

Skills for Learning

Guide to Employability Skills from Assignments, Research and Dissertation Writing

When you begin to apply for jobs and attend interviews, it is highly likely that employers will ask you to give examples of how you have gained specific skills from your time at university. This guide reviews the specific employability skills you can gain from preparing assignments, carrying out research and writing dissertations. It should be a useful aid to you when drawing up your CV or applying for jobs and work placements.

Preparing Assignments

Doing assignments at university prepares you for work in a variety of ways. Employees who can take on a task, “run with it” and deliver results on time, are highly sought after. Employers expect graduates to be dependable, reliable, and have the initiative to know when to ask for further information and know how to find things out for themselves. They will also expect you to be able to plan effectively, be aware of deadlines and foresee possible problems.

As you progress through your course and related assignments, you will not only develop your subject knowledge, but also your ability to plan and organise your work. It is not unusual to struggle a little with planning your initial assignments, but by learning from this, you will develop the following key skills:

- Understanding, and analysing a brief / list of requirements
- Knowing how to find and use information
- Planning and organisational Skills
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Ability to problem solve and think analytically

Research: Finding and Using Information

The ability to find the right information at the right time is perhaps one of the most valuable graduate skills of all. Not only is it important to be able to source information for your employers and to provide reports that may help them make crucial decisions, it is also essential to keep abreast of your field and be aware of new advances and changes. In an ever dynamic and changing job market, you may need to be proactive in your learning and acquisition of new skills and knowledge, either to stay ahead in your profession or to be able to move to a new one if necessary. The skills you develop in doing so are:

- Information literacy (for example, finding and using journal articles)
- IT skills
- Critical thinking
- Decision making
- Planning and organisation

Dissertations

Your dissertation will be probably the largest piece of work that you complete during your studies. Your written research and analysis of a specific area within your subject discipline will draw on a wide range of your academic skills, along with your subject knowledge and expertise. In terms of your skills as a potential graduate employee, your dissertation is a showcase of your skills in:

- Research and information literacy skills
- Intellectual /critical reasoning
- Planning and organisation
- Problem solving and analysis
- Written communication
- Academic writing
- Verbal communication (for example, if you have an oral exam (Viva))
- IT



Cite this work:

Skills for Learning (2024) *Guide to Employability Skills from Assignments, Research and Dissertation Writing*. Available at: <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/skills> (Accessed: give date accessed)

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