

• THE FOUR CAREER COMPETENCIES EMPLOYERS VALUE MOST

By NACE Staff

COMPETENCIES

What career readiness competencies do employers value most in their new college hires? Employers responding to NACE's *Job Outlook* surveys have consistently indicated that critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, and oral/written communications are all essential competencies.

The top four competencies have remained consistent the past three years. When rating the [eight NACE Career Readiness Competencies](#) by essential need in the *Job Outlook 2019* survey, critical thinking/problem solving once again tops the list. (See Figure 1.)

Teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, and oral/written communications fall second through fourth, as they did last year. All of the four top-rated competencies are rated above “essential.”

However, the competencies that are rated between “somewhat essential” and “essential” have changed order. This year, digital technology is the fifth most essential competency, according to respondents, and leadership is sixth. This is interesting since the *Job Outlook 2019* survey found that [leadership skills were also lower](#) on this year's list of attributes that employers look for on a student's resume.

The final two competencies—career management and global/multi-cultural fluency—remain in the same order, but their average ratings fell.

In terms of proficiency, employers gave students slightly higher marks on all eight competencies this year, but all ratings still fall in the range between “somewhat proficient” and “very proficient.” Employers feel that recent graduates are most proficient in teamwork/collaboration, digital technology, and critical thinking/problem solving. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 1: Employers rate the essential need of the career readiness competencies

COMPETENCIES	WEIGHTED AVERAGE RATING*		
	2019	2018	2017
Critical thinking/problem solving	4.66	4.62	4.58
Teamwork/collaboration	4.48	4.56	4.43
Professionalism/work ethic	4.41	4.46	4.56
Oral/written communications	4.30	4.30	4.43
Digital technology	3.84	3.73	3.78**
Leadership	3.65	3.82	3.86
Career management	3.38	3.46	3.47
Global/multi-cultural fluency	2.78	3.01	2.85

Source: *Job Outlook 2019*, National Association of Colleges and Employers. *5-point scale, where 1=Not essential, 2=Not very essential, 3=Somewhat essential, 4=essential, 5=Absolutely essential. **This competency was called “information technology application” in the *Job Outlook 2017* report.

Figure 2: Employers rate recent graduates on the eight career readiness competencies

COMPETENCIES	WEIGHTED AVERAGE RATING*		
	2019	2018	2017
Teamwork/collaboration	3.83	3.82	3.96
Digital technology	3.76	3.71	3.92**
Critical thinking/problem solving	3.64	3.58	3.59
Oral/written communications	3.49	3.39	3.41
Professionalism/work ethic	3.47	3.35	3.43
Leadership	3.31	3.28	3.38
Global/multi-cultural fluency	3.13	2.94	2.93
Career management	3.05	3.01	3.09

- Source: *Job Outlook 2019*, National Association of Colleges and Employers. *5-point scale, where 1=Not at all proficient, 2=Not very proficient, 3=Somewhat proficient, 4=Very proficient, 5=Extremely proficient. **This competency was called “information technology application” in the *Job Outlook 2017* report.

DATA BITES

85.1%

Percent of employers who rate students as very/extremely proficient in teamwork competency
Job Outlook 2020

79.0%

Percent of seniors who rate themselves as very/extremely proficient in critical thinking
2019 Student Survey (Four-Year Schools)

98%

Percent of employers that deem teamwork as very to extremely essential in new hires
Job Outlook 2020

84.8%

Percent of seniors who rate themselves as very/extremely proficient in teamwork
2019 Student Survey (Four-Year Schools)

88.3%

**Percent of seniors who rate themselves as very/extremely proficient in
professionalism/work**
2019 Student Survey (Four-Year Schools)