EMBEDDING ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYABILITY IN THE CURRICULUM

An introduction to the pedagogy for creating future-proof opportunity-ready graduates at Bath Spa University

Produced by the Enterprise & Employability Team at Bath Spa University
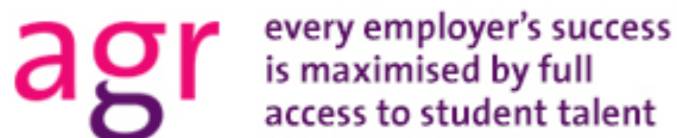
This is intended as a helpful guide and reference point for academic colleagues who are in the process of developing or updating degree and module curriculum. Whilst employability and enterprise content is neither the primary driver of curriculum design nor the only means of delivering this content it is the most important vehicle available to the university for ensuring our graduates are prepared for life beyond university and are able to evidence and articulate what they've learnt in a way that is meaningful to both themselves and their future employers.

Given that around 80% of BSU students work part-time and the relative paucity of student extra-curricular activity the onus is on the curriculum to deliver on employability in a way that other universities might not contemplate.

According to the annual Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey whilst around 95% of our graduates go on to find work or further study very swiftly the number securing professional and managerial grade jobs currently sits around the 65% mark which suggests a degree of 'under-employment' and this is where our focus is. The university has a challenging strategic KPI of 70% of graduates finding professional or managerial jobs by 2020.

DLHE is based on a census date in the January of the year following graduation so to be captured by that survey we aim to help graduates move swiftly into appropriate employment. The earlier students start thinking about their career the more likely it is that they'll be successful in the year following graduation.

CONTENTS

THE OPPORTUNITY-READY GRADUATE

The future of work is a contentious thing and ideas about emerging roles and employer needs will change from sector to sector, but the undeniable momentum is towards ever-faster change, ever greater use of digital technology, ever more precarious forms of employment, and an ever more competitive global marketplace of talent.

In such times we cannot prepare graduates for a narrow role based on past or even present templates; our graduates will shift role and shift career more often than we have; they will need to have hybrid skills and a breadth of talents to remain viable in the employment market. Whilst there will always be specialists it is difficult to say what specialisms will be in demand for the long run. Who knew a decade ago that Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Data-Mining would top the 'hottest skills' sought by employers (http://blog.linkedin.com/2014/12/17/the-25-hottest-skills-that-got-people-hired-in-2014/).

As such we have to prepare our graduates to be adaptable and opportunity-ready; able to spot, evaluate, and seize opportunities as they emerge. To do this they'll need a range of tools which we'll outline in this guide. They'll also need to learn and practice those tools through their university experience, and be able to evidence and articulate them effectively if we are to arm them appropriately for their future.

Find out more:

The Future of Work: A Journey to 2022:
www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/salvation-in-a-start-up/
The Future of Work: Jobs and Skills in 2030:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobs-and-skills-in-2030
Salvation in a Start-up: The Microbusiness Boom:
www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/salvation-in-a-start-up/
Freelance Workers Reshaping Companies and Careers:
www.economist.com/news/briefing/21637355-freelance-workers-available-moments-notice-will-reshape-nature-companies-and
Design Thinking Comes of Age:
https://hbr.org/2015/09/design-thinking-comes-of-age

DEFINITIONS

Employability

'a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy'
Professor Mantz Yorke (2004) 'Employability in Higher Education: what it is - what it is not', Higher Education Academy/ESECT

Employability is not the same as gaining a graduate job, rather it implies something about the capacity of the graduate to function effectively in a job and be able to move between jobs, thus remaining employable throughout their life.

Employability education sets as its outcome the development of those skills, understandings, and personal attributes through the creation of appropriate learning environments. This could be narrowly focused around the needs of a specific role or industry but should include some generic fundamentals around self-awareness, self-efficacy, the development of transferable skills such as teamwork, and an ability to critically evaluate the needs of the employment market.
www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/employability-higher-education-what-it-what-it-not

Enterprise

'the application of creative ideas and innovations to practical situations… it combines creativity, ideas development and problem solving with expression, communication and practical action.'
Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education: Guidance for UK HE providers (2012), QAA

Entrepreneurship

'the application of enterprise skills specifically to creating and growing organisations in order to identify and build on opportunities'
Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education: Guidance for UK HE providers (2012), QAA

Entrepreneurship is thus an applied subset of Enterprise. **Enterprise education** aims to create graduates who can develop and act on ideas and **Entrepreneurship education** thus focuses on those skills specifically associated with creating, developing, and growing an organisation or business as a vehicle for that idea.

Career paths such as **Freelancing, Self-employment** or **Portfolio Careers** are a form of employability that can harness an enterprising and entrepreneurial skill-set to carve out a more successful alternative career path or in the absence of structured employment. This is particularly relevant to Bath Spa University because of the increasingly freelance-intensive natures of many of the industry sectors to which our graduates gravitate; we have twice the national average of graduates in self-employment as an institution and for some courses we are approaching 70% self-employment.

