

Beacon Literature Review

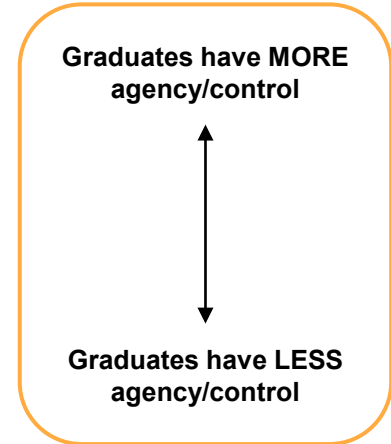
What are the most important learning/development points for university students (from Africa) to enhance their international employability?

What is “employability”?

Author/s	Definition of employability
Hillage and Pollard (1998)	Employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work
Hinchcliffe (2001) cited in Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007)	Having a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make a person more likely to secure, and be successful in their chosen occupation
Sanders and de Grip (2004)	The capacity and the willingness to be and to remain attractive in the labour market, by anticipating changes in tasks and work environment and reacting to those changes in a proactive way
Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007)	Having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful
Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic, and Kaiser (2013)	The ability to gain and retain employment (including finding new employment when necessary)
Bennett (2016)	The ability to find, create and sustain meaningful work across lengthening working lives and multiple work settings

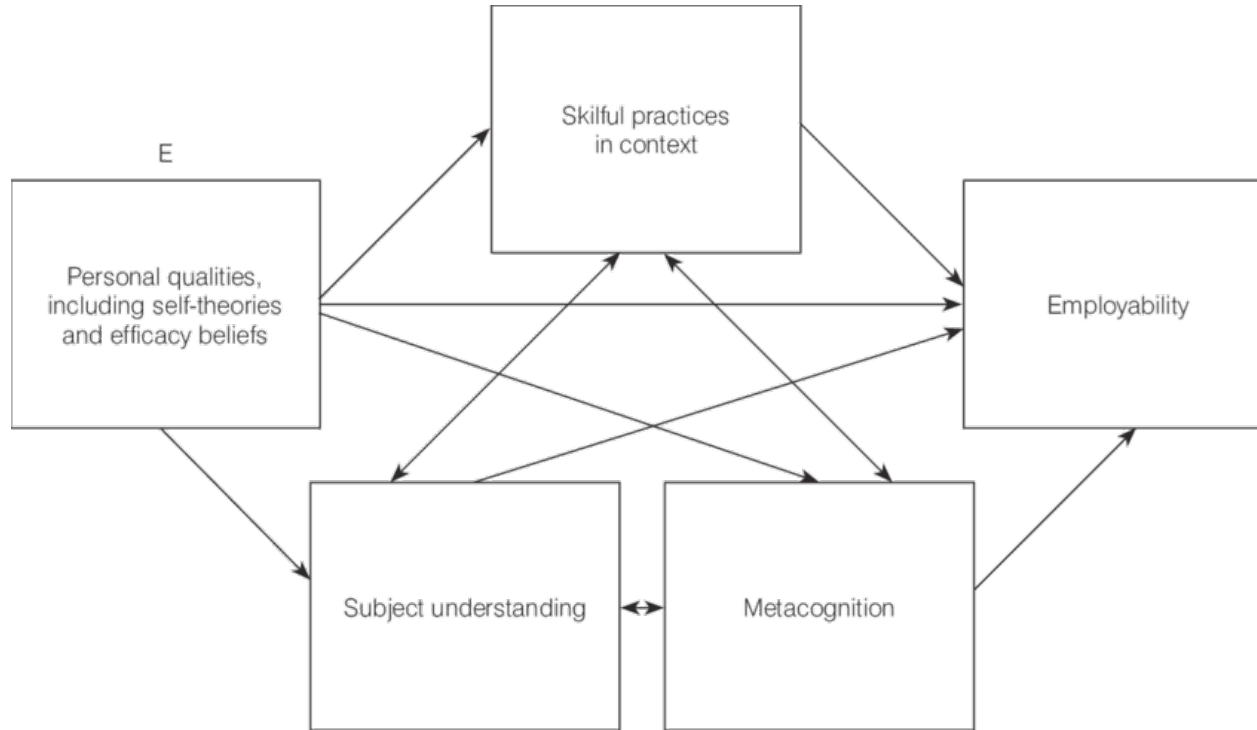
What is “employability”?

- “Employability” is not just a set of skills and attributes an individual has
 - [Tholen, 2012](#); [Hogan et al., 2015](#); [Holmes, 2011](#); [Dass 2018](#)
- Employability is affected by 4 major factors:
 - **Individual factors** (skills, competencies, and attitudes)
 - **Social factors** (networks and connections)
 - **Employer perceptions** (degree prestige and subjective impressions)
 - **Economic factors** (labor market conditions and work visa requirements)
- Taking a broad view of employability can better predict employment outcomes, particularly for international students
 - [Shumilova & Cai, 2015](#); [Li, 2016](#)

