EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Compiled by: University of Bolton Careers Service

For further help and advice contact us:

Tel: 01204 903080
Email: careers@bolton.ac.uk
www.bolton.ac.uk/careers

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Employability Skills

Introduction

The employment market is rapidly changing with global competition, new technology and an increased pressure to perform. 21st century graduates need to demonstrate to employers that they can respond to the requirements of a diverse and dynamic workplace. In the current climate a degree is no longer enough! In order for graduates to remain competitive, they need to have acquired and be able to demonstrate key employability skills that will complement their academic achievements.

Graduate recruiters are looking for graduates who can articulate and provide evidence of employability skills drawing from both academic and extra-curricular experience such as work experience, volunteering, internships and leisure interests.

What is Employability?

‘Future Fit’, a document produced by the Universities UK and the CBI defined employability skills as: “A set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy” (Future Fit: Preparing Graduates for the World of Work; 2009)

Employability Skills

After carrying out a range of research from employers and various studies, the University of Bolton has listed the top ten skills that it feels every student should acquire throughout their time here at the University.

These skills are:
1. Communication
2. Team Work
3. Numerical Interpretation
4. Organisation and Time Management
5. Problem Solving
6. Flexibility and Adaptability
7. Action Planning
8. Self-Awareness
9. Personal Impact and Confidence
10. Initiative

Employers also cite other key attributes such as Commercial Awareness, Leadership and IT
Developing Employability Skills

Through Academic Study

It is important for you to plan the development of your employability skills early on in your course, and understand that the learning process you are undertaking as part of your degree has value in other contexts. A small minority of students will be undertaking their studies purely to learn, but with changes to current fee regimes, research suggests that the majority of students come to University to enhance their career and job prospects.

The learning process holds many opportunities to enhance your skills, and your tutors should make explicit the clear links to career management skills in learning outcomes, opportunities to participate in career planning activities and the opportunity to construct a personal development plan (PDP).

During your studies you will have many opportunities to enhance your employability skills such as writing assignments, reports and dissertations, and take part in presentations, discussions and debates. Recording your skills and achievements, and reflecting on what you have learnt, will help to develop your own self-knowledge, and provide a bank of evidence that you can relay to an employer at the application and interview stage.

Through Work Experience

Why not think about gaining some work experience by undertaking a placement or internship, or securing a part-time job? Getting some real work experience is an excellent way for you to develop your skills and check out a potential industry that you are interested in. You should consider the skills you are interested in developing further and then choose an appropriate context from which to gain that experience.

Work experience is really important, even if you are engaged in shop or working in a bar, there are still great skills that you can draw upon such as customer service, communication skills, numeracy, time management, flexibility etc.

Through Extra Curricular Activities

During the application process it is important that you articulate all the skills you have gained, and not just those from work or study. You may have been involved in a student society or club, or held a position of responsibility within the University such as a Student Representative or Student Ambassador. Also many students have acquired a range of marketable skills from undertaking voluntary work but do not always record this as they think 'it isn't important'.
Understanding and Articulating Employability Skills – The Skills Audit

It is important for students to become self-aware and recognise their skills. They also need to develop the confidence to market their skills effectively when the time comes to apply for jobs.

It is not enough to say you have these employability skills, you need to provide evidence via CVs, application forms, presentations, assessments and interviews as part of the whole selection process for employment.

Employability Skills Audit

The starting point in applying for employment opportunities is to have a comprehensive personal employability skills profile. The following table offers students a guide of how to audit their skills with some contextual examples. This list is not exhaustive, and every individual will have different experiences from which to draw.

