**Employability Skills: Maintaining relevance in Marketing Education, 2013**

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Abstract

Employability is an important outcome of education and particularly so with vocationally orientated degrees such as Marketing. Supporting this there is a wide range of literature discussing the variety of skills that should be developed within students in general and those on business and marketing courses in particular (Bennett, Dunne, & Carré, 1999, Hillage & Pollard, 1998, Zinser, 2003) however, with increasing competition for graduate placements and jobs it is important to ensure that the skills under discussion remain relevant to the conditions of the job market and that any new requirements are identified that will help to give students an 'edge'.

This study that was undertaken to explore the meaning, purpose and relevance of the employability skills. Qualitative and quantitative research was undertaken amongst employers of marketing and business graduates to examined how they rated the importance of the 'employability' skills that the university strives to develop in its students and sought to identify other traits that they looked for in 'would be successful' candidates.

The objectives of this research study were to explore the range of employability skills that are offered to students, investigate the relevance and desirability of the current employability skills amongst current graduate employers, identify whether employers have other decision making criteria which are being overlooked by the university and assess the implication for learning and teaching in respect of LSBU marketing courses

Introduction

'Employability skills' have been the subject of a considerable amount of research and the literature is rich with discussion in relation to the relative benefits to be gained for students in terms of improving their chances of securing employment relatively quickly after graduation.

Employability is therefore an important outcome of education, particularly with vocationally orientated degrees such as Marketing. Supporting this, a wide range of literature discusses the skills that should be developed within students in general and those on business and marketing courses in particular (Bennett, Dunne, & Carré, 1999, Hillage & Pollard, 1998, Zinser, 2003). However, with increasing competition for graduate placements and jobs, do the skills under discussion remain relevant to the conditions of the job market and still give students an 'edge'. This study was undertaken to explore the meaning, purpose and relevance of employability skills, using qualitative and quantitative research amongst employers of marketing and business graduates, to examine how they rated the importance of the 'employability' skills that universities strive to develop in students and to identify other traits that are looked for in 'would be successful' candidates.

The objectives of the study were to explore the range of employability skills offered to students, investigate the relevance and desirability of them amongst current graduate employers, identify any other decision making criteria which may be over-looked by universities, and assess the implication for learning and teaching in respect of marketing courses.

The Institute for Employment studies (IES) website quotes Hillage and Pollard (1998) who defined employability as 'being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work.' In order to do this, a graduate needs "Employability skills", and these skills have been the subject of a considerable amount of research. The literature is rich with discussion of their benefits to a student when it comes to improving their chances of securing employment, however, much of this work focusses on defining 'Employability Skills' in actuality. Hillage and Pollard (1998) reflect the core focus developed in 1997 by the Dearing Report, which framed the debate by demonstrating that employers wanted graduates to exhibit skills such as "those personal and cognitive capabilities that people use to carry out a wide range of tasks and activities" (Dearing 1997).

While Dearing did not identify a definitive list of these skills, it recommended four that were believed to be "key to the future success of graduates": communication skills, numeracy, the use of information technology and learning how to learn (Dearing 1997, 9.17). Hillage and Pollard (1998), who undertook their research on behalf of the Department for Education and Employment, while building on Dearing, examine the issue more specifically in terms of securing initial employment rather than long term career success. They proposed a definition of employability with four constituent parts: Employment Assets, Deployment (including career management and job search skills), Presentation (including job-getting skills), and finally Students' personal circumstances and external factors).

Other work carried out around the time of Dearing, such as that of Baruch and Leming (1996) sought to break down and classify these initial definitions, with many of the terms listed by Dearing becoming known as the "Generic Skills". The Pedagogy of Employment Group (PEG) summarised these key skills in 2006, listing Imagination /creativity, Adaptability / flexibility, Willingness to learn, Independent working / autonomy, Working in a team, Ability to manage others, Ability to work under pressure, Good oral communication, Communication in writing for varied purposes, Numeracy, Attention to detail, Time management, Assumption of responsibility and for making decisions, Planning coordination and organising ability

A major focus for work has been how to prioritise and cluster these generic skills, a topic approached for example by Nabi and Begly (1998) who posited the three core areas of 'personal', 'communication' and 'problem solving' skills and also by Douc and Metzger (2007) (See Appendix 2). The work of Raybould and Sheedy (2005) was more prescriptive, and while they too talk of core skills such as IT, communication, action planning and self-management, they introduce the discussion of personal character traits such as the ability to work under pressure, coping with uncertainty, networking and team-

working. This element echoes Dearing (1997) in highlighting the importance of a willingness to learn, which also could be seen as a character trait rather than a pure skill. Raybould and Sheedy (2005) is supported by Hilton (2008), who, in looking at skills for the future, cites Richard Murnane of Harvard who reiterates that the same wide range of skills and competencies would remain valuable. Looking more specifically at marketing graduates however, Dekko (2006) found these graduates were often under-prepped in skills and over-prepped in knowledge.