We must also mention **Social Enterprise**. Whilst the exact definition is still being debated the thrust of the movement is to use business techniques to address social problems. Social enterprises aim to solve social needs with sustainable business models that are not dependant on charity. Social Enterprise is often a good way to engage students in valuable learning about business practices who might otherwise find commercial activity distasteful.

BACKGROUND

'Higher Education institutions will need to adapt their services to meet emerging needs and find ways to deliver learning that crosses disciplines, focuses on what employers need and employers/individuals will pay for through customisation, and optimises technology use.'
The Labour Market Story. UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). July 2014

'We are already behind other leading powers in re-imagining learning in the 21st Century to ensure that current and future generations have the technological, entrepreneurial and creative confidence and skills to drive economic growth.'
Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity & Growth. Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value. March 2015.

Employability and more recently Enterprise are increasingly significant elements in the HE landscape. Student fees and an increasingly competitive graduate employment marketplace have brought the career-enhancing aspect of degree choice to the fore. Whilst the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) annual survey of graduate outcomes six months from graduation is a very limited metric it is widely used in the university league tables and increasingly features in discussion as prospective students and their parents discuss the 'return on investment' for undertaking a university degree.

Successive governments of all stripes have tried to link HE provision to the business world, seeing HE as part of a supply chain of talent for the UK economy. Whatever your view on this link it already exists and policy makers are increasingly measuring and funding HE on its ability to service the employment market.

The Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act (2015) has recently expanded the ability of government to use measures such as graduate earnings (drawn from HMRC data) as a new measure of the 'value' of an educational programme. Whilst the exact nature and form of this measure and how it will be presented is still to be determined, it further illustrates the pressure on HE institutions to factor employability in as one of the ways in which their institutional performance will be measured. We should stress that we have deep reservations about current and future measurements of employability and their value - and we participate in a vigorous national debate on how we might improve them.

As a careers guidance provider we will always endeavour to help students fulfill their own ambitions but part of that advice to students and course leaders alike has to include an alignment between programmes of study and the realities of the labour market. Students can make their own decision, but they won't be making it in ignorance.

GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

The University has recently adopted a series of Graduate Attributes. Whilst these attributes encompass more than simply employability they suggest an outcome for our graduates in terms of what they will be able to evidence about their abilities and competencies. Given that such attributes can be hard to measure most employers will fall back on trying to diagnose the presence of the attribute by virtue of detectable symptoms.

We have suggested the kinds of questions an employer might ask by way of establishing evidence of the attribute and we have also suggested the kinds of activities that might serve as evidence of the attribute:

Bath Spa's Graduate Attributes are:

1. They will be employable: equipped with the skills necessary to flourish in the global workplace; able to work in and lead teams.

   a. Employer surveys routinely cite Communication Skills, Teamwork, Commercial Awareness, and Initiative amongst the most sought-after generic skills. Employers will typically ask for an example of where the candidate can demonstrate their competency or they will test candidates in a selection exercise

   b. A curriculum that includes regular and diverse modes of group-work, a range of written and oral presentation, and include reflection on success and failure will develop communication and teamwork skills. Contact with externals such as client-led briefs, mentors, and/or stakeholders including businesses will add further polish and suggest some commercial awareness.

2. They will be able to understand and manage complexity, diversity and change.

   a. Employers value individuals who can thrive in fast-moving and complex environments undertaking a range of different projects using a broad base of skills. At interview they do seek examples of students coping with deadlines, dealing with unexpected problems, and responding positively to challenging changes.

   b. A curriculum that includes regular and diverse modes of teaching and assessment can really help students evidence their competency. Where you're able to set work that keeps students on their toes this can be great developmental experience, likewise using changing teams and groups within the classroom and asking students to rotate the leadership of projects.

3. They will be creative: able to innovate and to solve problems by working across disciplines as professional or artistic practitioners. AND

4. They will be creative thinkers, doers and makers

   a. Employers increasingly seek problem-solving and creative skills - and not just in the 'creative industries'. Students will be challenged to demonstrate their ideas, their processes, and its results. Artistic or musical skill is not a proxy for being able to generate ideas and enact them with coherency and consistency under pressure. Graduates will work in mixed-skill teams in the workplace so demonstrating interdisciplinary work is also valued by employers.

   b. A creative curriculum will explore and reflect on different methods of solving problems and generating ideas. Students should have a toolkit of strategies at their disposal and have examples of selecting and using them to deliver results in appropriate contexts. The use of creative briefs and challenges - especially those set by external clients - are great evidence for students to use.

