

ASK us about...



Job Prospects

Making Yourself Employable

Hit the ground running

In today's graduate market a degree on its own is not usually enough to convince employers that you are worthy of a job.

A survey carried out on behalf of the Institute of Directors (IoD) in October 2007 questioned 500 directors to gain their views on the skills and qualities they particularly valued in graduate employees. The 'top ten' skills and qualities IoD members rated as being most important for recent graduates to possess were:

1. Honesty and integrity
2. Basic literacy skills
3. Basic oral communication skills (e.g. telephone skills)
4. Reliability
5. Being hard working and having a good work ethic
6. Numeracy skills
7. A positive, 'can do' attitude
8. Punctuality
9. Ability to meet deadlines
10. Team working and co-operation skills

When asked to rate employability skills compared to the specific occupational, technical or academic knowledge and skills associated with their degree, **65% of graduate employers placed more importance on employability skills** (Source: Institute of Directors skills briefing: December 2007).

"21st century graduates need to demonstrate to employers that they can 'hit the ground running'. In addition to working hard to gain a good degree, students should engage in extra curricular activities and obtain work experience in order to develop skills that will make them better prepared for the world of work"

Carl Gilleard
Chief Executive, Association of Graduate Recruiters

Need more help? Just ASK!

- Visit the Help Zone at Student Services:
 - City North Campus (Perry Barr), First Floor Baker Building
 - Gosta Green, room G27
 - Edgbaston Campus, Second Floor Seacole Building
- Dates and times of drop-ins are available on our website www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services/see-us, along with details of how you can contact us.
- You can access useful links and information at www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services/careers, or telephone **0121 331 5588** for help and advice.

Student Services Career Zone, October 2009
View our full range of leaflets online:
www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services/careers/handouts.html

People Skills

Team working

The ability to work effectively in teams, often more than one team at once; and to be able to re-adjust roles from one project situation to another in an ever-shifting work situation. *Supportive, facilitator, organised, coordinator, deliverer, imaginative, delegator, open-minded.*

Leadership

The ability to take control of a situation and to lead by empowering others to follow. Having the vision and innovation to move forward. *Dynamic, motivator, team-builder, confidence booster, energetic, capable, outward-looking, accountable, visionary*

Interpersonal skills

The ability to relate to, and feel comfortable with, people at all levels and to be able to make and maintain relationships as circumstances change. *Listener, adviser, counsellor, politically aware, initiator, professional, co-operative, constructive, assertive.*

Customer orientation

The ability to establish a confident and flexible relationship with people important to the employer or company. *Welcoming, friendly, caring, approachable, constructive, accommodating, tactful, diplomatic, tolerant.*

Oral / written communication

The ability to communicate, formally and informally, verbally and in the written form, with a wide range of people both internal and external to the organisation. *Educator, trainer, communicator, presenter, promoter, influencer, humorous, empathetic, telephone skills*

Cultural Awareness

The ability to speak, write, understand more than one language; valuing languages; awareness of other cultures and how they impact upon career decisions and / or work environment. *Specific language skills, cultural awareness, international experience, written and oral expertise, sensitivity*

Generalist Skills

Problem-solving / intellectual skills

The ability to analyse, critique and synthesise information in order to solve problems. *Achiever, successful, results-orientated, project management, creative, practical, logical, astute, agile mind*

IT / computer literacy

The ability to accept, learn and adapt to new technology and make the most of the opportunities it presents. *IT skills, software packages, common sense, task-orientated, progressive, specific, office skills, keyboard skills, electronic communication e.g. internet, email, fax*

Flexibility and adaptability

The ability to respond to change, to pre-empt change and ultimately to lead change. Understanding of work based culture. *Multi-disciplinary, flexible, versatile, multi-skilled, willing, obliging, mobile, adaptable*

Numeracy skills

The ability to handle numbers includes basic maths skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, an understanding of percentages, gathering statistical data in various formats and being able to analyse, interpret and present them in a clear and accurate way. *Accurate, logical, problem-solver, detailed, methodical, consistent, quick thinker, analytical, thorough*

Business acumen

Use, observe and develop skills appropriate for a commercial environment. Being an innovator, and a professional with effective marketing and communication skills. *Competitive, entrepreneurial, enterprising, commercial, foresight, budgeter, risk-taker, effective written communication e.g. reports, business letters, effective documentation.*

Commitment

Showing an interest and dedication to a topic, subject, value or activity etc. *Dedicated, trustworthy, conscientious, reliable, loyal, punctual, knowledgeable, experienced*

Self-Reliance

Self-awareness / confidence

Self-confidence, self-awareness, self-belief, self-direction self-sufficiency, and self-promotion. *Purposeful, focused, reflective, perceptive, honest, objective, realistic, balanced*

Self-promotion skills

The ability to advertise your own agenda and publicise personal strengths by selling real benefits to someone else. *Positive, persuasive, pleasant, proactive, persistent, ambitious, opportunistic, promoter*

Initiative, proactivity, self motivation

Being a self-starter, resilient, tenacious and determined. *Resourceful, energetic, drive, flexible, self-starter, self-reliant, initiative, self-disciplined*