Useful work was undertaken by Pool and Sewell (2007), who reviewed a number of models that sought to broaden concepts of employability into areas of self-reflection and personal development. These included Bennet et al (1999 p80) whose model for course preparation divided issues into disciplinary content and skills, workplace content and skills and generic skills is outlined in Appendix 3. Building on this and other models, including York and Knight (2004 pp 5) as detailed in Appendix 4, and the Dots model of Law and Watts (1977), they propose an inclusive and metaphorical model "The Career EDGE, The Key to Employability" as shown in Appendix 5.

**Professional Competencies**

- COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Able to express clearly one's thoughts and information both verbally and in writing

- ABILITY TO APPLY KNOWLEDGE: Able to transfer theoretical concepts to real life

- LOGICAL THINKING: Thinks logically

- COMPUTER PROFICIENCY: Able to generate professional spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts, documents & presentations

- CRITICAL ANAYSIS: Able to examine a problem in detail and explain one's point of view about it

- RESEARCH SKILLS: Able to research independently & interpret data

- ADAPT TO CHANGE: Able to adapt ideas and behaviour to meet new challenges

- ABILITY TO HANDLE PRESSURE: Able to deal successfully with pressure

- ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: Achieved high grades in one's studies

**Business Skills**

- PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS: Ability to critically assess a problem & devise a plan of action for its solution

- LEADERSHIP SKILLS: Ability to influence/inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction

- PLANNING AND ORGANISING: Ability to plan and arrange activities effectively

- TEAMWORK: Ability to work in a team to achieve the team's objectives

- PRESENTATION SKILLS: Ability to give a presentation in front of an audience

- TIME MANAGEMENT: Ability to arrange activities on time or as scheduled

- ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT: Ability to organise & manage a business undertaking & spot new opportunities

- INITIATIVE: Ability to generate alternative and innovative ideas

- OVERALL QUALITY OF WORK: Ability to accomplish assignments effectively

**Personal Attributes**

- ENTHUSIASM: Intense interest in work

- SELF CONFIDENCE: Confidence in one's abilities

- SELF RELIANCE/INDEPENDENCE: Reliance on one's own judgement, abilities, etc

- CREATIVITY: Inventiveness, creative ability

- SELF MOTIVATION: Able to motivate oneself

- MATURITY: The quality of being fully developed, not childish

- FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY: Able to adjust to change

- ATTENDANCE/PUNCTUALITY: Being observant of an appointed time frame

- WILLINGNESS TO LEARN: Commitment to further study

Within the consideration of Reflection and Evaluation in their model, Pool and Sewell (2007) include the concept of Personal Development Planning (PDP). The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2009) underlines the central role of PDP as an enabler both in terms of employability and long term career development as shown in Appendix 6, which was

also recently highlighted by the Higher Education Academy (HEA 2011). Usefully PEG (2006) contains resources for the development of PDP including the Kneale's Context Website (2005) with its range of case materials for use in HE and employment. PDP is again embodied within the QAA subject benchmark statements for Business and Management Programmes (QAA 2007 as detailed in Appendix 7) as key to the enhancement of lifelong learning skills.

**Skills and their link to employability**

Employability may have been driven by employer requirements, but Cox and King (2006) note that it is also an issue for students and therefore for universities. A number of studies have looked at the employment readiness of graduates including Douc and Metzger (2007) which reports employers complaining of a lack of skills or practical experience. Interestingly, Mason et al (2009) notes that structured work experience and employer participation in course design had a significant impact on graduate employment. Indeed this work notes "sandwich participation increased probability of finding employment by 5%" (Mason et al 2009), although this data is based on a 1996-1999 student cohort.