It is important to recognise that relevant personal experiences and the content of different degree disciplines will create diverse skills profiles. It is also an opportunity to highlight skills gaps and to identify areas for further development. A Careers Adviser or Personal Tutor will be able to help you with this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example Skills</th>
<th>Example Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>&gt; Presenting information in various formats</td>
<td>&gt; Presentation of work and ideas in seminar groups</td>
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<td>&gt; Motivating and encouraging others</td>
<td>&gt; Discussion and debate</td>
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<td>&gt; Questioning</td>
<td>&gt; Presentation of research</td>
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<td>&gt; Ability to relate to a wide range of people</td>
<td>&gt; Undertaking a peer mentoring role</td>
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<td>&gt; Ability to articulate</td>
<td>&gt; Becoming a Student Ambassador</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; Listening</td>
<td>&gt; Involvement in extra-curricular activities such as societies, university radio, student newspaper etc</td>
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<td>&gt; Giving and accepting criticism</td>
<td>&gt; Becoming a volunteer</td>
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<td>&gt; Persuading and negotiating</td>
<td>&gt; Work experience with people and customers</td>
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<td>&gt; Using appropriate body language</td>
<td>&gt; Writing essays, reports and dissertations</td>
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<td>&gt; Ability to construct coherent arguments and articulate ideas clearly to a range of different audiences</td>
<td>&gt; Writing and delivering power point</td>
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<td>&gt; Writing articles for student newspaper</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>&gt; Presenting on University radio</td>
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<td>&gt; Acting as a Student Rep</td>
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<td>&gt; Showing round prospective students and parents at an Open Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>Example Evidence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Team Working** | > Contributing ideas  
> Working with confidence  
> Taking a share of responsibility  
> Being assertive/ showing leadership  
> Supporting others  
> Flexibility  
> Analysis of a problem or task  
> Developing rapport with others  
> Respecting others  
> Mediating between people  
> Developing and maintaining networks  
> Understanding own role within a team  
> Understanding different cultural backgrounds | > Group work activities as part of a degree subject  
> Getting involved in volunteering projects or community activities  
> Taking part in University committees such as sport and drama groups  
> Outdoor team pursuits  
> Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme  
> Work experience – negotiating with others, motivating and supporting other team members, resolving disputes |
| **Personal Impact and Confidence** | > Ability to accurately assess own capabilities  
> Displaying a sense of control  
> Positive attitude to work  
> Expression of views  
> Ability to seek advice and support  
> Ability to establish boundaries  
> Taking responsibility for own learning and reflective practice  
> Awareness of growth, progress and achievements  
> Acting as a role model  
> Displaying innovation  
> Ability to take risks | > Attend a workshop to develop self esteem and confidence  
> Managing a group task or work project  
> Signing up as a peer mentor  
> Being engaged as a Student Ambassador  
> Having a clear personal development plan and a clear career direction  
> Undertaking some voluntary work |
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</table>
| **Organisation and Time Management** | > Setting clear achievable and measurable goals  
> Reviewing progress  
> Assigning priorities  
> Working to deadlines  
> Incorporating time management techniques  
> Developing processes and procedures  
> Maintaining documentation and record keeping  
> Attention to detail | > Running a home, managing bills and budgets  
> Balancing academic demands with extra-curricular activities  
> Compiling a study plan  
> Producing a timeline or Gant chart for a specific task or work based project  
> Organising an event, putting into place plans for responsibilities, outcomes, budget etc  
> Organising or developing a new filing system for storing data and information  
> Organising a Gap year |
| **Numerical Interpretation**        | > Carry out accurate number calculation/forecasts/estimates  
> Use percentages ratio and formulae  
> Ability to interpret and analyse figures and statistical information  
> Presenting numerical information logically to others  
> Managing a budget | > Devising a spreadsheet to manage personal income and expenditure  
> Work experience in a job involving use of numbers eg. processing invoices, book-keeping or accounts software  
> Treasurer of a committee  
> Work experience involving handling cash, balancing till receipts  
> Presenting, analysing statistical and numerical information in essays and reports.  
> Reading the financial press |
| **Problem Solving**                 | > Ability to identify and analyse situations  
> Ability to deal with and implement change  
> Use of initiative and logical reasoning  
> Ability to evaluate information  
> Ability to work as part of a team  
> Decision making  
> Planning implementing and delegating tasks  
> Resolving conflict  
> Negotiation  
> Setting goals | > Putting together an argument for a class debate  
> Dealing with an awkward customer or situation when working in a part time job  
> Thinking of ways to re-vitalise a club or society  
> Analysing systems and processes in a part time job and considering how things could change to make improvements  
> Negotiating with staff in part time job in relation to staff rotas |
<table>
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<th>Example Evidence</th>
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| Flexibility and Adaptability | > Manage multiple assignments and tasks  
> Adapt to changing conditions and work assignments  
> Working independently or as part of a team  
> Setting parameters | > Working overtime or covering someone else’s shift in a part time job  
> Moving from home to university or working abroad  
> Agreeing to learn new ways of working by undertaking specific training  
> Becoming an integral part of a company during work experience (forming working relationships, accommodating different set of expectations)  
> Working or living with people of different ages/cultures |
| Action Planning              | > Identifying objectives  
> Prioritising tasks effectively  
> Working to deadlines  
> Setting clearly defined steps  
> Developing a contingency plan  
> Devising a timetable or work schedule | > Compiling an action plan to undertake academic course work and revision  
> Establishing an action plan for career development and progression |
| Self-Awareness               | > Understand own strengths  
> Understanding where the gaps in knowledge and experience are  
> Ability to know how to ask for, receive and use feedback  
> Ability to reflect on what has been learnt  
> Develop decision making skills  
> Identify own training needs | > Compiling a CV outlining key skills and experience  
> Having seen a Careers Adviser to talk through career goals and aspirations  
> Undertaking a skills awareness test to check which skills need further development  
> Compiling a personal careers plan  
> Researching the employment sectors of interest |
| Initiative                   | > Solving problems  
> Introduce improvements  
> Give assistance to others  
> Finding a solution to a problem quickly and effectively  
> Generate ideas  
> Take responsibility  
> Challenge perceptions | > Use degree subject knowledge to resolve technical issues  
> Develop a new system or process to improve a service or product  
> Learning a new skill/undertake a training opportunity to ensure more productive work  
> Volunteering to learn a new task  
> Putting forward a new idea /rationale |
# Employability skills audit

