Recurrent Themes

What communication skills do Waikato employers want from entry-level graduates?

Presented by Elna Fourie – Wintec

(research by Trish Clokie and Elna Fourie)

What's the context?

CBITE / Media Arts
How might this inform our curriculum?

Haven't we heard this before?

Graduate skills surveys, discrete research, institutional & industry body research, careers NZ, etc.

Time
Self-motivation Passion
Self-management Teamwork

Communication

Skills
Written Active
Common
Industry
technology
presentation

Leadership Flexibility

Work Experience Multi-tasking Confidence

communication

Decision-Making

Solving

Initiative

Adaptability/flexibility

Self-motivated

Independence

management

Technology

Enthusiasm sense
Organising
Interpersonal

Listening

Planning

Thinking

Qualifications

Academic

Intelligence

skills Energy

Emotional

Learning

knowledge

Critical

Personal

Problem

Lateral

Verbal

ACCI (2002)
Bennett (2006)
Careers NZ (2013)
Davies, Gore, Shury,
Graduate Careers
Australia (2013)
Vivian, Winterbotham,
& Constable (2012)
VUW (2006)

Word collage created on Wordle - http://www.wordle.net/

More than ten years ago...

"A problem here is that, although indicators such as job advertisements' provide an objective measure of employers' demands, they do not describe the level of competence required in each skill area. If there is no shared understanding of the precise skill attributes...universities cannot know what they need to teach."

(Bennett, 2002)

Looking for clarity

What are the 'good communication skills' they want?

30 Respondents
- media, finance, PR, local govt., dairy, IT, creative, events, sport, health, retail, advertising, agriculture

large / small / private / public

Interpersonal, Written, Business Communication

What is lacking in grads?

Writing, "grammer and spelling" [sic]

- Confidence with face to face
- Functioning in organisational context
- Self-management

Impact of technology on communication

23/30 – 'Significant Impact'

"constantly moving"
"pace of technology"
"technology evolution is constant"
"reduces the amount of traditional communication"

"Everything can be achieved so quickly that young communicators seem to be losing the ability to consider things deeply."

Communication in context of all skills/attributes

Most important:
Interpersonal skills; Oral communication;
Initiative; Self-management

Written communication; Team Work

Least important: Industry specific skills, cultural sensitivity

Please indicate what you look for in entry-level roles by rating the following skills for importance (1 = not important, 6 = very important):
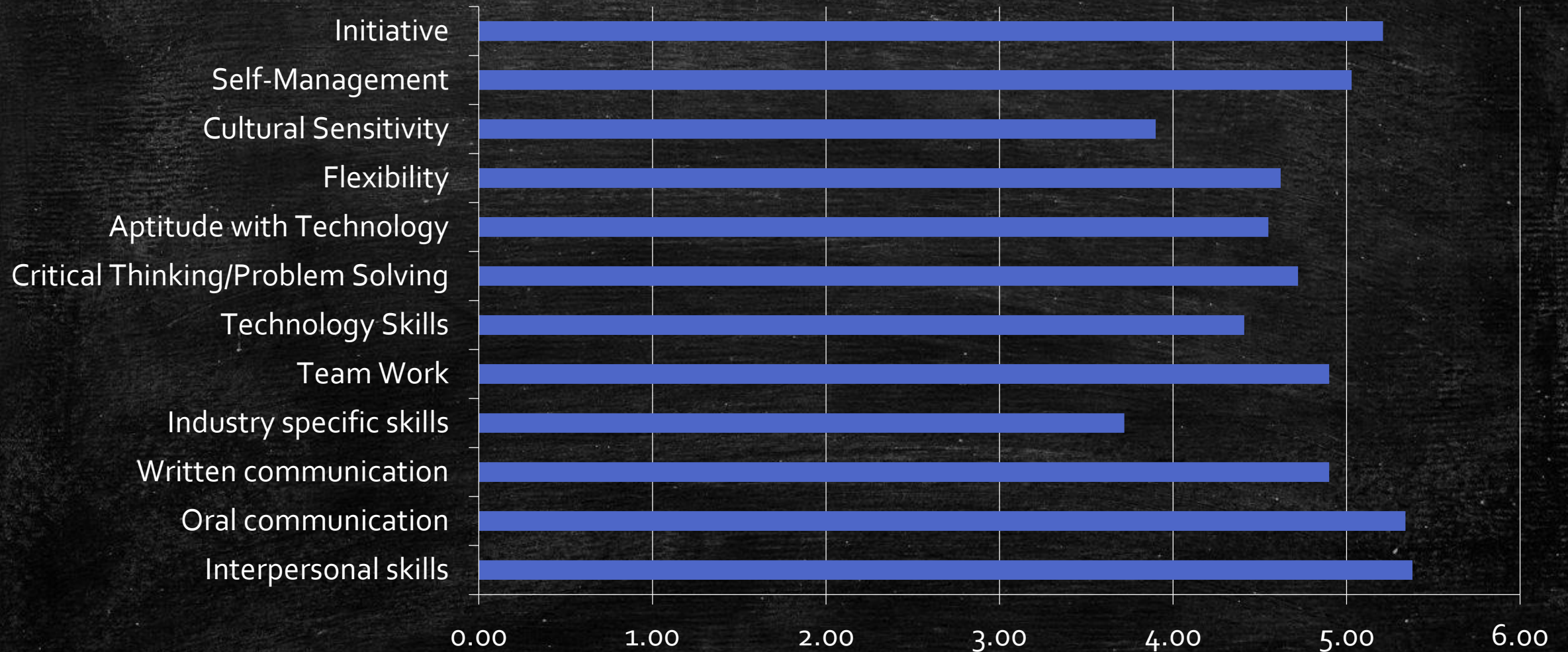
Focus on Interpersonal & Intrapersonal:

