

# Graduate and Employability Skills

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## What

The skills that will enable students to perform more ably as undergraduates will, if applied in different contexts, equip them for a graduate career. Employers want to see the demonstration of these skills in settings that have relevance for the workplace. This does not diminish the level of challenge to students or dilute the subject knowledge, rather it encourages flexibility of application. In the University's Curriculum Framework document these common skills are identified as:

- Management of self, learning and tasks:
  - Study and self-management skills
  - Thinking and reflective skills
  - Problem-solving skills
- Management and communication of information:
  - Writing skills
  - Reading skills
  - Oral communication skills
  - IT/Information skills
  - Research skills
- Interpersonal skills:
  - Team work
  - Leadership skills

## Why

According to the Association of Graduate Recruiters '...many degree courses do not help students to develop vital core work skills. It is crucial that the higher education experience prepares students to take control of their own learning, career and life' (2010, p. 5). We have a duty to assist students to face the challenges of the labour market.

## How

Graduate and employability skills should be embedded in all courses and can be developed when course teams:

- Teach and encourage reflective learning.
- Use case studies modelled on real-life work situations applicable to the subject.
- Incorporate role-playing or simulations in units.
- Encourage self and peer formative feedback and assessment.
- Consider the use of student mentors in courses or units.
- Encourage local employer involvement in course development and delivery.
- Make assessments relevant to professional practice.
- Incorporate short or long work placements in the programme.
- Develop an online PDP, which students own and populate with their achievements.
- Encourage students to broaden their horizons, volunteer, and become active citizens.
- Encourage students actively to engage with career planning from an early stage of their university career.

## **And if we are already doing this?**

There is already much good practice across the University and we can learn from each other. Many vocationally oriented courses are already producing graduates equipped for specific careers. However, even in these cases it is always worth considering whether all your graduates will enter a particular profession, and if not, whether your curriculum is catering for those who may choose an entirely different career pathway.

## **Selected references and websites**

Association of Graduate Recruiters. (2010). *Talent, opportunity, prosperity*. Retrieved 20 May 2010, from: <http://aces.shu.ac.uk/employability/resources/AGRManifesto2010.pdf>

Yorke, M. (2006). Employability in higher education: what it is – what it is not. *Learning and employability*. Series 1. Higher Education Academy. Retrieved 20 May 2010, from: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/employability/id116\\_employability\\_in\\_higher\\_education\\_336.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/employability/id116_employability_in_higher_education_336.pdf)

The Higher Education Academy (2000). *Skills Plus: Employability in Higher Education. Project Outcomes*. [Offering links to 7 papers of practical application]. Retrieved 20 May 2010, from: [www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/employability/employability23](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/employability/employability23)

Sheffield Hallam University website providing links to recent publications on graduate employability and higher education, including practical ideas for course development. Retrieved 20 May 2010, from: <http://aces.shu.ac.uk/employability>

## **Further advice**

Further advice and guidance is available from the Academic Development Consultancy service ([acdev@port.ac.uk](mailto:acdev@port.ac.uk))

