

Employability in Psychology: a guide for departments

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I. Introduction

This guide is about employability in Psychology education and how, when and where it can fit into an undergraduate degree. It is intended to support those who design, deliver, manage and review Psychology programmes of study, heads of Psychology departments, subject leaders and teaching groups, those who design and teach modules, and those who provide personal and academic tutoring to Psychology students. It may also be of use to subject-specialist careers advisors.

Within the guide, you will find a general introduction to the concept of employability, leading into an exploration of the issues that specifically apply to Psychology education. The concept of employability is then developed further to introduce the relatively new idea of psychological literacy (Cranney and Dunn, 2011), as a possible theoretical construct to facilitate the embedding of a much wider and deeper version of employability into the curriculum.

This guide builds on previously published resources to support the delivery of employability and on recent thinking around policy in Psychology education. Our work has been strongly influenced by the report of Trapp *et al.* (2011) on [The future of undergraduate Psychology education in the United Kingdom](#), and we have also been informed by both Pegg *et al.*'s (2012) generic guide [Pedagogy for employability](#) and Lantz's (2011) [Psychology student employability guide](#). We aim here not to reproduce the excellent information provided in these documents, but rather to build upon them to provide evidence-based suggestions on how Psychology departments might go about facilitating their students in developing employability. Where a key resource, like those mentioned here, is available online, we have provided hyperlinks, identifiable as blue text, within the guide to allow you to click on them from within the guide and easily navigate to the relevant webpage; further information, including the web address, is provided within the reference section.

Bachelors degrees in Psychology are not job training and do not confer automatic entry into a career. Our students expect to go on to rewarding, interesting careers, inside or outside professional psychology. They must compete for these opportunities and they expect their university education to equip them to do so. Those paying for the Psychology degree, including parents, the government and graduates themselves, expect us to prepare our students to succeed. Universities are judged on their graduates as well as their research and teaching quality. Employers seek graduates who can contribute to their organisations, and society itself benefits from a skilled population of graduate workers. It is not immediately obvious how we as Psychology educators should go about building these elements into our degree programmes, but we hope that by reading this guide you will see some of the current issues and ideas aired. We are particularly grateful to the Psychology departments who have contributed case studies to this resource, for openly illustrating their particular approach to best practice in the interests

of dissemination and supporting the Psychology academic community. Case studies can also be accessed directly from within the text using blue hyperlinks.

Employability broadly defined has a long-term role at the heart of university education and much of our learning and teaching practice and existing curricula already contributes to this aim. We may usefully add employability modules to an existing curriculum, but we also have an opportunity to re-engineer our curriculum and practice to deeply embed it. Whatever you do, we hope you find this resource stimulating and useful.



2. What is employability?

2.1 Definitions and generic introduction

Since the [Browne report](#) (2010), and in the context of rising student fees, employability has become a buzz word within higher education. The term 'employability' is widely used in a variety of settings and its

definition alone is the subject of a number of papers (e.g. McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). One suitable definition might be:

... a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Yorke, 2006, p. 8).



For Yorke (2006) 'employability' refers to the achievements of the graduate, and their potential to obtain a 'graduate job'. Actual employment in a 'graduate job' is not irrelevant, but depends on outside factors, notably the demand for graduates; so a graduate may be highly employable and yet not employed, or vice versa. Lowden *et al.* (2011) review difficulties in definition and distinguish between a narrow approach with a focus on skills and attributes, and a broader and more inclusive approach to employability, including skills and attributes, but based on values, intellectual rigour and engagement (Hinchliffe and Jolly, 2011). Harvey (2004) suggests that employability is an ongoing developmental process that does not stop once the graduate is employed. It is much more than the acquisition of key skills or getting a job; it is about developing graduates as critical, empowered learners. This holistic and inclusive approach to employability places the learner at the centre of the approach and engages them as partners in learning. So there are a number of aspects to employability:

- a set of skills, understandings and attributes that are achieved over the course of a degree;
- being prepared to engage in an ongoing process of professional and personal career development;
- developing the ability to bring critical reasoning to bear, and applying these skills throughout and across the lifespan, not just within employment.

Underpinning all of this is a 'can-do' approach, a positive attitude, a willingness to take part and to contribute, an openness to new ideas and experiences, and a drive to make these happen (Confederation of British Industry, CBI, 2011). This attitudinal component relates well to the entrepreneurship and enterprise often sought by employers and incorporates innovation, creativity, collaboration and risk-taking.

The ESECT (Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team) project created a range of very useful resources, including a series of papers on learning and employability, and a variety of reports and guides. In addition, the HEA guide, *Pedagogy for employability* (Pegg *et al.*, 2012), provides an up-to-date, evidence-based introduction to employability. Further resources can be found by browsing the HEA webpages

dedicated to [employability](#). All of the resources mentioned in this section provide a useful insight into employability from a generic, rather than Psychology-specific, perspective.

2.2 Employability and skills

Numerous studies report on the skills and qualities that are valued by employers. A study published in the United States by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Employment Review (2003) listed 28 competencies that employers typically use to recruit graduates as well as to assess and develop employees. These competencies include a variety of skills (e.g. analysis, planning, organisation, written and verbal communication, technology use) as well as capabilities (e.g. initiative, adaptability, flexibility, achievement orientation, stress tolerance). More recently, the [CBI](#) (2011, p. 13) cited the following desirable skills for employers of graduates:

- self-management – readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, time management;
- readiness to improve own performance;
- team-working – respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions;
- business and customer awareness – basic understanding of the key drivers for business success and the need to provide customer satisfaction;
- problem solving – analysing facts and circumstances and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions;
- communication and literacy – application of literacy, ability to produce clear, structured written work and oral literacy, including listening and questioning;
- application of numeracy – manipulation of numbers, general mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts;
- application of information technology – basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines.

It would be relatively straightforward to map these skills to elements of the undergraduate curriculum to demonstrate where employability is gained by students on a particular programme. However, as we will see, being exposed to opportunities to develop skills does not necessarily create employability, and there is no single dominant model of employability; a comprehensive model remains elusive. The [USEM model](#) (Yorke and Knight, 2004, p. 5) has, however, been influential and can form the basis of an audit of a programme:

- **U** understanding, of disciplinary material and more broadly, how the world works;
- **S** skilful practices in context, whether discipline-based or more generic;

- **E** efficacy beliefs, including a range of personal attributes and qualities;
- **M** metacognition, including the capacity for reflection and self-regulation.

Preparing our students, whether they are aiming for careers in professional psychology or elsewhere, means helping them to become aware of and able to offer evidence of their abilities and achievements, developing interests, preferences, skills and attributes. They need to know about the careers that are available to them and the unique contribution that Psychology education can bring to work and life. They need to be able to compete in a market made more competitive by the increased numbers of students participating in higher education (from 50,000 university students in 1939, to 300,000 in 1980 to about 2,500,000 now), and by economic challenges.

This requirement to prepare students to compete in the graduate employment market is not without its tensions. Collini (2012) points out that the rate of expansion means that there has not been a settled period within higher education (HE) in the United Kingdom (UK) for several generations and there has long been tension between meeting local educational needs such as training the next generation of professionals, and the desire to pursue the fullest understanding of a subject driven by the intellectual logic of the discipline. There has been an explosion in funding for scientific research and higher education is now seen by many as a key factor in wealth creation (consensus theory; Kerr *et al.*, 1973), and as a “driver of national economic and social development through the formation of human capital” (Coaldrake and Stedman, 1999, p. 3). The idea that university education is an investment in future economic and cultural vitality is perhaps the founding idea of the modern university dating back to Humboldt (Elton, 2009), but nevertheless academic purists may well be fearful of the threat they perceive from the employability agenda to the integrity of their discipline.

This argument is not new. For Newman (1852), the importance of undergraduate education lay not in providing technical skills for the workforce, or in accumulating knowledge for its own sake, but in educating the mind and cultivating understanding. The aim of university education was to develop students’ critical faculties so that they could see things as they truly were, get to the point, discard irrelevance and detect sophistry. He had little to say about exactly what should be studied and acknowledged that many subjects provided appropriate subject matter for educating the mind. The essence of university education is the ability to weigh evidence and to evaluate critically. However, Newman is helpful rather than problematic for our concept of employability which very much incorporates the need for graduates to be critical, creative and engaged in continuous learning beyond graduation. In this context, employability is an ally of scholarship, the values of liberal education and the university tradition. It embraces self-knowledge and awareness, skills in research and analysis, the construction of adult professional identity, the development of more sophisticated epistemological



awareness, and aims at the development of reflective, critically aware and ethically informed global citizens.

Employability then is not just about having knowledge and being able to slot into a niche. It is about bringing research and critical-thinking skills to bear on the abundance of knowledge increasingly at our disposal. We should be equipping our students for jobs that do not yet exist using

technology that has not yet been invented. Engagement in such employment requires a willingness to learn and develop and an ability to do so independently. Many existing jobs require critical capacity rather more than purely factual knowledge, and we should perhaps remember that in a digital age where information is freely available, the ability to critique, evaluate and analyse is more important than the ability to remember a given knowledge set that may quickly become outdated and be superseded by new research. Overall, Newman's concept of exercising and enriching the life of the mind can be seen both as an end in itself and as useful in developing intellectual capacity of economic and societal value.

Other factors also draw attention to the broader importance of the educational output of universities. Globalisation, sustainability and the desire to propagate democratic values have led universities to take ethical positions and a more active role in promoting global citizenship. The value of a reflective, critically aware and ethically informed graduate goes beyond simple economic calculations.

The utilitarianism that Newman defended university education against may be something of a spent force, but it lives on in the assumptions of some students. Students may enter university thinking that higher education is simply the learning of useful facts and undertaking the socially ordained steps to achieve the credentials necessary to enter their chosen career. This reinforces the need to engage students with the employability agenda and to help them to recognise the value of independent, proactive and responsible learning within the structure of a university education.

2.3 Measuring employability

Defining employability more broadly than employment means that measuring it is difficult, whether at graduation, six months on, or substantially later. Employability is not the only factor in achieving employment. The state of the labour market has an impact and the status and reputation of an institution continues to influence employers so that they tend to employ graduates from institutions that they have confidence in. This often favours the longer established and more prestigious institutions (Brown and Hesketh, 2004). The playing field is also far from level in relation to ethnicity, gender and other factors.

The principal measure of graduate employment (as distinct from employability) is the annual *Destination of leavers of higher education* (DLHE) survey (Higher Education Statistics Agency, HESA, 2012), which provides an indication of the employment status of graduates six months after finishing their course. However, it gives rather a skewed picture, as graduates of vocational programmes such as Medicine, Pharmacy or Dentistry are much more likely to be employed in graduate-level jobs immediately than graduates from non-vocational degrees who need to gain experience in order to access graduate-level training or employment. Some graduates may have to build a portfolio of experience over several years before being in a position to report their status as 'in graduate-level employment'. Gibbs (2010, p. 2) points out that:

There is a lack of evidence about the long-term consequences for graduate employment of either narrowly focused vocational education or education that emphasises efficiency in generic 'employability skills', rather than emphasising the higher order intellectual capabilities involved in adaptable expertise. This makes relying on HESA's very short-term employment data a risky thing to do.

Indeed, such graduates may never actually take employment related to the subject matter of their degrees, but rather may work voluntarily to gain experience in their chosen field, while being employed in a non-graduate role for financial reasons, and then ultimately may establish themselves as successfully self-employed some years later, based on the experience they gain in this way. The DLHE statistics six months after graduation in such cases cannot truly reflect the employability of these graduates, and will underestimate the value of degree-level education to their careers.

3. Psychology and employability

3.1 Psychology-specific issues for employability

On the surface, Psychology may appear to the outside observer, and indeed to aspiring students, to be a vocational degree. The undergraduate qualification in itself does not, however, provide entry into the psychology professions. Rather, the Graduate Basis for Chartership (GBC) conferred by studying for a degree accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2012) merely provides the graduate with recognition that they have studied an appropriate course to provide access to professional postgraduate training. Anecdotally, it seems that a majority of Psychology students enter Psychology degrees with the intention of pursuing careers in professional psychology, but in reality, only approximately 15-20% of Psychology graduates do so (QAA, 2010). Despite this, the undergraduate curriculum as accredited by the BPS is perhaps designed primarily with preparation for postgraduate training in mind, and traditionally there has not been a great deal of consideration of the effectiveness of this approach for the majority who do not pursue Psychology careers. Trapp *et al.* (2011) have given a very clear signal to the academic

Psychology community that this situation must be addressed, and that we have a moral responsibility to support our students in this regard. As such, we need to:

- a. help those aiming for the psychology professions to understand what they need to do to compete successfully for them;
- b. ensure that the majority, some of whom may have begun their study of Psychology with unrealistic vocational expectations, are prepared for the range of options that they have. The existence of the psychology professions is in itself an argument for building employability into the curriculum. In non-vocational subjects it may be reasonable to assume that students know little about graduate employment, while vocational subjects are clearly leading students towards a particular career. Psychology falls between these two stools if students are misled by the salience of the psychology professions. It is important therefore that we show Psychology students the breadth of opportunity they have as well as the specific routes into professional psychology;
- c. show how a grounding in Psychology has value and applicability in work and life.

Psychology has a lot to offer in relation to employability. Psychology lies at the academic heart of work and organisational behaviour including around recruitment, aptitude and selection. It informs human resource management, careers guidance, coaching and consultancy. Our subject addresses the individual and is concerned with self-awareness, growth and development, social behaviour and cognition. In addition, we are a strongly research-focused discipline, and employability emphasises being able to bring research and critical-thinking skills to bear. All of this should mean that Psychology education is entirely compatible with the development of employability in its students and graduates.

However, despite the optimism implied here, Psychology graduates do not perform especially well in the DLHE statistics. This may to a large extent be the result of the non-vocational nature of undergraduate Psychology, and the intense competition for access to postgraduate training in Psychology ([Trapp et al., 2011](#)). This may lead students to start in non-graduate jobs, especially as grass-roots experience may be an important element in a CV. In addition, a recent report on Psychology students' responses to the 2011 National Student Survey ([HEA, 2012](#)) suggests that Psychology students are less confident about skills related to employability than students from all subjects, students from all STEM subjects and students from three cognate comparator disciplines.

According to a recent benchmarking review of Psychology ([Wakeling, 2010](#)), unemployment for Psychology graduates (7.4%) is slightly lower than the average for all subjects (7.9%), although much higher than in some subjects (e.g. Medicine at 0.3%). First destination jobs often involve clerical, retail and food service-related occupations, and social and welfare jobs, with employment in the public sector most common. Table 1 below indicates the professions pursued.

Table I: Professions pursued by Psychology graduates (adapted from [Prospects, 2009](#), p. 48)

Percentage of Psychology graduates	Profession pursued
24.0 %	Other or unknown professions or continued studies
13.9%	Social and welfare professions
13.7%	Other clerical and secretarial occupations
13.7%	Retail, catering, waiting and bar staff
8.1%	Commercial, industrial and public sector managers
6.7%	Business and financial professions
4.4%	Other professional and technical occupations
3.8%	Education professions
3.7%	Marketing, sales and advertising professions
2.7%	Health professions
2.1%	Numerical clerks and cashiers
1.4%	Arts, design, culture and sports professions
1.0%	Information technology professions
0.9%	Scientific research, analysis and development; legal and engineering professions

The above data provide a somewhat limited picture for graduates especially since some are likely to be undertaking work to develop experience to enable them to pursue careers as psychologists (Van Laar and Udell, 2008). As well, general criticisms of such surveys suggest that graduates often take a number of years to settle into careers ([Purcell and Elias, 2004](#)). Of course, gaining graduate employment is only one aspect of employability and the perceived worth of a degree, and the Labour Force Survey data, as reported in Wakeling (2010), suggest that wages for Psychology graduates place them at 17th for men and 21st for women out of 25 disciplines. This is consistent with research by Bromnick and Horowitz (2013) who found that Psychology students are less motivated by salary, and more motivated by aspirations to pursue a ‘helping’ career. Of the fifth of Psychology graduates who go on to pursue careers as professional psychologists, about a third work in the public services (e.g. health service, education, civil

service), a third work in industry or commerce (e.g. market research, human resource management) and about a tenth work in education at various levels (QAA, 2010).

However, research suggests that graduates who are better prepared have an easier time. For example, a study by Harvey and Blackwell (1999) found that graduates who had work experience were much more likely to be in a permanent full-time job than graduates without. In addition, Purcell and Elias (2004) show that with both their 1992 and 1995 cohorts, around 50% of graduates entered non-graduate jobs on graduation, but the proportion remaining in non-graduate jobs fell rapidly and consistently and 79 months later was down to 15%.

In response to the perceived requirement to better understand the longer-term career development and destinations of Psychology graduates, the BPS is undertaking a longitudinal study into longer-term Psychology graduate destinations, following Psychology graduates from universities across the UK for up to five years post-graduation through an annual survey. This will undoubtedly provide invaluable information to help academics to support their students in developing employability and increasing awareness of possible career options. Results will be published at intervals on the BPS website.

The psychology professions, while being salient to some, may also provide a 'red herring' for others. The emphasis on professional psychology as the only 'successful' route for Psychology graduates may risk condemning able and committed graduates to several years of uncertainty in the pursuit of limited opportunities. This may lead to wasted effort and a sense of failure, while rewarding opportunities in other careers pass by unacknowledged. This puts university staff in a difficult position. We want students to feel empowered, confident, ambitious and aspirational, and so we put effort into helping them prepare for possible clinical or other professional careers. The downside is the risk of adding to the allure of professional Psychology and reinforcing that this is somehow the 'best' and highest status career to aim for, regardless of personal suitability, job satisfaction and reward. Equipping our students with an understanding of the range of types of employment available to them, the skills required within different careers, and how best to articulate and demonstrate those skills to relevant employers through well-developed jobseeking skills, is vital if we genuinely seek to support informed choice and employability.

3.2 Psychology graduate skills and attributes

The QAA has a subject benchmark statement for Psychology (QAA, 2010), which Trapp *et al.* (2011) note claims:

...due to the wide range of generic skills, and the rigour with which they are taught, training in Psychology is widely accepted as providing an excellent preparation for many careers. In addition to subject skills and knowledge, graduates also develop skills in numeracy, teamwork, critical thinking, computing, independent learning and many others, all of which are highly valued by employers. (p. 2)

It also points out that:

Psychology is distinctive in the rich and diverse range of attributes it develops – skills that are associated with the humanities (e.g. critical thinking and essay writing) and the sciences (hypothesis testing and numeracy). (p. 5)

The [QAA \(2010\)](#) benchmark goes on to list the generic skills that Psychology graduates should be able to demonstrate, as follows:

- communicate effectively;
- comprehend and use data effectively;
- be computer literate;
- retrieve and organise information effectively;
- handle primary source material critically;
- engage in effective teamwork;
- problem solve and reason scientifically;
- make critical judgements and evaluations;
- be sensitive to contextual and interpersonal factors;
- use effectively personal learning and project management skills, becoming more independent and pragmatic as learners.



As [Trapp et al. \(2011\)](#) point out, many of these are not exclusive to Psychology, but the full set has a remarkable reach and scope that incorporates skills traditionally associated with STEM subjects, alongside those that may be relatively rare in STEM subjects and may be more commonly associated with the social sciences and humanities. Thus [Trapp et al. \(2011\)](#) have framed Psychology as a 'STEM plus' subject, potentially offering a broader skill set than other, traditional STEM subjects.

A comparison of QAA's benchmarking statement and the skills and competencies sought by employers suggests that in theory, Psychology graduates should be well placed to develop the competencies important to employers as well as to develop a unique blend of skills of use in a variety of workplaces. However, there are a few concerns. First, it cannot be assumed that all Psychology students develop a particular set of skills to the same degree because of individual differences between students. Second,

focusing upon the development of long lists of skills can sometimes overshadow larger career considerations such as career decision making and identifying work that will be meaningful to graduates and will fit with their long-term plans. Therefore care should be taken in helping students to recognise the skills they have developed as Psychology students while fostering self-understanding of their own strengths and contributions as unique individuals. A number of case studies referred to later develop this point. Some of these skills will be in common with other Psychology graduates (for example, project management experience gained through completion of an independent final-year research project), and others will be individual and based upon specialised experience (for example, experience of a particular qualitative methodology, or application of Psychology to a particular work experience setting) or personal strengths (for example, one person may be particularly adept at statistical analysis while another might excel at leading or influencing people).