Assertiveness

Listening

Conflict management
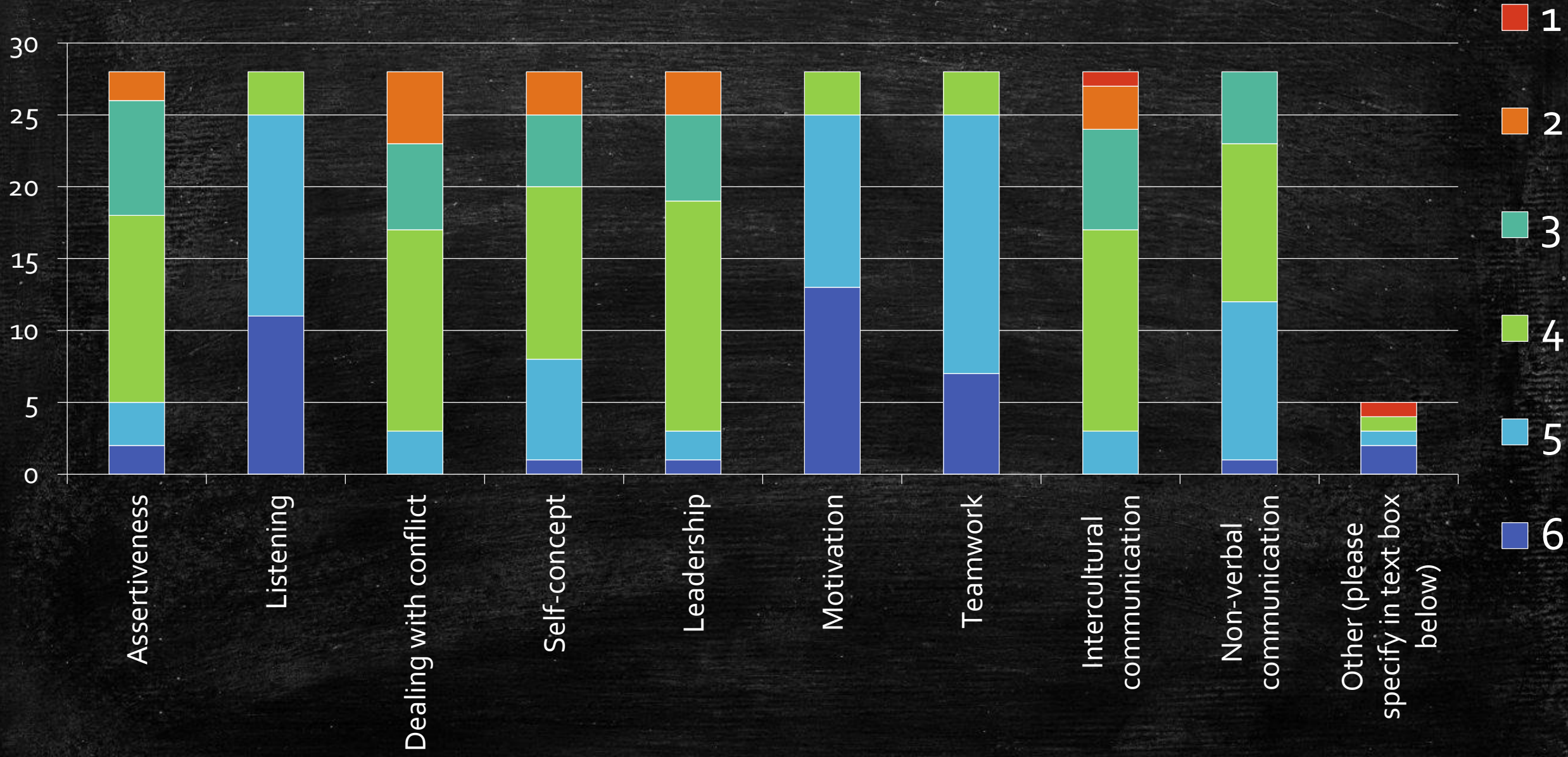
Self-concept

Leadership

Motivation

Teamwork

Intercultural Communication

Non-verbal Communication

Please rate the following specific interpersonal skills for relevance to entry-level roles in your industry (1 = irrelevant, 6 = essential):

"These skills are all important – it is hard to rank them. We are now putting more emphasis on hiring for personality and potential rather than on technical skills as in the past."

