to, in order to understand your processes and values.
- How well that choice is working for you now, to gain insight into how to make other decisions in future.

## Make some notes on the following

**Q** Why did you choose to study the degree you are taking? This may include a mix of the following and other things:

- Intrinsic interest or passion for the subject
- It seemed within reach – I was good at the right subjects at school, and the degree was a natural extension
- Part of a plan – possibly linked to further study, vocation or career direction
- Other people (e.g. parents; teachers) recommended it to you.

**Q** What areas of your current studies fascinate and absorb you?

**Q** What are you most proud of in your studies? And why?

**Q** Do other people share your pride? What other factors might contribute to your positive feelings?

**Q** Are there specific skills or knowledge you have developed that you would like to continue to use in future role(s)? What are they?

**Q** Is there a particular activity or way of working which you look forward to or do particularly well? Briefly describe an example, and note what it is that works for you?

**Q** If you want to use your degree subject knowledge in your work, which areas are most important/ interesting for you?

# For Students: My Degree - Pleasure or pain?

## What to do?

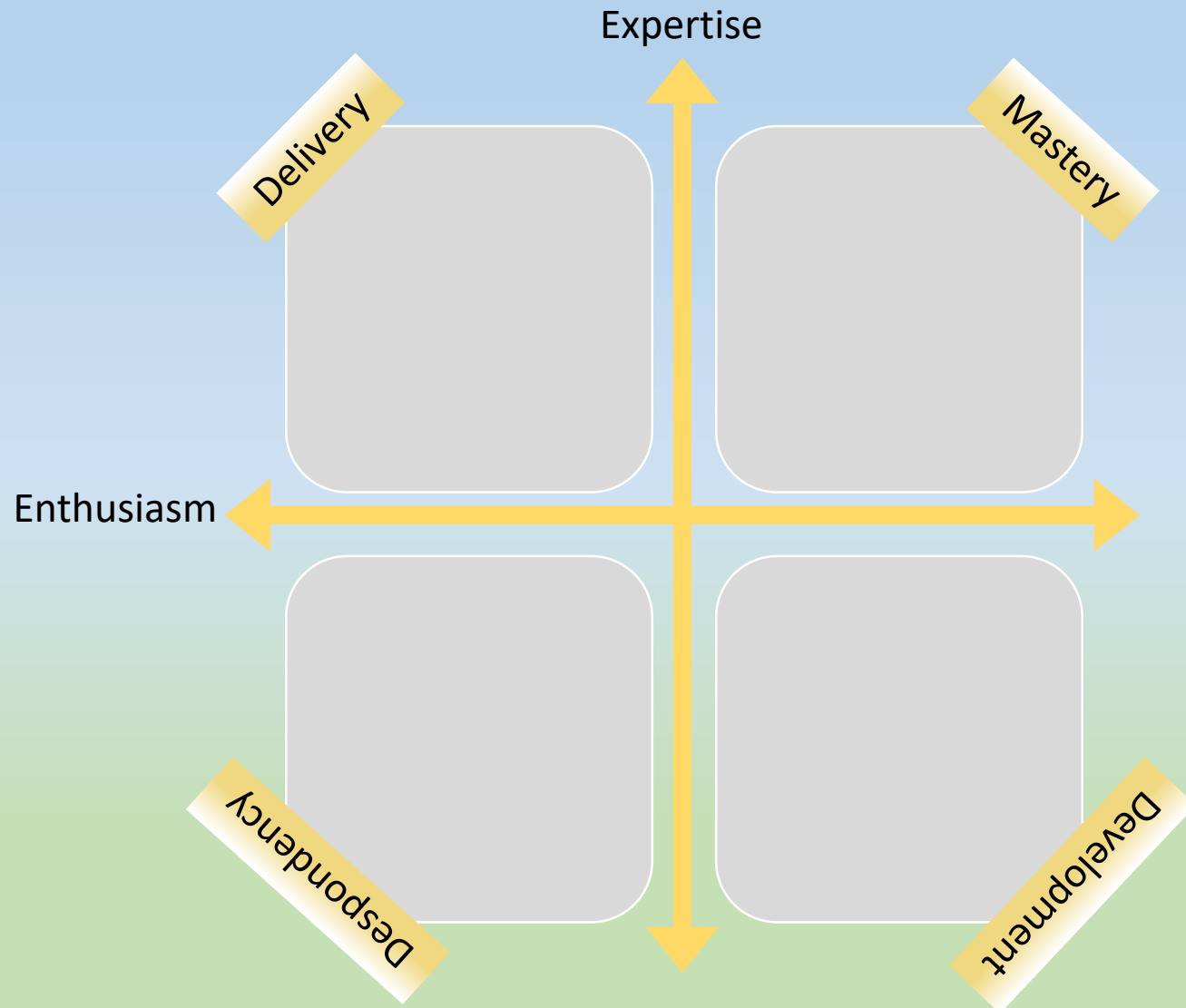
Rate different aspects of your study from -3 - 0 - +3 against both Expertise and Enthusiasm. For example, you might rate:

- Specific subject areas
- Experience of lectures (listening; note taking)
- Experience of Tutorials
  - Receiving information
  - Speaking and defending your arguments
- Background reading or Researching essays
- Writing the Essays
- Labs and practical work
- Formal examinations

Plot these onto the grid to the left.

