

Professional Skills Reflection

IDS 494- ePortfolio Project

Name: Emma Humphreys

August 15th, 2026

Introduction

When I began my degree in Cybersecurity at Old Dominion University, I expected most of my learning to focus on the technical side of cybersecurity. While my coursework has certainly helped me develop that foundation, I have also come to recognize how much of my professional experience has shaped the way I approach technology and problem solving. Working in IT while completing my degree has allowed me to see how technical decisions are connected to people, business needs, vendors, and organizational processes. Looking back at both my coursework and professional experiences, three skills stand out to me: technology procurement and vendor management, project coordination, and problem solving and critical thinking. They connect what I have learned academically with what I have experienced professionally and will continue to be valuable throughout my career.

Skill 1: Technology Procurement and Vendor Management

Technology procurement and vendor management is a skill I have developed through both professional experience and academic work. Effective procurement requires understanding needs, evaluating options, maintaining accurate information, and considering longer-term implications.

My vendor renewal database is a strong example of this skill. I designed a centralized resource that tracks vendor and supplier names, product descriptions, contract terms, costs, invoice numbers, cancellation requirements, and price-cap provisions. I organized the information by department and structured it with future automation in mind. This gave IT management a more complete view of vendor obligations and upcoming renewals and created a process for making informed procurement decisions.

My digital forensics laboratory plan demonstrates this skill from an academic perspective. I developed a plan for establishing and operating a digital forensics laboratory, including the hardware, software, security maintenance, and operational resources it would require. I had to consider how individual technology selections supported the laboratory's larger needs.

My entrepreneur application assessment provided another opportunity to evaluate technology based on user needs. I assessed two potential cybersecurity applications, one focused on

cybersecurity education for senior citizens and another on training for small businesses. I considered the needs of each target population and how technology could address those needs. Together, these experiences have strengthened my ability to evaluate technology in terms of both practical requirements and organizational value.

Skill 2: Project Coordination

Project coordination has developed through both my academic and professional experiences. I have learnt that successful coordination involves understanding the larger objective, organizing individual pieces, communicating with stakeholders, and keeping those pieces moving towards a common outcome.

My CYSE 425W Illuma Cybersecurity Assessment provided an academic example of this skill. Each member of our team contributed different components to a larger cybersecurity assessment, requiring me to complete my responsibilities while considering how my work fit into the overall project and final deliverable. This reinforced the importance of communication, organization, and understanding how individual contributions affect the larger outcome.

I applied these skills more directly during the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement renewal. I led negotiations with Microsoft's account representatives while working closely with the CIO to determine the firm's priorities. I coordinated licensing needs, contractual terms, pricing, product discounts, and service-level issues while managing communication between internal leadership and Microsoft's representatives. I had to keep multiple stakeholders and competing considerations aligned while working towards the firm's objectives.

My IT Administrative Teams Channel demonstrates coordination on an ongoing operational level. I created and structured the channel to centralize vendor information and frequently used documentation, including SOPs and accounting forms stored in the firm's DMS. By connecting these resources in one accessible structure, I made information used in daily operations easier to locate and supported greater continuity within the IT administrative team.

Skill 3: Problem Solving and Critical Thinking

Problem solving and critical thinking have been central to my cybersecurity education. Cybersecurity problems rarely have a single obvious answer, requiring professionals to evaluate incomplete information, consider multiple perspectives, and make evidence-based decisions.

My digital forensics final is one of the strongest examples of this skill. I examined evidence from a smartphone and laptop using multiple forensic tools and techniques, analyzing messages, browser activity, emails and recovered files. I then correlated findings across sources to develop an understanding of what had occurred. An important part of the analysis was distinguishing between what the evidence demonstrated and what could not be definitively established. This strengthened my ability to reach conclusions without going beyond what the evidence supports.

My FISMA policy paper approached critical thinking from a broader organizational perspective. I examined FISMA through organizational, social, cultural, and political considerations and the relationship between security requirements and operational realities. This helped me recognize effective cybersecurity decisions often require balancing competing priorities rather than identifying a technically ideal solution.

My CYSE 495 Human Factors and Policy Paper further developed my ability to analyze cybersecurity problems involving people and organizations. I examined the relationship between employee participation, organizational culture, and cybersecurity policy adherence, considering both potential benefits and limitations of involving employees in security decision-making. These experiences have strengthened my ability to examine evidence and perspectives before reaching a conclusion.

Describing my Skills

The skills I have developed allow me to contribute across both technical and business environments. I can manage technology vendors and contractual information with attention to organizational priorities, costs, and risks. I can coordinate projects and processes involving multiple stakeholders by creating structure, maintaining documentation, and keeping my responsibilities moving forward. I also approach problems analytically, considering evidence, risk and human factors before recommending a course of action. Together, these skills allow me to manage details without losing sight of broader organizational goals.

Strongest Skill Reflection

Of the three skills, technology procurement and vendor management is my strongest. It stands out because it is where my professional experience, communication skills, attention to detail, and understanding of technology come together most naturally. I developed this skill gradually as my responsibilities expanded from administrative and operational tasks to greater ownership of vendor relationships, renewals, contract information, and procurement processes.

Although I included the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement renewal as an example of project coordination, it also had the greatest impact on my development in vendor management. Leading negotiations with Microsoft required me to understand the firm's needs, communicate with multiple stakeholders, pay attention to contractual details, and contribute to decisions with significant financial and operational implications. It challenged me to move beyond coordinating information and understand how that information could influence a business decision.

Applying My Skills Going Forward

Going forward, I hope to apply these skills in roles at the intersection of technology, business operations, and risk management. I want to continue developing my understanding of technology governance, information security, and strategic vendor management while helping organizations make thoughtful decisions balancing security, efficiency, cost, and long-term needs. My

experience has shown me that understanding how technology decisions affect an organization is equally important. I see the skills represented in this portfolio as a foundation I can continue to build throughout my career.