

# Non-Cognitive Skills

## Description

Non-cognitive skills are also referred to as non-academic skills, soft skills, college readiness and workplace skills. They often consist of behavioral skills, such as study skills; personal development skills, such as motivation or social skills, and skills that aid with the transition from high school to college. They are distinct from traditional measures of academic success, such as GPA; they are also distinct from “cognitive” skills that encompass measures of learning and intellect.

## Why is this important?

Non-cognitive skills have been identified as essential for success both in college and post-college workplace and personal success. As such, measuring these skills is considered more inclusive and accurate in predicting success of non-traditional or historically marginalized students who may not perform as high on some traditional measures of success like GPA. In higher education, non-cognitive skills are also considered more malleable, or possible to change through intervention, than cognitive skills—examples of malleable skills include self-regulated learning skills, self-determination skills, and growth mindset.

## Implementation Examples

Instructor-to-student messaging tools		
Student-facing learning objectives*	✓	
Low-stakes practice assignments	✓	▶
Active, collaborative learning tools in class		▶
Supplemental teaching materials for non-cognitive skills	✓	
Goal-setting and reflection surveys	✓	

available in



\*in select courses

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## Practical Applications

- ✓ Implement student messaging interventions, such as reminder texts or emails, to check in with students and encourage positive behaviors
- ✓ Provide ample opportunities for academic help and feedback to boost self-confidence and competence
- ✓ Clearly communicate norms and expectations for classes to help students with the transition from high school to college as well as promote student autonomy
- ✓ Explicitly teach skills such as self-regulated learning, growth mindset, or mindfulness through activities such as goal-setting or strength-finding exercises or reflection activities
- ✓ Offer meaningful and collaborative learning experiences, such as problem-based learning or peer learning, to improve motivation and interpersonal skills