



Enhancing Student Support: Personal Tutor group sessions

Thinking of employability

The **aim** of this session is to introduce UG students, particularly 1st years (NB: the session plan should be adapted to suit the year of the students, their discipline or their needs. Notes to tutors do include some ideas on adaptation or modification) to employability and what it means to students, to challenge their assumptions about the concept and its relevance, and to encourage students to make full use of the University's wide range of opportunities in the formal curriculum, as well as in co- and extra-curricular activities to develop employability.

The plan below outlines potential activities that may be undertaken by the tutor during the session in order to meet the objective and the outcomes; *it isn't however a fixed structure and should be adjusted according to the needs and expectations of the learners.*

This introductory session is planned to take between 45 and 60 minutes (depending on group size, level and needs of students, etc), with an interactive, student-centred and reflective focus from the start. Considering it is an introductory session only, the transfer between activities should be swift and dynamic. Tutees will be encouraged to record and share any reflections with their peer group after the session and possibly design a plan for working with employability.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

By the end of the session learners/tutees will have:

1. Challenged own potential assumptions relating to the employability concept and relevance
2. Appreciated the dynamic wider context within which employability is developed
3. Discussed and reflected on the links between employability and the Graduate Attributes Framework, with focus on the

three overarching attitudes or ways of thinking: Enquiry and Lifelong Learning, Aspiration and Personal Development, Outlook and Engagement

4. Reflected on own understanding of, motivations and aspirations with regards to Graduate Attributes and employability development and encouraged students to seek and make full use of the available opportunities from the start

Activity and proposed timing	Learning approaches or methods used	Resources	Objective	Comments (e.g. adapting session)	Potential challenges	Potential benefits
Introduction and warmer 5 mins	<p>Introduce students to the aims of the session. Engage them into drafting initial definitions of employability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Slide 2</u>: students get into pairs or groups of 3 (max!) and define what employability is, what it means to them - (scaffolded and more in-depth approach (optional, may be used with PG students or those who are not new to employability) get them to define what employability is NOT). <p>Students may be encouraged to swap their sheets and definitions with another group for peer learning. The activity should be kept to 5 mins max and timed accordingly to keep the discussions focused and get students' 'very first' thoughts.</p>	Blank sheets of paper (one per group), pens	1	<p>Working in small groups encourages sharing, discussion and different viewpoints</p> <p>Scaffolded activity may be suitable for PG students or more senior UG</p>	<p>Students may find the second part (what GAs are not) a bit challenging; peer discussion may be beneficial here.</p> <p>Timing should be kept to 5 mins max to keep students' discussions focused</p>	<p>Asking for definitions at start reveals students' way of thinking and potentially exposes and challenges any assumptions (to be discussed in the following stage of the session)</p>

Two perceptions of employability 3 - 5 mins	<u>Slide 3:</u> The two 'interpretations' or perceptions of employability are presented. Tutor at this stage may leave the students to work these two interpretations out for themselves (students work in small groups or pairs on this task)	PowerPoint (enclosed), projector	1			Excellent potential here for students to create meaning rather than 'be told'
Defining employability 3-5 mins	<p><u>Slide 4:</u> 'I am employable because...' Analysing 'surface' approaches to the concept of employability leads to establishing what employability is not. With the last bullet point, it would be worthwhile to get students to vocalise their own definition or understanding from Slide 2 activity.</p> <p><u>Slide 5</u> gives a widely used definition of employability by Yorke (2006); students can compare and discuss their own definition against this one to find similarities and differences.</p> <p>There is more insight into employability provided on www.employability.ed.ac.uk and both staff and students can be referred to this website.</p>	PowerPoint, projector	1 and 2	This section should be adapted in length and depth to suit the students and their level of university life awareness. E.g. for more advanced groups USEM model of employability can be discussed	Slide 4: it is worth noting that these are not incorrect interpretation of employability, rather they are the more surface approaches to the concept and value of employability	
Dynamic context: 7 - 10 mins	The tutor may at this point go back to one of the initial questions/assumptions: e.g. 'is it all about getting a job?' and introduce the task as 'Drafting/drawing the wider context for employability':	PowerPoint, projector	2	For less advanced or less employment-experienced groups tutors	Although some students may not have direct employment experience; however, they	

	<p>It would be interesting for students to share employment experiences and/or employment/job market knowledge and awareness at this point. The students can work in small groups of 3 or 4 (it's good to change the combinations of people within groups with each activity) to 'draw' the wider context: they can put the word 'work' or 'employment' in the centre and think of as many forces of the market and other aspects of life in general that impact on employability.</p> <p><u>Slide 6</u> can be presented after the discussions to recap on the conclusions from group discussions and compare the main aspects identified.</p> <p><u>Slide 7</u> serves as a continuation of the 'dynamic' line of thinking on employability as an ongoing process.</p>			<p>can prompt the students by identifying some areas of the wider context discussions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1). companies/or organisations, 2). skills and knowledge, 3). careers and career paths, 4). money/finances, etc. 	<p>will have awareness and prior knowledge. Sharing personal stories of resilience in securing and maintaining and progressing in employment and careers are useful to add credibility and engagement to peer discussions</p>	
<p>Employability as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lifelong learning -Outlook and engagement -Aspiration and Personal Development 	<p><u>Slide 8, 9 and 10</u>: the focus here is on attitudes and ways of thinking and linking employability with the University's Graduate Attribute Framework (and particularly the three overarching attributes).</p> <p>As a reflective exercise, students could think of specific examples from their own life (study, work, society) to answer the set of questions on learning and on outlook and engagement. For <u>Slide 10</u></p>	<p>PowerPoint, projector</p>	<p>3 and 4</p>		<p>'Finish the sentences' (brief) activity builds on the students' personal interpretations and encourages reflective learning</p>	

10-15 mins	'Finish the sentences' activity, students can work individually or in pairs to later swap and share their thoughts.					
Employers' perspective 15 mins	<u>Slide 11:</u> This slide summarises and closes the session with a very generic and therefore debatable (!) 'employer perspective'. To make this more relevant and practical to students, get students into small groups and ask them to decide on 5 top graduate attributes (skills, behaviours and attitudes) that a student of the University of Edinburgh graduating <u>from their discipline</u> should be able to <u>demonstrate</u> : ask students to clearly <u>articulate and justify</u> their choices, referring to benefits of developing these in their personal and professional lives. If time allows, they can visually and/or verbally present their ideas to the rest of the class. <u>An alternative idea</u> could be a role play, where students get into groups and are employers (they can create their identifies and decide on the sector and what their 'organisation' does) and they 'attend' an employability conference where they discuss the attributes they think university graduates need to demonstrate and/or develop most in order to be more employable in the global and dynamically changing world of work.	Power Point, projector, pieces of paper for student groups to present their graduate attribute models (if applicable) OR business card format blank cards	4	This is a choice of two activities, open to adaptation. Can be replaced with a video e.g. on the importance of creative confidence : http://www.ted.com/talks/david_kelley_how_to_build_your_creative_confidence (NB: please evaluate prior to session whether video suitable for your students' context and discussions)	Getting into 'employers shoes' offers the opportunity to consider their perspective and utilise students' job market awareness and observations and experiences. It is also a chance to contextualise the attributes and get students thinking about sector competencies or professional values.	The role play activity may run the danger of dragging on; tutors should keep it focused (and possibly timed, particularly if they are making the business cards) to leave some time at the end to share conclusions and reflections from it.
Questions	Open plenary					