5. They will be digitally literate: able to work at the interface of creativity and technology.

   a. Students are often excellent digital consumers; but it is critical appraisal and active construction of digital materials that employers increasingly seek. Can a student efficiently search for, analyse, design, and build digital resources?
   b. A curriculum that includes regular and diverse interaction with digital technology develops skills and nuanced understanding. Students should be challenged to critique both the medium and the message as they would any other form of information or artefact. Writing and designing for different audiences with different needs and interests is critical.

6. They will be internationally networked: either by studying abroad for part of their programme, or studying alongside students from overseas.

   a. Business is increasingly international in ambition and practice. Where a student can demonstrate specific cultural understanding or at least a sympathy and flexibility of approach to communication and design, then that is attractive to employers small and large. It also opens up a far wider job market.
   b. A curriculum that encourages both the study of international perspectives and ideally interactions with people and organisations from different cultures can implicitly and explicitly broaden students' skills and give them valuable experiences to refer to in interviews.

7. They will be critical thinkers: able to express their ideas in written and oral form, and possessing information literacy

   a. Employers rarely use expressions like critical thinking or information literacy, preferring instead terms like commercial awareness, communication and research skills. Commercial awareness or business acumen is simply the application of critical thinking methodology to business models and the behaviour of organisations and markets. Good communication skills are almost always the top of employers skills lists and usually the make or break aspect of most interviews for even the most technically skilled applicant.
   b. Critical thinking tends to be rooted in a specific disciplines' context, but where you are able to explore broader applications and models of analysis that might work in a business context or be translated into business language this can be useful to students. We extensively use models like Porter's Five Forces, the Business Model Canvas, and Stakeholder analysis tools as critical thinking aids for business. Communication skills are developed through regular challenges to write and present in different formats for different audiences.

8. They will be ethically aware: prepared for citizenship in a local, national and global context

   a. Whilst few businesses explicitly seek these attributes they do want 'rounded' individuals with wider interests and often a failure to demonstrate 'professional' qualities like trustworthiness, discretion, politeness, and punctuality can be a critical issue at interview. Some employers (in all sectors) do seek specific ethical and societal awareness but this is often quite specific to their business.
   b. A curriculum that encourages reflection on individual and organisational behaviour might provide useful content to students trying to evidence their preparedness for professional life and citizenship. Equally group and team work and reflecting on successful collaboration can generate many of the same insights about building trust, respect, and collective values.

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"Business is clear that developing the right attitudes and attributes in people - such as resilience, respect, enthusiasm and creativity - is just as important as academic or technical skills." Neil Carberry, Director of Employment and Skills, Confederation of British Industry. www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-30802474
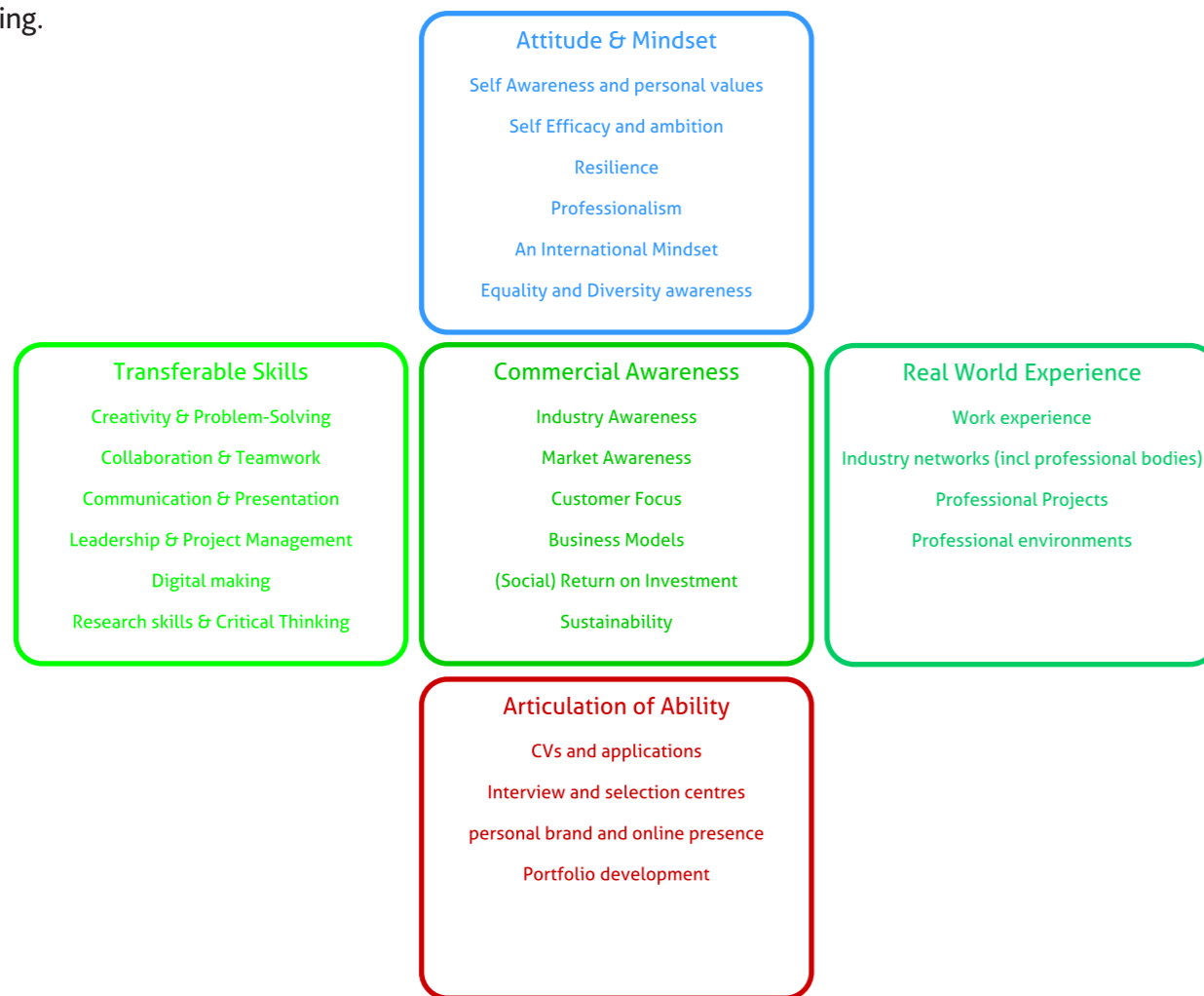
"Nearly half the recruiters who took part in the [High Fliers Graduate Labour Market 2015] research repeated their warnings from previous years – that graduates who have had no previous work experience at all are unlikely to be successful during the selection process and have little or no chance of receiving a job offer for their organisations' graduate programmes." The Graduate Market in 2015. High Fliers Research Ltd.

