Employability Resource *Pack*

Resources designed to help students of the physical sciences develop skills for employment

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Introduction

The employment of graduates has been highlighted as a key area of concern by both the government and Higher Education Institutions. This has resulted in a government initiative to assess the scale of the shortfall between the skills required by employers and those achieved by graduates. A three year project to address this situation was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)[1]. The team appointed to assess the shortfall is the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT). ESECT's aims include helping institutions to promote the development of employability skills through good teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment design[2].

Higher Education Institutions may address this skills shortage for a number of reasons, including;
- The publication by HEFCE of employment performance indicators and benchmarks for all Higher Education Institutions[3]
- The increased numbers of students entering higher education, resulting in greater competition for limited graduate vacancies
- Students, in the current climate of tuition fees and associated debts, may be influenced in their choice of institution and course by the employment prospects after graduation

Many departments currently have activities in place designed to develop the 'key' or 'core' skills that were broadly defined by the Dearing report[4] as;
- Problem solving
- Communication skills
- Analytical skills
- Data analysis
- Critical appraisal
- Time management
- Teamwork

However, 'employability' skills put increased emphasis on encouraging students to relate these skills beyond the academic setting to an employment context. In addition, students may need help developing the skills that allow them to actively market themselves in order to obtain suitable employment.

In order for students to obtain the most from their university course, career choices and subsequent career development, they need to plan ahead effectively. Personal development planning (PDP) and its implementation within higher education has been a further consequence of the Dearing report. Although a student PDP may be designed in a wide variety of formats, the principle aim is to enhance student development in order to help them to:
- Become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners
- Understand how they are learning and relate their learning to a wider context

- Improve their general skills for study and career management
- Articulate their personal goals and evaluate progress towards their achievements
- Encourage a positive attitude to learning throughout life[5]

Several activities within the resource pack concentrate on encouraging students to assess their current skills, and how they might develop these further. This complements any form of PDP that they may be undertaking. (More information about PDPs can be found in the briefing paper at the back of this pack). Thus, many of the activities in this pack may be used in conjunction with PDPs in order to support student development and encourage students to plan for employment.

References

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3. J. Allison, C. Harvey and I. Nixon, Enhancing employability: a long term strategic challenge, University of Newcastle, 2002.
    http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/
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Acknowledgements

How to use this resource

This pack is a structured resource that can be used as a complete module or as individual exercises to support other career-based activities. The aim is to provide academics with a range of easy to implement activities that develop undergraduate key skills in an employment context. The resources have been designed specifically for the physical sciences community. The direct relevance of the activities to the physical sciences enables students to relate their skill development to their studies and see the links to future employment.

A Tutor's Guide accompanies each activity. The guide outlines the aim and nature of the relevant student activity and, where applicable, a suggested assessment scheme is included. The student activity sheets clearly set out what is required and contain any relevant additional information as handouts.

The activities are divided into five main categories:
- Considering career options and which skills employers are looking for
- The skills that are needed to obtain interviews and secure employment i.e. CV writing and interview technique
- Developing communication and presentation skills
- Getting the most benefit from careers services and recruitment fairs
- Thinking ahead in a professional way

These relate to the five sections of the resource pack;
- Starting out
- Skills development
- Achieving results
- Finding information
- Looking forward and maintaining professionalism

Figure 1 provides an overview of the activities included in the pack. Table 1 provides an overview of the main skills developed through each activity.

The activities are designed to be used in an informal workshop style. Some of the activities are individual student activities and some require group work. Depending on the type of activity, students may be required to prepare work outside of a timetabled session. The resource has been successfully trailed with second and third year students.

What skills are employers looking for? How can I match these to the skills I already have? What areas of employment would I enjoy/most like to enter when I graduate?

Starting Out
Introduction, PDP, quizzes, card sort exercise
and
skills audit

Activities
1, 2, 3, 4

Developing Skills

How can I make the most of my degree and continue to improve?