In addition to the skills typically obtained during the study of a degree in Psychology, the specific knowledge and understanding acquired by Psychology graduates is also of value to employers. An understanding of research methodology may be useful, for example, in conducting market research or evaluating customer experience. An understanding of cognitive psychology may facilitate the understanding of communication, perception and attentional processes; knowledge of learning and thinking may inform business strategies or training programmes in the workplace. Social psychology can provide an understanding of group dynamics, which can be applied in organisational settings to inform team working policies. Psychological understanding has the ability to inform change management, influence through leadership, behaviour change around environmental concerns, and many other employment-relevant issues. Psychology students are also particularly well trained with regard to ethical issues, which may be of clear value to some employers. An understanding of the psychology of individual differences is important in working in diverse workplaces. Human computer interaction represents yet another useful application for Psychology disciplinary knowledge. [Bray \(2010, p. 2\)](#) points out that:

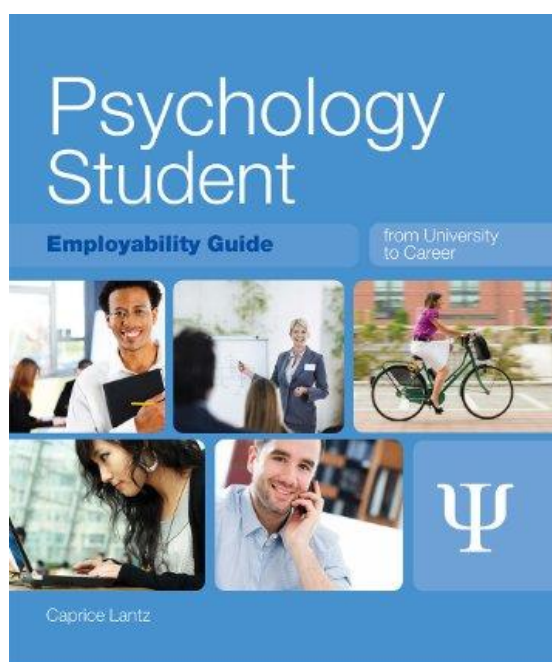
Psychological knowledge is essential to scientific and technological innovation. Technology requires the use of human operators, and understanding human capacities and limits is essential for implementing technological advances.

Psychology graduates appear therefore to be well placed to develop the skills outlined in the benchmark and above. It would seem, therefore, that Psychology graduates should be highly desirable in the graduate labour market; what is needed, perhaps, is for students to develop their awareness of their own employability.

3.3 Supporting the development of employability in Psychology students

There are a range of adjustments, improvements, reforms and embellishments to a Psychology degree that can aid employability as the 31 case studies featured later illustrate. Additional content such as study skills or employability are often free-standing, bolt-on marginalia, somewhat separate from the main Psychology curriculum. However, at the outset we should consider whether employability should be separate from the Psychology degree or whether it should be embedded. We should consider the merits of an embedded approach bearing in mind Wingate's (2006) arguments against bolt-on study skills and her contention that study at university cannot be separated from subject content. Fully embedding employability into the Psychology degree suggests a move from aiming at subject coverage to aiming at graduate qualities and attributes. Such a course would be more explicit in using the subject matter as a vehicle to develop graduateness, and employability, broadly defined, would infuse the whole degree. Does this sound like putting the cart before the horse? Before dismissing the idea consider, firstly, that the model of employability suggested is inclusive and embracing of scholarship, academic excellence and higher-order intellectual capability. Secondly, making employability a central feature of a programme makes it fully explicit rather than tacit and implicit, and avoids letting students think that employability is separate, not part of the curriculum, unimportant or just a matter for the careers service. This would mean putting employability, personal growth and development, and future careers centre stage as part of what studying Psychology is about. Starting work on employability in the first year, as soon as students join, may help to achieve this. Students are receptive and are learning about university study. A variety of approaches can be taken to introducing the concept of employability to students early in their university careers, as will be illustrated in our first set of case studies. [Case study 1](#) from Debbie Pope shows how

employability is incorporated into the curriculum using the *Psychology student employability guide* (Lantz 2011) at Edge Hill University. In [case study 2](#) Rachel Mulholland writes about using the same resource in a Level 1 module at Glasgow Caledonian University.



3.3.1 Personal development planning

Students themselves need opportunities to reflect on their developing skills and through reflection to identify and evidence them with both academic- and employment-based examples. Personal development planning (PDP) offers a framework that is well adapted for this purpose and dovetails

well with developing generic skills and employability. PDP reflects the concern that professional bodies such as the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) have for continuing professional development (CPD) throughout the professional career and lifespan. Promoting metacognition and reflection on growth and development is also clearly relevant to Psychology as a discipline. PDP is not a new idea and it needs to be made pertinent to students to be taken seriously by them. Students may perceive that the best way to use their degree to help their employability is to focus on attaining the best grade possible, using the strategies that proved successful at A-level, and so may not invest sufficient effort in PDP activities. Research conducted at Staffordshire University (Das Gupta, 2012) confirms this, in that students were found only to be motivated to engage in PDP when it was assessed. Some additional information for students may be needed to explain that degree grades are broad categories and employers are interested in far more than the 2:1 grade that a student may share with thousands of others. Building employability into the curriculum via PDP is one way forward, and [case study 3](#) by Suzanne White shows how employability is embedded across the curriculum at Bath Spa University.

However it is done, employability is likely to include career development learning, and Bridgstock (2009) suggests that it needs to be included early, be mandatory and credit bearing. PDP is strongly recommended by the QAA as a suitable vehicle to help 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” (QAA, 2009, p. 6). PDP uses tools and activities such as personal profiles, skills audits, action plans, progress files and other academic and personal records, learning portfolios and reflective logs. These can all be used to capture activity, reflection on that activity and evidence of growth and development. PDP can be embedded into the degree as part of a structured tutorial programme, a work or placement preparation module or perhaps a Psychology in practice module. Or it could be built into a separately awarded employability module running in parallel to the academic programme for all or most of the duration of the degree. An alternative is to include small amounts of PDP within every core module on a degree programme, and then to use personal academic tutoring to support the student in synthesising a ‘big picture’ view. [Case study 4](#) by Alison Walker and Dan Heggs, on creating a Level 4 core module ‘Psychology for learning and work’ at Cardiff Metropolitan University, and [case study 5](#) by Sarah McGeown and Julia Goodall, on the University of Hull’s Psychology student employability programme, illustrate two ways in which this issue has been addressed.

Some universities have attempted to navigate the PDP issue by rewarding students who engage with PDP with an additional award. Such employability awards are proliferating and Pegg *et al.* (2012) suggest that there are over 50 in the UK. The danger of such bolt-on awards, however, is that they may carry a message that the degree is about one set of important things and that the employability award is about an unrelated set of unimportant things. This sets up students to trivialise their own careers. Students may

well be assessment focused and ignore what is not on the mainstream curriculum and not contributing to their grades. They learn to be strategic and focus their attention on credit-bearing academic modules. Ironically of course they are really being the opposite of strategic in attending to grades rather than a more balanced set of factors influencing their future employment, wealth and welfare.

Reflection may not be an easy or intuitive activity for students. They may need to be shown how to do it and have access to people and case histories as models to enable them move beyond a defensive self-presentation. [Case study 6](#) by Jacqui Akhurst at York St John University shows how a [card sort tool](#) can be used to encourage student reflection.

Reflection, and perhaps employability itself, can be thought of as a threshold concept (Meyer *et al.*, 2010). Successfully negotiating a threshold concept allows the learner to access new ways of thinking and fresh modes of reasoning and explanation. Without access to these new understandings, perceptions and discourses, the learner will find it difficult to progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept the students' view of themselves, their subject matter and the point of studying at university may be transformed.

The new knowledge in threshold concepts can be troublesome if it is conceptually difficult, hard to define, difficult to disentangle from the everyday, complex, counterintuitive, alien or tacit. It may require the adoption of an unfamiliar discourse, or may be troublesome because the learner is defended from it and does not wish to change their usual way of seeing. There may be a 'liminal' phase of transition, in which new understandings need to be integrated and prior conceptions relinquished. Letting go of a familiar view may be uncomfortable. Taking on the discourse of employability for someone who understands and has done well at A-level may be quite threatening. It changes the rules by which success is judged and may mean leaving a familiar world of success to move into bigger waters where teachers and parents can help you less. There are new ways to fail as well as to succeed, and it is therefore important that academic staff support students in taking their first steps towards developing their personal employability skills. Peer support can also be useful in helping students to develop their reflective skills; for example, work by [Mair \(2012\)](#), with Psychology students at Southampton Solent University, demonstrates that students' use of online discussion via a virtual learning environment can



significantly improve students' scores on measures of metacognitive awareness, as well as their ability to accurately predict their own performance.

The thorny issue with PDP, then, is to encourage students to engage with it deeply rather than superficially, and it may be that this can only be achieved by assessing it. [Case study 7](#) by Christine Rogers at the University of Manchester on

electronic e-portfolio use and encouragement offers an interesting perspective on this informed by a healthcare education viewpoint.

Different types of marking criteria may be appropriate for these types of assessments, and students need to be supported in developing their PDP skills. There is a tendency for students to use PDP to simply report what they are good at, in the false belief that this is how to gain good marks, and the real value of PDP lies in developing truly reflective skills, using salient resources and feedback to help students to develop in areas of weakness as well as to identify strengths. [Trapp et al. \(2011, p. 28\)](#) concur with this view, recommending that PDP goes beyond simple delivery of study skills, and instead is “metacognitive, thinking about thinking, in order to maximise learning, following a cycle of setting goals and action plans, carrying them out, evaluating the outcomes, reflecting on the process, and then starting the cycle again”. Potentially, they suggest, undergraduate Psychology students could usefully be encouraged to reflect on the professional competencies applied to postgraduate training courses ([BPS, 2012](#)) as part of their PDP. This may be especially useful for students who ultimately plan to enter professional Psychology training, but consideration will also need to be given to whether the same competencies are appropriate for the majority of students who will follow careers outside of professional psychology.

3.3.2 Curriculum content to enhance employability

Below are some ideas about how the curriculum itself may change so that employability and Psychology education may develop more synergy. By no means all of Psychology can be taught in a three-year degree programme and perhaps some fresh thinking might be possible about what a Bachelors degree could consist of. The recently announced changes to the BPS accreditation requirements ([BPS, 2012](#)) around curriculum may increase the ability of course teams to offer more flexible curricula, and to open up the possibility of including more employability-relevant psychological content within programmes.

One idea would be to focus more on growth and development. Teaching students about their own development resonates with PDP and the importance of being reflective and self-aware. It is also likely to be of interest to students and can help to contextualise the major shifts in thinking and reasoning about knowledge that arguably take place while studying for a degree and that otherwise seem to be unconnected with academic Psychology. It also makes a break with A-level content that may help students realise the importance of taking a different approach to study. Here are some ideas for content:

- Lifespan and adult development including the work of Erikson (1978) and Levinson (Levinson et al., 1978; Levinson and Levinson, 1996), to help develop students’ understanding of the ways in which development and growth continue throughout life.
- Late adolescent and early adulthood cognitive development and/or the development of epistemological reasoning. The work of Perry (1970) and Baxter Magolda (1992, 2001) could

provide a theoretical framework for teaching students about how they develop their reasoning abilities and their understanding of their own ability to learn. The dominant patterns within these theories relate to the emergence of voice for students, the evolving relationships with peers, and the changing approach to authority. Finding ways to challenge and support students in developing their voice, in learning from their peer relationships, and in developing appropriate relationships with staff based on mutual respect and autonomy are clearly relevant to the development of independent learning and critical and reflective thinking valued by employers. Baxter Magolda (1992) suggests that students begin their university life thinking that knowledge is absolute and factually either right or wrong. They believe that this knowledge is held by their lecturers, whose duty is to convey it to students in a straightforward and accessible way. However, this tends to change as students move through higher education and they increasingly adopt more sophisticated, less absolute and more relative conceptions of knowledge (Pizzolato, 2003). Students begin to realise that knowledge can be uncertain and there are many different areas that need to be explored in order to get the best answer. They also move on from thinking that lecturers have the right answers and are the only source of acquiring knowledge to thinking independently by analysing and evaluating different approaches and alternative outcomes. An understanding of this process of development is relevant for both psychological and theoretical reasons, and in supporting students in understanding themselves. It is also central to the development of employability in relation to students becoming critically aware, independent thinkers.

- Metacognition, metacognitive development and the implications of cognitive psychology for study would facilitate students in better understanding of their own learning processes, and how to optimise these both during their studies and beyond into employment.
- The social psychology of relationships may be already covered in a social psychology module, but transferring it to a module about the psychology of undergraduate development may give it more immediacy and relevance for students. This topic has clear relevance to students in relation to employment, as it can be applied to understanding the patterns of relationships within a team or working environment.
- Individual differences is another core area of undergraduate Psychology, but could fit into a psychology of undergraduate development module and include material helping the development of self-awareness and investigating individual interests and preferences. Understanding individual differences can also facilitate improved understanding of diversity within the workplace.
- Career psychology and related material from organisational psychology can help students to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and how these might apply to career choices, as well as introducing selection processes such as psychometric testing, which may support them through recruitment into employment. Savickas (2010) describes a model focusing on the

psychology of individual differences, termed the 'matching' model, because it strives to enable individuals to deepen their self-knowledge (of skills, attributes, interests and values) and consider these in relation to occupational information (e.g. the work of Holland, 1985). Lantz (2011) makes use of this approach in the *Psychology student employability guide*.

- Social and developmental psychology-related material can be used to address intercultural competence, a collection of skills that are increasingly highlighted in the literature as important for Psychology graduates today (see Trapp *et al.*, 2011). Section 5.1 defines intercultural competence and suggests ways in which it might be addressed.

This section is not intended to provide an exhaustive account of ways in which our teaching of Psychology might promote employability and reflection upon it, but it is intended to show that reconsiderations of the design and content of our Psychology curricula might be useful and possible. Encouraging students to become more understanding of their own development, and to be more metacognitively aware, through their exposure to psychological content, is an area that merits further exploration and research. [Case study 8](#) by Helen Dudiak, Debbie Pope, Pamela Qualter and Kathryn Gardner on [emotional intelligence in PDP](#) is particularly interesting in this context, and we would encourage you to explore the concept for yourself to see if this approach might be appropriate for inclusion in your own programme.

3.3.3 Counselling, communication and interpersonal skills

It is rare to find counselling, communications and interpersonal skills being part of a UK Psychology undergraduate programme, but potentially they might be and they would certainly contribute to employability as this is an area that is widely associated with Psychology and may be expected of a Psychology graduate. Indeed, interpersonal and communication skills are mentioned among the set of skills listed by QAA in relation to Psychology described above and could be of value to any employer requiring their graduate employee to engage in communication with clients or to work as part of a team.

There is interest in several health professions both in giving students interprofessional learning experiences and in helping them to develop their clinical skills through helping them to communicate effectively with patients. Traditionally, undergraduate education in the life and health sciences and professions allied to medicine has concentrated largely on theoretical and discipline-specific knowledge. Recently, professional bodies, practitioners and the HCPC have increasingly advocated the importance of professional skills. There is encouragement to develop skills within an interprofessional learning environment. The benefits of teaching health professions counselling, communications and interpersonal skills in their undergraduate courses are considerable. Failures in communication between healthcare professionals and their patients can lead to poor patient experiences, dissatisfaction (Haynes *et al.*, 1979; Ley, 1988) or result in misunderstanding that may affect adherence to treatment regimens (Bain, 1976).

Inadequate communication skills are cited as one of the key factors contributing to unanticipated patient deaths and illness within the UK (National Patient Safety Agency, 2007). Healthcare professions are common destinations for Psychology graduates (see Table 1), and so it is worthwhile considering incorporating counselling and communication skills into the undergraduate curriculum.

Teaching counselling and interpersonal skills is usually done in small and intensively supervised groups, which require high levels of staff input and time allocation. Traditional classroom and role modelling based simulation offers high fidelity and captivates attention, but requires significant and expensive resources and as a consequence is difficult to be shared and accessed across the learning community.

Furthermore, achieving reliable and valid assessment of large cohorts of students in a mass higher

education system in a timely and economic manner is

problematic and challenging.



Despite these difficulties a team at Erasmus University, Rotterdam, have developed a way to teach and assess counselling and communications skills with large cohorts as part of their Psychology programme (Kuntze *et al.*, 2007). This

includes large classes with multiple staff and students working in triads, considerable independent work supported by extensive video material and a novel instrument for the assessment of counselling and communication skills involving structured response to video prompts that they have shown to be reliable and valid, the counselling communication skills progress test (Kuntze *et al.*, 2009). The innovative assessment in particular

makes this material more accessible with real potential for

improving employability generally and in the psychology professions both directly and through the

development of the reflective self-awareness that such skills-based work may support. An

interprofessional counselling and communicating skills module might draw on the work of Egan (2010) or Corey (2013) and include;

- attentive behaviour;
- small encouragements (and non-verbal prompts);
- asking questions;
- paraphrasing;
- reflection of feelings;
- summarising;
- making a conversation more specific;

- opening and closing of a clinical interview;
- motivational interviewing;
- appreciative enquiry.

Communication is central to employability and, as can be seen in section 5.1, to intercultural competence. For the health professions, counselling and communication skills are very much part of being a professional and are therefore absolutely central to employability. Without wishing to endorse urban myths that all psychologists are also therapists, it is probably widely expected of Psychology graduates that they have some familiarity with counselling and communication skills. Including this sort of material is a very clear way of directly addressing employability and the material is of course very much part of our discipline.

3.3.4 Enterprise and entrepreneurship

In introducing employability earlier we noted that it is necessarily underpinned by a 'can-do' approach (section 2.1; CBI, 2011). This attitudinal component relates well to the entrepreneurship and enterprise often sought by employers and incorporates innovation, creativity, collaboration and risk-taking. These qualities are highly valued and relate to organisations of all kinds, not just the for-profit sector or to those interested in starting their own businesses. Indeed successful scholarship and research requires openness to new ideas, a willingness to take part, collaborate with others and get stuck into a project, be innovative and creative and take risks. Such qualities may often be a feature of outstanding undergraduate work. Belbin's (2010) well-known work on team roles suggests that successful teams include people with a range of qualities, including those who generate new ideas, those who can bring out others and completer/finishers who ensure that the job is actually done. It may be helpful to show students both that a 'can-do' approach is a great asset and that there is room for all to contribute. Work such as Belbin's may be part of Business Studies programmes, but this and similar work could also be used in Psychology programmes to help students to understand and reflect on their own strengths and preferences, validate their potential to contribute to teams and projects and help them to understand some of the dimensions of leadership.

How can we encourage such enterprise in our students and make it relevant to all areas of career aspiration, not just those aiming at self-employment or starting their own business? Psychology departments approach enterprise and entrepreneurship in different ways. As described in [case study 9](#) by Rachel Mulholland, as part of a required first-year module in Glasgow Caledonian University's Psychology and Allied Health Sciences Department, students have to investigate and write up case studies of careers in psychology and non-psychology occupations.

The Department of Sport and Exercise Science at Aberystwyth University has a module that contains activities designed to help students apply academic knowledge to ‘real-life’ tasks. In Skills for the Sport and Exercise Scientist II, students seek funding for a novel social enterprise, business idea or community project, underpinned by an evidence base of research. In groups students pitch to a *Dragon’s Den*-style panel composed of University staff, invited external funders, and representatives of local government and businesses. This is preceded by a programme of workshops and invited speakers (e.g. successful alumni) to inspire students and help refine their ideas. Emily Oliver and Les Tumilty describe this in [case study 10](#).



3.3.5 Constructivist approaches to learning and teaching

Constructivist approaches to learning and teaching are well aligned with PDP. Active and experiential learning develop employability as they encourage exploration and provide feedback, and help to develop reflection, motivation and engagement. Lecture-based teaching still has a role to play in developing contextual abstract and theoretical knowledge, but combining constructivist learning with contextual academic teaching may be particularly important in Psychology. Contextual content offers a theoretical rationale for the experiential activity that in turn provides a practical application for what may otherwise remain rather dry. The use of psychometrics and the teaching of individual differences and aspects of

occupational psychology offer opportunities for learning synergies. Using careers service measures of interest and personality helps to explore the ethical and practical issues in psychometric administration and interpretation and PDP prompts reflection and practical use of the data. Data can also contribute to sets for practical and statistics classes. Common modular systems can challenge well-intentioned synergies, but there may be lost learning opportunities in not bringing such things together.

[Case study 11](#) by Rachel Mulholland shows how students can be encouraged to combine work-related experience, including paid and voluntary work and other roles, with their developing knowledge of Psychology so that they develop more confidence in independent, self-directed learning and have a deeper understanding of the value and applicability of their academic learning to real-world issues.

