



Supporting  
Students with  
Professional  
Development:  
Ideas for Academic  
Tutors

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# Introduction

This guide provides a number of ideas for Academic Tutors to promote students' professional development.

It identifies 10 key tips for bringing career learning and student professional development into tutorials. It provides a useful careers and employability timeline and work experience framework to refer to as well as a [glossary of terms](#). The ideas cover topics such as challenging myths, spotting and challenging barriers to development, building the 4C's: courage, curiosity, clarity and competency, think social diversity and scaffold reflexivity and establishing goals as well as a careers and employability 'litmus test' with referral links for tutors to suggest for development areas identified.

For further support, information or to access resources relating to this pack contact [t.lyden@reading.ac.uk](mailto:t.lyden@reading.ac.uk) or your [Careers Consultant](#).

Please note that HBS has a separate [Careers Team](#).

# Top ten tips

1. **Consult:** with colleagues, Careers about the employability/career development goals for your school and approach this with a clear purpose in mind.
2. **Timing:** make sure you are aware of the best times to be undertaking different activities.
3. **Connect with the curriculum:** how can you use tutorials to bring the curriculum to life?
4. **Student partners:** involve students from higher year groups or even alumni to 'transport' students.
5. **Challenge myths:** challenge key career/employability myths that students have.
6. **Spot/challenge barriers:** support reflection on barriers to progress and challenges them.
7. **Build the 4Cs: courage, curiosity, clarity and capability:** work on projects together to explore self and career.
8. **Scaffold reflection and set goals:** generate activity and reflect on successes to builds confidence.
9. **Think diversity:** strengthen student social capital through collaboration.
10. **Refer:** specialists and services can help your students, know them and promote them.

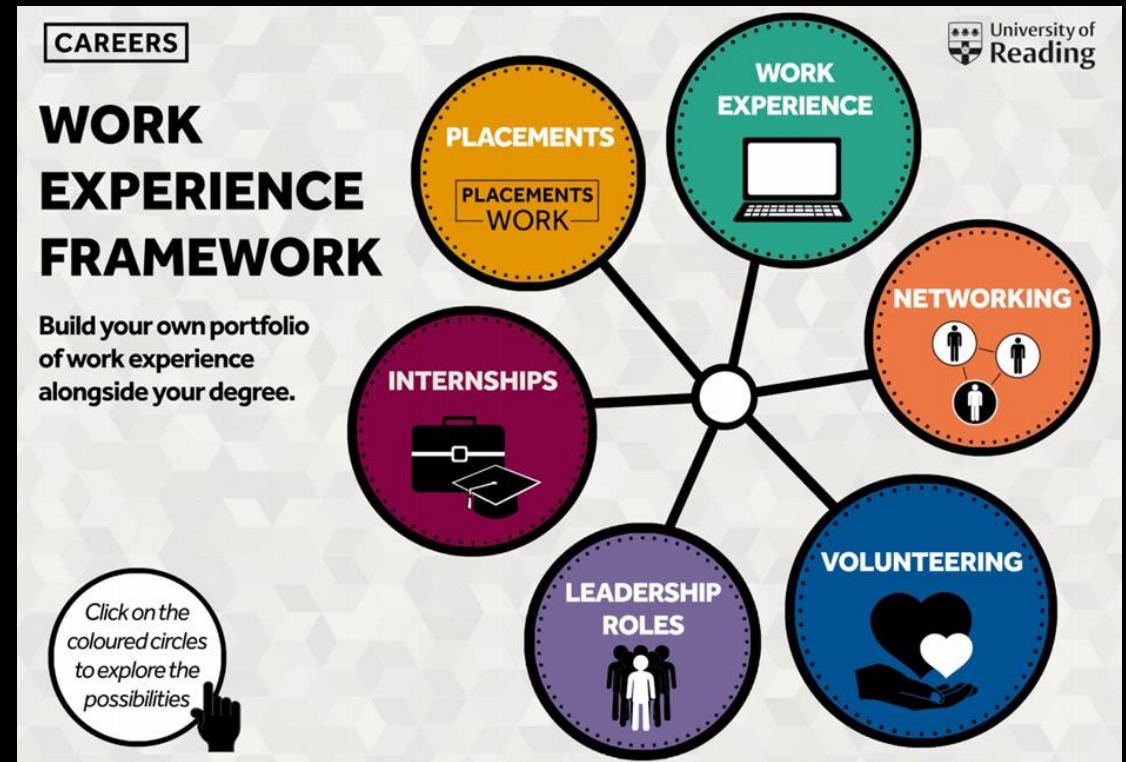
# Timing


Students typically start later than they ideally should. Employers recruit onto degree apprenticeships and create 'talent pipelines' from part one. Employability and career identity take time to build and refine and are easier to do in the earlier parts of the degree. The timeline shows when it is best to get started on different activities if you don't want to be at a disadvantage.

Careers and employability timeline								
First Year			Middle Years			Final Year		
1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Register with My Jobs Online								
	Explore key resources e.g. 'What can I do with my degree?'							
RED Award								
Volunteering								
Attend Careers events to explore options and refine career identity								
Undertake informational interviewing and use LinkedIn to build network to discover more about jobs								
Attend careers events to build cv, applications, LinkedIn profile and interview skills								
Reading Internship Scheme								
	Apply/attend Employer insight							
University Research Opportunitie Programme (UROP)								
Thrive Career Mentoring								
	Internship and/or placement preparation and applications							
Book a one-to-one careers appointment or mock interview with a Careers Consultant								
						Make graduate applications		
Sign up for external jobs sites such as Prospects, TargetJobs								

# Work experience framework

Our work experience framework highlights the many opportunities that students have to develop their employability and their career identities. Click on the picture to explore the framework.