Wilton (2008), using the same 'Class of 99 Survey' as Mason et al but focussing on the Business and Management (B&M) field, noted the growth of this sector from 1985 to 2005. Citing Salter and Tapper (1994), Wilton underlined a shift from a "cultural rationale for HE" towards its "economic function … as promoted by the Dearing report." Remarking that this transfer of emphasis was underpinned by employer demands for greater work related training and experience in education, Wilton sought to evaluate the extent that these taught skills were used in employment.

In a comparison of skills development versus usage which compared the value placed on skills while at university with that to which they were used in subsequent employment, (Wilton 2008 p153), it could be seen that while B&M graduates reported high levels of training in all areas with the exception of Advanced IT and foreign languages, team project exercises and presentation skills were of higher value in the workplace than expected and more emphasis should be placed behind spoken communication, management and leadership skills as shown in Appendix 8. His data also showed a "labour market advantage" in respect of those graduates who had undertaken work placements. Overall, Wilton concluded that while there was a need for employer involvement, there could be an even greater benefit from engaging with recent graduates to ensure the continued relevance of skills training (Wilton 2008). The importance of team-working and decision making had also been highlighted by Nabi et al (1999), while Nair and Mertova (2009) went on to reinforce the requirement for employer feedback to maintain the relevance of skills training.

Andrade (2008), building on Douc and Metzger (2007), found that mature students also tended to rate the importance of skills less highly than employers. Knowledge transfer capabilities, abilities to change and adapt, and the ability to handle pressure were rated as highly important by over 70% of employers, but much lower by the students (Andrade 2008), and Andrade was concluded that more needed to be done by universities to underline the importance of these skills to students..

**Provision of Skills**

There appear to be a number of routes taken to develop employability skills in students. Pool and Sewell (2007) believe their model gives a clear understanding of what needs to be included. Mason et al (2009) outline the opportunity to embed the skills into course and unit design, or to provide stand-alone units that can be 'bolted on' to existing courses. Baker and Henson (2010) detail successful dedicated programmes, while Stubbs and Keeping (2002) argue the benefits of embedded skills training. Meanwhile Cox and King (2006) detail the involvement of employers in course design, but warn of the dangers of this creating courses which are too employer specific. Working with professional bodies and accreditation is also viewed as a workable alternative but this can be criticised as overloading the syllabus (Stubbs and Keeping 2002). Using employers as guest speakers, setting role play scenarios and research topics whose findings can be reported directly back to the employer are all considered by Cox and King (2006). Stubbs and Keeping (2002) also record the introduction of role play models, citing Kolb (1984) on the value of experiential learning.

It is, however left to Cox and King (2006) to highlight the tension between formal education and vocational training. They propose that education develops critical and analytical thinking which solves problems, whereas training is focussed on task specific skills which can be aimed too closely at a particular employer or business sector requirement.

**Career Services:**

McIlveen and Pensiero (2008) present a clear example of how career services within universities can address employability. This encompasses business sector skills workshops hosted by employees, reflective mentoring journals and student and employer networking. The latter particularly involving small to medium sized enterprises. Baker and Henson (2010) detail a programme which brings together a career specialist and an academic to provide a cross-disciplinary "Inside Employment" pilot initiative, utilising extra-curricular project work and a research based, experiential learning style.

**Primary research and methodology**

Building on the literature review and secondary research this study set out to identify which skills are valued by today's employers of marketing students. The survey was distributed via LinkedIn and remained active for a period of two months. The sample was based upon non-probability convenience sampling, the sample frame being drawn from the researcher's professional network of colleagues working in marketing arena. In total 150 individuals were invited to participate. The email invitation outlined the purpose of the survey and contained an email link to the survey which was hosted on surveymonkey.com. In total 72 completed responses were received. An initial screening question asked whether respondents were responsible for recruiting graduates, of which 70 % said that they were, giving a total of 49 usable surveys. The sampling plan targeted to achieve 100 useable responses, but as this was not possible, the results are not considered statistically representative but strongly indicative of current opinion.

**Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire was primarily based upon the 'quality indicators' survey devised by Douc & Mettzger (2007) and subsequently used by Andrade (2008). This questionnaire includes a detailed list of core Professional competencies, Business skills and Personal attributes,

commonly included under the general heading of employability skills, and, as in the previous studies, employers were asked to rate the individual skills in terms of importance.

The method for measurement used in this particular survey was a rating scale, where a rating of 1 mean indicates low importance and 5 indicated high importance. With a simple, comprehensive comparative measurement for analysis, the data can be interpreted against past research. In addition respondents were asked a number of 'open' qualitative questions. In this way it was possible to compare results to previous works, and identify priorities and new areas of importance.