Academics interested in engaging in constructivist learning and teaching approaches might also be interested in Lin Norton's (2004) work at Liverpool Hope University using [Psychology applied learning scenarios \(PALS\)](#), a problem-based learning type technique that encourages independent learning and critical thinking through the use of example problems similar to those that might be encountered by a professional psychologist.

3.3.6 Assessment

Assessment also offers potential to develop employability. In some disciplines, the link between assessment and employability is easy to make; for example, the business game tradition in Business education, or mock courtroom scenarios in Law. In Psychology, our research project traditions and expertise involve the development of a range of employability-related scholarly skills. Group projects develop interpersonal skills and leadership; individual final-year projects lead to high level and high quality independent learning, often associated with a broad range of project management skills, data handling and information technology skills, and research and written communication skills. Poster presentations of group projects or intermediate work-in-progress with final-years develop further skills. We may need to do more to get students to reflect on their existing learning and developing skills, and to be more aware of them and how to evidence them.

We can also be more creative in designing assessments that contribute further to employability by going beyond traditional assessment methods. An example idea, adapted from Mark Smith's 'project pitch assessment' in Geography at Aberystwyth University, could be for student groups to develop research proposals that they could pitch competitively for a number of notionally 'real-world' project grants. These could include options set up by the staff's own real research groups and involve team work, posters and presentation skills in a conference environment, a debate and popular vote as well as judgement by academics, budgeting, time and project management. Similarly, engaging students in panels

making ethical decisions about research proposals, or in peer review of articles that they write for assessment, involve students in typically academic employment-related activities.

More creatively, students can be assessed on their ability to solve real-world problems that exist in real workplaces. To do this authentically requires links between academics and employers. For example, a local charity may wish to raise awareness of its cause and increase donations, and students are asked to outline a strategy for them to do so, drawing on their knowledge of psychological theories. A small business near to the university needs to increase productivity but cannot employ more staff; how might Psychology help this business? The local council are trying to change public behaviour to reduce the amount of litter on the streets; based on an understanding of Psychology, how might they go about this? The assessment itself takes the form of a written report or presentation, explaining the recommended strategies and underlying rationale to the local employer or organisation. The ideal scenario is for the employers to be involved in the assessment process and to provide feedback to students alongside that given by academic staff, so that the student gains real understanding of how their knowledge of the discipline of Psychology can be applied in the workplace. An additional advantage of this approach is the development of strong relationships between the academic department and employers, which can be mutually beneficial, especially when looking for opportunities for students to gain work experience or to carry out final-year research projects in a community-based context.

3.3.7 Work-based and work-related learning

Students often work part-time during their degrees and many work during vacations. In Psychology this is rarely graduate-level work, but is still important in many ways. Butler (2010) teaches a Business module in which students learn about management theory and write a case study of their part-time work, often in bars and restaurants, on the management theory and practice espoused and actually in use. [Case study 12](#) by Shirley Pressler at the University of Huddersfield demonstrates that this approach is equally valid within Psychology.

Work experience of any kind may be a considerable source of informal learning that can potentially be drawn on in developing employability and demonstrating the student's ability to apply Psychology within the workplace. It may be reasonable to expect students to all have some work experience that they can reflect on, even if this is achieved through voluntary work in the summer vacation period. A more formal alternative is to introduce a placement option.

Integrated periods of work experience are common in many vocational qualifications, especially in health. An example in Psychology is the work experience that is gained as a core part of the doctorate in clinical psychology. These are often 'thin sandwich' placements taking place during part of each week, or during the middle part of a term begun and ended at university. Other options include placement modules,

where students engage in work experience (which may be paid or voluntary) for a set time each week and are assessed within a module on employability-related skills and reflections, or semester-long placements. ‘Thick sandwiches’ of a full year taken between the second and final years of undergraduate study are common in Business, Computing and Engineering. Regulations at many universities allow them as an option, and increasingly Psychology departments are offering placements to at least some of their students. At the University of Bath, all Psychology students go on placement, and they are a very popular option at Aston, Leeds, Surrey and elsewhere. Recent changes to BPS accreditation requirements (BPS, 2012) have increased the flexibility of undergraduate Psychology curricula to make formal work placements more possible while still allowing students to achieve GBC.

The [Dearing Report](#) (NCIHE, 1997) recommended that all students should have the opportunity to take a work placement. Ten years later, however, in 2007, only 29% of UK students undertook a work placement compared with a European average of 55%, with 72% in France and 80% in Germany (Little, 2008). Much evidence supports the academic, employability and career benefits of work placements (Mason *et al.*, 2006; Lowden *et al.*, 2011) including evidence specifically in Psychology (Moores and Reddy, 2012; Reddy and Moores, 2012). Reportedly “a third of graduate vacancies this year will be filled by applicants who have already worked for their new employer as undergraduates” ([High Fliers, 2011](#), p. 5).

If placements are new to you, here are a few basics:

- Employers are generally very much in favour of them. A year-long placement can make a significant contribution to an organisation and a year-long trial helps with selecting and recruiting the right graduates. In general there is no shortage of placements locally, nationally and internationally.
- Placements have well-established employability, career entry and academic benefits.
- Graduates typically regard their placement as the one of the most valuable parts of their degree, and identify benefits in communication, time management, confidence, self-presentation, taking responsibility, writing and teamwork. The [work experience podcasts](#) from Pauline Fox and her colleagues at the University of West London involve students and employers show the importance of gaining relevant work experience and how Psychology degrees are used in various work settings.
- There is well-developed support for undergraduate placements from a range of organisations, for example from the placement specialists ASET, the professional body for placement and employability staff, who offer a good practice guide to work placements ([ASET, 2012](#)). QAA have a section of the [Code of practice](#) for work-based and placement learning (2007), and also *Outcomes from an institutional audit: work-based and placement learning and employability* ([QAA, 2008](#)).

A series of case studies about a variety of work experience schemes, both from placement schemes and alternative approaches, follow. The first, [case study 13](#) by Victoria Lavis, is about the Level 3 research studentship scheme at the University of Bradford, where students work with a member of staff to carry out research in the Summer between their second and third year of study. It is perhaps worth noting that the BPS regularly offer a research assistantship scheme for students to undertake Summer research in their own universities, so if you are interested in supporting your students in this way, it would be worth [checking their website](#) for information.

An alternative approach to internships is to engage students in work shadowing schemes, as explained by Helen Mitchell from the University of Chester in [case study 14](#). This can be problematic for students seeking careers in professional psychology due to issues around confidentiality, but is not impossible, and it is certainly possible for students aspiring to alternative careers to shadow relevant professionals.

[Case study 15](#) by Maddie Ohl shows how University of West London students develop their skills and experience through community service. These sorts of projects offer employability gains for students, but also add benefit to the local community; in this case, local primary school children with special educational needs. Community service projects could be developed with a range of partners to match students' aspirations, depending on local availability and demand.

For students for whom it is challenging to work outside university, for whatever reason, another approach can involve inviting professionals into the university. In many cases, this is done as an 'add-on', non-compulsory seminar or workshop offered to interested students, but there is no reason that this type of learning cannot be formalised. [Case study 16](#) by Tamara Turner-Moore, Therese Shepherd and Margaret Hardman describes a second-year elective module – the 'Psychology professionals' workshop' – which exemplifies this approach.

Experience need not be gained in a professional psychology setting unless this is specifically required. Businesses will usually be more interested in the individual student than what it is they are studying. [Case study 17](#), by Ed Walford at Aston University, provides an example of the benefits perceived by both a student on placement in a business environment, and the employer of that student.

Placements and work experience opportunities for students require sourcing, monitoring, supervision and support so there is a staff workload implication. Dedicated and professional placement support, at programme, school of study or university level to achieve these targets is essential to ensure that the student experience is good. However, the workload may be less than imagined as there are significant differences between this kind of sandwich placement and professional training courses where students must be found a particular placement and allocated to it. Students should and do arrange their own placements and work experience opportunities as part of the learning process, and many also source

them. For example, a student from Aston University had a contact at an Australian university, which led to a research placement; this contact has subsequently developed to take several students on placement each year. Thus the initial challenge of sourcing placements can be reduced by asking students to be responsible for their own placement in the first instance, and then through developing a network of contacts. University careers services are also likely to be very helpful and keen to be involved and should be consulted early on. [Case study 18](#) from Peter Reddy looks at pre-placement, on-placement and post-placement activities at Aston University that aim to help students to make the most of their learning opportunities .

However, it should be noted that placements and similar activities are not without their risks and challenges. With the funding changes in 2012-13 students are now responsible for fees and it is not yet clear how the new regime will affect the uptake of placements. A placement fee may be acceptable where students are paid, and paid placements are the norm outside of a limited number of areas. Unfortunately psychology placements as honorary assistants in clinical and forensic practice are among the largest groups of unpaid placements. This immediately raises issues of equity and access. Aston University has chosen to support unpaid placements with fee waivers and bursaries to facilitate equality of access to placements, and it may be that other institutions who wish to support placement learning may wish to take similar steps for their Psychology students. The financial burden of unpaid work is considerable and tends to exclude those with limited resources. In addition students with professional family connections may be better placed to access quality placements than those from less privileged backgrounds who may not even know of the existence of vacancies. [Case study 19](#) by Annette Baxter at Sheffield Hallam University shows a way in which this may be addressed through a career mentoring system, which makes good use of alumni and other networks.

Participating in a placement may also reduce the opportunities for the student to work part-time alongside their studies, and thus reduce their ability to support themselves or their families. Perlin (2011) suggests that the UK may be about five years behind the United States in internship culture so now is the time to ensure that good practice for both placements and internships is in place. Recent correspondence in *The Psychologist* shows that concerns about fair access and cost are already being raised in the UK. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2012) have an [internship charter](#) that may be a model of good practice. Issues of fairness of access and equality of opportunity are clearly paramount.

Another risk to be managed in undergraduate placements is the quality of the placement and the consequences of problematic placement experiences. The student is potentially in a vulnerable position; they may feel that leaving a placement in which they are learning little or feel underused, or worse, are intimidated, harassed or bullied, puts their academic progress at risk. In paid work resigning may be a last resort, but it is certainly an option. Is it an option for a student if they are required to achieve a certain

period of work experience, or they feel that they are letting their university down by leaving? To avoid these risks, universities need policies to assess and approve placements, and they need regularly to monitor students' progress. Bullying and intimidation, failing relationships and communications breakdowns may happen in any sector or organisation, and universities need clear procedures to enable a student to leave a placement and receive care, support and guidance about exit routes and options that do not penalise them. The [ASET guidelines](#) (2012) can be used to inform such policies.

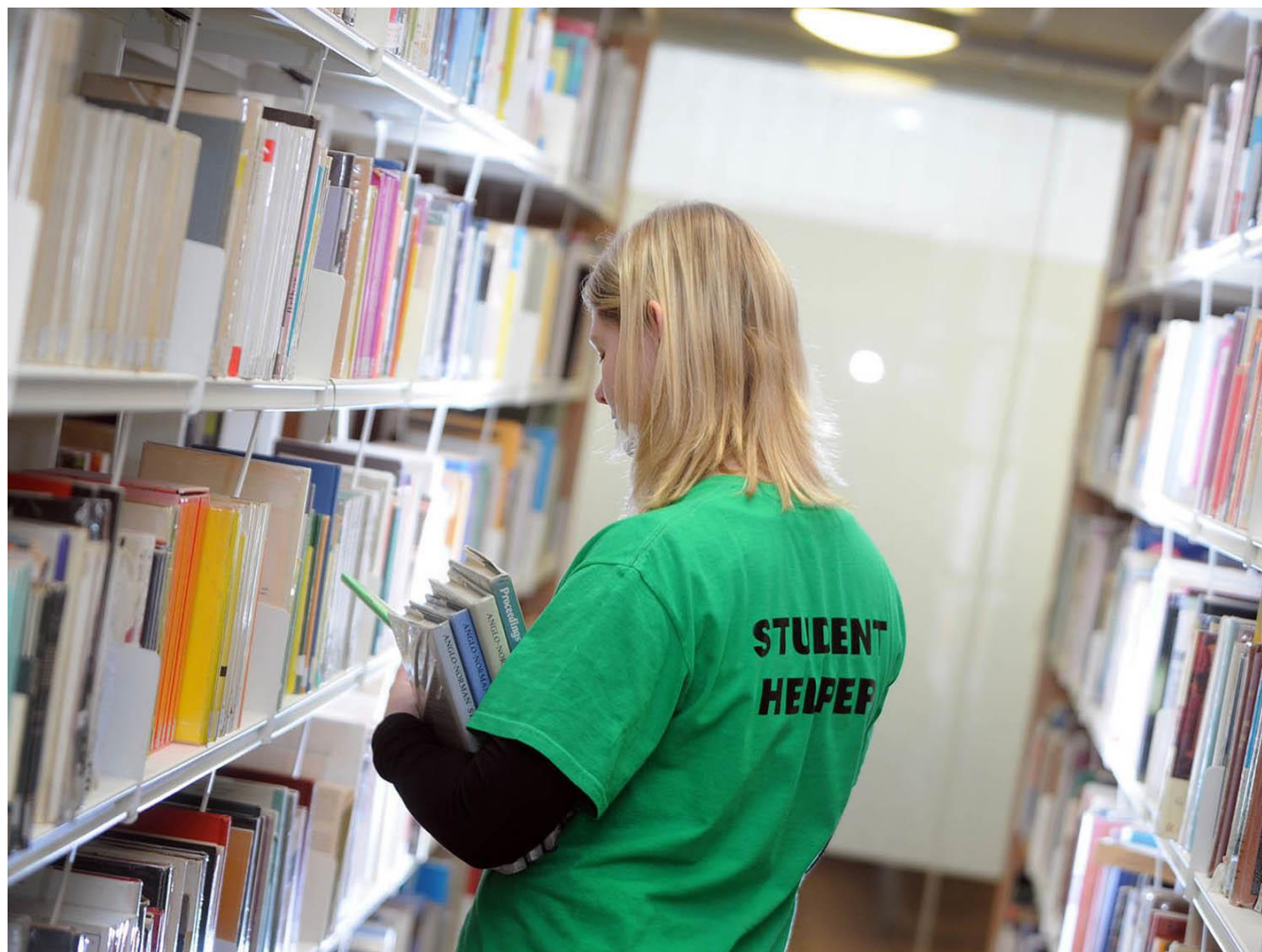
Thus placements, whether in the context of a module, or as a thin or thick sandwich, or less formalised work experience opportunities, can greatly enhance students' employability skills, and also their ability to articulate these skills. There are workload implications, and risks to consider, but support and guidance is available and can be used to navigate some of the most likely difficulties in advance.



3.3.8 Using extracurricular activities to enhance employability

Departments are increasingly aware of the need to help students to develop, understand and articulate skills and competencies and address them in various ways. However, many students engage in a range of activities outside their studies that are highly relevant to their burgeoning employability. Students can test out and develop skills through participating in clubs and societies; for example, committee members may well be involved in planning and strategy for the group, public speaking, chairing meetings, managing finances and organising events. Encouraging students to have their own psychological society, for example, can be a fantastic way of facilitating both a sense of community for students and helping them to

develop employability skills. [Case study 20](#) by Charlotte Taylor explains this in the context of the Worcester University Psychology Society (W.U.P.S.).



4. Gaining employment with a Psychology degree

As we saw earlier (section 2), graduates may be highly employable, and yet not employed. In part, this has something to do with the graduate's ability to compete within the recruitment and selection process for employment. Graduate recruitment and selection is the process through which employers search for and locate graduates to fill their positions. Different employers recruit in different ways depending upon their size, needs and their operation (Branine, 2008). Larger employers often recruit graduates in the Autumn, their selection process takes place in the Spring and graduates begin working in the Summer or Autumn. However, other employers recruit throughout the year with no clear timelines.

Branine (2008) provides a useful overview of the various trends seen today in recruitment and selection. However, of particular relevance to Psychology is a substantial increase in the volume of graduate applicants, making it more difficult for employers to identify the most qualified applicants. It is therefore

crucial that students are supported in developing their skills in applying for jobs and making themselves 'stand out from the crowd'. Again many departments use [Lantz's \(2011\)](#) guide, which contains resources for students around job search, CV writing, interview techniques and networking, and there are other Psychology-specific resources available to help students with CV preparation, such as Laura Dean's helpful resources on [assessing Psychology employability skills](#) and [building a good Psychology CV](#) from Leeds Metropolitan University. In addition, Rachel Bromnick and Paul Charman at the University of Lincoln, have produced a [set of vodcasts](#) demonstrating interview skills for jobs and postgraduate training opportunities in Psychology.

Departments use the above resources in a variety of ways. Some are incorporated into required classes, used in optional workshops or used to inform events or the development of programmes. The Health and Life Sciences Faculty at Oxford Brookes University, for instance, hold an annual networking event for Psychology students, described by Emma Robinson and Bryony France in [case study 21](#). The event helps to educate students about networking as well as to practise their networking skills and make personal contact with employers.

As a result of the difficulties in distinguishing good graduates, employers are increasingly turning to more person-based selection methods such as personality tests, competency-based interviews and psychometrics. While this has relevance for all students, Psychology educators are likely to be in a better position to help students rise to this recruitment challenge by emphasising the personal aspects of course material such as motivation and personality (see the section above on curriculum suggestions for employability). [Case study 22](#) by Suzanne White is about gauging students' skills and interests at Bath Spa University.

Immediately post-graduation, graduates are likely to be applying for a combination of graduate and non-graduate jobs, and it is important to note that a non-graduate job at this stage should not be regarded in any sense as a failure. Some graduates will not be ready to commit to a full-on career immediately, some will be working to finance travelling, and in Psychology some will want to establish their comfort with and commitment to patient contact as a tentative first step towards a clinical career. This able and ambitious 2011 graduate from Aston University greatly valued her work as a healthcare assistant six weeks after graduating:

... so I started working and I absolutely love it, I really do and I no longer feel like a student ... I'm really looking forward to like my journey into like the world of working ... finding a career, doing something that I enjoy and I've got my first pay cheque as well, brilliant. I'm actually making a lot of money compared to ... hardly anything as a student. ... Yes, it really is a massive incentive. I don't want to stay there forever because it is a healthcare assistant ... and I'm hoping to become a clinical psychologist, but just meeting people and feeling like an adult and, I don't know, I'm really, really enjoying it. ... I feel extremely confident

in doing it. ... I really think that it's a really good thing how it's helping me easing into this world of work ... I've given myself at least six months to stay at this job.

In fact she did move on to a graduate job in less than six months, and the period in non-graduate work, and her ability to learn from it and to articulate and reflect on her learning, contributed to her success in doing so.

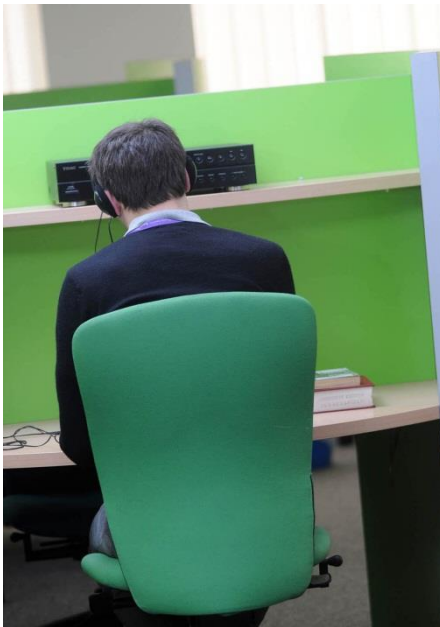
4.1 Increasing students' awareness of their employability

An important aspect of helping students to become aware of their own employability is supporting them in becoming aware of the career paths open to them. The [BPS \(2012\)](#) provides a variety of information relevant to traditional psychologist career paths, which many departments find useful. Another useful resource are [a collection of vodcasts](#) produced by staff at the University of Worcester, which include a series of talks given by professional psychologists who provide overviews of the traditional career areas. These podcasts are publically available, but the University of Worcester also embeds them into Psychology modules so that students not only watch them, but are required to reflect upon them. The Open University also uses podcasts with its own graduates, as [case study 23](#) by Jean McAvoy describes.

Many departments provide seminars that address career opportunities. At the University of Birmingham, Psychology students are provided with weekly talks addressing career opportunities within and outside Psychology, described in [case study 25](#) by Julie Wainwright and Jim Reali.