"The call for a greater emphasis on enterprise and entrepreneurship education is compelling. Driven by a need for flexibility and adaptability, the labour market requires graduates with enhanced skills who can think on their feet and be innovative in a global economic environment." Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education: Guidance for UK HE Providers. QAA. September 2012.

AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT

Enterprise and Employability both encompass a range of attributes, skills and know-how. It is certainly not limited to writing CVs and business plans. We believe that a well-rounded degree education must include elements from five key areas of activity and we've drawn out some of the most important ideas under each heading.

Attitude & Mindset
Self Awareness and personal values
Self Efficacy and ambition
Resilience
Professionalism
An International Mindset
Equality and Diversity awareness

Transferable Skills
Creativity & Problem-Solving
Collaboration & Teamwork
Communication & Presentation
Leadership & Project Management
Digital making
Research skills & Critical Thinking

Commercial Awareness
Industry Awareness
Market Awareness
Customer Focus
Business Models
(Social) Return on Investment
Sustainability

Real World Experience
Work experience
Industry networks (incl professional bodies)
Professional Projects
Professional environments

Articulation of Ability
CVs and applications
Interview and selection centres
personal brand and online presence
Portfolio development

1. **Mindset & Attitude**: If skills and knowledge can be likened to software then mindset is the hardware; confidence, self-awareness, resilience and professionalism transform a graduate's ability to deploy their skills to effect. Does your degree or module help develop:

   a. **Self Awareness and personal values** - can students realistically and clearly identify their skills, interests, values, motivations and other personal attributes in terms of life and career choices.
   b. **Self Efficacy and ambition** - does a student have a core belief and conviction in their abilities to achieve goals and ambitions.
   c. **Resilience** - does a student have the ability to bounce back from setbacks, and keep moving towards the direction of their goals. Resilience and determination are key attributes sought by graduate recruiters.
   d. **Professionalism** - can a student demonstrate the polite behaviour & sound judgement expected in the workplace. Executing work to a high standard and keeping relevant knowledge and skills up to date. Can they present a strong, professional image which commands the respect of others, i.e. positive personal impact.
   e. **An International Mindset** - is a student 'globally savvy', that is culturally aware and interculturally competent. The ability to adjust to different environments & work effectively with international colleagues is a must in the increasingly competitive international graduate labour market.
   f. **Equality and Diversity awareness** - can a student embrace diversity and value the different life experiences and skills people bring to organisations and society. Are they aware of barriers to equality and ready to challenge discrimination and promote equality of opportunity where appropriate.