All responses were anonymous but the survey included two questions, the respondent's industrial area and their Job Title, to help classify, segment and analyses data further. In addition, respondents were asked if they would be willing to elaborate on their answers in a short email or telephone interview. Six of the respondents went on to leave their email details. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix 9.

### Findings from employers

The results are broken down into two main areas. Firstly the statistical results from the skills rating scales and cumulative mean average for each of the three skills categories, Professional Competencies, Business Skills and Personal Attributes in terms of their importance in getting the first job. Secondly, theme analysis of the open answers to the qualitative questions.

**Professional Competencies (Appendix 10 Table 1):** Communication skills (both verbal and written) was almost universally thought to be of great importance, closely followed by ability to apply knowledge, logical thinking and critical analysis. By contrast, academic excellence was seen as least important, although none of the respondents actually rated it at low as '1'.

**Business Skills (Appendix 10 Table 2):** In terms of what is sought in new graduate recruits, respondents thought that 'Problem Solving' and the 'Overall quality of work' as being of greatest importance, with Teamwork, Time Management, and Initiative rating very highly too.

**Personal Attributes (Appendix 10 Table 3):** of those sought in new graduate recruits, respondents rated Enthusiasm of key importance, followed by Self-motivation, Maturity and Flexibility & Adaptability, as detailed below.

Respondents were then asked to reconsider the list of eighteen criteria and identify any attributes that stand our as being more important than the others. Self-motivation, Enthusiasm, Willingness to learn, to become part of the team and fit in with the working environment, were cited many times. One respondent noted..

> *"The job requires an ability to fit in with a motivated team, working for common goals and the individual to be self-motivated but tempered with the intelligence to know when to ask for guidance" Director, Insurance*

Respondents were also asked whether there were any other attributes that they might look for in new graduates. 65% said 'yes'. Comments fell into two distinct areas. Firstly related to the degree of knowledge a student had bothered to acquire about the company that they were being interviewed by and their motivation for wanting to work there:

> *"I usually examine their motives for being here and involved in the work. Some people inhabit moral high ground and then see a charity as the perfect place to take a look down at others". CEO, Charity*

And a more difficult one for universities to embed in any way – the simple fact of personality.

*"Midnight rule - if we are still sitting round a table, for work or socially, do I still want to be in their company?"* Planning Director, Marketing

In exploring other issues that might be considered respondents were asked if they thought students should have an understanding of Ethical Issues and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). 65% said no. Therefore those that went onto answer how an understanding of Ethical Issues and CSR might manifest itself were in the minority. Amongst those that did pass comment: -

*"They should be trustworthy and ethical themselves"*, Marketing Consultant

Respondents were also asked whether they thought that work experience was important. This received 90% agreement, so can be seen to be very important which reflects the findings from past research as outlined in the literature. Respondents were asked to explain why. Some mentioned that it showed keenness and a true/genuine interest in their field:

*"Relevant work experience gives a candidate the 'edge'. It means they have had some experience of the post they are applying for, and have decided they are suited to it, and therefore are not wasting your time."* Manager, Education/Training

Others said that it enabled them to develop, articulate and demonstrate many of the skills listed under Personal Attributes. One respondent outlined that it was increasingly important because employers do not want to 'waste time training'.

*"The graduate needs to be able to bring examples of applying their knowledge and skills to real world problems, which requires work experience. Can come in many forms however"* Management Consultant


**Conclusion**

It can be seen that there are a great number of skills that are encompassed within the phrase 'Employability Skills' and that there is no perfect method for nurturing these within graduates as they undertake their university education. The CareerEdge (Pool & Sewell, 2007) certainly provides a solid framework around which to formulate programmes to try and ensure that they cover all of the requirements. In addition the QAA benchmark statements provide a good way to reflect the generic skills and whilst tailoring them to the subject area of interest.

There is evidence that embedding skills rather than providing them as standalone modules is a stronger way forward, as it provides the ability to reflect a multitude of the more subtle personal skills rather than just honing specific business competencies. However, the evidence of Baker & Henson (2010) and Stubbs & Keeping, (2002) shows that devising modules around experiential learning combined with reflective techniques is a positive way to bring out required business skills and professional competencies. Professional accreditation is seen as important but universities need to be careful not to overload modules or design the course too closely to one specific employer's needs. However, the involvement of employers with assignments and research topics, or as guest speakers, is to be encouraged.

