Liberal arts skills are defined here as transferable, functional abilities required in many different problem-solving and task-oriented situations. They are performance abilities that can be acquired through informal life experiences or formal education and training. Liberal arts skills are interdisciplinary abilities involving many areas of human development, such as cognitive, affective, social, psychological and moral development.

Here are nine clusters of related skills that are generally recognized as essential in a variety of careers and other activities:

Information management skills include the ability to...
- sort data and objects
- compile and rank information
- apply information creatively to specific problems or tasks
- synthesize facts, concepts, and principles
- understand and use organizing principles
- evaluate information against appropriate standards

Design and planning skills include the ability to...
- identify alternative courses of action
- set realistic goals
- follow through with a plan or decision
- manage time effectively
- predict future trends and patterns
- accommodate multiple demands for commitment of time, energy, and resources
- assess needs
- make and keep a schedule
- set priorities

Research and investigation skills include the ability to...
- use a variety of sources of information
- apply a variety of methods to test the validity of data
- identify problems and needs
- design an experiment, plan, or model that systematically defines a problem
- formulate questions relevant to clarifying a particular problem, topic, or issue
- identify information sources appropriate to special needs or problems

Communication skills include the ability to...
- listen with objectivity and paraphrase the content of a message
- use various forms and styles of written communication
- speak effectively to individuals and groups
- use media formats to present ideas
- express one’s needs, wants, opinions, and preferences without violating the rights of others
- identify and communicate value judgments effectively
describe objects or events with a minimum amount of factual errors
convey a positive self-image to others

**Human relations and interpersonal skills include the ability to...**
keep a group "on track" and moving toward the achievement of common goals
maintain group cooperation and support
delegate tasks and responsibilities
interact effectively with peers, superiors, and subordinates
express one's feelings appropriately
understand the feelings of others
use argumentation techniques to persuade others
make commitments to people
be willing to take risks
teach a skill, concept, or principle to others
analyze behavior of self and others in group situations
demonstrate effective social behavior in a variety of settings and under different circumstances
work under time and environmental pressures

**Critical thinking skills include the ability to...**
identify quickly and accurately the critical issues when making a decision or solving a problem
identify a general principle that explains related experiences or factual data
define the parameters of a problem
identify reasonable criteria for assessing the value or appropriateness of an action or behavior
adapt one's concepts and behavior to changing conventions and norms
apply appropriate criteria to strategies and action plans
take given premises and reason their conclusion
create innovative solutions to complex problems
analyze the interrelationships of events and ideas from several perspectives

**Management and administration skills include the ability to...**
analyze tasks
identify people who can contribute to the solution of a problem or task
identify resource materials useful in the solution of a problem
delegate responsibility for task completion
motivate and lead people
organize people and tasks to achieve specific goals

**Valuing skills include the ability to...**
assess a course of action in terms of its long-range effects on the general human welfare
make decisions that will maximize both individuals and collective good
appreciate the contributions of art, literature, science, and technology to contemporary society
identify one's own values
assess one's values in relation to important life decisions

**Personal/career development and learning skills include the ability to...**
analyze and learn from experience: both one's own and the experience of others
relate the skills developed in one environment (e.g., school) to the requirements of another environment (e.g., work)
match knowledge about one's own characteristics and abilities to information about job or career opportunities
identify, describe, and assess the relative importance of one's needs, values, interests, strengths, and weaknesses
develop personal growth goals that are motivating
identify and describe skills acquired through formal education and general life experience
identify one's strengths and weaknesses
accept and learn from negative criticism
persist with a project when faced with failure unless it is clear that the project cannot be carried out or is not worth the time or effort needed to complete it
recognize when a project cannot be carried out or is not worth the time or effort required to complete it
generate trust and confidence in others
take risks
accept the consequences of one's actions
market oneself to prospective employers