Presentation
and
communication skills

Activities
5, 6, 7, 8

Achieving Results
What new skills do I need to develop in order to enhance my chances of obtaining suitable employment?

CV writing and evaluation, applying for vacancies, interview preparation and interview technique

Looking Forward, Maintaining Professionalism

Finding Information

How do I work in a professional manner?
What do professional bodies have to offer?

An ethical dilemma, professional guidelines and reflective log

Activities
9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Activities
14, 15, and 16

How can my tutor/careers service support me?

Knowledge of careers service, awareness of dates of recruitment fairs and take away guide

Activity
17

Figure 1.   An overview of the resource pack.

Skills Developed

Activity Number	*Planning*	Team working	Finding information	Oral or written communication	Interview technique or preparation	*CVs*	Problem solving	Ethics and professionalism
1	✔		✔					
2	✔		✔					
3	✔		✔					
4	✔							
5								
6				✔			✔	
7				✔			✔	
8		✔		✔				
9		✔		✔		✔		
10				✔		✔		
11				✔	✔		✔	
12					✔			
13		✔		✔	✔	✔		✔
14		✔		✔			✔	✔
15	✔		✔					
16	✔							
17	✔		✔	✔				

Table 1.   A summary of the main skills developed in each activity

Example Assessment Scheme 1		
Session Number	Activity used	Assessment %
1	1 & 2 & 3	
2	5 & 6	
3	7	20
4	8	20
5	10	
6	11 & 12	20
7 & 8	13	
9	14, 15 & 17	
	Reflective Log 16	40

Example Assessment Scheme 2		
Session Number	Activity used	Assessment %
1	1 & 2	
2	3& 4	10
3	5 & 6	
4	7	10
5	9	20
6	10, 12	
7	9, 10 & 11	20
8	13	
9	13	20 & 20
10	14, 15	

	Example Assessment Scheme 3	
Session Number	***Activity used***	**Assessment %**
1	3 & 4	10
2	5 & 6	
3	7 or 8	10
4	8, 9 & 10	
5	11	10
6	13	
7	13	20 & 20
8	14 & 15	
	Reflective Log 16	30

Notes

The time required for interviewing and presentation activities varies depending on the number of students and the number of tutors available. The reflective log (Activity 16) covers the whole module and may start with the skills audit or card sort exercise and requires students to reflect on the development of their skills and evidence of future career aspirations.

Developing Skills for Employment: An Introduction for Students

In addition to demanding specific qualifications, employers look for evidence of key skills when recruiting graduates; this applies irrespective of the type of industry involved. University departments now incorporate activities into courses to provide undergraduates with the opportunity to develop these skills.

Key skills, often referred to as core or transferable skills, include;

- Problem solving
- Communication skills
- Analytical skills
- Data analysis
- Critical appraisal
- Time management
- Teamwork

What are employability skills?

Employability is not just about finding your first job. It includes successfully developing all of the key skills and being able to apply these in a work environment. The ability to plan your own skills development is important. Some of the activities in this course are designed to help you do this. These activities ask you to appraise your current proficiency in a variety of areas and then to plan ahead to find ways of developing them. For example, this may involve finding different ways to improve your communication skills. Alternatively, you may need to consider gaining work experience or the timing of job applications. Effective planning will help you get the most from your university course, career choices and subsequent career development.

Meta data

The following table describes information about this resource (meta data) which is also used to locate the resource using search tools. Please note the terms and conditions of use under the Creative Commons licence associated with the use of this resource.

Author (s)	Paul Chin, Della Grice, Tina Overton, UK Physical Sciences Centre
Owner (s)	University of Hull
Title	Employability resource pack - Introduction
Classification	F900 X220
Keywords	ukoer, sfsoer, employability, employability resource pack introduction, career progression
Description	This resource provides a tutor and separate student introduction to the Employability Resource Pack, which is made up of a series of individual activities.
Creative Commons license (url)	http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/uk/
Language	English
File size	105Kb
File format	Word 2007