Primary research indicated a number of areas that are of current importance to employers, with communication skills being seen as the most important professional competency. Problem solving and overall quality of work are important business skills and enthusiasm is the most important personal attribute. When looking at all skills equally it was the personal attributes that were of greatest importance, with employers looking for self confidence, self motivation, maturity, and willingness to learn alongside the continued need for good communications skills. The order of priority identified from this research differs slightly from

previous research that used the same survey elements, reinforcing Wilton (2008) and the need to ensure continued relevance of employability skills training by involving recent graduates and current employers.

When asked if an understanding of the modern business issues around Ethics and CSR were important employers, around two thirds said no. Despite this it is unlikely that future managers could afford not to have a strong grounding in Ethics and CSR. However, reflecting the literature, work experience was identified as key, with over 90% of respondents saying that it gave candidates 'the edge' over others, that it showed an interest in their business, that it helped students develop, and then articulate, many of the personal attributes that they sought.

Finally, employers said that they look for two things when differentiating candidates. Firstly, the level of knowledge that the graduate has about the company or industry, and their motivation for wanting to work within it. Secondly, the pure element of personality. Does the interviewer think that they would be able to get on with the person and would they contribute positively to their team? The importance of the former is something that is already built into some module assessments, teaching students how to research relevant details and questions about a company and its industry in preparation for interview. The latter is more difficult and is possibly a topic for further research.

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**Appendices:**

**Appendix 2: Quality indicators for Graduates (Douc and Metzger, 2007, pp 635)**

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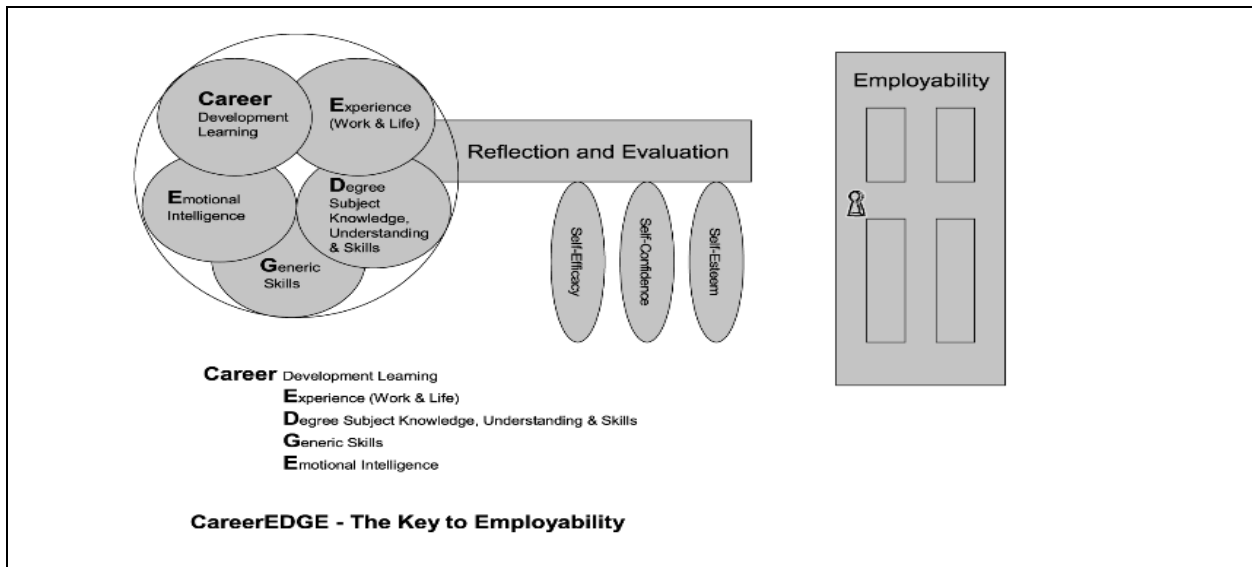**Appendix 3: A model of Course Provision (Bennett, *et al*, 1999, pp 80)**
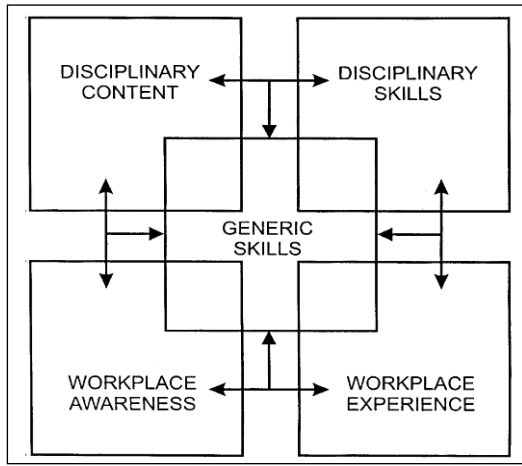