The *Psychology student employability guide* ([Lantz, 2011](#)) is an important resource in supporting Psychology student employability. The publication outlines each of the traditional areas of Psychology, describes emerging areas (e.g. animal psychology, human computer interaction), health and social care opportunities such as those created through IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) and includes a variety of case studies illustrating the range of careers graduates have pursued outside of Psychology. It includes realistic advice regarding the preparation required for postgraduate study, addresses recent trends in the job market, career decision making, getting work experience, conducting a job search and provides Psychology-specific examples and advice related to CVs and covering letters.

Perhaps most usefully, the employability guide provides a skills audit tool, which amalgamates the skills and qualities outlined by the [QAA \(2010\)](#) and those commonly sought by employers. The assessment describes skills, provides prompts requiring students to reflect on the development of each skill, encourages students to rate their levels of skill proficiency and enjoyment, and encourages students to develop action plans to address skill deficits. This exercise encourages students to enhance their awareness of their skills, identify their proficiency levels, plan for further skill development, and articulate their skills. It also helps students to recognise their potential strengths and weaknesses, which are important both for both explaining their skills to employers and identifying career paths that match their



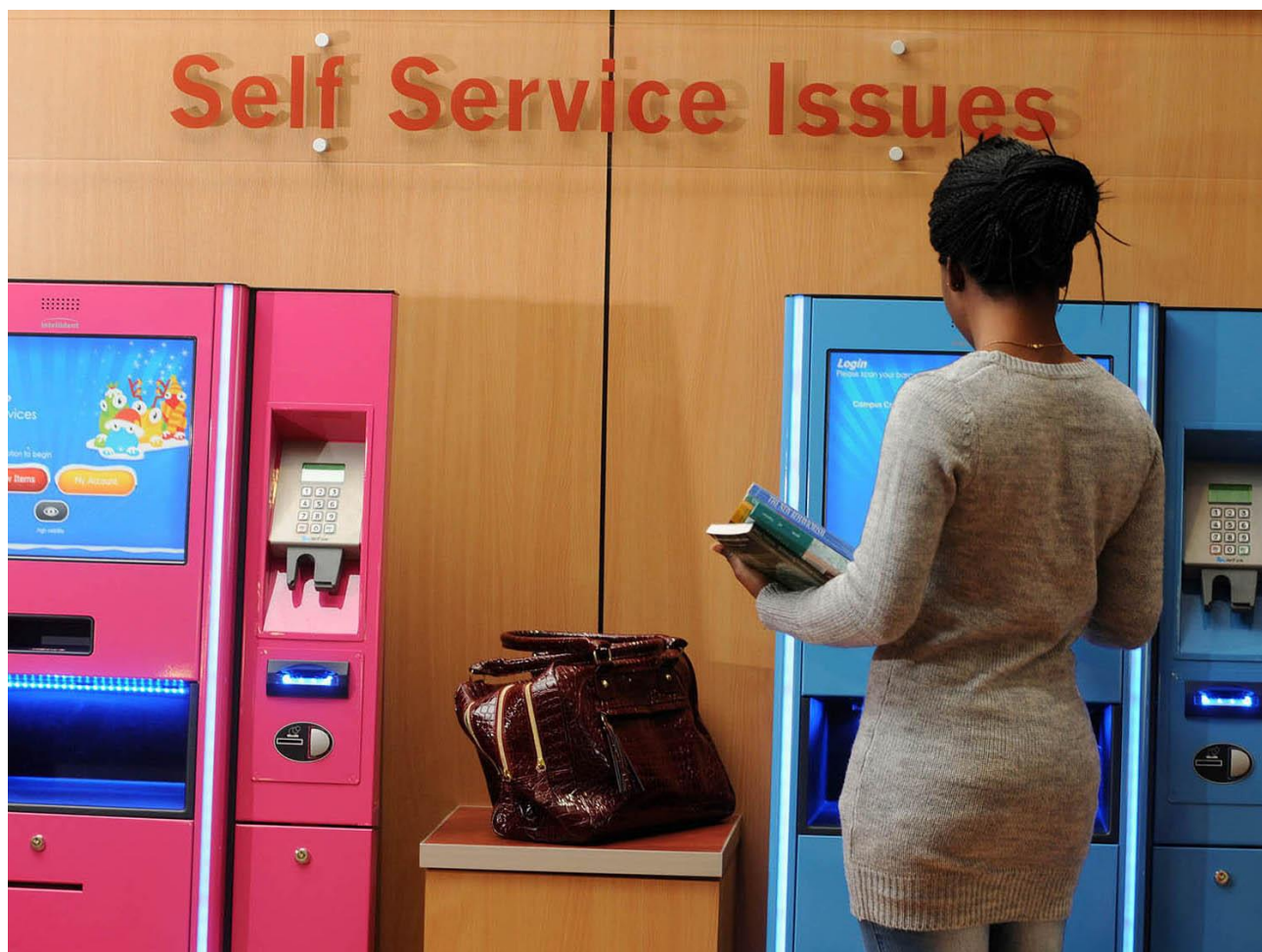
strongest skill areas. This understanding of students' personal skill profiles is useful to them when exploring careers outside of Psychology, as well as helping them to understand whether professional psychology is really the career choice for them. While employers may wish for graduates with the full QAA list of 28 skills, or more, the reality is that most students will excel at some far more than others. While some weaknesses will need to be addressed so that they reach some a minimum threshold (e.g. most graduate jobs require the ability to write a coherent email or letter), others may come to be relatively unimportant with appropriate job choices. Thus good understanding of their own abilities is essential to informing students' choice.

Departments use the *Psychology student employability guide* (Lantz, 2011) in a variety of ways to increase student awareness of careers and to generally support students' employability. For example, the Psychology departments at the University of Hull and Edge Hill University issue hard copies to students and use them in workshops to address various aspects of employability as part of their comprehensive employability programmes (see [case study 5](#) and [case study 1](#)). The Department of Psychology and Allied Health Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University uses the electronic version of the guide as a core resource for their required first-year module, 'Employability and Career Development for Psychology' (see [case study 2](#)). Bath Spa University have used the exercises contained within the guide to develop an online survey that helps to inform Psychology students about their post-graduation options and to determine the relative strength of interests in and between options ([case study 22](#)). Further, their system enables staff members to analyse student career interests, including the extent to which self-assessments of skills match those required by the careers of interest, and whether there is a pre- to post-survey change in student goal orientation.

One way to contribute to this is to engage students, recent graduates and staff in reflecting on their employability development at different stages. This may make the troublesome concept of employability and its related requirement to be reflective and self-aware more accessible to students. This engagement could be via short biographies and podcasted recordings of reflections and discussions. Weblogs ('blogs') are another useful tool; for example, Keele University Psychology department are currently developing an idea whereby final-year students will reflect on the employability value of their final-year projects, and the resulting (edited) blogs will then be made available as a resource to future students. A similar approach may be useful with alumni, and indeed some universities are using alumni as career mentors for their undergraduate students such as the Department of Psychology, Sociology and Politics at Sheffield

Hallam University ([case study 19](#)). Others, such as Royal Holloway, hold alumni networking events, as described in [case study 24](#) by Szonya Durant.

All of these approaches can be used to facilitate students in engaging with personal development planning, reflection and metacognition, and thus in developing awareness of and the ability to articulate their own employability-relevant skills.



5. New skills for psychological employability

5.1 Fostering global perspectives in Psychology students

In their chapter reviewing the future of Psychology graduate employment, [Trapp et al. \(2011\)](#) note the rapid changes taking place in society that require graduates who are able to cope in an increasingly globalised world. Further, they suggest that Psychology educators address these changes by supporting students in developing 'new skills', specifically intercultural competence and global citizenship. This section briefly describes globalisation relative to Psychology student employability, defines global citizenship and intercultural competence, and suggests ways in which they may be facilitated in Psychology students.

5.1.1 Globalisation, global citizenship and intercultural competence

Globalisation is thought to be a process involving the movement of societies around the world towards becoming more interdependent and integrated (Steger, 2009). Many in the academic community are uncomfortable with the concept of globalisation arguing that the academic orientation of higher education is being eroded by an increased focus upon economics (Caruana and Spurling, 2007). While such criticisms may be warranted, within and outside the discipline changes are afoot and the academic community will be increasingly required to respond. The increase in international students in many Psychology departments is an obvious example with their presence requiring lecturers to be, for example, more cautious with the use of language, attuned to cultural teaching and learning issues, and knowledgeable about Psychology in other countries. Policy developments also herald change. The Bologna Process has established a system through which educational qualifications can be transferred across countries and the European Certificate in Psychology (Europsy), which outlines requirements for Psychology teaching across Europe, suggests that departments need to consider the transferability of qualifications and the future mobility of their graduates (Trapp and Upton, 2010).

In response to globalisation, most UK HE institutions have developed internationalisation strategies (Koutsantoni, 2006; Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2007) designed to bring an “international, intercultural or global dimension” into students’ experiences (Knight, 2003, p. 3). While internationalisation can involve a variety of activities, producing graduates who are interculturally competent global citizens is often an expected outcome. However, global citizenship and intercultural competence are concepts that are not well understood.

While ‘citizen’ suggests belonging to a particular country, ‘global citizen’ suggests that individuals are members of the world community as well (O’Byrne, 2003; as cited in Patel *et al.*, 2011). While there are a variety of interpretations of what it is to be a global citizen, Oxfam’s guideline for global citizenship education highlight the key elements of it as being: knowledge and understanding of topics such as globalisation, interdependence and sustainable development; skills such as critical thinking and conflict resolution; and values and attitudes such as empathy and value and respect for diversity (Oxfam, 2006).

Intercultural competence (ICC) is generally considered to be “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). While ‘ICC’ is one of the more common terms found in the literature, researchers have identified over 20 terms for ICC (e.g. ‘global competitive intelligence’, ‘international competence’) (Fantini and Tirmizi, 2006) and over 300 related theoretical constructs (Spitzberg and Changnon, 2010). However, across approaches there is some agreement that ICC comprises a set of particular attitudes (e.g. openness, respecting difference), skills (e.g. active listening, behavioural accommodation), and knowledge (e.g. norms and values of other cultures) relative to communicating with people across cultures (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009).

While no widely agreed upon conception of a globally employable graduate exists, global citizenship type awards in higher education institutions (see the universities of Warwick, Kent, and Surrey) suggest that graduates who are prepared to contribute successfully in a global workplace can demonstrate intercultural competence, awareness of international issues within and outside of their disciplines, and the ability to contextualise learning globally.



5.1.2 Methods of fostering global perspectives

Producing Psychology graduates who have global perspectives (i.e. ICC and global citizenship) is an outcome increasingly incorporated into university and departmental employability and internationalisation strategies. Although relevant to all students, global perspectives, especially ICC, may be of particular importance for Psychology students, who will go on to serve highly diverse client populations, with a significant proportion working in social and welfare professions (Prospects, 2010) and about one-fifth becoming psychologists. However, ICC will be important even for Psychology graduates who pursue other employment opportunities not only because of increasing domestic diversity or potential employment abroad, but because employers may assume, rightly or not, a level of expertise regarding their understanding of human behaviour across cultures and may call upon them for such expertise.

Initiatives for developing graduates with global perspectives primarily include encouraging students to learn about other countries and cultures through foreign language study or taking 'international' related modules in other departments, enhancing curriculum within the discipline, and encouraging intercultural contact between students. Curricular enhancements can range from the addition of a single module to a comprehensive review of the curriculum to infuse global perspectives. A case study from the School of Psychology at the University of Liverpool demonstrates the former approach. Their new 'International Psychology' module considers how the diversity of human behaviour across nations contributes to psychological theory, research and practice and how this knowledge can help to address global issues such as ageing, health and the environment, and is described in [case study 26](#) by Freya Newman.

A case study from Leeds Metropolitan University's School of Social, Psychological & Communication Sciences demonstrates the latter approach. Their full curriculum review resulted in global perspectives being integrated throughout the curriculum. For example, one core module involves students exploring the idea that mainstream Psychology is ethnocentric and tends to be underpinned by westernised ideas often applied inappropriately to individuals from other cultures. The curriculum review is described by Margaret Hardman in [case study 27](#).

Intercultural learning through intercultural contact has been encouraged for years through the provision of study abroad. While such opportunities have largely been the domain of particular types of courses (e.g. foreign language study), there is an increased emphasis on study abroad in other disciplines including Psychology. The University of Bradford's Division of Psychology, for example, places special emphasis on co-ordinating a semester of study abroad for their students, described by John McAlaney in [case study 28](#).

York St John University's Faculty of Health and Life Sciences helps students to gain global perspectives by offering a module, described by Jacqui Akhurst in [case study 29](#), through which students can participate in a short-term, community-based learning experience abroad.

While study abroad experiences can be valuable, they typically benefit a minority of students, and departments are beginning to consider ways to increase intercultural learning on home campuses. The University of Bradford's Division of Psychology actively recruits international Psychology students to study within the department and many universities in general recruit international students, in part to diversify the student population and increase the potential for intercultural contact and learning. In [Case study 30](#), John McAlaney explains how he recruits Psychology students from abroad to study at Bradford.

5.1.3 Challenges to developing graduates with global perspectives

While emerging practice exists, there are a variety of challenges to developing global perspectives in students. In particular there is a basic assumption that intercultural contact automatically leads to the development of global perspectives (Van de Berg and Paige, 2009). However, research around students'

intercultural interactions on home campuses (Brown, 2009; Dunne, 2009; Harrison and Peacock, 2009 and 2010) and in study abroad (Lederman, 2007; Pedersen, 2010; Van de Berg, 2009) suggests that intercultural learning through contact can be limited in part because students tend to stay within their own cultural groups. Therefore, while intercultural contact has the potential to enhance intercultural learning, it can also have no impact, or even negative impact (see De Vita, 2005; Ippolito, 2007). See Brewer (2003) for an overview of intergroup relations and issues surrounding contact.

While there is no singular solution to this challenge, researchers suggest that intentional pedagogy directed towards intercultural learning is needed (e.g. Lederman, 2007; Pedersen, 2010; Van de Berg, 2009) and that serious approaches to supporting global perspectives need to consider how intercultural learning is both encouraged and assessed (Deardorff, 2011). Facilitating contact on home campuses outside of the curriculum includes efforts such as running buddy type schemes (Pain, 2011), whereby international students are paired with home students to engage in mutual cultural learning. Within the curriculum, a relatively common practice is to intentionally place students in mixed cultural working groups, although care needs to be taken to effectively manage such approaches (see De Vita, 2005; Ippolito, 2007).

5.1.4 Psychology's contribution

An important recommendation by Trapp *et al.* (2011) is that the Psychology community could do more to promote the insights from psychological research to inform teaching and learning in all disciplinary areas. In that regard, cross-cultural, developmental and social psychologists are particularly well placed to address the development of ICC and the challenges around intercultural contact. While research from psychologists around these issues abounds (see Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009), research around ICC is relatively sparse from these UK sub-disciplines, with the exception of the University of Surrey's Department of Psychology. Researchers at the University have promoted understanding regarding ICC through undertaking research and contributing to educational materials such as the Council of Europe's *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (Byram *et al.*, 2009). As well, however, other UK Psychology researchers (e.g. Crisp and Turner, 2009) are involved in ongoing research investigating ways in which to address the challenges surrounding intercultural contact. [Case study 31](#) by Martyn Barrett explores using Psychology to develop intercultural competence research and practice.

Beyond cross-cultural, social and developmental approaches, Stevens describes the rise of the sub-discipline of global, sometimes called international, psychology, which strives "to sensitise investigators to the hazards of implicit ethnocentric bias", support organisations that represent the worldwide interests of Psychology, and support students in becoming "globally-oriented psychologists" (Stevens, 2007, p. 7). While potentially useful in helping to inform the Psychology community itself, most academic psychologists with knowledge of human behaviour have the potential to help point the way towards

effectively educating students for a global workforce and more broadly global citizenship and many have the potential to make meaningful contributions to research and practice in this important new area.



5.2 Psychological literacy

The concepts of ‘psychological literacy’ and of ‘psychologically literate citizenship’ are relatively new ones to UK higher education. Broadly speaking, psychological literacy is the idea that an understanding of basic principles of human behaviour and development will help us to better understand ourselves and others and to help individuals and organisations to function better. The terms were first coined by McGovern *et al.* (2010), who sought to unpack the skills, attributes and characteristics that were or could be typical of Psychology graduates, and reflected on how such graduates could be beneficial to society. They defined psychological literacy as:

- *having a well-defined vocabulary and basic knowledge of the critical subject matter of Psychology;*

- *valuing the intellectual challenge required to use scientific thinking and the disciplined analysis of information to evaluate alternative courses of action;*
- *taking a creative and ‘amiable skeptic’ approach to problem solving;*
- *applying psychological principles to personal, social and organizational issues in work, relationships and the broader community;*
- *acting ethically;*
- *being competent in using and evaluating information and technology;*
- *communicating effectively in different modes and with many different audiences;*
- *recognising, understanding and fostering respect for diversity;*
- *being insightful and reflective about one’s own and others’ behaviour and mental processes.*

(McGovern et al., 2010, p. 11)

For anyone familiar with the breadth and depth of the typical UK Psychology degree (especially one accredited by the BPS), it is relatively clear that the curriculum and assessment methods commonly used here are well suited to developing these skills. Psychological literacy incorporates aspects of subject knowledge (for example, vocabulary, individual differences), critical thinking, application of Psychology to problem solving in a variety of contexts, ethical awareness and personal reflection on the relevance of Psychology to one’s own life. With regard to employability, there are links between psychological literacy and the skills we have already identified as valued by employers (for example, QAA, 2010). Effective communication skills, evidence-based problem solving abilities, and an ability to think critically and adopt an evaluative approach to work are inherent to developing employability and psychological literacy.

Psychologically literate citizenship is an extension of the basic concept of psychological literacy, and considers the role of Psychology graduates in contributing to social issues:

Today’s students must prepare themselves for a world in which knowledge is accumulating at a rapidly accelerating rate and which old problems such as poverty, racism, and pollution join new problems such as global terrorism, a health crisis created by alarming increases in obesity, and the growing gap between the poor and the very rich. All of these problems require psychological skills, knowledge and values for their solution. (Halpern, 2010, p. 162)

The ability to apply psychological literacy in the workplace is of benefit to employers, but the ability to apply psychological literacy to everyday life and to solving problems within the graduates’ communities has the potential to be of benefit to global society. Psychology graduates could apply their knowledge and skills to organisational effectiveness, promoting charitable giving, reducing prejudice, increasing environmental awareness and environmentally friendly behaviours, supporting behaviour change to improve health, developing intercultural competence and appreciation of diversity, and to enhancing their



roles as parents and carers. Psychologically-literate citizenship (and see section 5.1 regarding global citizenship), then, has links not only to employability, but also the social contributions of Psychology graduates on a much larger scale.

[Trapp et al. \(2011\)](#) strongly recommend embedding the concepts of psychological literacy and psychologically literate citizenship within the UK Psychology undergraduate curriculum.

Developing the curriculum to enhance graduate engagement with these concepts requires some thought and innovation around content, application of knowledge and authentic assessment. It is not sufficient to merely describe psychological literacy to students, but to give them opportunities to practice applying their skills and knowledge to real-life situations. Some

departments are already putting this idea into practice. For example, in the Department of Psychology at the University of Stirling, students are required to carry out a study to find out why there are high numbers of breaches of regulations at a particular level crossing near to the University, but only from traffic coming in one direction, and with the majority of offenders being mature female drivers, who statistically are more cautious drivers. For their assessment, they are asked to write a report making recommendations to reduce the number of offences at this crossing, one for a psychologically trained audience, and one for the lay person. In the context of work-based learning, students at Glasgow Caledonian University are asked to write reflectively about how their understanding of Psychology can assist them in solving a problem in their workplace, or to work more effectively ([case study 11](#)). Both of these examples allow students to gain practice in seeing the relevance of psychology outside the university classroom. According to [Dunn et al. \(2011, p. 16\)](#), “promoting psychological literacy entails reorienting what and how we teach students in a way that emphasizes Psychology’s relevance”.

Addressing the relevance of Psychology to the whole human experience will help students and graduates to appreciate the value of their degree to all employment, not just within professional psychology, and so will enhance employability for the majority of graduates who will not pursue professional psychology careers ([QAA, 2010](#)). In addition, employers and the larger society will benefit from the scientific and critical approach they encounter in Psychology graduates who are applying their psychological literacy to a range of contexts.