## What to consider?

- Seek to understand how different activities feed or drain your energy and interest.
- Are the most positive elements aligned to your passions and interests – and your reasons for taking this course - or are there some surprises?
- For negative elements, what could you do to shift them into a more positive quadrant



# Work & Play:

## How you choose to spend your free time?

Think of activities you do either on your own or with others. Fill the table opposite for up to 3 activities:

- IDENTIFY and NAME the activity.
- Why do you choose to do this activity?
- What do you value most about each activity - what makes you feel fulfilled and satisfied?
- What takes away from your enjoyment?

## What can I learn from this?

- Do you see any of the same themes or motivations to those in your LifeLine or thoughts about your degree?
- Are there any important new ideas or elements being met through your hobbies or extracurricular involvement?

WHAT is the activity?	WHO else is involved?	WHY do you enjoy it, or choose to do it?

# Dream a little:

Here's your chance to reflect and find some clues about your unique pattern of interests and motivations.

*Make notes on this page or a separate sheet of paper.*

**Reflecting on the past can give us some indicators as to our preferences, so let's start by remembering what you wanted to do when you were 12.**

Think back to career ideas you might have had when you were younger. Can you remember what specifically attracted you to those careers? Are those ideas still interesting to you? How has your thinking changed since then?

**Now think back to when you applied to study at Oxford.**

What in particular attracted you to your college, assuming that you didn't make an open application? Does that tell you anything about what matters to you? Might these factors be relevant to your choice of career/employer?

**Let's move to the present day and your life as a student.**

Describe what a productive and enjoyable day at Oxford looks like in a few sentences, including time spent studying. What times of the day are you most productive? Where do you like to work? What other activities do you enjoy during the day? How do you sustain your energy or recharge your batteries? Does this give you any clues as to what you find fulfilling and what helps you stay motivated?

# Dream a little (continued):

**Imagine you have three lives and you have all the skills/aptitudes/resources to do anything you would like.**

What would you do? Try and describe (or draw) your ideas below, using more detail than just a job title (use an extra page if need be).

**Example:** Be a successful artist who lives in an eco-friendly small-holding and runs art classes for disadvantaged people whilst also being a motivational speaker.

1.

2.

3.

This exercise can help identify some of your core interests ,values ,and motivations. The above **example** indicates an interest in art, and career ideas could be expanded by researching other jobs/sectors that combine creativity with altruism or the environment.

Are there any common themes that link these three lives that you might want to consider in your career choice?

# Values & Motivations

Values are personal to you. They provide a framework for making judgements about what is important and you will use them to guide your decisions and set priorities.

Psychologically, values are established during childhood and often change little during your lifetime. They also tend to be an innate part of who you are - hidden from view and guiding your decisions without you consciously applying them, which can make them difficult to identify.

Values can be defined as those you use as 'guiding principles' and others that establish your 'preferences'.

**Values as Guiding Principles** Personal values and beliefs about how people 'ought' to behave provide a set of guiding principles that you use to navigate the world. These tend to affect your motivation, and you will be more comfortable and happier if you behave in a way that is in line with your values.

**Values as Preferences relate to Environment and Culture** Your values are also reflected in your preferences about your working environment and the culture or style of an organisation. How these elements affect your attitudes and job satisfaction can provide clues about what is most important for you.

# Values & Motivations

Although the emphasis you place on your values may shift during your working life, and motivations flex in response to changing circumstances, your core values are unlikely to change much as you grow older.

## It's not always about the money!

For example, a new graduate may be keen to maximise their initial earnings and weight starting salary quite strongly in their career decisions, but later on will value a longer holiday entitlement, flexible working patterns or being regarded as truly expert in their field over and above higher 'pay'. In fact, for many people pay becomes a '*hygiene factor*' whereby once pay is high enough, earning more money does not motivate further and nor does it compensate for having to work longer hours or for travelling more.

## What changes as you become older and (perhaps) wiser?

As you gain experience you will come to know yourself better and we believe it is likely you want to revisit these questions about core values and motivations as you grow. It is even quite likely that you will want to re-assess your career choices as you develop new insights into yourself, or as circumstances change around you.

Ultimately few people perform well in a job if their own values and motivations are not aligned with those of the role or the organisation, and it is not uncommon for people to re-evaluate – particularly in the early years. As you grow, remember that your first career step is just that ... a starting point, and it is not forever.