**Appendix 4:** The USEM
**account of**
**employability** (Yorke &
**Knight, 2004)**
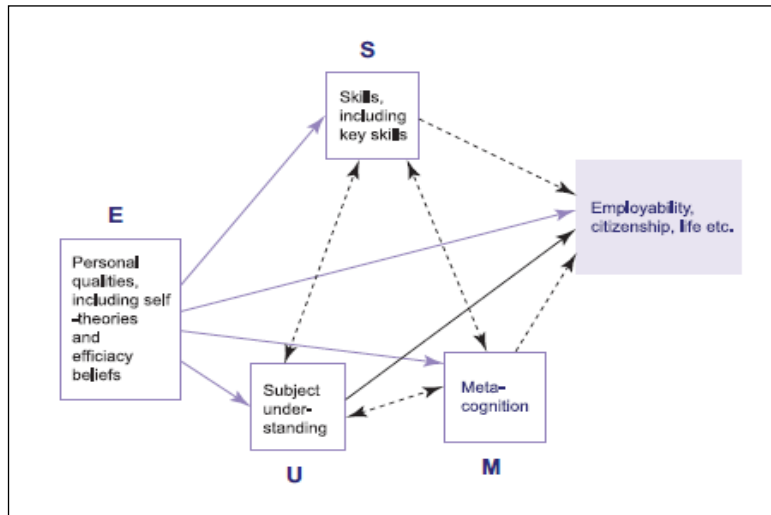


**Appendix 5: The key to employability (Pool & Sewell, 2007)**

**Appendix 6: The objectives for PDP (QAA, 2009)**

PDP should enable students to

- Plan, integrate and take responsibility for their personal, career and academic development, identifying learning opportunities within their own academic programmes and extra-curricular activities

- Recognise, value and evidence their learning and development both inside and outside the curriculum

- Be more aware of how they are learning and what different teaching and learning strategies are trying to achieve

- Gathering evidence of learning experiences and achievement identifying new learning needs and creating development plans

- Reviewing progress towards the achievement of goals set reflecting on learning experiences and achievement

- Be more effective in monitoring and reviewing their own progress and using their own records and evidence of learning to demonstrate to others what they know and can do

- Evaluate and recognise their own strengths and weaknesses and identify ways in which perceived weaknesses might be improved and strengths enhanced

- Develop their identity in relation to their academic, professional and personal progression

- Develop a vocabulary to communicate their development and achievement

- Be better prepared for seeking, continuing or changing employment or self-employment and be more able to articulate the skills and knowledge they have gained to others

- Be better prepared for the demands of continuing progression and career development in professional and academic careers.

**Appendix 1: QAA Subject benchmark statement: General business and management, 2007, Skills (QAA, 2007)**

Business and management degrees are strongly related to practice and therefore there should be a strong link between the development of skills and employability of graduates. Graduates should be able to demonstrate a range of cognitive and intellectual skills together with techniques specific to business and management. Graduates should also be able to demonstrate relevant personal and interpersonal skills. These include (not in any particular priority order):

- Cognitive skills of critical thinking, analysis and synthesis. This includes the capability to identify assumptions, evaluate statements in terms of evidence, to detect false logic or reasoning, to identify implicit values, to define terms adequately and to generalise appropriately

- Effective problem solving and decision making using appropriate quantitative and qualitative skills including identifying, formulating and solving business problems. The ability to create, evaluate and assess a range of options together with the capacity to apply ideas and knowledge to a range of situations

- Effective communication, oral and in writing, using a range of media which are widely used in business such as the preparation and presentation of business reports

- Numeracy and quantitative skills including data analysis, interpretation and extrapolation. The use of models of business problems and phenomena

- Effective use of communication and information technology for business applications

- Effective self-management in terms of time, planning and behaviour, motivation, self-starting, individual initiative and enterprise

- Effective performance, within a team environment, including leadership, team building, influencing and project management skills

- Interpersonal skills of effective listening, negotiating, persuasion and presentation

- Ability to conduct research into business and management issues, either individually or as part of a team for projects/dissertations/presentations. This requires familiarity with and an evaluative approach to a range of business data, sources of information and appropriate methodologies, and for such to inform the overall learning process

- Self reflection and criticality including self awareness, openness and sensitivity to diversity in terms of people, cultures, business and management issues. Also, the skills of learning to learn and developing a continuing appetite for learning; reflective, adaptive and collaborative learning.