**Rating:** Highlight your level of skill by circling the appropriate number:

1 = Never  
5 = Always

**Evidence:** Identify an experience, or activity that you have been involved in that demonstrates your ability in that skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Being able to give clear and accurate information, using appropriate language and style. Listening to others and clarifying your understanding. Being able to write well constructed, well presented essays, reports and letters for a variety of audiences Being able to present ideas and information clearly, concisely and appropriately to an audience using appropriate technology.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Working</td>
<td>Being able to co-operate with others on a shared task, being aware of and adaptable to the working styles of others, working in teams</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Impact and Confidence</td>
<td>An attitude which allows positive perception of ourselves and our abilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation and Time Management</td>
<td>Working in a methodical manner, prioritising and using time management, carrying out tasks effectively for either yourself or your team.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerical Interpretation</td>
<td>To have confidence and competence with numbers and measures and to think and express oneself effectively in quantitative terms.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>Process by which an individual or team works through the details of a problem, utilising their creativity, available resources, reasoning and past experiences in order to reach a solution.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility and Adaptability</td>
<td>Ability to be adaptable and responsive to change in any given situation or work environment, or in response to the needs, wishes or demands of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action Planning</td>
<td>The process which will help to focus your ideas and to decide what steps need to be taken or activities that must be performed. To achieve particular goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Knowing your own strengths and skills and having the confidence to articulate them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>The ability to act and make decisions without the help or advice of other people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial Awareness</td>
<td>Being able to demonstrate an insight into how firms operate and how this relates to the wider business world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Being able to use appropriate IT packages, e.g. word processing, databases, spread sheets, PowerPoint, web page construction, and email.</td>
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</tbody>
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You can use the blank boxes below to include any other skills you think will be useful to you.

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