Self-Management & 'Self-Marketing'

"Skills can be learned – attitude, not so much."

"I think students need to be taught about presence, presenting the right first impression…"

Focus on Business Communication:

Letters

Emails
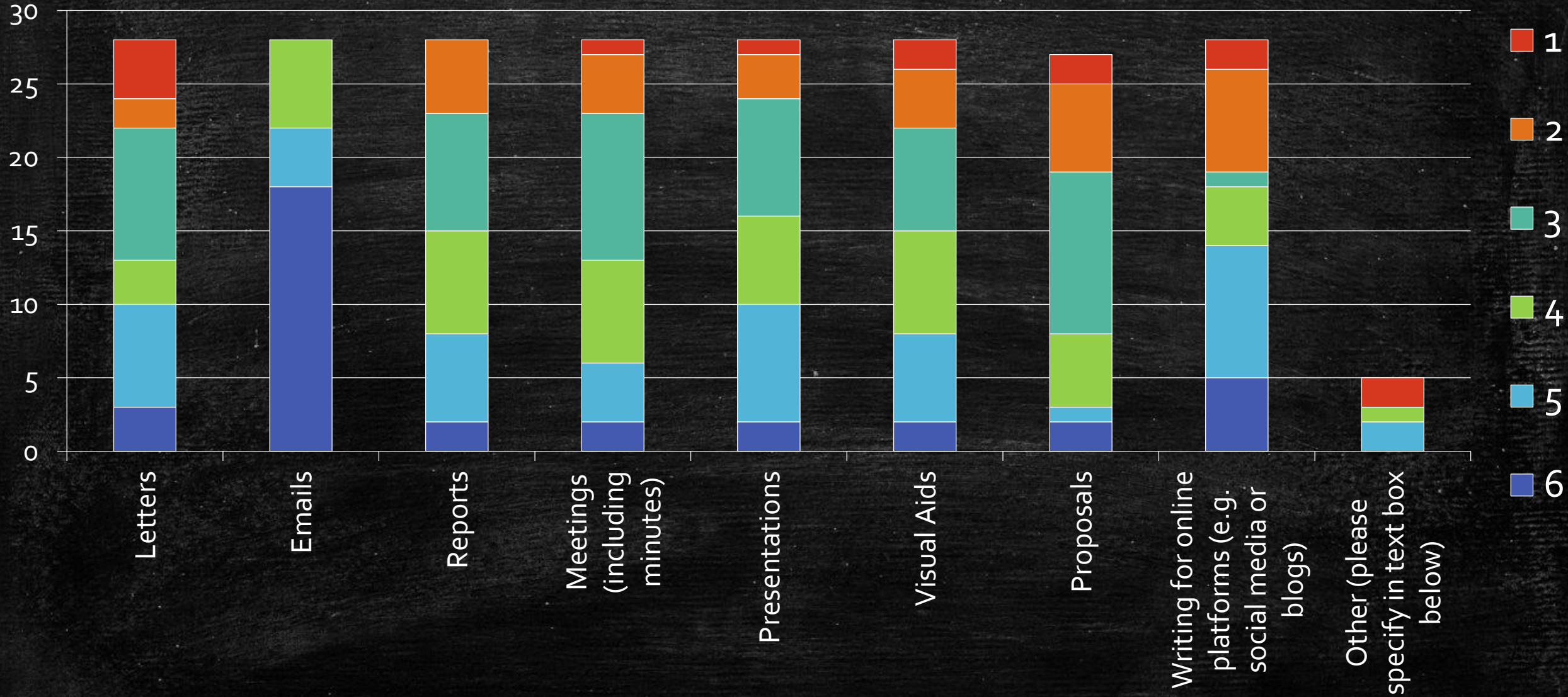
Reports

Meetings (including minutes)

Presentations

Visual Aids

Proposals

Writing for online platforms

Please rate the following specific business communication skills for relevance to entry-level roles in your industry (1 = irrelevant, 6 = essential):