A key challenge to introducing psychological literacy into the undergraduate classroom relates to the need for academic staff to engage with its aims, and to model a psychologically literate approach in their own practice ([McGovern, 2011](#)). Psychological literacy has a lot to offer to academic staff: applying psychological principles to teaching and learning, for example, can help tutors to practise ethically, to

engage and motivate students, to understand student diversity, and to be effective facilitators and assessors of learning. Psychological literacy underpins the requirement to be reflective in our practice, insightful about our own behaviours and those of our students, and adopting lifelong learning habits. A starting point for tutors wishing to develop the concepts of psychological literacy and psychologically literate citizenship within the curriculum, then, is to develop their own psychological literacy, through scholarship. The book by Cranney and Dunn (2011) would be an ideal starting point in this regard.



6. The UK Psychology degree: time to change?

In 2010, a group of psychologists representing the BPS, the HEA Psychology Network and the Association of Heads of Psychology Departments (AHPD), met to discuss the future of undergraduate Psychology in the UK. The meeting and subsequent report (Trapp *et al.*, 2011) was in response to a range of changes in the circumstances around the UK Psychology degree. These included the impending transfer of the bulk of funding to the student supported by loans, the requirement to publish additional information about each degree (Key Information Sets), the creation and role of the HCPC, a recent

review of undergraduate education in Psychology in the United States (US) (Halpern, 2010), developments in European integration, and to change in the discipline itself. This disciplinary change includes the growth of applications to real-world problems and the increasing significance of the neurosciences. Two great strengths of the discipline were identified: an extraordinary heterogeneity around a core focus of understanding human behaviour, and the links to a range of Psychology-based professions. The heterogeneity also related to a third strength, a pronounced tendency to be self-critical leading to the motivation and capacity to evolve and develop in response to change.

This heterogeneity and tendency to be self-critical have the potential to give Psychology graduates some real strengths and advantages. They help students and graduates to see problems from more than one point of view, to be self-aware and to reflect on Psychology as a discipline. They also mean that students are able to draw on a range of theoretical perspectives, epistemologies and methodologies. As we have seen, these capacities are important for several reasons:

- they dovetail with what employers want and with a range of conceptions of graduate attributes and generic skills;
- they coincide with scholarship and the solving of intellectual problems;
- they prepare the graduate for dealing with change and for lifelong learning ;
- they fit with the development of adult cognition and epistemological reasoning proposed by Baxter Magolda (2001);
- they fit with the skills and attitudes outlined above needed for graduate career selection, broadening career choice and aspiration and career development;
- they correspond with what evidence shows to work in undergraduate education;
- they fit with the requirements of PDP;
- they dovetail with Newman's defence of liberal education.

These benefits cannot be assumed to be automatically available to all Psychology graduates. The '4As' model of employability (acquisition, application, acknowledgement, articulation) developed by Paul Gaunt at the University of Chester, suggests that not all students will acquire the desired skills, others will be unable to apply them, and some of those who have acquired and can apply them may not acknowledge (possibly through lack of awareness) or able to articulate them. Individual differences in ability and engagement are important. Perhaps even more important are differences in the extent that each Psychology programme promotes the development of these qualities and habits of mind and enables, in particular, application and articulation. To some extent perhaps all graduates 'mature' into applying and articulating high level analysis, but we should do all we can to promote and develop these benefits of a university education in Psychology; they are after all, as Newman (1852) makes clear, the very essence of higher education.

In response to the [Trapp et al. \(2011\)](#) report, the BPS have revised their undergraduate accreditation criteria ([BPS, 2012](#)), with a view to 'liberalising' the curriculum while continuing to ensure high standards for students taking BPS-accredited degrees. Recently announced changes present the opportunity for increased flexibility around the curriculum, with more scope for including employability and internationalisation initiatives within Psychology degree programmes than has been previously possible. Authentic assessment, employability, internationalisation, intercultural competence and psychological literacy have all been identified as areas of good practice that the BPS will be hoping to see. At a time when the UK HE system is facing unprecedented challenge and change, when students hold increasingly high expectations, and as the BPS are encouraging change within Psychology, now is the perfect time for curriculum developments that embed employability firmly within our programmes.



7. Conclusions

Echoing Pegg *et al.* (2012), learning and teaching for employability should inform the entire curriculum. This may sound radical, but we have argued above that to do so would endorse and support, rather than undermine, the traditional university mission. It would not surrender the academy to utilitarianism or narrow commercial interest, rather it would better equip our students to contextualise and critically evaluate such forces. It would not lead to the loss or trivialisation of traditional course content, but would require some better alignment of content with employability. Not so much embedding employability into a protesting curriculum, but embedding the curriculum in employability, scholarship, growth and development. It would not lead to the wholesale abandonment of lecture-based teaching. However action is required in four main areas:

7.1 Learning, teaching and assessment

Evidence suggests that successful pedagogical approaches include experiential learning, an emphasis on exploration, learning by doing and reflection in authentic contexts, ideally mixed with rather than simply replacing existing approaches. Existing assessment methodologies should, where necessary, be challenged and new approaches explored that reward successful practice in developing employability, giving them parity of esteem with technical skills and academic knowledge.

7.2 Work experience

There is strong evidence to indicate that authentic work experience contextualises learning, has a strong influence on graduate employment and should be integrated into course curricula wherever possible. In order to maximise learning for both employability and the academic subject, it is important that this should be a pedagogically supported experience, which includes reflection on and articulation of the learning achieved. Where this is difficult or impractical, it may be possible to embed examples of work-related learning or simulated work experience.

7.3 Global perspectives

There is clear evidence to indicate that Psychology graduates will need global perspectives in order to successfully compete in the job market and to succeed in their long-term careers. Increased emphasis needs to be placed upon experiences that help develop global perspectives such as learning about psychology in the global context, encouraging study abroad, language learning and sensitivity to cultural difference. Exposing students to cultural diversity can help to facilitate global perspectives and skills associated with intercultural competence; however, learning through cultural contact is not automatic and requires guidance and reflection to facilitate learning. Psychology as a discipline is in a unique position

to facilitate this learning for its own students, as well as to develop approaches useful for students in any discipline.

7.4 Psychological literacy

Psychological literacy is a relatively new concept, which will not necessarily be familiar to many Psychology academics. However, in supporting students to apply their psychological knowledge and skills, and to ‘think like a psychologist’, within their studies, within their employment and within their wider lives, we facilitate them in becoming both employable and potentially of real value to their communities. Psychological literacy, to some extent, incorporates employability and yet also goes beyond it. In this regard, embedding psychological literacy within the undergraduate Psychology curriculum may help us to ensure that our graduates gain the requisite employability skills, and at the same time, increase the inherent relevance of academic Psychology to everyday life, thus making it more interesting to study. This approach to the discipline could be seen as preserving the academic integrity of Psychology against perceived utilitarian threats, while ultimately meeting student needs.



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Appendix A: Case studies

Case study I

Incorporating employability into the curriculum using the <i>Psychology student employability guide</i>	
Contact information	
Name	Dr Debbie Pope
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Employability in the HE curriculum is increasingly being emphasised by regulatory bodies (e.g. the BPS) and education organisations (e.g. the HEA) and is increasingly influencing recruitment (e.g. via Key Information Set (KIS) data) and league table positions. *The future of undergraduate Psychology in the UK* (Trapp *et al.*, 2011) discussed employability in the curriculum as one of several important themes highlighted, and five recommendations were made: make the skills gained by Psychology students more explicit to students; make the skills gained by Psychology students more explicit to employers; encourage placements; highlight psychology literacy (or psychological understanding); and encourage new skills (e.g. global citizenship, cultural competence, etc.).

At Edge Hill University the recent revalidation of all our Psychology programmes has enabled a timely look at our provision and, using recommendations and trends emphasised above, we have attempted to build employability into our programmes within all three years. This is via explicit inclusion of employability; for example, in Year 1 a 'PDP' module with increasing emphasis on employability, and in Year 3, 'Reflections and Future Directions', a module that incorporates both historical and conceptual issues (reflections) and emphasises skills gained throughout the course. Other, core modules include more implicit incorporation of psychological skills, for example, an understanding psychometric testing, awareness of emotional intelligence competencies, etc.

The HEA *Psychology student employability guide* (Lantz, 2011) is an invaluable resource that we introduce to students in Year 1 and use as a point of reference throughout the course. At the beginning of Year 1, we buy one employability guide for each student and we then base several PDP sessions around activities within the guide. Students are required to complete a current skills assessment and write an action plan on how to improve their skills while at university. This is then linked into talks by careers advisors and visiting professionals so that students, right at the beginning of their course, see what skills they already possess and what employability skills they need or would like to acquire. This allows plenty of time to develop new skills with the help of academic staff and/or careers advisors who can both provide suggestions by which students can both gain new competencies and can advise how to communicate these competencies more explicitly to future employers (using case histories, role play, etc.).

In Year 2, students can revisit their personal action plan regularly within personal tutor meetings and in liaison with careers services and external agencies. They can also begin to link their personal career aspirations to their own academic results and achievements.

In Year 3, within their compulsory 'Reflections and Future Directions' module, students reflect on past psychological issues and their own development within the discipline. Students also reflect on the skills assessment from Year 1 and consider what has changed. The *Psychology student employability guide* is again used to plan and structure teaching sessions as it contains useful sections on career decision making, writing covering letters and writing CVs. Advice is given on interview skills and then students practice and watch interviews in the Psychology observation lab. The assessment on this module utilises specific sections from the guide to produce a portfolio of evidence for assessment, thus ensuring that all students leave university with a range of personalised employability materials.

In conclusion, the HEA *Psychology student employability guide* is a very useful resource. It includes both generic and subject-specific information, which can provide a cohesive structure and informed content to incorporate into scheduled teaching sessions at all undergraduate levels.

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Case study 2

Using the *Psychology student employability guide* in a level 1 Psychology module

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The Department of Psychology and Allied Health Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University developed a new module undertaken by all first-years entitled: 'Employability and career development for Psychology' in 2009. Its aim is to actively involve the students in career development and enhancing their employability by, for example, investigating and considering what employability and career opportunities are open to graduates of Psychology. The module makes the students reflect upon their own personal development and gets them to undertake a number of activities aimed at increasing their own self-awareness, understanding of employability and careers and how this can help them plan for their future.

We decided to make the core textbook for the module the *Psychology student employability guide* (Lantz, 2011) for several reasons:

- It is available and usable in an electronic form that aids the blended learning approach that is being used on the module.
- It is a comprehensive introduction to many important areas that students need to consider when they begin to think about employability and careers.
- It provides practical exercises that students can complete in order to help them gain personal insights and awareness of their preferences, skills, competencies and goals.
- It provides good examples of the range of careers that can be undertaken when you obtain a degree in Psychology. Importantly, it provides information that is relevant to England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and international audiences.
- The guide is well structured and easy to navigate and again this is a valuable feature, especially for first-years, who sometimes complain that some academic texts are hard to follow.

We use the *Psychology student employability guide* as a framework and guide that the students can refer to when we get them to complete exercises, such as personal development planning, goal setting, assessing current knowledge and skills, considering what the academic models of career development mean for you, and determining what types of career are available to Psychology graduates. We also get the students to complete some of the particular exercises in the book (e.g. skills and vocational type as outlined by Holland, 1985).

As the module aims to enable the students to develop skills in areas such as essay writing, CV preparation and critical self-reflection, the fact that the guide provides practical and academic

information that relates to these activities is also helpful for the students when completing their portfolios and essay.

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Case study 3

Embedding employability across the curriculum	
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The careers consultant to Psychology consults with module leaders over careers input into Levels 4, 5 and 6 in order to embed employability into the Psychology curriculum. This involves delivering lectures on options with a Psychology degree, the psychologist, CVs, cover letter and applications, and interviews. Relevant employers such as clinical and educational psychologists have been invited to speak within lectures as well as to take part in the Industry Insights Week run by the Employability Department. Final-year students receive graduate vacancies through the careers newsletters and websites, and graduate vacancies that appeal to Psychology final-year students are entered directly onto Blackboard under their Level 6 dissertation module.

Employability is embedded into the Psychology programme at all levels; however, it is the Level 2 research methods module where students are assessed in these skills. As part of the module, students produce a PDP plan covering self-development and reflection, career choice, networking, job search and interviews. The *Psychology Student Employability Guide* (Lantz, 2011) acts as a valuable resource to students in developing their portfolio, along with supporting lectures from the careers consultant to Psychology. The assessment includes either a CV or cover letter for a graduate-level job, or a personal statement for further study. Students are expected to find a real vacancy or postgraduate course to apply for, and this work is supported with lectures and seminars. Students refer to the Skills, Values and Work Preferences section of the *Psychology student employability guide* to identify areas of work that interest them, before they select a vacancy/course for which to apply. The skills and interests audit, along with the students' reflections are submitted with their portfolio. Students also prepare a presentation for an interview in Week 23 of the course and this is supported with a lecture regarding the recruitment process and interview techniques.

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Case study 4

Creating a level 4 core module 'Psychology for learning and work'

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Staff in the Department of Applied Psychology have discussed various approaches to responding to the changing needs of new students, especially issues of skills development and employability, which led to the employment of a new lecturer whose remit would be to focus entirely on skills, work-based learning and employability.

At the outset it was agreed that the priority was to embed employability in the first year using a subject-specific approach, providing a basis on which skills could be developed. After much deliberation, it was decided that the SOAR model gave the structure and flexibility needed to embed employability into the programme. SOAR (self, opportunity, aspirations and results) focuses on four thematic developmental stages. Each stage is facilitated by specific enquiry, information and guidance, providing structure, direction and coverage for the design and delivery of the curriculum and provides students with a coherent and continuous process of self-development (Kumar, 2007).

While adding employability to all modules seemed the obvious way to 'embed' employability, it did not support the coherent approach desired. Therefore, it was decided to replace a core module 'Introduction to Psychology' with a new module, 'Psychology for learning and work' with necessary aspects of the old module, for example, history of psychology, being covered by the other level 4 modules.

'Psychology for learning and work' is a year-long Level 4, 20-credit core module covering PDP skills and competencies, but also introducing aspects of occupational psychology; for example, vocational preference inventories; skills employers look for; team working and motivation. Taught in small groups and using a student-centred approach, the module allows students to individualise their learning, focusing on self-reflection, career planning and skills development within a psychology context.

We hope that students will perceive this applied approach as more relevant to their career development, which will make for a more meaningful portfolio of work. The module is supported by weekly tutorials, that link to skills development and also skills and content of other level 4 modules. This way, employability is focused in one module but embedded across the level.

This change provides a foundation for work-based learning opportunities in level 5, and also more career-orientated work at levels 5 and 6. The new module will be evaluated on an annual basis via focus groups and evaluation forms.

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Case study 5

Psychology student employability programme	
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Many students studying Psychology are still undecided about what career to pursue after completing their degree and very often lack knowledge about specific careers and routes into these. In addition, students often have very little experience in applying for jobs and therefore will benefit from learning and developing 'employability skills' to make them more competitive candidates. The Psychology Department at the University of Hull, in collaboration with the University Careers Service, created a 15-session Psychology employability programme that ran for a full academic year for final-year Psychology students. The employability programme included nine careers talks and six 'Preparing for work' workshops.

External speakers for the careers talks were contacted via the University Careers Service and Psychology Department, and included talks in: educational psychology, forensic psychology, clinical psychology, occupational psychology, careers in teaching and research, primary and secondary school teaching, mental health nursing and cognitive behavioural therapy. These talks provided students with an opportunity to meet people working within these areas and find out more about these careers. In addition, students learnt more about the qualifications and experience necessary to pursue these careers.

Workshops were carried out by Psychology Department staff members. These workshops included: selection and psychometric assessments, building confidence, assessment centres and group exercises, CVs and applications, and presentations and interviews. A chartered occupational psychologist based in the Department of Psychology led several of these sessions (Dr Peter Clough).

Programme organisers circulated an employability programme timetable at the beginning of the year to make final-years aware of the sessions and sent reminders for upcoming sessions. Out of a year group of 200, between 15 and 50 students attended each session depending upon topic with some (e.g. interviews) having a broader appeal than others (e.g. occupational psychology).

At the start of the academic year, all students received a copy of the *Psychology student employability guide* (Lantz, 2011), which was used in various workshops. For example, students were asked to complete the psychology skills assessment section which they then used to develop CV content. This exercise was helpful as it allowed them to focus on the more general skills that they had developed during their degree course and to identify the skills that they had developed in each module. This exercise helped many students to realise that modules help to develop skills in addition to subject matter content.

In addition to the *Psychology student employability guide*, students were given access to a University of Hull virtual learning environment (VLE) employability site, both of which were useful resources for the workshops. Additional one-to-one sessions to further practice interview techniques were offered by the University Careers Service. The employability programme resulted in a very successful collaboration between the Department of Psychology and the University Careers Service. In addition, the *Psychology student employability guide* and VLE employability site were excellent resources to direct students to for additional information and to further develop their employability skills after the programme had ended.

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Case study 6

Using a Psychology card sort tool to encourage student reflection and measure skill development

Contact information

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The development of the Psychology card sort tool (Akhurst, 2005) was influenced by consideration of the cognitive and developmental needs of undergraduate students in their second and third years of study. The card sort was developed as part of the employability initiatives of the Higher Education Academy Psychology Network during 2004-05 and draws from various categories of key skills and generic career development models such as the Windmills material (Hawkins, 1999) and from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA, 2010) subject benchmark statement for Psychology.

The card sort is designed to enable students to evaluate their capabilities against 36 skills that are said to be developed during undergraduate study. The 36 skill/attribute cards are grouped into six tactics, namely: cognitive skills; generic competencies; personal capabilities; technical ability; specific organisational practice related to Psychology; and generic career planning activities. Freely available online (see URL below), students sort cards into columns, similar to a game of patience or solitaire, and are then able to print off their results for discussion with a tutor.

A research study explored the use of the card sort with a group of second-year Psychology students (n=30), who completed the online card sort at the beginning of their second semester of study. This was prior to engaging in the 'Psychology of work' module in order to prepare them to apply for their compulsory three-week work experience placement. The study found the card sort useful in helping students to reflect upon and identify skill development.

The Psychology card sort is a potentially useful tool for programme audits. It encourages students' reflective practice and may have value as part of students' personal development planning (PDP). At York St John University, the card sort continues to be used as a pre- and post-measure for students participating in the 'Psychology of work' module, although it may be used at more regular intervals in a variety of contexts. For example, it could be used to assist students in developing their CV writing, to identify (and learn to give examples of) the skills that they are able to demonstrate, and it could similarly be used for interview preparation tasks. At York St John University, the careers advisors are familiar with the tool, and use it to structure small group discussions with Psychology students.

The card sort tool is freely available at:

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/subjects/psychology/Evaluation_of_a_psychology_card_sort

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Case study 7

Electronic e-portfolio use and encouragement	
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Psychology sits within a faculty that prides itself on delivering excellent healthcare education (Medicine, Dentistry, Speech Therapy, Audiology, Pharmacy and Nursing) and even though Psychology as a discipline does not fit with many of the educational practices and goals, we have benefited from being involved in sharing good practice in reflecting on and documenting professional skills. In clinical disciplines, the recording and assessment of skills is an essential part of the curriculum and the importance to students' success in their chosen profession is highlighted from the first day of registration. Working within this accepted ideology it became clear that Psychology was an outlier and we were determined to give our students the same opportunities to reflect and record their skills as is afforded on a 'clinical' programme. To meet this goal, we developed the Psychology skills framework. Presented in an electronic portfolio format, the framework is based on the skill sets that the HEA and BPS outline for Psychology graduates. Our students are introduced to the portfolio and the concept and importance of recording and articulating skills early in their first semester during compulsory tutorials, although the portfolio is ultimately optional. The challenge has been to encourage engagement with the process. Engagement is piecemeal and correlates with overall course engagement. Our focus is on persuading all students of the benefits of developing a portfolio that is tailored to their own goals rather than forcing completion of a generic record. Our goal is to have students associate employment and further study opportunities to their skill base and their ability to effectively demonstrate and articulate their skills; we have found that this requires encouragement from multiple sources.

We work with academic advisors, the Psychology careers consultants and alumni to facilitate and encourage engagement with the portfolio. The e-portfolio training is embedded within the first-year tutorial system and delivered by first-year academic advisors. Following this initiation, second- and third-year academic advisors provide the one-to-one discussions about the portfolios during 'PDP-like' meetings. Advisors are able to access the student's portfolio and they can discuss the entries (or lack of them) in a broader discussion about future plans and career goals. The Psychology careers consultants are also familiar with the portfolio and take opportunities to encourage students to use it to practice reflecting on, and articulating their skills. The consultants are often engaged in dialogues with students about how to maximise employability potential for either specific careers or where students do not have a clear direction and can tailor advice about using the portfolio to fit a student's goals. Knowing that students are often more influenced by their peers and recent graduates, we developed a series of events focused on particular types of profession or employment where alumni return to the university to share their advice and experience with current students. We ask our speakers to encourage the use of the portfolio to record and reflect on experiences and skills. We are seeing an increase in the use of the

portfolio with about 40% of students currently engaged and an improvement in the quality of entry as a result of this approach.