2. **Transferable Skills**: The competency-based interview is now the default for graduate roles; can they evidence that they can execute a range of skills consistently under pressure? Does your degree or module help develop:

   a. **Creativity & Problem-Solving** - Students are able to develop original approaches in defining and solving problems, using a variety of tools and methodologies to help resolve issues. They can outline and apply strategies for overcoming obstacles, whilst assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of such strategies.
   b. **Collaboration & Teamwork** - Students are able to build positive and cooperative working relationships that successfully achieve shared goals. They are instrumental in helping to establish an atmosphere that encourages all team members to share their views and to feel listened to. Together, they can identify desired outcomes, negotiate roles and responsibilities and demonstrate flexibility in reaching a mutually agreed outcome.
   c. **Communication & Presentation** - Students will use appropriately tailored language, methods and conventions to present both written and oral content for a specified audience. They are clear, concise and focused; whilst remaining open and responsive to the views of others. Students can research, plan and deliver ideas, knowledge and information in a coherent way. They use suitable visual aids and develop skills to engage their audience in discussion. Written material is well spelt and grammatically correct.
   d. **Leadership & Project Management** - Students show potential to motivate others; assigning and delegating tasks well; setting deadlines and leading by good example; whilst allowing others to make a full contribution. They are able to plan, monitor and evaluate using appropriate techniques to provide workable solutions within a specific timeframe.
   e. **Digital making** - Students are able to synthesise, present and communicate information in ways appropriate to the task, using a range of digital applications and technologies. Typically this would include using social media tools, web-based resources (such as Wordpress/ Wix), and for the more advanced an understanding of coding. Additionally, they are proficient in basic IT skills e.g. delivering word processed correspondence, reports and documents, producing presentations and spreadsheets; maintaining of databases etc.
   f. **Research skills & Critical Thinking** - Students find, collect and record required data from a range of sources, making the best use of specialist help to locate material. Where primary data is collected they operate within the ethical dimensions of research and generate needed information using appropriate methodologies. They consider issues from a number of perspectives, questioning and evaluating the processes used for collection and generation of the information/data, before arriving at a considered critical judgment.

3. **Commercial Awareness**: This isn't about having an MBA, its about applying critical thought and analysis to businesses and organisations and how they operate so as to demonstrate that a graduate can 'hit the ground running' on gaining employment. Does your degree or module help develop:

   a. **Industry Awareness** - a critical analysis of the size, scale, and activity of the organisations operating in a particular sector (i.e. understanding how designers are employed inside and outside agencies)
   Market Awareness - a critical analysis of the size and emerging trends in particular categories of goods and services (i.e. exploring emerging trends in online educational courses and qualifications)
   b. **Customer Focus** - showing how a business satisfies customer needs and adapts to customer behaviour (i.e. changes in how books and magazines are consumed)
   Business Models - understanding how an organisation structures and aligns its activities to ensure it
   c. makes a profit (i.e. showing how changing music purchasing behaviour has driven new strategies for musical acts to survive)
   d. **(Social) Return on Investment** - explaining how a business turns an investment of time or money into impact, be that a social good or an economic gain (i.e. Demonstrating how an environmental scheme will generate more savings than it costs to run)
   e. **Sustainability** - exploring how from environmental, social, and economic standpoints an activity can be continued over the long term at a manageable cost (i.e. evidencing how the materials used by a textile business are ethically and environmentally sustainable to import from overseas)

4. **Real World Experience**: work experience has long gone from being an optional bonus to being a basic requirement. It demonstrates interest, evidences skills, and reassures a prospective employer that a new hire can cope in a professional setting. Does your degree or module help develop:

   a. **Work experience** - some form of placement in which a student is immersed in a business - and ideally in that workplace. This might be short or long, accredited or unaccredited but provides genuine experiential learning. Longer, accredited, paid, and meaningful experiences should be encouraged wherever possible.
   b. **Industry networks** (incl professional bodies) - making connections and developing confidence and capability with future peers and employers is invaluable and even fundamental in many employment sectors. Do you encourage contact with real professionals and provide chances to interact?
   c. **Professional Projects** - the provision of meaningful projects, set by external clients with a clear brief that are expecting practical results helps students translate from a school-like environment to an employment environment where their actions have impacts beyond the receipt of an academic mark.
   d. **Professional environments** - spending time in real or simulated professional environments builds confidence, develops transferable skills, and helps students translate themselves into workplace. Almost implicit in nature, professional environments engender behavioural shift away from 'classroom' mindsets. This might include office, workshop, studio, laboratory, boardroom or more specialised environments.

