



Institute
and Faculty
of Actuaries

Continuing Professional Development Scheme

RPD Toolkit: Soft Skills

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Your Objectives

Part of the reflective process is identifying gaps in your knowledge or skillset, setting learning objectives and considering how those objectives can be met through activities and other learning opportunities. This toolkit is intended to be used during a Reflective Practice Discussion between a member of the IFoA and their 'appropriate person' and should assist you to identify specific soft skills that you need to develop. This toolkit may also be beneficial when preparing for an RPD or as a learning tool when planning your CPD activities.

This toolkit poses several questions and areas to consider. There are suggested topics to explore and sources of learning or development opportunities to consider.

Soft Skills

Soft skills are non-technical skills that relate to how you work. They are personal attributes and interpersonal skills that characterise relationships with other people and can allow us to engage, interact and build successful relationships in the workplace. Soft skills can often feel intangible and although soft skills aren't always taught through traditional methods they can be learned and improved over time. Soft skills include communication skills¹, leadership, presentation skills, growth mindset², among others.

Questions for your Reflective Practice Discussion

- Which soft skills are most valuable in your specific area of work/ to your team?
- Have you considered what your personal communication strengths and weaknesses are?
- Do you know what your communication style is?

- Have you received feedback from peers, junior/ senior team members, stakeholders, or clients on your written or verbal communication?
- Would you like to develop a specific communication skill?
- Is presenting an area you are comfortable with?
- Have you experienced challenges while presenting virtually or in person?
- How do you make your presentations engaging?
- Do you watch recordings of your presentations to reflect on the positives or identify areas to improve?
- Do you shadow more experienced colleagues?
- Have you struggled to find ways to build your network out with your organisation?
- Have you got existing strategies in place for delivering difficult news or information, or having difficult conversations in the workplace?
- Do you have access to coaching sessions or a mentor program? Do you think this could enhance your leadership skills?
- Do you view challenges/ mistakes/ failures as an opportunity to improve or develop?
- Have you considered how a 'growth mindset' may impact your day-to-day development?

Areas to think about

- Communication – verbal, written, active listening skills, influencing skills etc.
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Time management + Delegation
- Adaptability + Resilience
- Presenting/ pitching
- Growth mindset – creative and critical thinking

¹Communication is a broad term used to describe a two-way process of exchanging information. It includes verbal (spoken or written) and non-verbal (body language and facial expression).

There are many theories and schools of thought around communication styles, however, most agree that there are four main types: Passive Communication, Aggressive Communication, Passive-Aggressive Communication and Assertive Communication. You can read about these communication styles [here](#)

² A growth mindset is a belief that basic abilities are not fixed, and that skills and intelligence can be developed over time, effort, and persistence. People who adopt a growth mindset embrace challenges, learn from feedback, persist when they are faced with an obstacle and seek out inspiration in others' success.

IFoA learning and development resources.

- On the [IFoA website](#) you will find [general management and business skills](#) resources which include sessions addressing soft skills.
- We encourage you to explore the resources listed under [leadership and professionalism](#) where you will find sessions dedicated to Behavioral Science including Growth Mindset.
- By logging in to the [VLE](#) you can find webinars such as the '[Effective Communication and Influencing skills for actuaries in senior roles](#)' and the '[Growth Mindset for Actuaries](#)' self-paced course.
- The [IFoA Library](#) is a great digital resource for soft and technical skills.
- The [IFoA Mentoring Programme](#), aimed at promoting a culture of knowledge sharing, can be a useful resource to broaden your knowledge and skillset. The member driven platform provides an opportunity to be pro-active in developing and strengthening skills for the future.
- The IFoA host a number of events every year on the topics in this area, so keep an eye on the [Events Page](#).

External learning and development resources.

- Profiling tools have been around for years, but they can help you gain a valuable insight into who you are and why you do the things the way you do. Whether you work as part of a team or on your own, here are a couple of tools you may wish to use:

[The Belbin profiling tool](#)

[16 Personalities](#)

These may also help you understand why others may do things differently and how to adapt the way you work to get the best out of them and strengthen work relationships.

- The Open University offer a free course, [Effective Communication in the-Workplace](#) that explores the importance of communication skills in the workplace that you may wish to engage in. The course aims to increase your understanding of communication skills and to help you to consider how your communication style could be perceived by others. You'll cover areas such as verbal and non-verbal communication, written communication and using your communication skills in challenging situations.
- The following Skills Frameworks may be useful when thinking about identifying your current level of skills and knowledge and labelling your soft skills and behaviours:

[Financial Services Skills Commission Future Skills Framework](#)

[SFIA global skills and competency framework](#)

- It may also be worthwhile asking your employer to see if there are any relevant resources available to you

Disclaimer

The IFoA has no affiliation with any of the external resources listed above. They are mentioned as a reference point for further information you may find helpful. The IFoA cannot accept any responsibility or liability arising from a decision by you to use any of these external resources.



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