

21st Century Skills Integration

Purpose of 21st Century Skills Instruction

21st Century Skills, sometimes referred to as soft skills, or employability skills, are a set of crosscutting skills that have been deemed critical to success across industries. The goal of 21st Century Skills instruction is to provide students with the skills they need to navigate their careers and participate in today's society. Research shows that 21st Century Skills are best developed through both systematic instruction and practice, and that contextualized and applied strategies support understanding and transfer of learning to new settings. Educators across all disciplines can take responsibility for preparing students for their future by integrating these skills into instructional programs and incorporating work-based learning opportunities for students to practice the skills in real-world settings.

21st Century Skills Identified by the Region

Below is a preliminary list of the 21st Century Skills identified by the community colleges in the San Diego and Imperial Counties region. This list was informed by the San Diego Imperial Counties community college institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), San Diego Workforce Partnership, National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), New World of Work (NWoW), the 2018 Future of Jobs Report by the World Economic Forum, and skills identified by other organizations. They are consistent with the cross-sector employer needs identified by the San Diego Strong Workforce Partnership and Imperial County Workforce Development Board as essential for securing and retaining employment.

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creativity
- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
- Adaptability
- ICT Literacy
- Self-Management and Professionalism

General Principles for 21st Century Skills Instructional Approaches

The steps below help ensure students learn, demonstrate competence, and receive recognition for learning the skills:

1. Integration of skills into curriculum
2. Assessment of skills
3. Authorization (educator certification of student completion)

Dimensions of 21st Century Skills Instructional Approaches

The following dimensions should be considered when exploring or choosing an instructional approach:

- Content: all skills vs. some
- Delivery mechanism: course type
- Instructor: faculty
- Credit vs. non-credit
- Timing: semester, program length, or self-paced
- Assessment and authorization strategies

Faculty-Developed Modularized Content Deliver in an Online Credit- or Noncredit-bearing Course, with Certification

Description

Online modules allowing students to move at their own pace. One module would be created for each of the 21st Century Skills within the context of the discipline and students would have an opportunity to apply skills in real-world projects or workplace settings. Module content, assessments, and certification would be created by faculty. Each module would have:

- Readings and multimedia component to introduce the skill
- Activity structured to provide an opportunity to practice the skill
- Reflective statement about how the skill was used in context
- Assessment of learning by faculty or employer
- Certification of skill by faculty, career center staff, or employers

Considerations

- Requires content development and decision about delivery (e.g., open entry/exit or sequencing)
- Requires some means to track completion of modules
- Requires certification by faculty, career center staff, or employers
- Development of assessment/authorization system including any badging and/or certification of skills

Development

A regional group of college representatives will work together to finalize the preliminary list of skills and determine additional details for instructional approaches (e.g., regional or local development of course content and assessments, and an authorization processes that can signify skill proficiency to future employers).