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Case study 8

Emotional intelligence (EI) within personal development planning: teaching EI in universities

Contact information

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The future of undergraduate Psychology in the UK report (Trapp *et al.*, 2011) highlights employability in the curriculum as one of several important themes to consider in the development of new Psychology programmes, with five key recommendations: make the skills gained by Psychology students more explicit to students; make the skills gained by Psychology students more explicit to employers; encourage placements; highlight psychology literacy (or psychological understanding); and encourage new skills (e.g. global citizenship, cultural competence, etc.).

All HE programmes are required to provide students with opportunities to plan and reflect on their learning and self-development, known as personal development planning (PDP). While university staff have become increasingly aware of the expanding needs of their students it tends to be the practical study skills that receive the most attention and the most support during this PDP process. However, Psychology staff are particularly well placed to combine current psychological research related to learning, while also developing employability skills within their PDP sessions. For example, recent theories of intelligence incorporate aspects of emotional and social competence (emotional intelligence, EI), which have been shown to be essential for attainment at university (Qualter *et al.*, 2009) and for effective performance in life, including graduate employability (Dacre-Pool and Sewell, 2007). The research suggests that young people who are emotionally literate are better placed to be more effective learners and make better employees. In addition, higher EI is associated with better social relationships, workplace performance, psychological wellbeing and leadership. In relation to the learning experience for students it seems that an awareness and facilitation of these skills will be crucial in the development of lifelong learners (Dacre-Pool and Qualter, 2012). As PDP involves various aspects of self-reflection and development then it is appropriate that EI be embedded within this system, combining subject knowledge within wider employability skills.

The Psychology sections at Teesside University, University of Central Lancashire and Edge Hill University have successfully developed and implemented models of PDP based upon EI competencies. The aim of this HEA mini-project was to combine the expertise of these teams and to develop a set of resources.

EI can be included in different ways and at different times in the 'student journey', as indicated within the freely available resource set:

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/subjects/psychology/Emotional_Intelligence_within_Personal_Development_Planning_Teaching_EI_in_Universities.

Within the resource set, in the section 'Free teaching materials', materials that have been used by staff in the three different institutions have been adapted for generic use (e.g. names of institutions, module codes removed) and are structured to reflect the different times within the student journey where EI and PDP can be beneficial. For example, in the 'Transition to HE' subsection, workshops and individual activities are provided that encourage students to reflect upon, and develop, the skills essential for HE, e.g. managing feedback, improving self-confidence, dealing with stress and taking responsibility. Individual worksheets can be printed off and detailed lesson plans are provided which list the time taken for each activity, resources needed, etc.

The 'Free teaching materials' section within the resource set also includes a briefing for academic staff about the transitions students experience within the levels of HE and how EI and PDP can be used to support this journey. The subsection 'Developing EI skills when studying' is based around a model whereby students in their first year of study would assess their EI competencies and then work on activities to develop these. Lecture and seminar materials are provided along with a tips booklet for students and tutor notes. One way in which these materials could be used is to present a lecture which introduces EI as a psychological construct (lecture slides are provided), students can then assess their own EI competencies (details of choosing an appropriate EI test are also provided), either within the lecture time or within a separate seminar/workshop and these competencies can then be included in further discussions about the development of particular skills and ways to make communication of skills explicit to future employers. Information about the wide variety of EI tests available can be found in the section 'Choosing an EI test', which includes an overview of several available instruments covering their cost, availability, content, relevance to PDP, practicalities of administration, reliability and validity.

As students move towards the end of their time at university, PDP provides an ideal opportunity to prepare for graduate careers. To encourage students to think about the requirements of graduate employers beyond an academic qualification, a lecture on applying for graduate jobs is included in the 'Preparing for graduate careers' subsection.

In summary, therefore, the site contains a synopsis of work carried out over a number of years and developed with Psychology undergraduate students at all levels. We have found that students find EI sessions interesting and informative, both from an acquisition of psychological knowledge perspective, but also in the demonstration of psychological theory to practice, while also providing personal information that supports the development of employability skills.

All materials are freely available at the following URL:

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/subjects/psychology/Emotional_Intelligence_within_Personal_Development_Planning_Teaching_EI_in_Universities.

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Case study 9

Introducing self-employment and entrepreneurship on a first-year Psychology module

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As part of a first-year module 'Employability and career development for Psychology' developed in 2009, the module leader wants the students to investigate and become more aware of the psychology and non-psychology careers that are potentially available to Psychology graduates.

As part of this module, the students have to investigate and write up case studies of careers in psychology and non-psychology occupations. We are very aware that although some psychology professions can provide a long-term career within a public sector organisation such as the National Health Service (NHS), it is increasingly important to recognise that many graduates will undertake a more protean career and within this, one of the options may be to enter self-employment and/or set up a business.

To introduce the idea of self-employment and setting up in business, the students are required to investigate how and where graduates would get jobs in psychology and non-psychology careers. By doing this they learn that some professional areas of psychology involve more self-employment than others (e.g. many sport and exercise psychologists, occupational psychologists and counselling psychologists work in a self-employed capacity and/or have set up successful businesses). This exercise helps the students to recognise that self-employment in a particular area is a possibility.

To further enhance the students' awareness and understanding of enterprise, we involve the Student Enterprise Society and their representatives in discussion sessions with the students. The student representative talks about how they got involved with the Student Enterprise Society and what it has allowed them to learn and experience in relation to business and enterprise. They also emphasise how other organisations can help you grow and develop ideas for business, for example, the Institutes for Enterprise. Through these experiences the students are more aware that self-employment and setting up businesses may be future options for them to explore.

Navigate back to [section 3.3.4](#).

Case study 10

Embedded employability: developing skills, raising aspirations, encouraging enterprise

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Sport and Exercise Science students are natural multi-disciplinarians, studying psychology, physiology, and the biomechanics of movement. Students sometimes struggle, however, to identify how the wide-ranging skills and knowledge they accrue can best be conveyed to graduate employers. As a department the approach taken has been to infuse employability-related activities across the curriculum, aiming to engage students, and to raise both their aspirations and awareness of suitable opportunities.

The primary mechanism through which student employability is enhanced is through core taught modules. In order to maintain relevance to the academic degree content, skill-based modules contain activities applying academic knowledge to 'real-life' tasks. In students' first year, these include 'Skills for the Sport and Exercise scientist I' and 'Group dynamics' – both of which require students to develop team-working and presentation skills. This foundation is then developed to include an enterprise-focused component in the second year. In 'Skills for the Sport and Exercise scientist II', students seek funding for a novel social enterprise, business idea or community project, underpinned by an evidence base of research. In groups students pitch to a *Dragon's Den*-style panel composed of university staff, invited external funders, and representatives of local government and businesses. This is preceded by a programme of workshops and invited speakers (e.g. successful alumni) to inspire students and help refine their ideas.

By the final year, the focus shifts from skills and knowledge application towards awareness of post-graduation opportunities. In 'Applied and integrated studies' students research career opportunities and find an advertised job or placement at graduate level appropriate to their career ambitions. Students may actually apply for the role or complete a mock application. In any case, for assessment, they write a professional CV and covering letter and deliver a poster presentation where they demonstrate what they know about the job, how they match the skills and criteria listed and their general suitability and enthusiasm for the role. The department worked closely with the careers service in the design of these activities, and a number of students have obtained their selected jobs.

Given current market patterns, the department emphasises the need for students to develop enterprising mindsets so they are well positioned to provide innovation, whether in the form of business startups or within organisations. This is assisted by recognition for enterprising behaviours, for example by providing bursaries for final-year dissertations with applications to industry or business. The approach was facilitated by the department's participation in the 'Academic champions of enterprise' scheme, with designated staff members responsible for promoting enterprise throughout the curriculum. One well-received element has been visits by 'dynamo role models', local early-career entrepreneurs who have shared their experiences with the students and run workshops 'incubating' original ideas. It is hoped that the department's multi-faceted approach develops students' awareness of employment opportunities and also their ability to maximise these. More information and module resources are available on request by contacting the authors above.

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Case study 11

'Work and Psychology' module enhancing employability, critical thinking and academic knowledge	
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The Department of Psychology and Allied Health Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University is very aware of the need to continually develop and enhance the employability of our Psychology students and help prepare them for the graduate job market. One of the ways that we achieve this is via embedded modules that utilise work-based learning to develop deeper learning and engagement with core academic Psychology literature that align with many of the higher levels of learning outlined in learning taxonomies, including that of Bloom *et al.* (1956).

We are cognisant of the fact that many of our students work part-time to help fund their way through their university course. We also recognise that the workplace offers rich sources of information and experiences to build skills and acquire knowledge about human behaviour and individual differences as well as to enhance future employability. We felt that by applying learning to their work outside the course, it would be of real impact to the students because it would be taking the textbooks and academic learning into their real lives and enabling them to reflect upon their academic knowledge in a more authentic and meaningful way. We felt that the real work-based learning opportunities would enable our learners to reflect upon, critically examine and articulate how the academic writings in psychology could help them to apply their learning and knowledge to real workplace issues and allow them to engage more deeply with the academic literature.

We run a 'Work and Psychology' module (previously at Level 2 and currently offered at Level 3) in which students have to evidence that they are undertaking paid or voluntary part-time work – this ensures that they have access to learning experiences and opportunities in a real workplace. A key feature of the module is that it requires the students to critically reflect upon their workplace in a number of different and meaningful ways.

Initially they have to ensure that they are complying with issues of ethics, confidentiality, health and safety and this makes them think about what these concepts mean and how you can meet these requirements when writing and conducting work. They then have to undertake organisational and job analyses, which means that they have to read literature in work psychology and human resources to be able to assess the context and nature of their work. This is a very good experience that engages them in areas of organisational design, culture and structure and at the same time enables them to learn about where Psychology is applied for example, in selection and recruitment processes.

The module draws heavily upon the academic areas of occupational, organisational, social and individual difference psychologies. The students are not given a set series of lectures, but instead they are given

some common themed lectures in areas such as, leadership and group processes. The lectures are then driven by the students themselves as they get more involved in examining critical incidents and everyday work practices. Depending on the students' workplace issues some further lectures have been provided on areas as diverse as age and the psychological contract, the entrepreneurial personality, international business and cultural issues, and stress in the workplace. Because lectures are driven by the students we have noticed increased attendance and more discussion and debates taking place regarding the material presented.

In conjunction with the lectures, the module leader provides discussion sessions and face-to-face meetings with the students to facilitate deeper learning about the literature and workplace issues.

An important feature of the module is that it requires students to write essays that relate the Psychology literature directly to their work-based observations. They also have to give a title to the essay, which really helps them to focus and critically think about the topic and exactly what they are appraising. The students have found this process to be especially valuable in helping them develop their critical thinking and writing skills and have mentioned that this learning has transferred to other modules.

The module is challenging to run because it requires module leaders to stay abreast with a variety of literature to help inform and guide students' learning. What is very rewarding about the module is that the learning experience is very active and engaging for all parties.

The students' have commented that they develop more confidence in independent, self-directed learning and that they have a deeper understanding of the value and applicability of their academic learning to real world issues. This has enabled them to use their knowledge to improve their own learning and to provide useful suggestions for ways to improve work.

The course ... made me more aware ... I now analyse most things which go on in the workplace and attempt to relate theory to what I witness. (Level 2 student)

Before undertaking the module I thought my manager was not very good. Now I realise they are working incredibly long hours trying to keep their business afloat and are probably experiencing workplace stress. I am more understanding and supportive of them now. (Level 3 student)

As the USEM model (Yorke and Knight, 2004) and others highlight, using work-based learning in the module is helping to further develop their adaptability, flexibility, understanding and ability to learn to learn, all key aspects of enhancing employability and harnessing work-based learning.

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Case study 12

Utilising psychological knowledge in the context of a work-related role

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Students in the Division of Psychology at the University of Huddersfield are being offered an intermediate module where they are encouraged to combine work-related experience with their developing knowledge of Psychology. Students are introduced to a series of Psychology-based, tutor-facilitated tasks, which they undertake relatively independently in small groups. In this context they are introduced to a number of ways in which they might make use of Psychology in work-related roles. Students are then required to select from, and explore, at least one of the practical based topics from an 'experiential' work-related context of their choice (e.g. paid work, voluntary work, and role as parent or carer) in order to closely examine the relationship with their chosen role. Here they are required to make use of experiential perspectives in contemporary psychology. However, this does not directly involve research-based activities within a workplace; rather the ability to be reflective about psychological knowledge in relation to the selected work-related experience is required. Students are expected to capture any perspective transformations (Mallone *et al.*, 2002) they experience as a result of integrating their knowledge and understanding of Psychology with experiential aspects of their selected work-related role. They are asked the question 'Does your understanding of Psychology not only help you better understand your experience of your work-related role, but does reflecting on it also help you recognise how this changes your actions?'

The tasks introduced in the module give some focus to naturalistic observation, communicative aspects of psychology, interpersonal relationships and some organisational issues, all in the context of teamwork and constructive peer support against a backdrop of ethically driven ground rules. Methods of assessment foster ongoing online record keeping and reflection; including online post responses, wiki, blog and discussion board – the second year of running this has included the demarcation of more 'social' and more 'academic' discussion sections. Work undertaken culminates in submission of a portfolio, largely evidencing ongoing engagement with a number of the tasks, followed by a focused reflective assignment evidencing that students have read both psychological and work-related literature as well as attending to experiential aspects of their 'role'.

Examples of work-related roles represented in submitted reflective work have included such things as bar work, or caring for children either as a parent or an older sibling. In the case of bar work, students might reflect on one of the tutor-facilitated tasks involving reading non-verbal communication alongside leadership and communication styles and/or a naturalistic observation of sex differences; but here are also encouraged to extend beyond this by way of reference to relevant issues, largely from social psychology, such as attitudes, stereotyping and prejudice, with particular emphasis given to illustrating how their knowledge has influenced their actions during their actual experience. In the case of 'parenting' students might be expected to consider a tutor-facilitated task related to styles of parenting and resistance to these, but then have also been known to consider family systems theory and non-verbal communication to illustrate influences on their actions during experiential reflection. In both cases students are encouraged to note whether or not they go about their role differently as a result of applying their knowledge of Psychology to their role.

The module has run for two years, is being developed in negotiation with students (for example, more careers advice was added in the second year of running) and is gradually being prepared for blended delivery and expansion into a mandatory module. More focus on career planning from the onset (all students undertake an actual job search and include some reflection on this in their portfolio), a bank of voluntary work opportunities and a gradual shift over to more virtual activity in negotiation with each student cohort taking the module is being undertaken.

Overall, we believe this module addresses several issues identified in respect of 'fitness of purpose' of Psychology provision for undergraduates identified by Trapp *et al.* (2011) and importantly addresses concerns expressed by employers therein.

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Case study 13

Students extend psychological and academic career knowledge and research experience through Level 3 research studentship scheme

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The undergraduate research studentship scheme at the University of Bradford is designed to provide experience of research to undergraduates in the Division of Psychology in the anticipation that some of those undertaking studentships will consider a career in research after graduation and to enhance employability-related skills in general. The scheme enables students to work with a member of academic staff in the summer period between the second and third years of their degree. Students gain experience in applying for research funding and working as a research assistant on a research project devised jointly by them and their supervisor.

Sources of funding for undergraduate research studentships are scarce, with the British Psychological Society, the Nuffield Foundation and the Experimental Psychology Society being the sources targeted by the scheme thus far. These schemes vary in their eligibility criteria, application processes, deadlines for submission of applications, the level of funding provided and the requirements that are to be met by the student and supervisor.

The administration of the scheme begins with an initial annual call to staff in the division to determine who is willing to consider supervising a research student. This call helps the scheme co-ordinators to determine the number of studentships that may be available in the coming year. The scheme is then advertised to students, initially, during induction week. In week five of semester one we advertise an 'information event' via posters and emails, which then takes place in week seven. The scheme co-ordinators give a short informational presentation and previously successful applicants talk about their experiences. The event is followed by an email call for expressions of interest in the scheme, which provides details on how to apply. In week nine students are able to access a workshop that provides support with the application form and development of CVs. The deadline for applications is the end of week eleven.

Applicants are shortlisted by the scheme co-ordinators in January and staff who earlier expressed an interest in the scheme are invited to view the applications. Shortlisting takes into account the quality of the student's application and also their grade point average at the end of Year 1. This reflects the requirement of most of the funders that students applying for studentship experiences should be expecting to achieve a first or 2:1 degree and be in their second year of undergraduate study. Successfully shortlisted candidates take part in a formal interview process, which takes place just prior to the commencement of semester two. The interview process enables students to gain experience in a formal interview process and also aids the scheme co-ordinators in matching applicants to a supervisor based on the areas of interest they have expressed on their application and during the interview process. All students receive feedback from the scheme co-ordinators enabling them to gain an appreciation of the quality of their application and performance at interview. Successful candidates then work together with the supervisor to make the initial application for funding.

The scheme has attracted a great deal of interest from students. In the first year, five students applied and were shortlisted, with three being offered studentships following an interview. In the second year, 15 students applied, eight were shortlisted, and three offered studentships. Fierce competition for

undergraduate studentships has led to about one in four projects being funded each year. Where funding is not secured, the student is still offered the opportunity to proceed with the studentship experience.

Overall, the scheme has been a great success with a number of previously successful candidates having progressed towards a career in research. For example, one candidate is now studying an MSc in Psychological Research at the University of Edinburgh and another has progressed to PhD at the University of Bradford. The scheme's value extends beyond these successes though, in that it enables students to gain skills and experience that relate directly to enhancing employability, through application and CV development, interview experience, individual feedback on performance and, for successful candidates, experience of real-world research.

Although the scheme has been successful, there are a number of limitations. For example, the number of students able to participate in the scheme is limited by the availability of staff to supervise studentships during the summer period. The scarcity of funders is a further limitation with the economic climate clearly having an impact. This year, for example the Nuffield Foundation announced its decision to focus its funding on Physics, Chemistry and Maths undergraduates. This impacts on the diversity of students that the scheme can attract since some students are unable to undertake a studentship on a voluntary unpaid basis due to economic constraints.

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Case study 14

Work shadowing scheme for Psychology students	
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The Work Shadowing team is part of the wider Careers and Employability team at the University of Chester and helps students to explore their career choices directly. It also provides an opportunity for students to network with potential employers as well as a forum through which to ask questions and to receive personalised advice regarding to entry-specific careers.

While many employers are sympathetic to a Psychology student's need for experience, it is generally not appropriate for a student to shadow a psychologist while they carry out client appointments and therapy sessions. Including students in therapy sessions risks breaching codes of client trust and confidentiality and psychologists can find that clients do not communicate in an open and honest fashion in the presence of an unknown individual. Although this is a challenge, it can be overcome by providing alternative work shadowing experiences, which can include tours of premises, meetings with the wider team and information interviews.

Employers are approached to participate in work shadowing in a number of ways. Employers who participate in any Psychology department careers events are considered potential candidates and employers are often identified at local networking events. Local mental health professionals not contacted through other means are sometimes approached via an introductory letter followed up with emails or phone calls. Approaching local hospices and the local council in this way has been very useful in finding potential employers both as directly linked opportunities and from the leads that they have supplied. Finally, employers are also contacted on an *ad hoc* basis depending upon specific requests from students.

Employers who become involved in work shadowing are asked to host students for a full- or a half-day visit. They are given a 'host checklist', which provides a list of typical activities they could carry out with a student, such as a tour of premises, a CV check, an opportunity to meet the wider team, shadowing administrative processes and talking about the professional's personal career progression.

In order to maintain positive relationships with employers, each contact made is monitored and recorded ensuring that employers are not contacted excessively and that important details such as how often they are willing to accommodate students are noted.

Work shadowing opportunities are advertised to students online and through career talks offered throughout the year. Individual students initiate work shadowing requests themselves and when one is received there is a follow up by phone and email. If students do not respond it is assumed that they are no longer interested and their request is withdrawn. However, the majority of students do respond providing additional details such as their interest in particular employers and their availability. Once an employer has been identified and an appointment date set, students are provided with preparatory material, which encourages them to visit relevant websites, research the role of their host person and prepare a CV. Students must also indicate what they hope to learn from the experience and this is passed on to the hosts. Students are reminded of their commitment on a number of occasions, including

two days before the visit.

