

Occupational Competencies

At Pearson we have identified four areas that make up employability, based on formal and informal research with employers, educators, and learners. Individuals need to develop skills in each area, but the stage they are at in their life – whether that's starting, developing, or changing career – will impact which areas to focus on most. *Occupational Competencies* is one of those areas.



What the skills are

- Occupational competencies are discipline-specific skills needed for specific jobs or job fields. For example, nursing skills if you want to be a nurse, or coding if you want to be a programmer.
- In many countries in which English is not the official language, proficiency in business English is crucial so that individuals can effectively do things like attend meetings, deal with customers, write internal reports, and present company products.¹

Why they matter

- 1 In a recent Pearson survey, employers told us that the number 1 reason why hiring is challenging is a lack of candidates with needed hard skills.²
- 2 Offering courses related to occupational skills can engage and motivate students in secondary schools, as they see the relevance of their coursework.
- 3 English is the lingua franca of business. More second language speakers of English communicate in English than native speakers.³ Good levels are required for a country to be able to compete in the global economy.

How to teach

- Each domain will have their own best practices, but there are some common threads when teaching new skills:
 1. Provide ample opportunity to practice with feedback.
 2. Be explicit and draw connections between topics covered and their application in specific occupations.
 3. Teach students how to be good learners so they can continue to update their skills after leaving formal education.
- Digital technology increasingly allows students to engage in authentic experiences and learn in environments closer to the real world. Simulations allow students to program computer networks, run their own businesses, and work with virtual patients. Students can ask "what if" in low risk environments and practice where mistakes don't have dire consequences.

Progression

Occupational competencies start very general and become more and more specialized as the learner advances. For example:

- 1 Primary students can engage with visual programming languages like Scratch.
- 2 Secondary school students will move to languages like JavaScript or Python where they learn the basics of text programming. They might build websites or engage in competitions using these tools.
- 3 As students move to post-secondary courses, they may specialize based on careers, but also learn how to learn new languages.

While this progression can play out across ages, it can also be undertaken by adults who are starting to learn to code.

Would you like to talk to us about employability? Email efficacy@pearson.com

^{1,3} British Council, (2018), *The Future Demand for English in Europe: 2025 and beyond*

² Pearson Global Employer Research, 2019