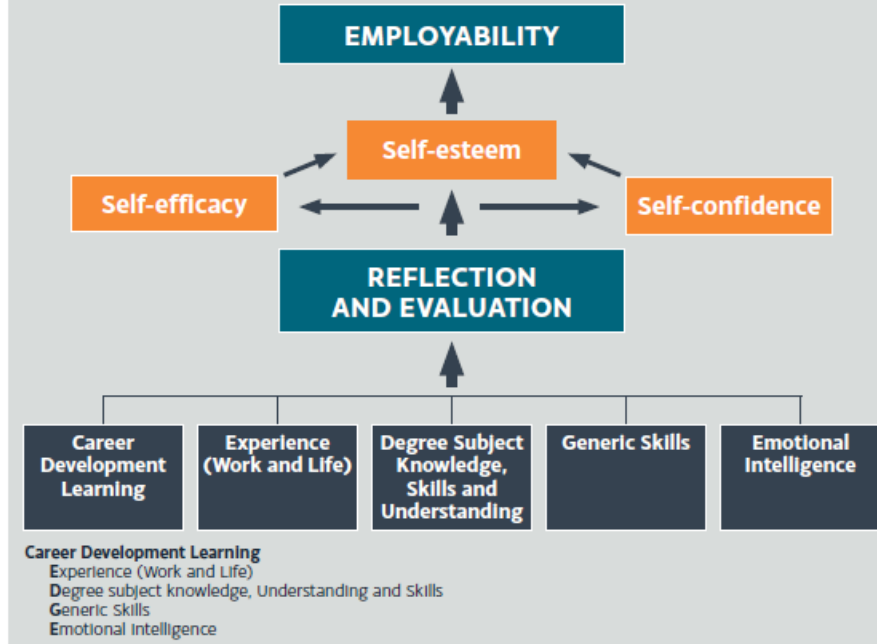


Individual Factors

The USEM Model (Understanding, Skills, Efficacy beliefs and Metacognition)



The Career EDGE Model of Graduate Employability



[The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability](#)
Dacre Poole, 2007

The UCLan - CareerEDGE Employability Development Profile

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

Please respond to the following statements. This is a personal development tool that should help you and your academic/careers adviser to identify possible areas for development over the next year. It is therefore important that you try to answer as honestly and accurately as possible.

Career Development Learning

1)	I know what kinds of work would suit my personality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2)	Apart from money, I know what I want from my working life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3)	I know where to find out information about jobs that interest me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4)	I know what I want to do when I finish my degree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5)	I know what is required for me to successfully secure the sort of work I want to do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Experience Work/Life

6)	I have a lot of work-relevant experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7)	I can explain the value of my experience to a potential employer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Degree Subject Knowledge

8)	I am satisfied with my academic performance so far	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9)	My academic performance so far is in line with my career aspirations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Generic Skills

10)	I have good oral communication skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-----	---------------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

See the full self-assessment tool at:

https://www.ntu.ac.uk/_data/asset/s/pdf_file/0015/400713/L-and-E-CareerEdge-EDP-Action-Plan-Questionnaire.pdf

Top 10 skills of 2025

Type of skill

- Problem-solving
- Self-management
- Working with people
- Technology use and development

-  Analytical thinking and innovation
-  Active learning and learning strategies
-  Complex problem-solving
-  Critical thinking and analysis
-  Creativity, originality and initiative
-  Leadership and social influence
-  Technology use, monitoring and control
-  Technology design and programming
-  Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
-  Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation

Source: Future of Jobs Report 2020, World Economic Forum.

[These are the top 10 job skills of tomorrow – and how long it takes to learn them](#)
[World Economic Forum, 2020](#)

Table 1: Factors which are associated with successful employment outcomes

	All	Older graduates	Lower socio-economic groups
Work experience in HE	✓	*	✓
Absence of term-time working	✓	✓	✓ *
Extra-curricular activities	✓	*	✓ *
Overseas experiences in HE	✓	*	*
Early job search	✓	*	✓
Techniques of job search	✓	✓ *	*
Private employer	✓/X	✓/X *	*
Medium/large employer	✓	✓ *	✓

(✓ = positive effect X = negative effect * = limited access to the positive factor)

[Access to what: an analysis of factors determining graduate employability \(2002\)](#)

Individual factor	Associated category	Mean	SD
1. <i>Listening skills</i>	Soft-skills	6.41	0.76
2. <i>Interpersonal skills</i>	Soft-skills	6.35	0.82
3. <i>Verbal communication skills</i>	Soft-skills	6.32	0.76
4. <i>Critical thinking skills</i>	Problem-solving skills	6.24	0.87
5. <i>Professionalism</i>	Soft-skills	6.19	1.06
6. <i>Written communication skills</i>	Soft-skills	6.11	0.93
7. <i>Creative thinking skills</i>	Problem-solving skills	6.09	0.83
8. <i>Adaptability</i>	Problem-solving skills	5.73	1.09
9. <i>Professional confidence</i>	Pre-graduate experience	5.69	0.89
10. <i>Job-specific competencies</i>	Functional skills	5.62	1.19
11. <i>Leadership skills</i>	Problem-solving skills	5.15	1.32
12. <i>Work experience</i>	Pre-graduate experience	5.01	1.20
13. <i>Job-specific technical skills</i>	Functional skills	4.76	1.36
14. <i>Academic performance</i>	Academic reputation	4.64	1.24
15. <i>Programme reputation</i>	Academic reputation	4.30	1.26
16. <i>Knowledge of software</i>	Functional skills	4.26	1.49
17. <i>Institutional reputation</i>	Academic reputation	4.16	1.30