Networking skills

For successful personal development, it is vital to build contacts throughout your working life. The process of finding people who are ready, willing and able to help you is the basis of this skill. *Initiator, trustful, personable, relationship-builder, persistent developer, resourceful, respected*

Willing to learn

The ability to learn and continue learning throughout life. *Motivated, adaptable, enthusiastic, active, keen learner, inquisitive, continual improver*

Action planning and self-regulatory skills

Self discipline, time-keeping, the ability to deal with stress, to plan and prioritise your workload and to "juggle" several tasks at once. *Decision-maker, planner, organised, negotiator, responsive, evaluator, forward thinker, target driven, able to prioritise*

Specialist Skills

Company-specific skills

Meeting the skill requirements of the company either on recruitment or on-the-job, being prepared to adapt and learn new skills to meet future "commercial" needs. *Specialist knowledge e.g. product or market knowledge; specialist skills e.g. IT packages; unique language skills e.g. Chinese; specialist interpersonal skills e.g. public speaker.*

Technical skills / knowledge

An understanding of basic principles rather than large stocks of specialist knowledge. *Professional, sector-based or functional skills e.g. journalism, research, aerospace engineering, tax accounting, counselling, creative design, economist, personnel, sales, marketing.*

Understanding commercial goals of company

An understanding of the values of the company or organization; and the need to balance needs of shareholders / owners with the needs of the market or individual. *Specialist understanding of an organisations goals, priorities and future direction (combination of self-reliance, business acumen and people skills).*

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Student Services

T: 0121 331 5588
www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services

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Student Services

How can I develop employability skills?

Your degree programme will enable you to develop employability skills such as:

- Teamwork
- Preparing and delivering presentations
- Problem solving
- Research skills
- Analytical skills

Listing the skills developed on your course should help you understand the relationship between your degree and the job market, support career choice and help you develop your application skills.

You can also develop employability skills from your other activities:

- Work experience (paid or unpaid)
- Volunteer work
- Extracurricular activity
- Networking

Extracurricular activities

Getting involved in activities outside of study can give you additional information to put on your CV and demonstrates to employers your interests, your abilities and the kind of skills you choose to use.

University offers an ideal opportunity to take part in activities that can develop your interests and skills, such as:

- Student clubs and societies
- Voluntary work, study exchanges and cheap travel
- Mentoring schemes

For example, membership of sports clubs is a useful indicator of team skills; taking on responsibility for organising fixtures or finances demonstrates the skills that employers seek. Or becoming a student representative will develop your negotiation skills and give you experience of liaison at various levels.

It is important to recognise that activities you do outside work and study may enable you to develop relevant employability skills!

Work experience

Employers increasingly seek graduates with work experience. Most students will acquire work experience of some kind through vacation or part-time employment. Although the work may be routine and seem unskilled it can enable you to develop relevant transferable skills (see the "Employability Skills Exercise" on the next page).

Gaining relevant skills and experience can be more difficult, but is possible through paid company vacation schemes, placements or work shadowing days. Applications need to be made around six to nine months in advance.

Remember, you don't have to apply to formal 'schemes' – why not set up your own work experience placement by contacting employers with a speculative CV and covering letter?

Networking

Networking can be defined as "the creation, development and use of personal contacts for mutual benefit, or for the benefit of others".

The old saying 'it's not what you know but who you know' is often true. Use every opportunity to build up contacts in your academic, professional and social life who may be able to help you with your future career plans. Only 20% of job vacancies are advertised through the traditional media of local and national newspapers therefore it is vital to have a network of contacts in as many areas of work as possible.

Volunteering

Employers value voluntary work, and the skills you gain will be transferable to whichever career you eventually choose. The Students' Union has details of local volunteer opportunities, or you can try the following resources:

Birmingham Voluntary Service Council
Tel: **0121 643 4343** Email: admin@bvsc.org

V: Information about volunteering for 16-25 year olds:
www.vinspired.com

Do It: volunteering opportunities:
www.do-it.org/wanttovolunteer

Employability Skills Exercise

This exercise helps you to identify the skills that you have! The skills listed in the table are general skills that will be an asset in any job.

- Tick where you have used each skill; was it during your studies, at work, or in a social setting?
- Think of an example of when you have used it
- Note it down!

PEOPLE SKILLS	<i>STUDY</i>	<i>WORK</i>	<i>SOCIAL</i>	Examples of where you have used this skill
Team working				
Leadership				
Interpersonal skills				
Customer orientation				
Oral / written communication				
Cultural Awareness				
SELF-RELIANCE SKILLS				
Self-awareness / confidence				
Self-promotion skills				
Initiative, proactivity, self-motivation				
Networking skills				
Willing to learn				
Action planning and self-regulatory skills				
GENERALIST SKILLS				
Problem-solving / intellectual skills				
IT / computer literacy				
Flexibility and adaptability				
Numeracy skills				
Business acumen				
Commitment				
SPECIALIST SKILLS				
Company-specific skills				
Technical skills / knowledge				
Understanding commercial goals of the company				

You will probably run out of space soon! Now that you have identified your strongest skills, you need to know how to express this. Overleaf, there is a brief description of each skill, followed by a selection of "buzz words" (in italics) that you may find useful.

Developed from "The Art of Building Windmills" – Peter Hawkins 1999;
Graduates Work - CRQ 1997