**Appendix 8: Comparison of Skills development versus usage amongst business and management graduates (Wilton, 2006, p153)**

| | Used in current job 'a lot' | Developed on 1999 course 'a lot' |
|---|---|---|
| Spoken communication | 1 | 5 |
| Management skills | 2 | 6 |
| Ability to work in teams | 3 | 3 |
| Leadership skills | 4 | 9 |
| Basic computer literacy | 5 | 4 |
| Problem-solving skills | 6 | 7 |
| Written communication | 7 | 1 |
| Numeracy skills | 8 | 8 |
| Creativity | 9 | 10 |
| Advanced IT or software skills | 10 | 11 |
| Entrepreneurial skills | 11 | 13 |
| Research skills | 12 | 2 |
| Foreign language skills | 13 | 12 |

**Appendix 9: Draft survey**

**Paper based draft of the surveymonkey.com questionnaire**

Thank you for taking the time to complete my survey. It will form the final part of my PGCHE (Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education). The aim is to clarify what 'skills' are looked for by employers when interviewing graduates for marketing and business roles. The survey lists a number of commonly cited skills that I would ask you to rate in terms of importance, plus room for you to add others skills or attributes that you know you look for. The results will remain confidential but will be fed back into course and curriculum design with the aim of ensuring that graduate education continues to be tailored to meet business requirements. Many thanks, Beverly

1.     **Your Industry:**

2.     **Job Title:**

3.     **Are you responsible for recruiting graduates?**

   ●     YES

   ●     NO

4.     **Thinking of the Professional Competencies that you seek in new graduate recruits, please rate how important you think each of the following is in getting that first job.**
       **1 = Low Importance and 5 = High Importance.**

| | 1 Low | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 High |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Able to express clearly one's thoughts and information both verbally and in writing | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| ABILITY TO APPLY KNOWLEDGE: Able to transfer theoretical concepts to real life | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| LOGICAL THINKING: Thinks logically | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| COMPUTER PROFICIENCY: Able to generate professional spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts, documents & presentations | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| CRITICAL ANAYSIS: Able to examine a problem in detail and explain one's point of view about it | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| RESEARCH SKILLS: Able to research independently & interpret data | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| ADAPT TO CHANGE: Able to adapt ideas and behaviour to meet new challenges | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| ABILITY TO HANDLE PRESSURE: Able to deal successfully with pressure | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: Achieved high grades in one's studies | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

5.     **Thinking of the Business Skills that you seek in new graduate recruits, please rate how important you think each of the following is in getting that first job.**
       **1 = Low Importance and 5 = High Importance.**

| | 1 Low | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 High |
|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS: Ability to critically assess a problem & devise a plan of action for its solution | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| LEADERSHIP SKILLS: Ability to influence/inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| PLANNING AND ORGANISING: Ability to plan and arrange activities effectively | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| TEAMWORK: Ability to work in a team to achieve the team's objectives | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| PRESENTATION SKILLS: Ability to give a presentation in front of an audience | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| TIME MANAGEMENT: Ability to arrange activities on time or as scheduled | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT: Ability to organise & manage a business undertaking & spot new opportunities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| INITIATIVE: Ability to generate alternative and innovative ideas | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| OVERALL QUALITY OF WORK: Ability to accomplish assignments effectively | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

6. **Thinking of the Personal Attributes that you seek in new graduate recruits, please rate how important you think each of the following is in getting that first job.**
   **1 = Low Importance and 5 = High Importance.**

| | 1 Low | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 High |
|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| ENTHUSIASM: Intense interest in work | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| SELF CONFIDENCE: Confidence in one's abilities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| SELF RELIANCE/INDEPENDENCE: Reliance on one's own judgement, abilities, etc | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| CREATIVITY: Inventiveness, creative ability | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| SELF MOTIVATION: Able to motivate oneself | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| MATURITY: the quality of being fully developed, not childish | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY: Able to adjust to change | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| ATTENDANCE/PUNCTUALITY: Being observant of an appointed time frame | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| WILLINGNESS TO LEARN: Commitment to further study | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