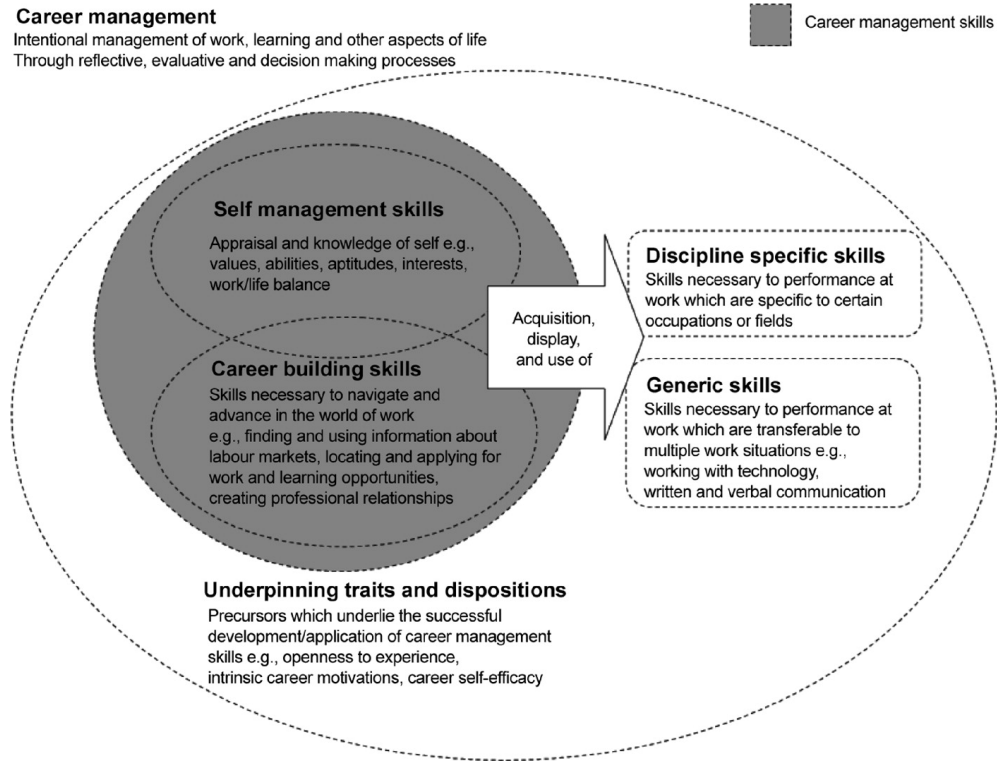
Category	Mean	SD
Soft-skills	6.28	0.64
Problem-solving skills	5.80	0.73
Pre-graduate experience	5.35	0.86
Functional skills	4.88	1.07
Academic reputation	4.36	1.04

Note: the factors used for *screening* applicants at the early stages of the hiring process are probably different from the factors that influence *getting an offer* at the final interview stages.

Table 3. Ranking of the 20 Soft Skills amongst all participants.

Rank Order	Variable	All Participants		Students/ Graduates		Employers	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Communication Skills	4.67	0.539	4.73	0.509	4.58	0.568
2	Being Committed to Work	4.61	0.638	4.54	0.707	4.69	0.526
3	Team-Work Skills	4.56	0.703	4.45	0.794	4.71	0.533
4	Learning Skills	4.43	0.771	4.33	0.843	4.55	0.649
5	Being Tolerant to Stress	4.41	0.662	4.44	0.680	4.37	0.637
6 or 7	Analysis Skills	4.38	0.692	4.47	0.716	4.27	0.644
6 or 7	Continuous Improvement Skills	4.38	0.717	4.35	0.792	4.42	0.607
8	Results Orientation Skills	4.37	0.708	4.31	0.773	4.44	0.610
9	Adaptability to Changes Skills	4.31	0.702	4.19	0.766	4.47	0.574
10 or 11	Customer/User Orientation Skills	4.13	0.891	3.98	0.991	4.31	0.703
10 or 11	Self-Awareness Skills	4.13	0.775	4.12	0.802	4.13	0.741
12 or 13	Contact Network Skills	4.10	0.859	4.27	0.809	3.88	0.872
12 or 13	Creativity/Innovation Skills	4.10	0.825	3.98	0.896	4.25	0.697
14	Decision Making Skills	4.07	0.803	4.15	0.880	3.97	0.681
15	Being Professionally Ethical	4.06	0.917	3.75	0.965	4.47	0.661
16	Conflict Management & Negotiation Skills	4.03	0.806	4.15	0.799	3.87	0.791
17	Culture Adaptability Skills	3.96	0.917	3.90	0.998	4.03	0.797
18	Management Skills	3.95	0.841	4.05	0.844	3.83	0.824
19	Leadership Skills	3.80	0.951	3.76	1.038	3.85	0.827
20	Life Balance Skills	3.71	0.984	3.72	1.108	3.71	0.802

Figure 1 Conceptual model of graduate attributes for employability including career management skills.



