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## Soft skills development in Hospitality, Tourism and Event Management education


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# Soft skills development in hospitality, tourism and event management education

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 DUBLIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
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## Sectoral Context

Changes in the sector leading to changing skills need 'The main skills gaps and shortages reported by employers relate to soft skills language skills, interpersonal skills and ICT skills rather than tourism-specific skills' (European Commission, 2016)




## Changing Educational Context

- ▶ Transformative learning
- ▶ "Modifying perspectives, attitudes and behaviours so that graduates are more open, inclusive and capable of confronting industry dilemmas" (Stone and Duffy 2015)



## Changing Education Context



Integration of soft competencies into a curriculum helps graduates obtain and maintain career positions (Mitchell et al. 2010)

## What are hard and soft skills?

### ▶ Hard skills

- ▶ Technical and/or cognitive knowledge



### ▶ Soft skills

- ▶ Interpersonal/people/behavioural skills (Weber et al. 2013)
- ▶ Personal behavioural attributes, values, or traits, including ethics, communication, leadership, interpersonal, and teamwork skills (Sisson et al. 2013)
- ▶ Ethical, flexible, tolerant, amiable, and responsible (Kim et al. 2010)



Soft skills are often described as interpersonal skills like communication and teamwork. Hard skills can be described as disciplinary knowledge and technical skills

## Which soft skills are more important?

- ▶ Debate in the literature
- ▶ Differences between different cohorts
  - ▶ Relative importance of different skills (eg Jiang & Alexakis 2017)
  - ▶ How well equipped graduates are for employment

The Association of American colleges and Universities found that students thought they were far better equipped for jobs than employers did

## DIT Graduate Attributes

- ▶ Global Citizen
- ▶ Ethical
- ▶ Motivated Self-Starter
- ▶ Excellent Communicator
- ▶ Innovator
- ▶ Leader
- ▶ Collaborative worker
- ▶ Entrepreneur
- ▶ Critical Thinker
- ▶ Problem Solver
- ▶ Decision Maker
- ▶ Strategic Thinker
- ▶ Active Team Player
- ▶ Emotionally Intelligent
- ▶ Resilient
- ▶ Disciplinary Knowledge
- ▶ Reflective Practitioner
- ▶ Work based / Work related learner
- ▶ Digitally Literate
- ▶ Creator of New Knowledge



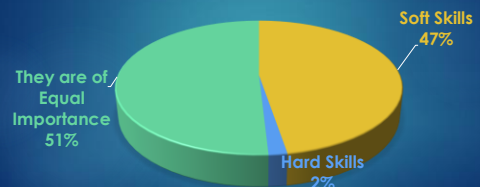
## Methodology

- ▶ Survey instrument embedded in 3 short questionnaires
- ▶ Distributed to students, employers



Employers	Students
Sample size = 173	Sample size = 195
Response rate = 47%	Response rate = 64%
(n = 82)	(n = 124)

## Employers views on whether hard or soft skills are more important



### Graduate attribute mean ranking – top & bottom

Employers	
RANK	
1	Excellent Communicator
2	Motivated Self-starter
3	Active Team Player
18	Leader
19	Creator of New Knowledge
20	Disciplinary knowledge

### Graduate attribute mean ranking – top & bottom

Employers		Students	
RANK		RANK	
1	Excellent Communicator	1	Excellent Communicator
2	Motivated Self-starter	2	Motivated Self-starter
3	Active Team Player	3	Leader
18	Leader	18	Resilient
19	Creator of New Knowledge	19	Digitally literate
20	Disciplinary knowledge	20	Reflective Practitioner

### Key skills according to employers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Excellent Communicator                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 1</li> <li>▶ Student # 1</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Motivated Self Starter                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 2</li> <li>▶ Student # 2</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Team work (Active Team Player* and Collaborative Worker**)                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 3, # 4</li> <li>▶ Student # 5, # 10</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Work Based Learner***                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 5</li> <li>▶ Student # 15</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Problem solver                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 6</li> <li>▶ Student # 4</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>*engages effectively with others in a respectful and constructive manner</p> <p>**willing to take collective responsibility when engaging with others</p> <p>*** autonomous learner that takes responsibility for their own professional career development</p>
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### Key skills according to employers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Emotionally Intelligent                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 7</li> <li>▶ Student # 12</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Critical Thinker                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 8</li> <li>▶ Student # 7</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Strategic Thinker                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 9</li> <li>▶ Student # 8</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Digitally Literate                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 10</li> <li>▶ Student # 19</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Global Citizen*                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 11</li> <li>▶ Student # 13</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Reflective Practitioner**                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 12</li> <li>▶ Student # 20</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Resilient                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 13</li> <li>▶ Student # 18</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>*internationalisation/multiculturalism skills and knowledge</p> <p>**engages in conscious and critical examination of actions in order to improve professional practice</p>
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### Key skills according to employers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Innovator                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 15</li> <li>▶ Student # 9</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Ethical                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 16</li> <li>▶ Student # 11</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Entrepreneur                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 17</li> <li>▶ Student # 14</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Leader                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 18</li> <li>▶ Student # 3</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Creator of new knowledge                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 19</li> <li>▶ Student # 16</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Disciplinary knowledge                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Employer # 20</li> <li>▶ Student # 17</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### Conclusions and Next steps

- ▶ Within the school - A shift in thinking
  - Reflection on assumptions
  - Greater focus on skills
  - Programme team approach
  - Graduate attributes across and within programmes
  - Assessment and Feedback
- ▶ Big Picture
  - Next tourism generation project
  - National and European focus
  - Re evaluation as a school
- ▶ Future proofing