7. **Which of the above Professional Competencies, Business Skills and Personal Attributes did you feel were the most important indicators of graduate quality and why? Please list all that apply.**

8.  **In addition to the attributes described above, do you look for any other qualities in a new graduate? If YES please go to Q9. If NO please go on to Q10.**

● YES

● NO

9.  **In addition to the attributes described above, do you look for any other qualities in a new graduate? Please specify what these are and why they are important.**

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10. **Do you think that students should have a stronger understanding of Ethical Issues and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility? If YES please go to Q11. If NO please go on to Q12.**

● YES

● NO

11. **Do you think that students should have a stronger understanding of Ethical Issues and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility. If yes, how do you think this should manifest itself to you?**

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12. **Do you think that relevant work experience is important? If YES please go to Q13. If NO please go on to Q14.**

● YES

● NO

13. **Do you think that relevant work experience helps? If yes please explain why**

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**14.** **Would you be willing to elaborate on your answers above in a short email or telephone interview?**

● YES

● NO

**15.** **If you are happy to be interviewed please leave me your email address in the box below, thank you :-)**

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**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.**
**If you have any questions about the work please contact me on xxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxx.ac.uk**

**Appendix10 Research Results:**

**Table 1:  Professional Competencies sought in new graduate recruits (1=Low/5=High Importance)**

| Qu | Detail | Rating Average |
|----|--------|----------------|
| 1 | COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Able to express clearly one's thoughts & information both verbally and in writing | 4.71 |
| 2 | ABILITY TO APPLY KNOWLEDGE: Able to transfer theoretical concepts to real life | 4.24 |
| 3 | LOGICAL THINKING: Thinks logically | 4.24 |
| 4 | COMPUTER PROFICIENCY: Able to generate professional spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts, documents & presentations | 3.47 |
| 5 | CRITICAL ANAYSIS: Able to examine a problem in detail & explain one's point of view about it | 4.12 |
| 6 | RESEARCH SKILLS: Able to research independently & interpret data | 3.82 |
| 7 | ADAPT TO CHANGE: Able to adapt ideas and behaviour to meet new challenges | 4.12 |
| 8 | ABILITY TO HANDLE PRESSURE: Able to deal successfully with pressure | 4.06 |
| 9 | ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: Achieved high grades in one's studies | 2.94 |

**Table 2 : Business Skills sought in new graduate recruits (1=Low/5=High Importance)**

| Qu | Detail | Rating Average |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS: Ability to critically assess a problem & devise a plan of action for its solution | 4.35 |
| 2 | LEADERSHIP SKILLS: Ability to influence/inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction | 3.12 |
| 3 | PLANNING AND ORGANISING: Ability to plan and arrange activities effectively | 3.82 |
| 4 | TEAMWORK: Ability to work in a team to achieve the team's objectives | 4.12 |
| 5 | PRESENTATION SKILLS: Ability to give a presentation in front of an audience | 3.71 |
| 6 | TIME MANAGEMENT: Ability to arrange activities on time or as scheduled | 4.29 |
| 7 | ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT: Ability to organise & manage a business undertaking & spot new opportunities | 3.12 |
| 8 | INITIATIVE: Ability to generate alternative and innovative ideas | 4.18 |
| 9 | OVERALL QUALITY OF WORK: Ability to accomplish assignments effectively | 4.35 |

**Table 1: Personal Attributes sought in new graduate recruits (1=Low/5=High Importance)**

| Qu | Detail | Rating Average |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | ENTHUSIASM: Intense interest in work | 4.53 |
| 2 | SELF CONFIDENCE: Confidence in one's abilities | 3.53 |
| 3 | SELF RELIANCE/INDEPENDENCE: Reliance on one's own judgement, abilities, etc | 3.29 |
| 4 | CREATIVITY: Inventiveness, creative ability | 3.82 |
| 5 | SELF MOTIVATION: Able to motivate oneself | 4.24 |
| 6 | MATURITY: the quality of being fully developed, not childish | 4.18 |
| 7 | FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY: Able to adjust to change | 4.00 |
| 8 | ATTENDANCE/PUNCTUALITY: Being observant of an appointed time frame | 3.94 |
| 9 | WILLINGNESS TO LEARN: Commitment to further study | 3.94 |