Career building skills include:

1. Being familiar with one's industry – the opportunities and threats that exist and which factors are critical to success. This involves a knowledge of 'the rules of the game', including industry structure, beliefs, norms, values and culture, as well as labour market information, such as unemployment rates and median salaries.
2. Being able to effectively identify and choose the best opportunities for advancement in terms of geography, projects and role.
3. Knowing how long to stay in a role, when to exploit a new employment or training opportunity and the ability to move quickly once an opportunity arises.
4. Knowing how to effectively apply for and obtain work; representing one's skills and abilities in a way that is attractive to employers or clients.
5. Creating social capital by creating strategic personal and professional relationships with those who might provide opportunities and important resources. These kinds of relating skills have been shown to have a direct effect on perceived ([Eby et al., 2003](#)) and actual employability ([Brown & Konrad, 2001](#); [Marmaros & Sacerdote, 2002](#)).

Examples (Individual Factors)

- Youth may increase their sense of self-worth through acceptance, support, and regard from mentors, who are seen as role models ([Davis 2013](#))
- A third channel is the support strong relationships offer to experiential learning, certain soft skills may be more likely to flourish in the context of these safe relationships ([USAID 2017](#))
- Volunteering, internships, and part-time jobs also help to “break down the rigid separation between school and work” ([Heckman 2013](#))
- Undergraduates were less confident in knowing which skills were needed for their chosen career; the extent to which their skills would fit the expectations of employers; and having a clear way to evidence the skills they had achieved ([Scotland 2019](#))
- Complete skills and knowledge inventory, utilizing career services regularly ([Dowson 2015](#))
 - Skills analysis - what skills are needed for the world of work? Which do I already possess and where are the gaps?
 - Skills match/identification - what skills do I need for my target career?
 - Skills trainings - how do I secure the opportunity, training, or experience that will equip me with the required skills and knowledge

Social Factors

Table 1. Definitions Related to the Different Categories of Employability Capital Matrix.

Categories	Job Related		Career Related	Development Related
	Specific	Generic		
Human capital				
– Knowledge (“I know”)	Knowledge needed to perform one’s current job	Knowledge needed to perform jobs	Knowledge needed to manage a transition and one’s career	Knowledge needed to adapt or develop oneself
– Skills (“I can”)	Skills needed to perform one’s current job	Skills needed to perform jobs	Skills needed to manage a transition and one’s career	Skills needed to adapt or develop oneself
– Attitude (“I want”)	Attitudes that are needed to perform a job		Attitudes that are needed to manage a transition and one’s career	Attitudes that are needed to adapt or develop oneself
Social capital	The network of contacts an employee has that can help to perform a job		The network of contacts an employee has that can help to manage a transition and develop one’s career	The network of contacts an employee has that can help to adapt or develop oneself

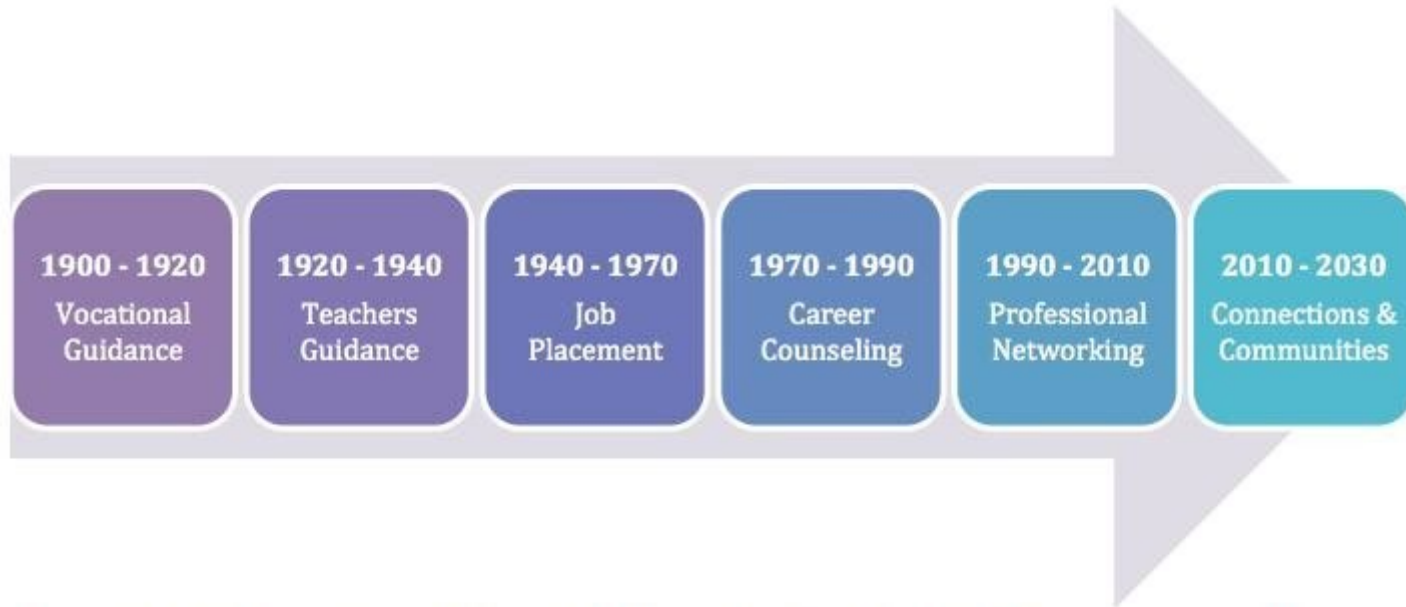


Figure 1: Evolution of Career Services in Higher Education (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014)

[Evolution of Career Services in Higher Education](#)
[Dey & Cruzvergara 2014](#)

Table 3. Comparison of the dimensions of employability in workplace learning research and higher education research.