5. **Articulation of Ability**: even the most capable and talented students can benefit from a bit of presentational polish; understanding how employers interpret CVs, applications, and interview responses and how getting your online presence right can be the difference between a near-miss and a burgeoning career. Does your degree or module help develop:

   a. **CVs and applications** - students will be able to demonstrate an interest in an employer's business and evidence how they match an organisation's competency requirements. Students should be able to effectively present and evidence skills, abilities and interests in a professional way. Are they able to choose and use an appropriate CV structure and reflect on strong and relevant examples to showcase individual knowledge, experience and writing skills?
   b. **Interview and selection centres** - students will be able to identify skills, knowledge and abilities necessary and relevant to specific job roles. Are they able to demonstrate their 'match' to these roles. They will develop an understanding of the various methods used to assess candidates and will be helped to actively prepare for these. They will be given the opportunity to refine and practice presentations, interviews and assessment centre activities.
   c. **Personal brand and online presence** - students will engage with the ongoing process of establishing a professional image in person and online. Identifying and utilising opportunities and appropriate networking platforms to present and market their individual skills and original projects.
   d. **Portfolio development** - students will develop the ability to effectively present work and collaborations in a professional way. Choosing and using appropriate formats and examples to showcase specialist knowledge and talent in a commercially appropriate way to their chosen industry.

PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL EMBEDDING

1. **'For', 'About', and 'Through'**: educational design can include enterprise and employability as a destination and outcome of pedagogical approaches, as the subject of discussion or research, or as the mechanism through which learning is achieved. For example a module might approach problem-solving as something to teach as if it were a set of tools to be used again in the future, in the abstract as the object of research, or use problem-solving activities to explore another subject entirely. Embedding employability and enterprise need not be a shoe-horning process.

2. **Embed the content in the context of the unit, don't bolt it on later:** context is important, if the principles set out in this guide can be explored in the language and setting of the academic programme then they are more palatable and more impactful to students who can be surprisingly myopic about what their studies include. Good, sensitive, embedding of key enterprise and employability content validates and reinforces further content students might seek outside of their curriculum. Furthermore, given the number of combined honours pathways at BSU there is a real danger that students end up repeating content - especially if both courses are bolting on the same activities; if content blends in and feels subject-specific this repetition would at worst feel similar and at best be a reinforcing echo of a principle.

3. **Actions speak louder than words**: students are influenced by their academics, if a piece of employability work feels like an afterthought they'll treat it like one. If the academic leaves the room when the Careers Consultant appears the students will question the apparent value of the session.

4. **Design with the end in mind at the beginning**: be bold and rather than squeeze and shove your desired content into a conventional format think about how both content and structure lead to better outcomes. If you start with the end in mind you can test throughout your design process to see if students will get what they need to reach your intended outcomes. Whilst content teaches students knowledge it is the form and structure of a programme that enables skills and competencies to be developed.

5. **Embed strategically through a degree programme, not a module**: you needn't jam everything here into a single module. There should be a strategy to deliver elements over every year of study and should accommodate all the possible elective choices. Whilst combined honours represent a challenge this can be worked around. First year activities should focus on Mindset and Skills, the latter years should provide Awareness and Experiences. The articulation of ability piece might sit ahead of placement activities or be a final veneer.

6. **Assessment drives behaviour**: students are ruthlessly instrumental, if you're not assessing something it's unlikely to get a lot of attention. If you want to make sure students engage with an enterprise or employability activity then you have to assess it. This is somewhere that the Enterprise and Employability team and even external Industry can help and lend further credibility. Consider the behaviours you want the students to demonstrate and construct your assessment accordingly. See also Paul Hyland's helpful Assessment Framework for example formats: https://wiki.bathspa.ac.uk/download/attachments/90603616/L326%20ASSESSMENT%20FRAMEWORK%202015%20PH.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1429106444000&api=v2

7. **Signpost explicitly**: many modules reference employability and enterprise development in their module descriptors and handbooks but make little reference to them during the course of teaching. Students often don't realise that they've implicitly been developing skills that could be powerful when they apply for employment. It greatly helps future articulation if employability and enterprise learning is highlighted as such before, during, and after it takes place. This is an area where a Careers Consultant can help a course leader develop the value of existing teaching through small changes and references.

8. **Failure is powerful, enable fast failure and recovery**: learning how to experiment, fail, and try again is a critical life skill but all too often students do not have room to fail in pursuit of a decent grade and pursue safe options. A good module will include some form of early assessment, formative in nature but potentially carrying a small mark, in which they are empowered to fail and to learn. By being challenged to stretch and take risks early in a degree programme, or in a specific module, we create greater tolerance and capacity for developing more innovative outcomes.

9. **Encourage reflection on the use of a skill, don't simply assess the product**: being a good team worker cannot simply be measured by marking the final product of the team's work. It is the process of having worked in a team, of having managed conflict, that is the value of such work. Encouraging students to reflect on their processes and identify the strategies for success is more meaningful than the artefact that they produce.

10. **Test every student in a group not just the volunteers and sacrificial lambs**: student groups are skilled at minimising individuals' workloads by splitting work up amongst themselves and not volunteering to answer questions because they know someone keen will do so in their stead. Whilst their efficiency is admirable it often means that many students never familiarise themselves with every aspect of the learning available because they are able to dodge being tested on it themselves. When students present their group work make a point of randomly asking technical questions or suggesting who feeds back from the group - this means all members have to have some understanding of everyone else's research work.

