



### Careers and Professional Skills

Careers and professional skills as a term, is often used as 'short-hand' to describe a set of employability skills, attitudes and attributes that a person may have or develop in order to secure a job:

- Skill = a type of work/activity which requires specialist training and knowledge
- Attitude = a way of thinking, feeling or behaving which reflects a state of mind and contributes to a person's personality
- Attribute = an inherent quality or strength

### Definitions of Employability

Employability focuses on enhancing the academic, personal and professional development of learners to meet the changing needs of employers, the economy and society. Over the last 20 years, definitions of employability have shifted towards a more holistic view of 'graduate attributes' that include transferable skills and person-centred qualities, developed in conjunction with subject specific knowledge, skills and competencies.

"Being able to get a job, keep a job, and if necessary find another job."

Carl Gilleard - Association of Graduate Recruiters

### Developing Careers and Professional Skills, Attitudes and Attributes

#### Through Academic Study

Your university experience has value in several contexts beyond just your course. Consider aspects of your time at university such as your subject specific knowledge, any membership of academic societies and/or professional bodies, discussions of professional ethical values and relevant legislation. Tutors also help you identify what employability skills, attitudes and attributes you develop through the use of Learning Objectives.

To help you construct a Personal Development Plan (PDP), you should actively reflect, review and take part in career planning activities. A useful strategy is to record your skills and achievements as you go along. You will then have a rich bank of evidence to withdraw from to use for applications and interviews.

## **Transferable Skills**

Usually picked up over a period of time, transferable skills are developed in one situation and can be transferred to another situation. They can be gained from previous job positions, charity or voluntary work and even your hobbies and can be applied to a range of jobs and industries. Not only do they show that you'd be a good fit for the team, they can also demonstrate what a candidate can bring to a role, and how much they've learnt from previous positions or experiences. They also enable you to apply for work and training beyond your subject specialism if necessary.

There are so many skills that could be classed as transferable, and every individual will have their own 'set', with natural ability and aptitude towards certain skills. All employers will be looking for something different, but some of the more common ones that are often cited by employers include: communication, team work, numeracy, organisation, time management, problem solving, flexibility, initiative, commercial awareness, leadership and the use of ICT.

## **Experience of Work**

Real work experience is essential for you to develop your skills and you can also 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 employed in a shop or working in a bar, there are transferable skills that you can draw upon such as customer service, communication skills, numeracy, time management, flexibility etc. If you do not have any work experience yet, it is highly recommended that you gain some whilst at university to increase your employability skills.

## **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. Even at the University of Bolton, you can undertake paid and voluntary opportunities to enhance your employability skills.

## **Voluntary Work**

Many students acquire a range of transferable skills from undertaking voluntary work. Evidence of voluntary work is increasingly cited as being important to employers (The Brathay Trust, Guardian Careers, 2014). Consider choosing an opportunity that has meaning to you in order to engage fully with the experience.

## **Understanding your Individual Attitudes and Attributes**

Two fifths of bosses surveyed by The Brathay Trust, (Guardian Careers 2014) suggested as well as wanting to know about graduates skills they also wanted to gain an understanding of the personal qualities and strengths of graduates. It revealed that a strong work ethic, commitment, resilience and motivation are the traits recruiting managers look out for most. It is important that individuals understand their own individual strengths and attitudes

## **Networking and Social Media**

University follow-up of graduates via the annual, national Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) Survey, evidences a strong trend in the importance of networking skills and 'mining' personal and professional contacts to source employment. The effective use of social media has become more important and increasingly used by employers for recruitment purposes. It is now viewed as essential to have a LinkedIn profile and to be actively using LinkedIn. It is also a useful way of finding employment opportunities and gaining commercial awareness.

## **So can I enhance my careers and professional skills at the University of Bolton?**

Yes! Look at our **Graduate Attributes Matrix for Employability (GAME)**

In 2017, the University of Bolton developed the Graduate Attributes Matrix for Employability (GAME). This matrix aims to evidence the development potential that a student can have within the Bolton learning environment.

### **The Graduate attributes are:**

- Expressive of what it means to be a University of Bolton graduate
- Not simply taught in the classroom but fostered through meaningful experiences and as a result of continuous learning and reflection
- Unique to every student – in terms of their starting point, experiences, development and comprehension

The Graduate attributes, as highlighted below, are the personal qualities, skills and academic abilities that the University of Bolton community values, and that a student should acquire during their time at this university. Graduate attributes can be developed as part of a programme of study, as well as through the wider student experience. The Graduate Attributes Framework has been created to allow for personalisation by each School and subject area and tailoring for particular co- and extra-curricular activities.



In conclusion, the term 'employability' can be seen as a shorthand expression of a range of complex skills, attitudes and attributes whose component parts are:

- Your subject specialism skills and knowledge
- Generic transferable skills which where adapted, can be applied in different work contexts
- A range of 'soft' attitudes and attributes identified as important to employers
- Work experience or employment
- Career management and planning skills

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