Dimensions/Research strand	Workplace learning	Higher education
<i>Dimension 1</i>	Human capital	(Applying) disciplinary knowledge
<i>Dimension 2</i>	Social capital	Transferable generic skills
<i>Dimension 3</i>	–	Emotional regulation
<i>Dimension 4</i>	Lifelong learning and (active and passive) flexibility	Career development skills
<i>Dimension 5</i>	Reflection on self and organization	Self-management
<i>Dimension 6</i>	–	Self-efficacy
<i>Dimension 7</i>	A healthy work-life balance	

[Unraveling the concept of employability, bringing together research on employability in higher education and the workplace](#)

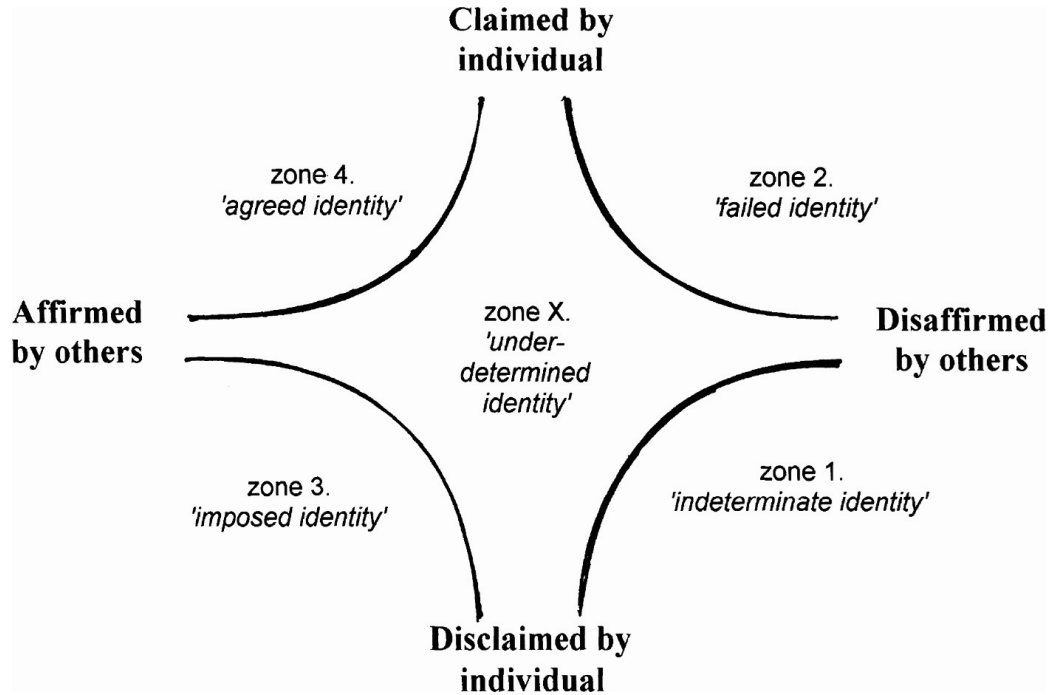
[Romgens, 2019](#)

Examples (Social Factors)

- Consider ‘connected communities’ in employability frameworks, engage “alumni for a lifetime” not merely for a short period following graduation ([Dey 2014](#))
- Employers identify graduates with international experience as possessing the skills to build relationships overseas, and to conduct business interculturally with cultural sensitivity ([Campbell 2010](#))
- 94% of recruiters use social media in their recruitment efforts, while 78% made hire through social media, 92% of those through LinkedIn ([SourcMob](#))
- The importance of students broadening their social network and refining their networking capabilities is increasingly recognized as critical to their employability, with well-developed professional social networks affording direct access to career opportunities and resources ([Batistic 2017](#))
- There is significant interest from employers in for-credit projects/consultancies/industry projects as a means of achieving scale in work-integrated learning ([Kay 2018](#))

Employer Perceptions

Figure 1. Claim-affirmation model of modalities of emergent identity.



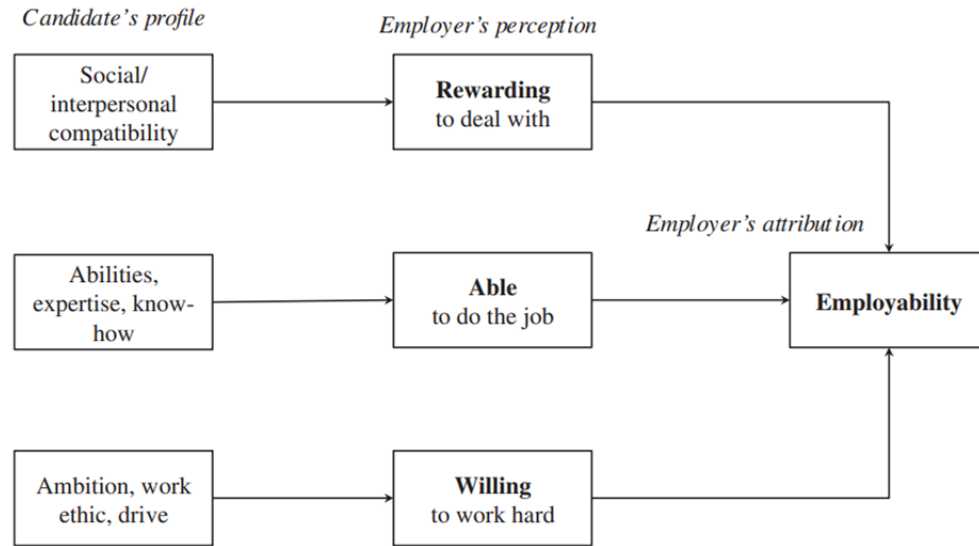


Figure 1. Determinants of employability.

Examples (Employer Perceptions)

- Employers are reviewing your LinkedIn profiles to see what kind of person you are outside of work, who you're connected to, and how you present yourself. Each gives clues to how well you can fit into corporate culture ([Schawbel 2011](#))
- If one of the goals is to maximize employability post-graduation then curriculum should focus on aspects that influence employer perceptions of employability, such as curriculum mapping. For example, there is often team-based learning in academic training, but rarely trained explicitly on the processes, roles, tensions, or conflict management required for teamwork ([Chhinzer 2017](#))

Economic Factors

Visa Requirements

New UK Graduate Visa

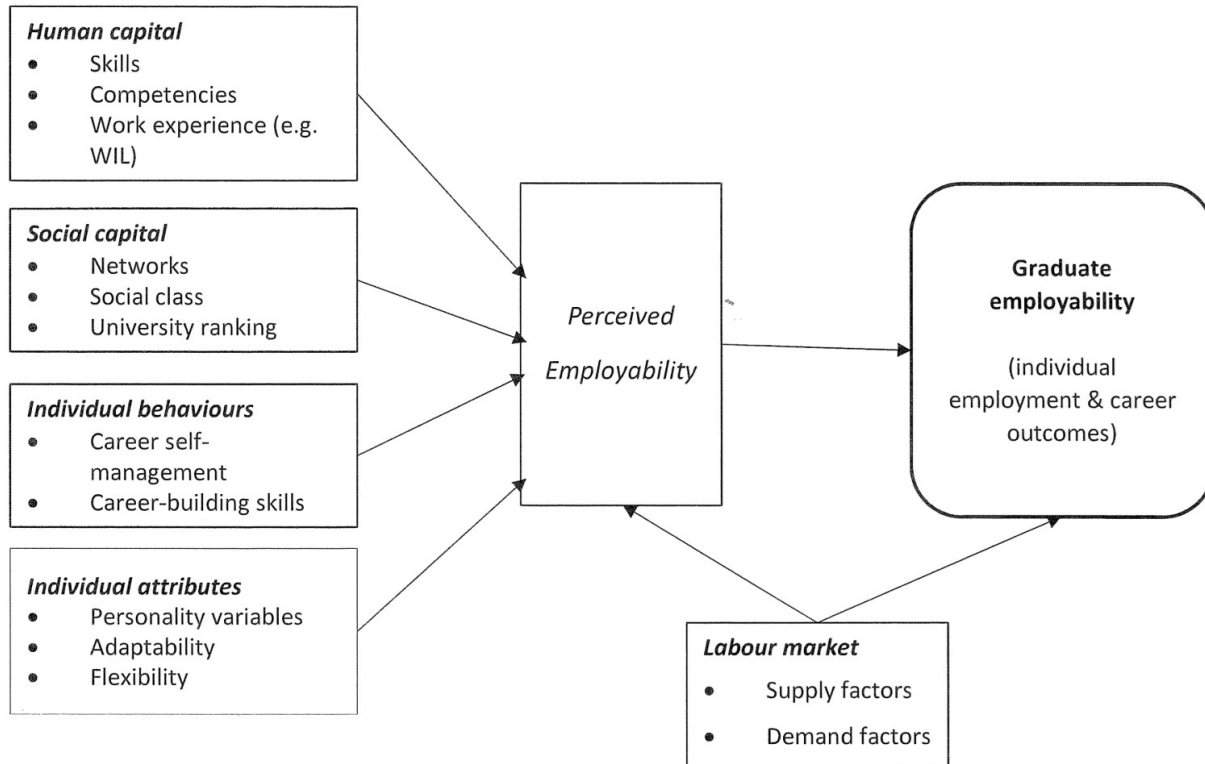
- Allows recent graduates to stay in the UK for at least 2 years after successfully completing a course in the UK
 - Must be in the UK when you apply
 - With a PhD or other doctoral degree, you can stay three years

Health and Care Worker Visa

- Available for medical professionals to do eligible job with NHS, NHS supplier, or in adult social care
 - Can stay up to 5 years
 - After 4 years you can apply to settle permanently in the UK (indefinite leave)