Following each work shadowing experience, participants complete a feedback questionnaire to ascertain what they have gained from the experience. Feedback suggests that the work shadowing programme works very well for Psychology students. In addition to helping students learn more about careers within professional psychology, students have also learned how their skills apply in other career areas with shadowing visits having been set up for Psychology students in human resources departments, local support charities and special needs schools. Through work shadowing, students have become more aware of the range of careers options available and have learned how to approach organisations to gain experience. A number of visits in the past year have resulted in students securing further volunteering opportunities or summer placements having impressed their hosts with their knowledge and maturity.

For further information visit: <http://www.chester.ac.uk/careers/current-students-and-graduates/work-shadowing>.

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Developing skills and experience through community service

The Psychology Department at the University of West London has a long established history of embedding employability into the Psychology curriculum. Undergraduate and postgraduate Psychology students are actively encouraged to take part in collaborative projects with local community partners. This provides an opportunity to integrate not only work-based learning and the practical application of theory but also research.

An example of this is an on-going collaboration with Pyramid-ContinYou. The Pyramid programme is a school-based intervention programme that is delivered nationally. It is an evidence-based early intervention programme, targeting seven- to eight-year-olds (Year 3 programme) and ten- to 11-year-olds (Year 6 transition programme), who have socio-emotional difficulties. Research shows that children with limited interactive skills are more vulnerable to developing low self-esteem and at risk of failing to reach their potential. These difficulties can limit educational achievement and stifle career opportunities as well as affect relationships and physical and mental wellbeing. Recent evidence shows improvements in all areas of social and emotional health in children who attend a Pyramid club both in the short and medium term (Ohl *et al.*, 2008; Ohl *et al.*, 2012).

Over the last eight years Dr Maddie Ohl, Dr Pauline Fox and Professor Kathryn Mitchell have worked with the Pyramid project co-ordinator and the Local Education Authority in the provision and evaluation of the Pyramid programmes. Each year 20+ Psychology students are trained to deliver the intervention in local primary schools, they are also often involved in data collection and two have used the intervention as a basis for their final-year dissertation. Training of students takes place at the university and the training material has been adapted to integrate with the assessments required on the student's third-year 'Experiential learning' module. Students are asked to commit to an initial ten weeks; however, the majority commit for the full academic year and more. An award ceremony is held each year to reward the students who take part and this year the Pyramid Organisation and the lecturers also won awards. This project provides excellent experience for students who intend to follow a career in either the educational or clinical domains and to date the project has resulted in four research papers (two published and two in preparation) and several conference presentations.

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Case study 16

'Psychology professionals' workshop	
Contact information	
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<p>Across the HE sector there is an increasing focus on preparing students for the workplace. Traditionally, employability skills have been developed through sandwich placements and extracurricular activities, such as volunteering and work experience. However, substantial competition for limited places, and practical and ethical issues for employers has resulted in limited and unequal access to these opportunities.</p> <p>At Leeds Metropolitan University, one way in which we have embedded these opportunities within the Psychology curriculum is via a second-year elective module – the 'Psychology Professionals' Workshop'. Visiting professional practitioners provide students with the opportunity to work on real-world projects in the field of occupational psychology, forensic psychology or Psychology A-level teaching. Under the guidance of the professional team, students work in small groups to research, design and implement a solution to a work-based problem. Projects have ranged from research and ideas generation for external clients (e.g. the NHS, the Department of Work and Pensions), work simulations using real-world data and problems (e.g. for West Yorkshire Police) to planning for and working 'on the job' (e.g. as a Psychology teacher for sixth-form students). Developed in conjunction with alumni and potential employers, the module delivery includes a careers briefing and discussion session with the professional team, campus-based workshops and external site visits (e.g. to a hospital, job centre, law court, school) with relevant professionals to inform the development of each project, and weekly drop-in support sessions with the module leader.</p> <p>The module culminates in a conference for the students to showcase their solutions to the visiting professional practitioners and other interested parties, and to celebrate the students' achievements. The module leader and professional practitioners mark the presentations, and each student's final grade is weighted by his/her personal contribution to the group, as determined through self- and peer assessment.</p> <p>Students are also required to submit an individual report comprising a description of the project, its development and outcomes, key recommendations for relevant stakeholders, personal reflections on the experience and future career plans, and a career-related SMART action plan (as outlined in Lantz, 2011).</p> <p>Future plans for the module include additional interactive, skills-based workshops; for example, on effective group work, critically reflecting on experience and practice, and producing and delivering</p>	

presentations.

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Case study 17

Psychology placement student	
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Around 70% of Aston University Psychology students complete a 12-month sandwich placement between their second and final years. Krishma is on placement at Hays Recruitment in Birmingham, a busy, business-focused environment where long hours are expected. Krishma's line manager, Jason, explains that, "we are a commercial and target orientated organisation and therefore expect our consultants to achieve financial targets within their first 13 weeks". What is the benefit of having a placement student in such a business-focused environment? Jason explains there were initial increases in his own workload and, as Hays had not hosted placement students before "it did take longer to try and map out ... how we best utilise their skills". Despite this Jason was positive and he elaborated on Krishma's role: "as she is not a fee earning consultant we've been able to give her longer term projects ... she's been allowed the time to do things that don't immediately make money". Asked about the roles that Krishma had engaged in Jason said: "she's done really well at ... marketing and ... our technical testing, becoming the administrator and 'super-user'" and that she had "worked on one source, where we have a resourcing team in India and ... managing and supporting all the team meetings". Asked whether he would like more placement students Jason replied, "Yes, we'll definitely do it again." Hosting a placement student made business sense for Hays as additional time in supervision had been more than compensated for by Krishma taking on projects that were beneficial to the company but did not immediately generate income.

Krishma admitted that working full-time had been "a bit of a shock" and that the hours were long, but she said that the experience had "given me an insight into working in a commercial environment and what I'm going to do when I finish Uni". She also liked the variety in the tasks she'd been asked to perform: "I've been given loads of things to do ... not just recruitment or admin ... I've been given so many different tasks and learnt so much." Krishma finished by saying there had been "nothing I've not liked at the placement ... if I've ever needed to ask anything there's always someone there to support me ... I pretty much just get on with what I need to do, and I think Jason trusts me to have it done, and I think that's really good".

So, for both employers and students there are real benefits from commercial placements. Students gain valuable work experience and a reference from an employer and companies can utilise the skills and ability students have to enhance their business.

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Case study 18

Supporting learning and employability before, during and after placement	
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Taking a year as an undergraduate work placement is a serious step. While placements have well-established employability, career entry and academic benefits, pre-placement preparation, on-placement support and post-placement reflection and consolidation are all important in helping students to get the full educational value from their experience.

At Aston University employability is part of the Psychology degree at all three levels and teaching is done jointly by academics, careers and placement support specialists. First-year students are introduced to employability and the placement year early in the first term of the programme. Voluntary and paid work, university societies and mentoring opportunities are highlighted as sources of learning and competence development. The assessment matching this is to start a personal development portfolio with a career plan that requires consulting a range of careers resources. In week five the students join second-years in attending a careers fair in which final-year students displaying posters about the placement work they have recently returned from are joined by employers seeking placement students.

Second-year students have a ten-credit first semester 'Employability in Psychology' module that introduces competencies and competency-based assessment in more depth and a range of careers inside and outside the discipline. It requires engagement with and reflection on psychometric materials, further PDP and career-planning work, and includes interview, CV and letter writing training and some interpersonal skills work. Extensive use is made of the *Psychology Student Employability Guide* (Lantz, 2011). Participation in two placement and careers fairs is required with academic assignments to match. On-placement learning is supported by a placement tutor visit, a mid-year return to university event and reflective writing submitted regularly culminating in the creation of a report and a poster evaluating learning and aimed at first- and second-year students.

Post-placement consolidation is prompted through a ten-credit reorientation module, including a mature look at evidence of competencies and a revised career plan in the light of experience. These feed into tutor-led personal development reviews in October and March. Research and data-handling revision options and further participation in careers fairs are also part of the module.

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Case study 19

Psychology student mentoring scheme	
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A range of career options are open to Psychology graduates but many require graduates to undertake further postgraduate study, extensive work experiences or voluntary work in order to enter their professional career and secure training opportunities. Without work-based learning modules or placements integral to the course, students can find work experience/shadowing difficult to secure, as many organisations that offer relevant employment have strict conventions of confidentiality, security or client safeguarding measures. Where students don't have friends or family connections in the sector from whom they can seek advice, their ability to get the valued first-hand insights into the workplace are restricted, making it difficult for them to make well-informed decisions about their futures. To address this concern, staff at Sheffield Hallam's Careers and Employment Service and the Department of Psychology, Sociology and Politics developed a career mentoring scheme specifically for Psychology students.

The approach taken to the mentoring scheme involved: recruiting the mentors and mentees; training and induction for both, and matching and monitoring the partnerships. Staff contacted potential mentors through alumni networks, personal and professional contacts of the Psychology department's teaching team, local employers from organisations and career areas allied to psychology, and approaching organisations identified by students as appealing. Students were recruited through the course virtual learning environment (VLE) and careers advertisements. Students applied to the scheme and were invited to an interview where their expectations and mentor preferences were discussed. A mentoring induction event for mentors and mentees allowed participants to learn more about committing to the programme and practise relevant skills. Once matches were made, students attended four meetings with mentors over the academic year, which allowed students to broaden their network of contacts, get valuable insights from mentors, see how their Psychology studies related to the workplace and develop confidence.

Mentees were supported by the *Mentee Journal*, which introduces the mentoring process, helps students set objectives and identify learning outcomes. Mentors were supported by the *Mentors' Guide*, which contains helpful guidance for mentors such as draft agendas and action plans.

These resources and a full project development report are available to download from:
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/disciplines/psychology/career-mentoring-scheme>.

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Case study 20

Forming a Psychology society

Contact information

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The Worcester University Psychology Society (W.U.P.S.) was a student-led society based within Psychological Sciences at University of Worcester. The society was formed in 2005; however, our aim was to introduce an academic in addition to the social aspect of the society and so W.U.P.S. was relaunched in 2007. During my final year of my undergraduate degree I served as chair of the society alongside three fellow students who fulfilled the roles as vice-chair, secretary and treasurer on the committee.

In contrast to the other case studies included in this guide this is written from a former student perspective; however, I hope this can illustrate how running a Psychology society can benefit the employability of Psychology students and how my time as society chair has enhanced my own employability leading to my current role as a Research Assistant at University of Worcester.

Aims of the society: The society aimed to integrate all students across all three years of the Psychology programme at the University of Worcester (UW) providing a mixture of social and academic events, with an emphasis on the latter. While the society was student led, we received considerable support from members of the Psychology team, which contributed to the overall success of the society.

Society events and activities: Social events proved to be a fantastic opportunity for students in all three years to meet and get to know each other outside of the lecture theatre. This included a number of activities including bowling, society lunches, and an end-of-year ball to name but a few. However, the society predominantly had an academic focus and we organised a number of events during our time on the committee. These events aimed to broaden students' experience, enabling students to explore real-world application of Psychology and included:

- **Psychology 4 Students (BPS student lectures)**
This is an annual event organised by the BPS aimed at enticing first-year undergraduate students into the world of Psychology. The event consists of key note presentations covering a range of issues in Psychology, delivered by established psychologists.
- **BPS Student Members Group Annual Conference (SMG)**
In 2008 members of W.U.P.S. attended the annual conference of the SMG in Dublin, which sits alongside the main annual conference of the society. This was a fantastic experience for all who attended and provided an insight into the real world of Psychology research. I also presented my dissertation research at the conference. This was an excellent opportunity to present my research in a supportive environment and network with others, some of whom I am still in contact with today.

- Institute of Health and Society Research Seminar series

This is a series of seminars hosted by the Institute of Health and Society in which the Psychology department sits. Academics from both within and outside of UW present a one-hour seminar relating to their current research and a time for discussion. These events were not run by the society, but W.U.P.S members were encouraged to attend by both the committee members and academic staff and communicated through Blackboard, Facebook and the student noticeboard. This provided students with the opportunity to not only gain an understanding of real-world research, but also see applications of Psychology to a number of different areas.

As a committee we also encouraged students to engage with the SMG and the HEA Psychology Network and actively promoted opportunities to our members, e.g. submitting articles to *Psych-Talk*, the student publication of the SMG and entering the annual student essay writing competition run by the HEA. These activities also served to support students' development, particularly those interested in pursuing a career in academia.

Being part of the W.U.P.S. committee was a fantastic experience and one which has developed a range of skills and abilities that are important in my role as a Research Assistant:

- Communication skills

Effective written and verbal communication skills are essential skills for a Psychology graduate regardless of whether they pursue a career in psychology. Presenting my dissertation research enabled me to develop my verbal communication skills, encouraging me to articulate my research findings to an academic. Of course, students can attend conferences and similar events even if they are not part of a Psychology society. However it is likely that students may feel anxious about attending what may be perceived as 'proper academic' events and may feel more comfortable attending as part of a student-organised event.

- Organisational skills

Running W.U.P.S alongside the demands of final-year study (and a part-time job) was a challenge and on reflection I would advise that students wishing to set up a Psychology society be in their second year of their degree. However, this taught me a lot about time management and how to deal with competing priorities.

- Interpersonal skills

As chair of the society a large part of my role involved liaison with both the Students' Union and the BPS, sending emails, making telephone calls and holding meetings. Liaison with stakeholders through email, telephone or face-to-face communication is often a fundamental part of the research process and an ability to work well and understand the perspective of others is an important skill.

Serving as a Psychology Society committee member is a great opportunity for students to not only develop skills and competencies that are applicable to a variety of career sectors, such as those described above, but also to engage with Psychology in the real world.

More information about setting up a psychology society can be found on the BPS Student Members Group website: <http://smg.bps.org.uk/smg/setting-up-a-psychsoc.cfm>.

Case study 21

Speed networking event for Health and Life Sciences faculty	
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Psychology students need to engage in a variety of relevant work experience before embarking on postgraduate study in order to specialise in their chosen branch of Psychology. As well, students who are not interested in pursuing Psychology careers are not always aware of the scope of alternative career opportunities and lack confidence in approaching employers. After a successful pilot last year, a speed networking event was expanded to include a strand specifically for Psychology students. This strand was designed to help students build knowledge regarding work experience and career opportunities within and outside Psychology as well as to develop confidence in meeting potential employers.

For students to make the most of the evening preparation was of primary importance. A couple of weeks prior to the event we sent attendees some guidance including details of employers attending, how to research them, advice and themes for networking on the day, and some basic rules to ensure the evening ran smoothly. We asked students to look at the employer list and Google employers in advance, then to focus their research on those they were most interested in speaking to since most would not be able to speak to all employers in their subject section. We encouraged them to update their CVs in advance, write a list of sensible questions, and to consider first impressions through their own verbal and visual presentation. Students registered online in advance and paid a £10 deposit, which was refundable after the event, but ensured those who signed up attended.

The format of the evening included a keynote address on the cycle of career development, followed by 75 minutes of employer speed networking, and then a short activity and plenary. Fifty-six employers participated and were subdivided into four separate networking groups representing the four subject areas of the recently formed Health and Life Sciences Faculty. Within the Psychology group, students were able to meet with a variety of professionals including clinical psychologists, research assistants, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) practitioners, occupational psychologists and PhD researchers. Each individual student had six minutes with each employer before circulating on to the next employer as a bell was rung. During these short interactions students had the opportunity to find out more about opportunities and expectations for graduates from each employer and to offer CVs or business cards as appropriate.

For the final part of the evening we asked employers to provide us with one 'top tip' and produced a display of A1 posters. Examples are below:

The top tip for occupational psychology (and other areas of Psychology) is to get practical work experience. Volunteer for a charity. Work as an intern. Shadow people working in a field. Psychology is such a popular course at university that when it comes to seeking employment in the field, you need to have something to

stand out against the competition. As employers, we are impressed with people who have already tried work or volunteering in Psychology. If people can demonstrate a practical knowledge of applying Psychology and that they have a sustained interest in this work, then they have already started to stand out from the crowd. (Rob Bailey virtualbailey.plus.com)

Find something you are passionate about and interested in to focus on, but remember don't narrow your focus too much too soon, and always explore the different routes to your end goal. (Kirsty Walter, Research Assistant, Department of Psychology, Oxford Brookes University)

Whatever your chosen career path, ensure that you develop your transferable skills alongside your specialism. Not only will this make you more marketable but it will give you a wider range of job possibilities that will be invaluable when we have a downturn in the economic climate and job market. (Shirley Ryall, Consultant Psychologist, The Ryall Connection)

Students evaluated and voted on the top tips for a final discussion in the plenary, while employers were rewarded with food and wine and their own networking evening. Out of the 82 students who participated in the event, 92% found it beneficial or very beneficial.

- *It is very engaging! My favourite part was networking because I found out about different work opportunities that I never knew about!*
- *Being able to talk to someone who actually employs is invaluable – you find out what they are really looking for.*
- *It has quite literally opened my eyes to the infinite career possibilities.*

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Case study 22

Website and online survey tool to gauge students' skills and interests	
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While employability is embedded into the Psychology programme at all levels, members from the Employability and Psychology team have been meeting to develop short- and long-term strategies to embed employability further into the curriculum, particularly in Level 4 and 6. Part of this planning has resulted in the development of a comprehensive careers website for Psychology students, which will provide them with information about a wide range of career opportunities, including non-psychology professions.

This web-based survey uses Part 3 of the HEA *Psychology Student Employability Guide* (Lantz, 2011) and will inform students of their post-graduation options and will determine the relative strength of interest in and between options. This will then provide a ranking of their preference to inform their Plan A, B and C. The data will enable us to analyse student career interests, including the extent to which self-assessments of skills match those required by the careers of interest, and whether there is a pre- to post-survey change in student goal orientation. We will measure goal orientation before we administer the survey, look at their goal-orientation year-on-year and look at the difference in graduation destinations among students who have used the survey and those who have not.

The online tool will involve a description of post-graduation options and a combination of Likert and ipsative questions to determine the strength of interest in each option and the relative strength of interest between each option. Scheduled for launch in October 2012, the effectiveness and usefulness of the website and survey tool will be evaluated by students at Bath Spa University and the survey will be available both internally and externally with a URL link. At Bath Spa University, the survey will be embedded in the module and first-year Psychology students will be herded into a computer room to complete the survey. Other institutions may decide to do the same.

This work will be supported by the Employability Department through one-to-one careers appointments and placement advice. The survey will also enable us to assess whether there is a need for a credit-bearing work placement, or even a sandwich year.

Additional plans include offering a non-credit bearing work experience in special schools for those considering careers such as educational psychology or occupational therapy. Our Education Partnership Office will make a 'call for offers' to special schools on our behalf.

Another scheme being discussed between Psychology and the Employability Department is 'Psych Buddy', Bath Spa University's new mentoring programme for Psychology students, which links professionals working within the field of Psychology and Mental Health with Psychology students wishing to gain an insight into life after their studies. Once students have completed the web-based survey, we

will be in a position to identify students who would benefit from the scheme.

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Case study 23

Embedding graduate podcasts for employability

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Five podcast interviews with Open University (OU) Psychology graduates have been embedded in the module study schedule as online activities, encouraging self-reflection and providing interactive links to further information and support. These activities are scheduled strategically to make links from the teaching of subject specialisms and generic skills to employment possibilities.

The graduates interviewed talk about how they became interested in Psychology, the skills they developed during their studies, how they are using these skills in their careers, and the routes they have taken to their current employment.

The interviewees address the application of subject-specific knowledge, such as behaviour shaping in work with children, discuss the value of the generic skills they developed as part of their OU degree and link examples from the module content to their employment experiences. Attention is also given in the interviews to routes into particular careers, including further training, gaining paid and/or voluntary work experience, and recognising the benefits of transferable skills. Supporting notes provide direct weblinks to information on psychology qualifications, advice on further study and careers information.

Students are encouraged to allow up to an hour of study time for each interview, to reflect on their own interests and career aims, and to follow up the embedded links to further information and career-planning support.

The podcasts have received positive feedback from students and tutors for the way they cover a range of student circumstances and aspirations. They are an effective way to provide up-to-date guidance to large numbers of students. They address one of the findings of recent OU research, that students require help in translating academic achievement into employability skills. The presentation of real-life examples from graduate perspectives contributes to this in a way that makes sense to students. Further, using directed study time to integrate skill awareness and employability awareness helps develop capacity for recognising transferable skills.