Read the Higher Education Academy's Framework for Embedding Employability in Higher Education: www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/embedding-employability-in-he.pdf

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER: INTEGRATING AN EMPLOYER EVENT INTO THE CURRICULUM

Inside the Creative Industries is an annual University of Chester event organised by Careers and Employability, the media department and a team of students from a variety of courses, including journalism, graphic design, PR, marketing, TV and English literature. Students put their questions to creative industry professionals to get advice, tips, industry views and the chance to network informally with employers.

Traditionally, the event was extracurricular in nature. However, for 2012 Careers and Employability and staff from the media and art and design departments worked together to integrate the event into the curriculum by setting practical assignments based around the event, or using client briefs to work on aspects of the event.

For example, Careers and Employability presented a creative brief to TV students requiring them to produce clips from the event that were less corporate in nature than those produced by university staff last year. Students developed written pitches containing suggestions about how the event format and resulting video clips could be made more student-friendly.

Careers and Employability selected the three strongest pitches (giving feedback to all students who had submitted pitches) and shortlisted students for a producer/floor manager role. The successful student then coordinated all TV-related aspects of the event in liaison with Careers and Employability (the client), including managing a TV crew of fellow students who filmed the day's events, coordinating studio set-up and editing footage. The TV students also scheduled, conducted and filmed guest interviews.

In addition to curriculum work, other degree courses, for example digital photography, asked student volunteers to work on briefs outside the curriculum to create portfolio content for assessment, and other volunteers took on roles such as 'events assistant' and 'marketing/social media' assistant. In total, 16 students worked on every aspect of the event including branding and publicity, artwork, studio set-up and management, sound and music composition, animation, TV production/filming, social media and photography.

Source:
www.agcas.org.uk/articles/640-University-of-Chester-Integrating-an-employer-event-into-the-curriculum

BATH SPA UNIVERSITY: APPLIED PROJECT (STUDY OF RELIGIONS/PHILOSOPHY & ETHICS)

In the Year 2 core module (*Darshana, Dharma and Dao: Philosophy in the Indian and Chinese Traditions*) students undertake an 'Applied Project' assessment – demonstrating how they can apply their philosophical knowledge and understanding to 'real-world' settings, whilst developing many credible and practical skills. Students must choose from one of the following project briefs (or negotiate a different project brief with the module coordinator if they have an alternative idea):

- Project Brief A: Application for research funding
- Project Brief B: Position paper for a meeting of primary school governors, staff and parents
- Project Brief C: Position paper for an 'A' level examination board
- Project Brief D: Book proposal for a popular philosophy title
- Project Brief E: Feature article for a magazine or colour supplement
- Project Brief F: Prepare a pitch for a new set of resources/new campaign for a Not-for-Profit organisation

They are given detailed guidance for each project brief, including headings, structure and some suggested resources.

A separate seminar run by the linked Careers Consultant is timed in advance of the assessment deadline, to help students engage with the project by enhance their understanding of how academia can 'connect' to the outside world and to help them recognise the value of completing these projects in preparation for future employability. The session uses real-life job adverts/descriptions from a range of specific careers sectors/roles/organisations that align closely to these projects (e.g. academia, research, think tanks, charities, local authorities, teaching, journalism, publishing, media, marketing), but also helps students to develop techniques for recognising the skills gained in a wider 'transferable' sense, and how to articulate these via written and verbal means. The added benefit is that students begin to get a sense of the complexity of graduate job descriptions/job titles and the element of 'decoding' that needs to take place - in comparison to what they have likely experienced so far for part-time/casual work this is often a shock the system, so the earlier this can be introduced the better.

The 'translation' of the curriculum in this way has resulted in some fantastic pieces of work and effectively brings together the inside world of academia with the outside world of work.

BATH SPA UNIVERSITY: CRITICAL READING 2 (ENGLISH LITERATURE)

The English Department needed an alternative to the generic "one size fits all" graduate development module as attendance, engagement, and feedback was generally very poor. Embedding an employability thread within the 2nd year core module has connected better to students by including an element of choice and by linking to assessment - giving them a bona fide reason to engage and resulting in much better feedback. Consistent and supportive staff rhetoric has also played a significant part. The inaugural lecture entitled 'Surviving Year 2' is an introduction to the academic expectations and structure of the module, where justification for the employability aspects are positioned against the previous alternative; allowing current students to hear things from a 'you said, we did' perspective. The first assessment (a targeted professional CV) is supported by linked Careers Consultant, and submitted as a formative, and then summative assignment after getting feedback. The assessment criteria itself has evolved into a comprehensive marking grid that ensures clear guidance for students, and clarifies the expectations for a graduate level CV.