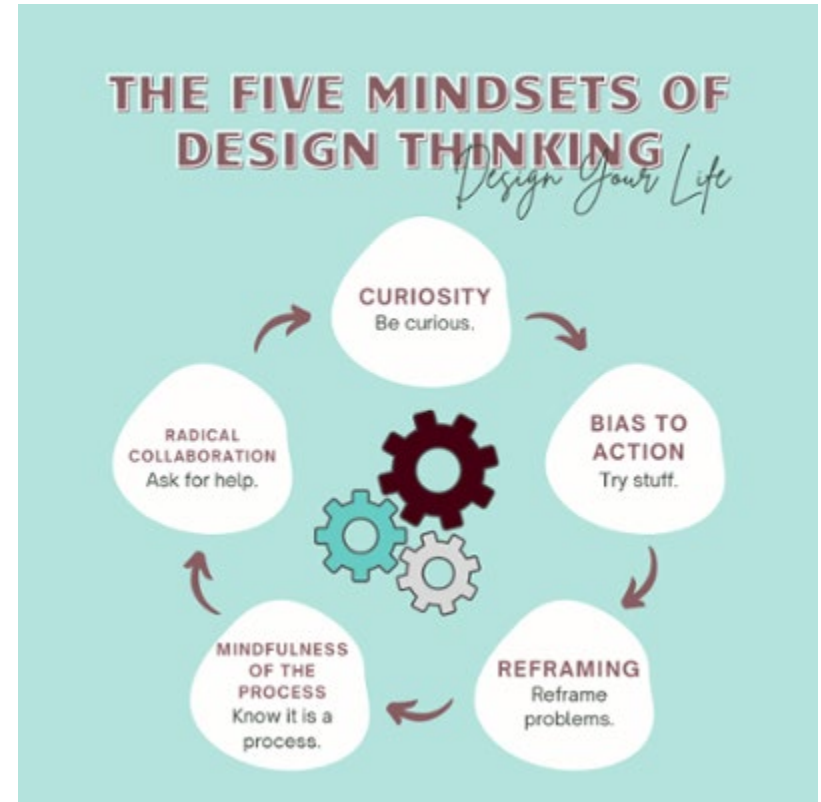
Comprehensive Employability Models

Figure 3. An integrated model of graduate employability.



Life Design

- The most comprehensive employability model being used in higher education
- External factors are part of the plan
 - “Getting good at being lucky.”
- How to maximize your chances of finding a purposeful first job:
 - Figure out what engages you and gives you energy by looking at what you’re already doing.
 - Ideate a number of possible career paths that you would find meaningful (not just one).
 - Start prototyping early to refine your search and expand your networks.
 - Informational interviews
 - Job shadowing
 - Internships
 - Get “inside” the game.



Overarching Themes

1. Employability is not only a factor of an individual's skills and attributes
 - a. It also depends on how individual factors are perceived by employers in a given labor market
2. Professional skills are best developed through experiential learning
3. Employability curricula often skip over metacognitive and career building skills
 - a. Focus on overcoming the “outsider” problem and learning “the rules of the game”
 - b. Self-assessment tools and reframing exercises are useful ways to help students get “unstuck”
4. Connections are vital resources for the ups and downs of the job search
5. Defining, iterating, and prototyping career paths early improves outcomes

Additional Resources

Free job searching resource for international students studying in the UK

- <https://www.gradlinkuk.com/about-us-uk>

Organizations who draft best practices and develop programming for career service centers on implementing employability strategies

- <https://www.agcas.org.uk/>
- <https://www.naceweb.org/>

Life Design Worksheets (samples)

ENERGY - ENGAGEMENT MAP WORKSHEET

- List your top energy giving or draining regular activities/engagements:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

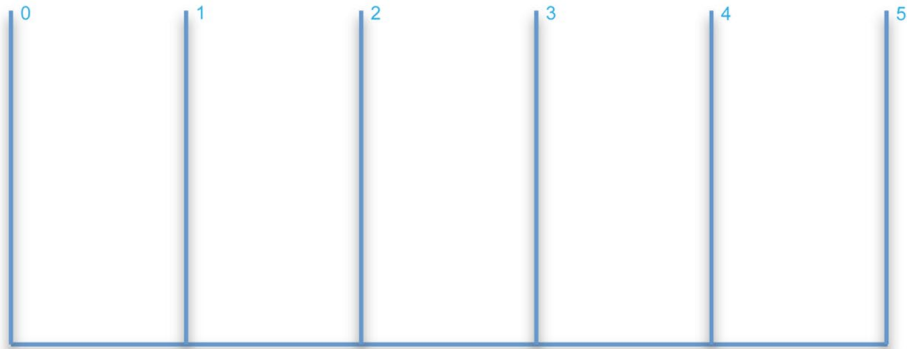
- Draw a bar of each one's (+) or (-) energy effect.
- What do you notice about your energy patterns?

- What relatively accessible changes can you make to improve your energy flows?



Life Design Worksheets (samples)

Good Time Journal – Activity Log



Alternative Plan #

6 word title: _____

Questions this plan addresses:



RESOURCES



I LIKE IT



CONFIDENCE



COHERENCE

Works Cited

1. Lynlea Small, Kate Shacklock & Teresa Marchant (2018) Employability: a contemporary review for higher education stakeholders, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 70:1, 148-166, DOI: [10.1080/13636820.2017.1394355](https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2017.1394355)
2. Tholen, G. (2014), Graduate employability and educational context: a comparison between Great Britain and the Netherlands. *Br Educ Res J*, 40: 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3023>
3. Hogan, R., Chamorro-Premuzic, T. and Kaiser, R.B. (2013), Employability and Career Success: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Reality. *Ind Organ Psychol*, 6: 3-16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/iops.12001>
4. Leonard Holmes (2013) Competing perspectives on graduate employability: possession, position or process?, *Studies in Higher Education*, 38:4, 538-554, DOI: [10.1080/03075079.2011.587140](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.587140)
5. Sarfraz, I., Rajendran, D., Hewege, C.R., & Mohan, M.D. (2018). An exploration of global employability skills: a systematic research review. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, 9, 63. DOI:[10.1504/IJWOE.2018.10012435](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJWOE.2018.10012435)
6. Shumilova, Y., & Cai, Y. (2015). Factors affecting the employability of international graduates. *International Scientific Journal of universities and leadership*, 1(1), 24-30. Retrieved from <https://ul-journal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/4>
7. Lim, Y.-M., Lee, T.H., Yap, C.S. and Ling, C.C. (2016) Employability Skills, Personal Qualities, and Early Employment Problems of Entry-Level Auditors: Perspectives from Employers, Lecturers, Auditors, and Students. *Journal of Education for Business*, 91, 185-192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2016.1153998>
8. Peter T. Knight & Mantz Yorke (2003) Employability and Good Learning in Higher Education, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 8:1, 3-16, DOI: [10.1080/1356251032000052294](https://doi.org/10.1080/1356251032000052294)
9. Dacre Pool, L. and Sewell, P. (2007), "The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability", *Education & Training*, Vol. 49 No. 4, pp. 277-89. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/top-10-work-skills-of-tomorrow-how-long-it-takes-to-learn-them/>
10. Access to what: an analysis of factors determining graduate employability. https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5366/1/rd14_02a.pdf
11. Finch, D.J., Hamilton, L.K., Baldwin, R. and Zehner, M. (2013), "An exploratory study of factors affecting undergraduate employability", *Education + Training*, Vol. 55 No. 7, pp. 681-704. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-07-2012-0077>
12. Chiara Succi & Magali Canovi (2020) Soft skills to enhance graduate employability: comparing students and employers' perceptions, *Studies in Higher Education*, 45:9, 1834-1847, DOI: [10.1080/03075079.2019.1585420](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1585420)

Works Cited (cont'd)

1. Ruth Bridgstock (2009) The graduate attributes we've overlooked: enhancing graduate employability through career management skills, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28:1, 31-44, DOI: 10.1080/07294360802444347
2. Eby, L.T., Butts, M. and Lockwood, A. (2003), Predictors of success in the era of the boundaryless career. *J. Organiz. Behav.*, 24: 689-708. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.214>
3. Brown DW, Konrad AM. Granovetter Was Right: The Importance of Weak Ties to a Contemporary Job Search. *Group & Organization Management*. 2001;26(4):434-462. doi:10.1177/1059601101264003
4. Marmaros, D., & Sacerdote, B. (2002). Peer and social networks in job search. *European Economic Review*, 46(4), 870–879. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0014-2921\(01\)00221-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0014-2921(01)00221-5)
5. Davis, K. (2013). Young people's digital lives: The impact of interpersonal relationships and digital media use on adolescents' sense of identity. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(6), 2281–2293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.05.022>
6. Heckman, J. J., & Mosso, S. (2014). The Economics of Human Development and Social Mobility. *Annual review of economics*, 6, 689–733. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-080213-040753>
7. Dowson 2015
8. Peeters, E., Nelissen, J., De Cuyper, N., Forrier, A., Verbruggen, M., & De Witte, H. (2019). Employability Capital: A Conceptual Framework Tested Through Expert Analysis. *Journal of Career Development*, 46(2), 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845317731865>
9. Dey, F. and Cruzvergara, C.Y. (2014), Evolution of Career Services in Higher Education. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2014: 5-18. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20105>
10. Inge Römgens, Rémi Scoupe & Simon Beausaert (2020) Unraveling the concept of employability, bringing together research on employability in higher education and the workplace, *Studies in Higher Education*, 45:12, 2588-2603, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2019.1623770
11. Anne Campbell (2010) Developing generic skills and attributes of international students: the (ir)relevance of the Australian university experience, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 32:5, 487-497, DOI: 10.1080/1360080X.2010.511121
12. 94% of recruiters use social media in recruitment efforts. <http://sourcemob.com/94-of-recruiters-use-social-media-in-recruitment-efforts/>
13. Batistic, S. and Tymon, A. (2017), "Networking behaviour, graduate employability: a social capital perspective", *Education + Training*, Vol. 59 No. 4, pp. 374-388. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-06-2016-0100>
14. Kay, J., Ferns, S., Russell, L., Smith, J., & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2019). The Emerging Future: Innovative Models of Work-Integrated Learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 20(4), 401–413. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1238315>
15. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2011/02/21/5-reasons-why-your-online-presence-will-replace-your-resume-in-10-years/?sh=2969430d6069>
16. Chhinzar, N. and Russo, A.M. (2018), "An exploration of employer perceptions of graduate student employability", *Education + Training*, Vol. 60 No. 1, pp. 104-120. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-06-2016-0111>
17. Marilyn Clarke (2018) Rethinking graduate employability: the role of capital, individual attributes and context, *Studies in Higher Education*, 43:11, 1923-1937, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2017.1294152