

The Humanities in Our Lives

THE VALUE OF SOFT SKILLS

Employers consistently report that they are in search of soft skills, especially the ability to communicate information in person and in writing. Communication is ranked as the top in-demand skill, and writing is ranked as a top-three in-demand skill in a range of industries.

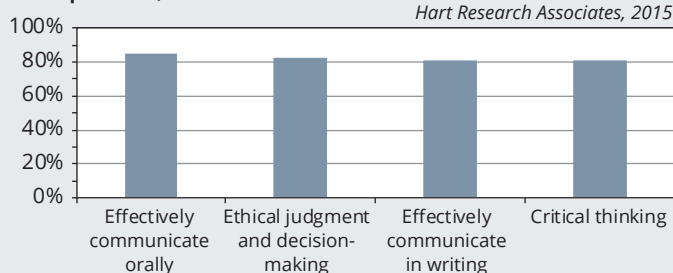
SOFT SKILLS AND HUMANITIES

Humanities majors develop important skills, often called “soft skills,” which include persuasive written and oral communication, creative problem-solving, teamwork, decision-making, self-management, and critical analysis. A growing number of companies—including software and technology firms—have reported a need for these skills, which are increasingly being described as “power skills” or “social skills.”

KEY FACTS

- A 2016 survey found that 93% of employers believed that soft skills were “essential” or “very important” when making hiring decisions.
- A 2018 LinkedIn survey of talent developers at companies found that the top priority for their learning and development programs was “how to train for soft skills.”

Share of Employers Rating Specific Abilities as Important, 2014



INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

An MIT study “found that a 12-month soft skills training program that focused on communication, problem solving and decision-making, time and stress management, financial literacy, legal literacy and social entitlements, and execution excellence delivered substantial returns.”

Universities are increasingly offering academic programs to bridge the gap between the humanities and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) majors. The University of Arizona offers a B.A. in applied humanities that provides a “transdisciplinary education” aimed at students interested in the fields of business, public health, and design/engineering. It provides students in these fields a combination of professional skills as well as “the cognitive, creative, international, interpersonal, and intercultural skills taught in the humanities.”

In another model program, Carnegie Mellon University offers a minor in humanities analytics that provides humanities majors with technical training and STEM majors with humanities training. Carnegie Mellon believes this minor provides STEM majors with “an opportunity to dig into texts and themes they might not have exposure to otherwise while simultaneously expanding their technical training.”

The Humanities in Our Lives series (#HumInOurLives) highlights the many and diverse forms of humanities activities in the nation, and key facts about the health of the field.

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

For more on the broad trends that mark American engagement with various forms of the humanities, visit humanitiesindicators.org or email humanitiesindicators@amacad.org.

 HUMANITIES INDICATORS
a project of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences