

Developing Employability Skills at University

Every day at university, you're developing employable skills. This may seem hard to believe, because you may not notice it happening, but as you attend lectures and tutorials, and participate in PASS sessions and visit the Writing / Maths Centre, you are developing a host of personal attributes that employers are seeking out. What are those personal attributes? **Self-awareness, resilience, emotional intelligence, adaptability, communication, initiative and critical thinking**

When do you develop these skills?

When you're sitting in a group during a tutorial, and realise that one of your group members is confused, and you explain what's going on (**emotional intelligence**). Or when you're sitting alone in the library, reading a journal article, questioning what the author is trying to say and thinking about how this author's argument can support your own (**critical thinking**).

Or when you visit the Writing Centre, and learn that what you've written so far doesn't really address the question being asked, so you talk with the Writing Mentor about how to revise your introduction (**resilience**). Or when you're working on an assignment and realise that you're reading the same sentence over and over again, so you go outside and take a walk to refresh your brain (**self-awareness**).

Or when you're working on a group assignment and you learn that one of your group members is ill and won't be able to complete her part of the project, so you divide up her part among the team and get to work (**adaptability**). Or when you're asked to give a presentation in your tutorial and you practice and prepare a ten minute talk that truly engages your classmates (**communication**). When you look over the Writing Centre's online writing guides, you're developing your independence and **initiative** as a learner, who can apply general advice to your particular circumstance.

These are just a few examples among the many instances where you are developing employable skills all the time. Always keep in mind that employability is a by-product of your learning, not something separate. When you are struggling—with a group assignment, or an essay, or a seminar presentation—remember that you are developing important, transferable skills that will serve you well in the workplace.

Writing and Employability

Writing is a transferable skill. That means that once you learn how to communicate effectively in one subject area, you'll be able to do it again in a different subject area, and in the workplace. Being able to write a compelling argument in your chosen discipline demonstrates your comprehension of the topic and your ability to communicate that understanding to others. It also means you're developing the tools to articulate a compelling argument in a meeting at work, or in a written report for your employer. The skills you develop in order to make those arguments has very little to do with disciplinary knowledge, and everything to do with practicing and improving your communication skills.

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Of course, you're also gaining disciplinary knowledge through your written assignments. (A lot goes on when you're given the task of writing an essay!) But, if you've ever wondered what the point of an assignment is, know that no matter what the discipline is, by going through the research, writing, and revision process, you are developing your written communication skills in a general and transferable sense.

Practicing the skills of researching, critical reading, communicating ideas, imagining your audience, and persuading readers of your position can all be transferred to any situation where you are asked to make a point, verbally or in writing. By going through the process of learning to write a clear, logical, well-supported argument, you learn critical, rigorous thinking and enhance your communication skills. That's what employers want, and that's the important skill that you will bring with you to the workplace.

Visiting the Writing Centre and Employability

When you take the time to visit a Writing Mentor and discuss how to better communicate your ideas, you demonstrate your initiative to pursue constructive criticism and your ability to apply that feedback. You're showing your commitment to being a good communicator, as well as your resilience to hear feedback and keep trying. Your attitude toward working with Writing Mentors can also be a way to build your employable skills.

When you see us Writing Mentors as supporters of your work, as critical readers and sounding boards for your ideas, you take ownership over your work and demonstrate passion for your own education. The Writing Centre is an opportunity to demonstrate your initiative in seeking help, but should not compromise your skills as an independent learner. No manager wants their employee to check in with them every moment about an upcoming project. Instead, they look for employees who will have the initiative, critical thinking and resilience to solve their own problems, and seek feedback at appropriate times.

Developing Communication Skills

We all write on our CV that we are good or even excellent communicators, but what does that mean? Are you able to give examples of exactly how and why you consider yourself a good or excellent communicator? Your time at university provides you with ample experiences and opportunities to develop your employability and communication skills. By investing in your participation at university, you have already taken steps to develop these valuable employable skills to take into your future career.

Employable skills aren't something you develop outside of university, but are in fact central to your university experience. As you work on your assignments, remember their broader relevance to your future career.