"We maybe expect a lot from entry level and need them to hit the ground running. This means we have a higher expectation of the courses to deliver relevant learning."
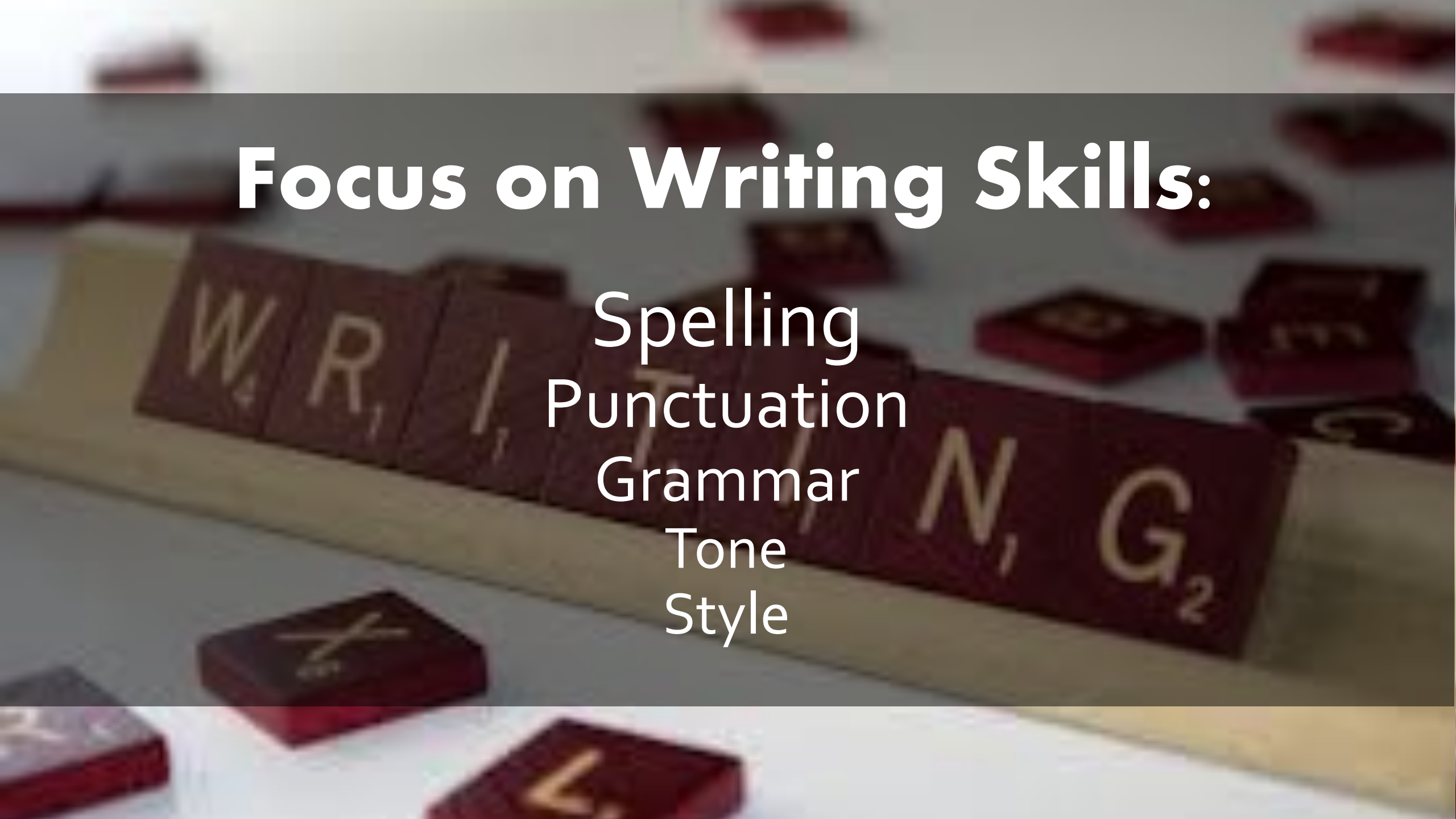
"A lot of what they need to know will be learned on the job, so they need to be good listeners and fast learners"

More specific to Comms roles...

"Writing for social media is a specific skill set. Many graduates know how to 'use' social media platforms, but lack the ability to create a strategy..."

Focus on Writing Skills:

Spelling

Punctuation

Grammar

Tone

Style

"Style and tone of writing are dependant on the industry and brand you are working for. My experience has shown that as long as the student has the ability to adapt to their environment...”

"Spell check is not reliable...We are not able to check emails before they are sent – hence the importance they are of a high standard.”

Where to now?

- Interview (cultural perspective from a significant Waikato employer)

- Follow up discussions with colleagues

- Provide rationale for update of courses

- Publish findings

"How to get personal attributes out of the too hard basket and incorporate them in a systematic way, into teaching, assessing and reporting, will provide a challenge to educationalists that will question the core of what they are doing."
(Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2002)

Still waiting for the Communication Revolution?

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