Following this, there is a two week period where the regular timetable is suspended, and students must choose to attend at least one workshop (with many opting to attend more) from a selection of 16 different career development themes, specifically designed with the client group in mind. These workshops 'feed into' the second assessment (the personal development plan: 1000-2000 words of reflective writing, focused on career goals and how to achieve them). An 'Alumni Roundtable' lecture is designed to introduce the forthcoming workshops by using the student voice to carry the message, and to provide an inspirational and motivational, yet realistic, context.

Evaluation is gathered at the end of every workshop and consistently scores very highly. In addition, the end of module evaluation also provides evidence of impact and effectiveness:

"I have really found the employment section of this module really helpful, coming to the end of year 2 is a scary time and it has certainly made things a lot more reassuring - the workshops really helped me understand how to figure out what I want to do."

"I liked the fact that a CV was part of the assessment because it made sure that we had the best CVs possible. I also liked the workshops that were put on for the PDP; again they were very useful with gaining information about later career choices."

"The employability element of the module was useful and I think it is better integrated into the module instead of a separate module."

BATH SPA UNIVERSITY: CREATIVE MEDIA PRACTICE

The course's final year is industry focused and based on students work at the supported professional practice centre Artswork Media - a digital media incubation and training business owned by the University which is currently based at the Paintworks business park in Bristol. This facility is staffed by University appointed practitioners and selected mentors working as freelancers.

Within the Year 3 project modules students participate in live briefs, often as part of a team, for a range of clients, and work with industry mentors and the University careers service to plan their futures – be it progression to further study or seeking opportunities in the workplace. Students are also encouraged and supported in undertaking paid freelance work as part of their final year and have a thorough understanding of the opportunities associated with freelance work and the process of establishing your own business.

What students say:

Overall my experience at Artswork has given me more, I believe, than almost any other degree can offer. Every project, essay or meeting has been conducted in a professional, real life office environment. We dealt with real people who wanted a real product, some were even willing to pay for the privilege. At the end of such an action-packed year I feel that as a group we went into Artswork Media as students but we are walking away from the office as young professionals.
Ed Whicher, Creative Media Practice graduate 2012

The third year of Creative Media Practice is amazing. We get to work with real clients and prepare ourselves for the professional world of work. I provides us with extremely valuable experience.
Creative Media Practice student, National Student Survey 2013

What the external examiner says:

The course embeds employability superbly through the Artswork initiative. This is a sector leading initiative which, to the credit of the University and the course team, has had significant investment. The breadth and scope of the work produced is super and professionally valuable.
Creative Media Practice External Examiner's comments, 2012

CREATIVE ENTERPRISE MODULE – COMMERCIAL MUSIC AT BATH SPA UNIVERSITY

Since 2005 over 400 final year students have undertaken this module. Students are challenged to develop a creative project over the course of the year which has some commercial element – it might be a product, a service, an event, or a series of performances – but there are some key elements to note; students actually have to DO something, not just write about it, and they have to enter it into the university's enterprise competition (historically the Business Plan Competition, now the Create it and Plan it elements of Bath Sparks).

Students organise themselves into small teams, write a business plan for their chosen music-related project and then work on creating this project throughout the year: this involves them in raising and making money, and engaging in new and existing markets. Students are encouraged to think imaginatively about potential commercial ideas, manage risk and reward, and develop future business ideas. Their journey is often illustrative. They learn the advantages of networking as well as delivering and managing their material. They are subject to peer group review as well as tutor and business support.

The planning, execution, and reflection on trying to make their ideas happen is massively valuable learning and drives not only the development of employable competencies but provides evidence that students routinely use to gain future employment should their enterprises not work out. It is ultimately a safe space to trial their ideas and learn the hard way.

CULTURING ENTERPRISE SKILLS IN THE LIFESCIENCES - UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

The workshop is based around the 'SIE Ideas Lab'™ in which students are set a real-life challenge rooted in a real social and community problem. In this case, the challenge is to explore how society can deal with the growing number of dementia sufferers and how they can play a more active part in everyday life. Using some of the key processes of design thinking, students are asked to identify the true extent of the problems faced by dementia sufferers, and to put themselves in their shoes and in the shoes of their carers.

Working in small groups, students develop a solution to one of the problems they have identified within this scenario and develop their idea into a possible pitch. The workshop finishes with a period of reflection which encourages students to think about how they approached the problem and how they communicated and worked within their small groups. It aims to support students at an early stage in their degree programme to start developing core behaviours for enterprise through bespoke learning activities.

This approach enhances students' employability as it helps them to understand how they are learning and improves their general skills for study and career management. After an Ideas Lab™, some students have also approached staff for assistance with the development of a business idea.

Source:
www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/enhancing_employability_through_enterprise_education_good_practice_guide.pdf

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