# Values & Motivations

How important for you are the following factors in a job?

**Going on your experience of life so far, choose your top 8 and write them in the table on the following page. If you choose some which are similar, group them as one and pick another.**

- Altruism/Helping others/Social Good
- Autonomy
- Being an expert
- Being the best
- Belonging
- (Intellectual) challenge
- Cheerfulness
- Contribution
- Cooperation
- Creativity
- Democracy
- Diversity
- Effectiveness
- Enthusiasm
- Excellence
- Fairness
- Financial reward (&/or generous leave!)
- Flexibility
- Fun
- Having an impact
- Independence
- Personal recognition
- Positioning (for next career move)
- Professionalism
- Progression (scope for rapid promotion)
- Responsibility (for people or things)
- Security
- Stability
- Status
- Teamwork
- Tradition
- Training & Development
- Unity
- Variety
- Vision
- Working Environment

# Your Top 8 Values & Motivations

1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

## What to do?

List your chosen top 8 values. Try to order these with the most important at the top.

For your Top 3, describe an event, a difficult decision or something you are proud of where your Values and Motivations were important in enabling you to be successful.

## What to consider?

Are there any strong drivers that you must be part of your career?

Are any of your current Top 8 likely to change in future, and if so, how? E.g. training & development can be important early in a career, but other issues can overtake them once you have a track-record.

# Work Environment

Finding a working environment and culture that fits your personal style can be hugely important for success.

Every organisation has its own working culture:

- the way people work together
- how work is organised
- how people are supported, managed, recognised and rewarded.

If you like the people you work with, enjoy the work and feel that you ‘fit in’ well, you are more likely to thrive and do well rather than simple ‘survive’ work.

*Circle criteria opposite and write in others that are important to you. Use these terms to write 3 or 4 sentences to describe “In my ideal work environment ...”*

<b>Work Surroundings</b> formal relaxed outdoor indoor other _____	<b>Type of Organisation</b> small large established new other _____
<b>Atmosphere</b> fast-paced calm friendly hard-working other _____	<b>Work Hours</b> long short flexible set specify _____
<b>Location</b> cities/countries near family/friends commute time/ willing to travel additional lifestyle factors other _____	<b>Salary</b> required salary desired salary benefits incentives and bonuses moving expenses other _____
<b>Interaction with others</b> work alone work with customers work in teams socialise with co-workers other _____	<b>Supervision</b> close style of management independent style team-orientated regular feedback other _____
<b>Types of Opportunities</b> promotion/progression training mentoring other _____	<b>Additional factors</b> travel reputation of organisation purpose and mission of organisation other _____

# Preferred Work Style

Your personality and work environment preferences combine to reflect:

- how you organise and approach work
- the way you like to process information
- How you make decisions
- How you interact with other people.

Most people find work most satisfying when it fits their own personal style.

*Mark **both** sides of the pivots opposite to reflect how strongly you like each element in your work.*

*Resist balancing the see-saw: make a choice – it may yield a useful insight*

On a team	3	2	1		1	2	3	Independently One-to-One
				▲				
Meeting new people	3	2	1		1	2	3	Working with the same people
				▲				
Ideas and data	3	2	1		1	2	3	Mostly with people
				▲				
Practical problems	3	2	1		1	2	3	Theoretical problems
				▲				
Logical objective approach	3	2	1		1	2	3	Provide understanding;
				▲				
Structured environment	3	2	1		1	2	3	Change, flexible environment
				▲				
Project oriented work	3	2	1		1	2	3	More relaxed, Open ended results
				▲				
Play it safe	3	2	1		1	2	3	Take risks (physical or intellectual)
				▲				

# Preferred Work Style

1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

## What to do?

- *Identify the one that feels most important to you, and which of these dimensions is not important to you.*
- *Identify 3 more 'important' dimensions.*
- *For each of your top 4 dimensions:*
- *Write a sentence or two to define 'What does good look like?'*
- *Is there a minimum requirement that must be satisfied?*

## What to consider?

- *When networking: think of two questions you could ask someone in a role that you aspire to in order to better understand how each is reflected in:*
  - *the work they do and*
  - *the culture of the organisation they work for.*

# Motivation and Rewards

*Think about some of your specific successes: things that you are proud of, or which made you happy, or that other people have praised.*

*Ring 6 to 8 of the items listed above (or define your own) that feel important to you as a recognition, reward or that gave you a sense of motivation.*

*In no particular order, label these A, B, C, D ... H, and turn to the grid below.*

- Altruism/Helping others (individually)
- Challenge/Intellectual challenge
- Fun
- Personal recognition
- Producing a tangible 'product'
- Benefiting society
- Responsibility – for people
- Responsibility – for outputs/delivery
- Security
- Variety
- Autonomy
- Financial reward
- Learning and personal growth
- Positioning (for next career move)
- Progression – scope for rapid promotion
- Making a profit
- Responsibility – for things (processes; technology)
- Status/Prestige
- Work/life balance

.....