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Case study 24

Alumni networking event – ‘Meet our grads’

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Role models who can provide examples of a successful career starting from the same base are important in enabling students to make the initial steps along their career paths. Equally, developing the confidence and ability to make contacts and having the opportunity to meet professionals is crucial. To support these aims our department organises an annual ‘Meet our grads’ event. Aimed at third-year Psychology students, the event provides an opportunity through which students can meet and mingle with alumni to enhance their networking skills and obtain valuable information regarding postgraduate study and job opportunities.

The department endeavours to stay in touch with alumni by obtaining contact information from them prior to graduation. While all recent alumni are invited to the meet and greet events, we invite five or six to speak about their careers. We try to ensure that there are a variety of speakers to include career psychologists, as well as representatives from careers outside of Psychology. For example, at our 2011 event alongside an educational psychologist, we also had a management consultant and a sexual health advisor.

In addition to alumni, we also invite academic staff so that alumni have the opportunity to see familiar faces and current students can see that academic staff are actively involved in promoting employability.

While networking is an important skill, it is not one that students automatically possess. Therefore, in preparation for the event, a member of the Careers Service staff presents on the role of networking in the world of work and provides tips for effective networking, helping students to make the most of the event. Prior to the event, students also receive a list of alumni that will be attending the event along with their job titles so that they can plan who they would like to meet.

The events begin with an informal session with wine and nibbles where alumni and academics ‘mingle’ with the students. Alumni are provided with name badges to enable students to find those that interest them. This session is followed by a series of short talks from invited speakers during which they talk about their career paths thus far. The talks are followed by a second informal session allowing for additional networking.

While the Department of Psychology at Royal Holloway, University of London provides a variety of employability-related support for Psychology students, this event has been one of the most popular with students and alumni.

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Case study 25

Weekly career seminars examine career possibilities and support available through the Careers & Employability Service

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Staff within the University of Birmingham's (UoB) Careers & Employability Centre have been proactive in delivering a range of seminars for undergraduate Psychology students, enabling them to gain insights into the opportunities available to them after their degree. Facilitated weekly to students, the voluntary attendance seminars regularly accommodate in excess of 30 students, all of whom are keen to learn more about the opportunities available to them. The topics for seminars have been wide-ranging, including:

- Getting into clinical psychology;
- Getting into educational psychology;
- Careers in teaching, charity work and working as a probation officer;
- Getting into human resources management;
- Getting into counselling psychology;
- Getting into occupational psychology;
- Volunteering and work experience opportunities in social care.

Many of the seminars have included panels of external speakers (some of whom are alumni) who are experts in their particular field; the Careers & Employability Centre's Internship Officer for the college has worked closely with several of these representatives to help develop bespoke summer internship opportunities, which have been promoted to students in advance of and during the seminars. Examples include the 'Get Well, Keep Well Project Co-ordinator' with Bournville Village Trust in Birmingham – a unique opportunity for a UoB Psychology undergraduate student to help staff in the Trust's care homes, ensuring that tenants' mental health is maximised, assisting staff to constructively manage conditions such as depression and assisting staff to develop working practices within the schemes to identify residents' needs in relation to their mental health and wellbeing and to respond to them accordingly.

Running through both the autumn and spring terms, the seminar series are promoted to students through our weekly work experience drop-ins and Careers Advisor appointments, targeted lecture shouts, poster and flyer by the Careers & Employability Centre's student staff team, bespoke college social media (Twitter and Facebook) and via our Interactive Careers Service database.

The seminars have given rise to a healthy interest in work experience and internships from students and we have used a combination of hand-outs developed in-house, as well as external publications including the *Psychology Student Employability Guide* (Lantz, 2011) to help answer students' immediate questions, as well as signposting them for further information.

We are now in the process of planning seminars for the next academic year and look forward to building on the continued success that we have experienced to date.

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Case study 26

Internationalising the Psychology curriculum

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The School of Psychology at the University of Liverpool recognises the great value of providing learners with an international curriculum and experience, resulting in graduates who are global citizens, sensitive to diversity and ready to tackle global challenges.

Internationalisation is already one of the highest priorities within the school, with opportunities for students at all levels to study and conduct research abroad. We are partners in the Erasmus programme, supporting our students for a period of study at other European Union universities. Our undergraduate students have the opportunity to conduct research projects abroad; an example includes examining how children learn different languages in Ghana and Spain. Postgraduate students can also experience work and research abroad; for example, students on the Masters in Science (MSc) in Investigative and Forensic Psychology can undertake internships with the Home Team Behavioural Science Unit in Singapore, where they are able to gain experience of applied research work in law enforcement and security settings.

As part of a curriculum review, we will be continuing to internationalise the way we teach Psychology and support learning. This will start next academic year, with the introduction of a new Level 4 undergraduate module 'International Psychology'. This module will consider how the diversity of human behaviour across nations contributes to psychological theory, research and practice and how this knowledge can help to address global issues (such as ageing, health and the environment). Students will learn about the development and practice of psychology in other countries, critically evaluate the extent to which certain psychological concepts are influenced by cultural differences and become aware of alternative theories developed in other communities.

In Year 2 and 3 of the curriculum review, all undergraduate modules will be examined and modified to incorporate internationalisation issues. In the near future, the School is aiming to introduce credit-bearing electives at selected partner universities across a number of continents, to ensure that more home students have the opportunity to experience a truly global student experience.

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Case study 27

Curriculum review to develop global perspectives	
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The BSc (Hons) Psychology at Leeds Metropolitan University has a very strongly embedded thread addressing inclusivity, diversity and global relevance throughout the learning experience. This focus on developing the graduate attribute of global outlook has enabled the course development team to more fully articulate the Psychology benchmarks that emphasise the importance of recognising ‘the inherent variability and diversity of psychological functioning’ and being aware of the ethical and culturally sensitive context of Psychology as a discipline, in psychological research and professional practice although it has relevance in almost any employment context.

An important part of our course, and a requirement of our accreditation, is our teaching of the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct and our evaluation of students understanding of working ethically, as appropriate to the level of study. The most recently published *Code of Human Research Ethics* (BPS, 2011) describes four ethical principles in relation to: (i) respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons; (ii) scientific value; (iii) social responsibility; and (iv) maximising benefit and minimising harm. For a professional career in research and practice psychologists must adhere to this Code of Ethics and Conduct in being accepting of different cultural traditions and beliefs, demonstrating respect for diversity and individual preference, and valuing difference regardless of personal view.

Having identified the graduate attribute of global perspectives as being important in the course learning outcomes, the course team have embedded this attribute in the core and optional modules at each level using the curriculum review guidelines developed by Killick (2006). The following provides just some examples of how the global perspectives attribute has been embedded within the course.

In first-year Level 4 core modules there is an emphasis on activities and discussion of lecture content that highlights relevant research on topical issues and debates across different cultures and societies. Learning outcomes at this level are focused on the ability to identify and describe one or two key issues relating to these debates. For example, in the first-year core module ‘Introducing Psychology’, a global outlook is developed through examining how Psychology has developed as a science and its global impact, and this understanding is assessed in the group presentation and exam.

In second-year Level 5 core modules, a wider more critical perspective on global outlook is developed and encouraged in seminar discussions and activities exploring political, historical and culturally embedded understanding and social practice. Learning outcomes at this level are focused on the ability to critically evaluate different theoretical and philosophical approaches and developing the ability to synthesise understanding and develop logical and well-structured arguments. For example, in the

'Psychological development through the lifespan' module, the ability to take a global outlook is further enhanced through consideration of universalities of human development and cultural diversities within and across cultures, and this is assessed in the portfolio assessment and exam. Optional modules take a similar approach. For example, in 'Identity and prejudice', students develop the ability to recognise and appreciate the multicultural differences within and between nations, and how these differences manifest themselves in relation to attitudes and behaviours (at the individual, group and governmental level).

In final-year Level 6 core modules, the graduate attribute of global perspective is much more fully developed. At this level, the range of issues is wider and the level of debate much more critical and political. Learning outcomes at this level are focused on students' abilities to critically evaluate different theoretical, philosophical and political approaches, abilities to synthesise understanding across the breadth of the discipline and develop arguments in a well-structured manner. For example, in the core module 'Critical and philosophical issues in Psychology', a global outlook is firmly embedded into every session. Students explore the idea that mainstream Psychology is ethnocentric and tends: (a) to be underpinned by westernised ideas and concepts (individualism, consumerism, capitalism, etc.); and (b) to assume that measures/theories developed within a western cultural context can be used or applied unproblematically in other cultural contexts. Students also explore the extent to which concepts such as personality, masculinity/femininity, ideas around what constitutes 'normality' and abnormality are 'culture bound' (i.e. vary from culture to culture or only exist in some cultures). This more critical understanding at this level is summatively assessed in both essay and exam assignments. In the 'Final project' at Level 6, global perspectives are addressed by requiring students to reflect on their own attitudes and consider their research findings within the context of the larger body of research on this topic. This and the ability to adhere to the ethical code of conduct in designing and conducting the research, is assessed in the project report.

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Case study 28

Case study 28: Third-years develop international perspectives through studying abroad

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The Division of Psychology encourages their students to study abroad in order to gain experience of living and working in another country, as well as to experience the alternative ways in which Psychology is taught and practised in different countries. We feel this gives students a broader outlook and helps them gain the independence they need to pursue a successful career in psychology.

To encourage home students to study abroad, as the study abroad co-ordinator in the department, I give students an overview of the study abroad option during the second year induction talk. I follow this with an email to the whole year group asking students who are interested in study abroad to contact me. I then hold a group meeting towards the end of semester one with these students to further discuss the study abroad process. Following this, students who meet requirements are permitted to submit an application for study abroad through the International Office at the start of semester two. Typically we have about three students going out each year. This tends to be primarily home students, although it is our experience that international students also appear to be likely to apply for study abroad places. All applicants must demonstrate that they are academically and individually up to the challenge of studying abroad. They must have a minimum average grade of 60% and to have done particularly well in research methods and data analysis modules. Each application is considered individually, and factors such as conduct in class and attendance are also taken into account. Only a small number of students are permitted to take part in study abroad each year. This is partly due to the fact that all proposed exchanges must first be approved by me as study abroad co-ordinator to ensure that the BPS regulations are being followed, which can be a time-intensive task. In addition the expectation of such schemes is that the department will receive an equal number of inbound study abroad students as it sends out. As a BPS-accredited programme we have to ensure that the majority of students in an elective module have completed the BPS core modules, so a high number of inbound study abroad students in an elective module could be problematic. Students can only make one application to a specific institution. Multiple applications to several exchange partners are not permitted because there is limited funding for the exchange programme and it can take a substantial length of time to arrange an individual exchange. If students were allowed to make multiple applications to several institutions then this could lead to the situation of an overseas university allocating a place for a University of Bradford student, for it ultimately to be declined and it to be too late for another student to take the place. We feel that maintaining a positive relationship with overseas universities is integral to the success of a study abroad exchange scheme, and so we aim to avoid a situation such as this arising.

BPS regulations make opportunities for study abroad rather limited in relation to time frames. All the students on our BSc Psychology degree take the core modules in their first and second years. They are allowed to miss up to 60 credits of their elective material provided that they have an 'equivalent educational experience'. To this end our students can only study abroad in the first semester of their third year. They only miss 40 credits since they remain registered on the semester one 20-credit dissertation module at the University of Bradford. If they want to go to a university where we don't already have a partnership they have to present a case to me as to why the course there is suitable, and then I make contact with the university myself to discuss their course content. Students do the

equivalent of 40 credits at the university, usually picking elective modules of the type you would find at UK third-year Psychology programmes. The students sit all of the assessments for the relevant modules and their grades are converted to our own system of marking when the students return to Bradford. The feedback from students who have been on a study abroad exchange is that the experience has helped them develop both personally and professionally, by allowing them to live independently in another country and witness different ways of practising psychology. Several previous study abroad students have also commented that their time abroad was something that was picked up on and discussed positively when they attended job interviews following their graduation from the University of Bradford.

The advice I'd give any other Psychology departments aiming to encourage study abroad is to allow a lot of time between inviting applications from students and the study abroad start date. In our experience it is easier to focus on developing a few high quality exchange relationships with a select number of overseas departments and to steer students towards these options. It can generate a lot of work if you let students just send you lists of where they want to go, as you need to check through the suitability of each course. When looking at another department I take into consideration the descriptions of the modules they offer and the range of assessments within these modules. I also establish whether or not there is a named member of staff who is responsible for inbound study abroad students. Moving to a new country and university can be challenging for even the most independent student and I think it is enormously important to know that there will be a tutor or supervisor at the overseas university who your student will be able to approach for help if they need it. I also require all outbound students to stay in regular contact with me to let me know how they are progressing, although sometimes this can take a little prompting if they have happened to go to an overseas site with an active social scene.

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Case study 29

Community-based learning abroad

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Since one of the important career directions for Psychology students is the 'third sector' (e.g. NGOs and social enterprises, not for profit), it is important to provide community-based learning (CBL) opportunities for our students. In addition, with the increases seen in domestic diversity and migration, it is perhaps of as much importance to help students to gain global perspectives and experiences. At York St John University (YSJU) both of these aims are accommodated by providing a three-week (or 100-hour) work-based learning (WBL) opportunity, which may be done internationally.

The work opportunities are organised through liaisons already established by academics within the department. Offered once per year as part of the 'Psychology of work' module, students undertake CBL towards the end of their second year of studies. Students who participate in international CBL opportunities are accompanied abroad by a lecturer as a group and all undertake similar activities. While the majority of the students engage in work placements in the UK, over the past four years we have taken students to three continents, which have included the following opportunities:

- students worked at a centre for children with communicative and developmental disorders on the University of Southern Mississippi campus, US;
- students participated in rebuilding efforts that took place on the Gulf Coast in New Orleans as a result of Hurricane Katrina;
- students worked in partnership with teachers based in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. They helped with information technology (IT) education, read and sang with the children, painted educational motifs on classroom walls, and assisted with vegetable gardening;
- students accompanied a lecturer to Tamil Nadu, India to explore the potential to work alongside community skill-building projects there;
- students worked at St John's University of Tanzania helping with English text marking and also assisted in the library. This placement is popular and over the past three years, 19 students went to SJUT.

As the lecturer in charge of the initiative, I have been funded by various university teaching enhancement grants and our international office, to accompany and supervise student learning. Students fund their own flights, accommodation and subsistence, so this is a substantial investment on their part.

Module requirements include reflection on experiences in relation to skill development and to the theories that they have covered and see 'come to life' in the workplace. Students choose the theoretical approach they best see reflected, and illustrate it with examples. For instance, they may choose theories related to motivation, staff training and development, stress management, leadership or teamwork. One

student noted: “Observing the culture in Africa was fantastic for putting the theories learnt through studying Psychology into real-life situations”. Students also do the Psychology card sort as a pre- and post-measure, to enable them to see the changes in their skills and competences. Students have found the CBL experiences very valuable in relation to developing career knowledge and enhancing cultural understanding. One student commented:

One aspect of the Tanzanian culture which I was surprised at was the sheer hospitality of the people. Everyone who we met (whether it was around the university campus or people we came cross in town) took time out of their day to walk with us and ask what we were doing and told us we were very welcome in their country.

Students meet regularly (about twice a week), to reflect on their experiences as a group (facilitated by their tutor). They also keep a daily diary, to capture aspects of their learning in relation to the project that they write up as an end-of-module requirement. In group briefings after their placements, a number of students have commented that the international CBL was a life-changing experience.

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Psychology students from abroad invited to study for a term in the UK

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Psychology students from overseas institutions are able to make applications to undertake accredited Psychology modules offered by the Division of Psychology as part of the study abroad and exchange options organised by the International Office. These opportunities are disseminated to prospective study abroad students through the existing connections of the International Office. In addition as study abroad co-ordinator, I liaise on a more individual level with my counterparts at overseas universities to ensure that the University of Bradford is promoted as a possible study abroad destination to their students. The Division of Psychology invites interested students from overseas to study abroad for a term in the department in order to experience higher education in the UK and to undertake modules from a BPS-accredited degree, which may include elective modules not available at their home institution.

Typically we have about four students coming to study in the department each year from a small number of about half a dozen applications. Students initially make an application to the International Office of the University, using standardised forms and application processes. I then review each application to ensure that the students have a sufficient background in psychology to be able to engage successfully with the modules on our BPS-accredited Psychology degree programme. If the students are successful then I send them an email to introduce myself and to give them a copy of a study abroad booklet we have created to aide both inbound and outbound study abroad students.

Inbound students are free to pick whichever modules they wish (subject to the approval of their home university), but generally tend to choose from our third-year elective modules and occasionally our second-year modules. There are no set prerequisites for students regarding any of the accredited Psychology modules offered by the Division of Psychology. However, as a professional training course it is assumed that students undertaking second- and third-year modules have a sufficient understanding of the fundamental aspects of the major areas in psychology. Overseas students wishing to study second- and third-year accredited modules may also be asked to demonstrate that they have previously successfully completed modules in research methodology and data analysis at their home institution. Only overseas students who are from a degree programme where the main focus is psychology will be considered. For example, students from the US who are studying Psychology as a minor will not normally be permitted to undertake modules from the BPS-accredited Psychology degrees. We receive a lot of queries from overseas students who want to do some Psychology modules but haven't ever actually done Psychology before. Since our Psychology degrees are BPS-accredited and assume students have done the core first- and second-year modules, we have to turn such applicants down.

Any incoming students proposing to collect research data from UK participants are asked to contact me in advance to ensure their study complies with regulations, although to date no inbound exchange student has made a request to do this.

Hosting inbound study abroad students has been a positive experience for both the staff and existing students on the course. Psychology is a profession that can vary between countries and cultures, and having overseas study abroad students in a class can add to the range of opinions and the scope of

discussion. It can take a lot of care to make sure an exchange programme runs smoothly. The UK is quite unusual in having a professional body like the BPS and as commented above an issue can be that students from non-Psychology backgrounds may be under the mistaken belief that they can take accredited Psychology modules. There can also be problems caused by the fact that the structure of modules and assessments can be very different from what students experience at their home universities. I feel that the key to addressing both of these issues is communication. I personally contact every inbound study abroad applicant to ensure that they have a full understanding of the course and Psychology in the UK. I also invest time building up close working relationships with the study abroad co-ordinators at the universities who most frequently send students to us, to make sure they are as informed as possible about our course. In my experience it is better to focus on developing a good exchange relationship with a small, select number of overseas departments than trying to create as many partnerships as possible.

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Case study 3 I

Using Psychology to develop intercultural competence research and practice

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An important recommendation by Trapp *et al.* (2011) is that “the Psychology community should do more within higher education to promote the insights from Psychology that should inform all subject areas” (p. 11). Given the Psychology community’s expertise in understanding human development and interpersonal relationships, the same can be said for doing more to promote research and practice around the development of intercultural competence (ICC) within higher education. Due to their methodological, conceptual and theoretical sophistication, both developmental and social psychology are in a unique position to make major contributions to the study of intercultural competence. However, research on this topic is sparse within both of these sub-branches of the discipline. This omission is surprising, given the importance of intercultural competence to current policy debates concerning the cultural diversity of contemporary societies.

Coming from a background that combines both developmental and social psychology, one of my interests centres around the development of intercultural competence in students and the promotion of this idea to educators. While the development of intercultural competence in students has relevance as a workplace skill that can foster employability, it has other implications. In a recent paper that I wrote (2012), I highlighted the Council of Europe’s *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* (2008), which suggests that education professionals have a responsibility to foster intercultural competence in students in order to promote tolerance and understanding, prevent conflicts, and enhance societal cohesion. While the article addresses the wider importance of intercultural competence, it also outlines various approaches to understanding intercultural competence that can be quite confusing to educators given the bewildering array of conceptualisations of the term and the numerous models in existence. Also included are a review of the components of intercultural competence and a few recommendations regarding tools used to support its development, in particular, the Council of Europe’s *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (Byram *et al.*, 2009). The autobiography facilitates students’ learning by asking them to describe and reflect upon their intercultural encounters as a means of gaining insight into their feelings, thoughts and learning around cultural difference. It can be used independently by students or as part of a structured programme.

Beyond writing for educators around the importance of intercultural competence, I have recently undertaken research, along with one of my PhD students, Abeer Alkeshnam, focusing on the examination of the components of intercultural competence, exploring how the components are related and examining differences in intercultural competence as a function of gender, age, minority vs. majority status and multilingual status. Through this work we developed quantitative scales for measuring components of ICC. These scales have since been adapted for use with schoolchildren and further work is planned involving their use with university students.

Although I take a multidisciplinary approach to research and work with colleagues from a variety of fields, I would be very pleased to hear from fellow psychologists who are interested in using disciplinary

knowledge to further research and practice in this important area.

Navigate back to [section 5.1.4](#).

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