EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

What they are and how you can develop them at the University of Kent
EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Graduate employers look for candidates who can demonstrate a wide range of skills and attributes, often called ‘employability skills’, in addition to their academic qualifications.

When you are applying for jobs, internships and placements the ability to demonstrate these skills is as important as the grades you have achieved at school/college and university. These skills are transferable, meaning that they can be acquired and used in many different ways, and you should find ways to gain or improve them even before you start to think about your career.

What skills are employers looking for?

Although these may vary to some extent between different employers and jobs, almost all employers will look for the following core skills:

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<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>What this means in practical terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>The ability to speak and write clearly and concisely, to listen to others and to act on what you have heard to, for example, advise, persuade or inform other people</td>
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<td>Team working</td>
<td>Cooperating with and supporting others in order to achieve a common goal</td>
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<td>Analytical ability</td>
<td>Being able to analyse and critically evaluate complex information, pick out the key issues and reach conclusions</td>
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<td>Creative thinking and problem-solving</td>
<td>Being original and inventive in order to solve problems, generate ideas or produce novel designs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>The ability to understand and interpret facts and ideas expressed in figures and non-verbal data</td>
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For more about these skills, see www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/skills.html

How can I develop these skills?

You can gain many of these skills through your studies (including the work placement and study abroad options that your degree may offer) but the University of Kent offers many other opportunities to develop these skills. This leaflet lists a number of them: to find out more, visit www.kent.ac.uk/employability

Gain experience of work

This is essential: many top graduate recruiters warn that graduates who have had no previous work experience at all are unlikely to be successful during the selection process for their graduate training schemes.

Your experience of work, though, doesn't have to be related to your future graduate career: these employers value experience of casual jobs such as retail, hospitality or customer service.

Jobshop is the first place to look for part-time work while you are studying. Jobshop is a free service run by Kent Union to help students find part-time or temporary work which will enable them to earn money and gain employability skills while they study. Opportunities include positions in IT, marketing, translation, web development, market research, hospitality, retail, education and care work. Visit www.kentunion.co.uk/employability/jobshop or pop in to Jobshop next to Essentials on the plaza.
The Careers and Employability Service (CES) advertises year-in-industry placements, internships and vacation opportunities online. Register at http://kent.prospects.ac.uk/index.html to receive vacancy updates.

**Bursary opportunities**

If you have secured some unpaid work experience within the UK, you could be entitled to a bursary to contribute towards your travel expenses. For full details, terms and conditions, see www.kent.ac.uk/employability/working/students/bursary-and-expenses.html

**Volunteer**

Volunteering is any activity that involves giving your time for free to do something that aims to benefit an individual, a group or a community. It can range from supporting a child with learning difficulties to organising fundraising events and from researching into Kent history to tracking wildlife in the Amazon rainforest. It can help develop skills and experience that can be used in all career sectors.

The University offers many volunteering opportunities, on and off campus, through Academic Schools and student-led groups. Kent Union has over 3000 volunteering roles, including sports and society committee posts and course, faculty or school reps (see below). You can get recognition for these activities through the Kent Student Certificate in Volunteering (KSCV) which has three main levels: Bronze (25 hours of volunteering), Silver (50 hours) and Gold (100 hours). Beyond this, you can also take the KSCV Platinum module which, depending on your course, can be taken as credit bearing or extracurricular.

www.kentunion.co.uk/activities/volunteering

**Join a society or sports team**

There are 200 societies and over 50 sports clubs at Kent, which you can join at any time of the year. All of these are run by student volunteers and each has a committee which is responsible for running the group. Taking on responsibility as a committee member is an excellent way to develop your employability skills and help you to stand out in job applications.
Become a rep
There are three types of reps working at different levels: Course Reps, School Reps and Faculty Reps. These are elected roles which aim to improve the student experience at Kent through liaison with academic staff. Course Reps report and try to resolve any issues students are having with their course. Their work is coordinated by School Reps and Faculty Reps.

For more about being a rep, joining a sports club or society and all Student Union activities at Kent, in Canterbury and Medway, see www.kentunion.co.uk and www.gkunions.co.uk

Be a Peer Mentor
Academic Peer Mentors are students who provide support to other students that will help them to improve their understanding of their subject and their academic performance. Students in all years of study, from first year to postgraduate, can act as mentors. www.kent.ac.uk/learning/school-support/mentoring.html

Learn a language
Kent offers many opportunities to improve your language skills or learn a new language, either as part of your degree or as an extra-curricular course. For more information visit www.kent.ac.uk/languages

Improve your IT skills
As well as enhancing your employability, being a confident user of IT programs and packages will help you with your essays, presentations and research. The University offers workshops or online learning to help you improve your skills and work towards an internationally recognised IT qualification, the European Computer Driving Licence. www.kent.ac.uk/itservices/training/index.html
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Stand Out Training
Stand Out sessions are free training sessions open to all Kent students. They will help you to enhance your employability skills and gain knowledge of topics ranging from British Sign Language to event organising. www.kentunion.co.uk/employability/stand-out/

Employability Points: get involved, get rewarded
The Employability Points Scheme gives reward points to students who actively take part in employability activities. At the end of the academic year points are transferred into prizes, ranging from a £10 Amazon voucher to paid summer internships. www.kent.ac.uk/employabilitypoints

Postgraduate Global Skills Award
The Global Skills Award Programme is designed for postgraduate students on taught Masters programmes. It aims to broaden your understanding of global issues and current affairs as well as to develop personal skills, such as team working, networking and leadership, which will enhance your employability. www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/skills/programmes/gsa.html

Get advice from a past Kent graduate
KEW-NET is an online mentoring/networking tool for Kent students and graduates to meet, support one another and help each other get ahead. Through KEW-NET, you will be able to make contact with University of Kent alumni from a range of degree subjects and career areas who could help you by offering insight into their area of work, reviewing your CV and advising you how to make it stand out or even offering work shadowing or work experience opportunities. www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/kew-net.html

Record your experience and skills development
All of the activities that you can take part in at Kent will be important evidence to show employers that you have those skills that they need. Keeping a record of what you have done and what skills you have gained through these activities will save a lot of time when it comes to making applications for internships, placements and graduate jobs. You can do this through the Kent Union Employability and Volunteering Toolkit www.kentunion.co.uk/eandv/ or through MyFolio, the University’s online ePortfolio and Personal Development Planner http://myfolio.kent.ac.uk/myfolio

Take the Careers Employability Award
This is an online extra-curricular module, delivered via Moodle, which helps you to reflect on your experience and skills and use them in your career planning and job applications. It consists of nine quizzes and three short assignments, including submitting a CV, and takes about 12 hours to complete. On successfully completing this module, you will receive a certificate and 60 Employability Points. www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/careersmoodle.html

Get help and advice from the Careers and Employability Service
The Careers and Employability Service (CES) offers a wide range of activities and events to enhance your employability. Our friendly, helpful team of professional advisers can help you with all aspects of your career planning and provide support in finding a job, including CVs, application forms and interviews. The CES also coordinates a range of events throughout the year to help you gain experience and develop your skills whilst studying at Kent. www.kent.ac.uk/ces

Further information
A comprehensive link to all employability opportunities available can be found on the Employability webpages. www.kent.ac.uk/employability