.....

# Motivation and Rewards

*For each pairing, decide which of the two motivations / rewards selected is more important to you. You must choose only one for each pairing?*

- **Score 1 in the row** for the winning letter/item.
- **Score 0 in the column** for the losing letter/item.

*Fill the grid with 1 and 0 and add the totals at the end of each row. With the highest scores at the top, create a ranked motivation and rewards profile. For ones that score equally, the winner of that pairing ranks higher!*

- *Consider your top 3 or 4 – does this feel right? Include 5<sup>th</sup> place if you are not sure.*
- *Try discussing this list with someone who knows you well – what do they think?*

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total
A									
B									
C									
D									
E									
F									
G									
H									

# Employability Skills

Most employers look for a mix of 8 core skills, summarised below. These are not restricted to particular degree subjects and can be developed and demonstrated in a wide range of roles and settings: in your studies, extracurricular activity and voluntary roles as much as work experience and internships.

Oxford's OCTANE model will help you to evaluate the skills you have, the quality of supporting evidence you can provide, and help you generate ideas and options to develop them further.

Some roles will also require specific 'hard' skills, such as languages; technical knowledge; coding or laboratory techniques; statistics. They are generally 'teachable' and easier to quantify/measure.



## OCTANE

# Employability Skills

*Our OCTANE model identifies eight core skills and examples of where and how they are commonly used, developed and displayed.*

## **Communication: Written and Verbal**

- Writing in a variety of styles, adapting format and content to the audience
- Explaining your message in a clear and logical way
- Listening to and understanding others (verbally and non-verbally)
- Developing a good rapport with people
- Speaking in an engaging way
- Evaluating, questioning and explaining
- Not interrupting; being sensitive to others' values

## **Planning and Organising**

- Prioritising tasks and using time effectively.
- Organising people and resources.
- Meeting objectives and working to deadlines.

## **Leadership**

- Directing and motivating others.
- Setting objectives and delegating tasks to others.
- Taking responsibility and monitoring progress.
- Being flexible.

## **Creativity**

- Using creative skills to identify possible solutions, entertain or promote ideas.
- Starting or helping others to start something new.
- Using different approaches to address familiar situations.

## **Commercial / Business Awareness**

- Being knowledgeable about the wider environment in which an organisation works.
- Identifying ways to improve efficiency resulting in time/cost savings.
- Understanding the main principles for business success.

## **Initiative / Problem Solving**

- Gathering information systematically.
- Analysing facts/data/situations.
- Identifying the nature of a problem.
- Proposing appropriate solutions through creative thinking.

## **Teamwork**

- Contributing to discussions.
- Listening, negotiating, persuading, co-operating.
- Respecting others.
- Sharing responsibility.

## **Self-Management**

- Managing your time effectively.
- Motivating yourself, particularly against set-backs.
- Self-awareness, developing skills and seeking support when needed.
- Initiative and resilience.

*On the following pages, identify your own best examples of using each skill. You can then:*

- (1) Evaluate the quality of evidence you can currently offer;*
- (2) Rate your current ability and how much you enjoy using each skill*
- (3) Identify which skills you want to develop further and consider ideas for how to do this.*

# Skills Inventory: Quality of Evidence

SKILL	Note your best examples of using each skill – find up to three examples per skill. Rate each example on the <i>quality of evidence</i> it provides for your level of skill and the impact of your contribution. <b>Score: 0 = no evidence, 1 = some evidence 2 = good evidence; 3 = strong evidence</b>	Add up your ratings <b>**Total (0-9)</b>	How can you improve the quality of evidence you provide? <b>Better stories &amp;/or More or Different experiences required?</b>
Communication	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3		
Planning & Organising	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3		
Leadership	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3		
Creativity	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3		
Business Awareness	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3		
Teamwork	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3		
Initiative & Problem Solving	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3		
Self-Management	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3		

# Skills Inventory: Development Gap

SKILL	Using best examples (recorded on the previous sheet), make an overall judgement on both how much you ENJOY using that skill and HOW GOOD You feel your skill level is. It is likely that you will want to practice and develop those skills more where your ENJOYMENT is the higher score.	How much do you ENJOY using this skill ? Rate (A) 1 - 9	How GOOD are you at using this skill? Rate (B) 1 - 9	Calculate Development gap $A - B = ?$
Communication	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3			
Planning & Organising	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3			
Leadership	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3			
Creativity	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3			
Business Awareness	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3			
Teamwork	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3			
Initiative & Problem Solving	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3			
Self-Management	Example 1 Example 2 Example 3			