The background features a series of concentric circles in a light gray color, centered on the left side of the frame. A dashed white line forms a large, irregular shape that encompasses the text. The overall background is a dark charcoal gray.

Ideas for one-to-one  
and small group  
▼ tutorials

# Challenging Myths

There are certain myths that seem to stop many students from moving forward with professional development. By focusing on these in a tutorial, you may be able to help them make progress.

# What is employability?

EITHER:

- Give students list of words e.g. resilience, self-awareness, communication skills, a 2.1 degree, a sense of career direction etc and ask them if they consider them part of employability or not. Contact your Careers Consultant for a list of words.
- Show them a model of employability e.g. CareerEDGE and discuss its breadth.
- Brainstorm ways of developing employability (use the work experience framework and timeline above for ideas) including the curriculum.

OR:

- Ask students to line up from the most employable to the least employable. Listen to their conversations and how they argue they are more (or less) employable and draw out the strands of their understanding.
- Follow up by discussing ways of developing employability (use the work experience framework and timeline above for ideas).

*This helps students to recognise the breadth of employability, seek opportunities to develop and start to take some action.*



# What is career?

- Ask students what they think the word 'career' means. Then discuss their thoughts in conjunction with the following points.
- Career means to meander and suggests change and experimentation.
- This involves moving between jobs and not necessarily having a job for life.
- This opens up the option for first jobs to be steppingstones, decisions don't have to be perfect, but a work in progress, starting with placements/internships.

*This provides students with more freedom to experiment and be curious and makes career choice less threatening so they can take action with less worries about it.*

# When do you start thinking about your employability and your career?

- This activity tackles the importance of pursuing work experience and skill and other attribute development in order to become more 'employable'.
- It also helps with refining career identity (how you perceive yourself in relation to 'work') to facilitate initial career choices. Forming a clear career identity takes time.
- Produce a timeline together by working backwards from getting a graduate job, getting experience, researching career options and establishing your preferences.
- Use the careers and employability timeline earlier as a guide.
- Bring students slowly back to the start of their degree to acknowledge that this is when they need to begin taking action and remind them they may have started already through their choice of degree or other activities.

*This hopefully achieves some impetus to get started.*

# Am I good enough for an internship/placement/graduate job?

- The purpose of this exercise is to unpack worries about whether students feel 'good enough'.
- Discuss the idea of applying for jobs as a learning experience. Establish the need to expect some 'rejection' and to treat it as feedback.
- Brainstorm why job application rejection may happen (wrong job choice, not practiced at CV writing, interviews, lack of experience, the competition?).
- Focus on learning and taking action to succeed (giving students back the control to succeed).
- Quote that typically 95% of graduates get into jobs/courses and so the recruiters decided they were good enough and stress that it is often potential they are recruiting.

*Achieves an action oriented and learning/growth mind-set.*

# Spotting and Challenging Barriers to Development

We all take part in what is called 'unhelpful thinking' which can hinder our progress, both in terms of academic and career development. Find out more about unhelpful thinking in our Academic Tutor video on the topic which you can find in the Academic Tutor Toolkit under 'meetings'.

# How can the way we think hinder our career development?

- Provide students with an 'unhelpful thinking' list (see next slide) contextualised to career development.
- Ask them to identify the 'unhelpful thinking' that they typically use and share examples, if they feel comfortable, with the person next to them. You may want to share your own!
- Facilitate challenging of thinking by asking are their actions (or inaction) **logical**? Are their actions (or inaction) **useful**? What **evidence** is there to support or challenge their thinking?
- Open the door to them taking positive action by asking them what they could do differently to help them move forward.

*This exercise can enable students to move forward with whatever they are dealing with, more aware of any unhelpful ways they are thinking about life. Team it with some reflection next time you see them to check if they are now making progress.*

# Examples of unhelpful thinking you can consider

1. **All or nothing thinking:** Seeing only one extreme or the other. There are no in-betweens. *“There are no decent graduate jobs out there.”*
2. **Mind-reading:** Assuming we know what someone else is thinking. *“Recruiters won’t think I’m good enough for the job.”*
3. **Magnification and minimisation:** Blowing things out of proportion, or shrinking something to make it less important. *“I’ve got plenty of time, I don’t need to think about careers until my final year.”*
4. **Emotional reasoning:** Assuming because we feel a certain way it must be true. *“I don’t think I’ll ever work out what I want to do after university.”*
5. **Mental filters:** Only paying attention to certain types of information, such as noticing friends who secure jobs and not those who haven’t. *“Everyone around me know what they want to do, but I have no idea!”*
6. **Personalisation:** Allocating false blame to yourself or others. *“My lecturers give me too much to do, no wonder I can’t find time to ....”*
7. **Labelling:** Assigning labels to ourselves or others. *“I’m just not good at attention to detail.”*
8. **Compare and despair:** Seeing only the good points in others and the bad points in yourself. *“Everyone in my house has secured an internship apart from me, I’m so behind on it all.”*

# Building the 4Cs: Courage, Curiosity, Clarity and Competency

These exercises help students to build the strength to go forward and explore, build a clear understanding of what they want and to self develop. They scaffold and encourage exploration, reflection and then consideration of how to explore further. More clarity of what options are and what students want should begin to emerge, particularly as they build on this in their own time.

# Do you know what career options you have after university?

- Take your tutee(s) onto the Prospects website and look at [‘jobs with your degree’](#).
- Share the list out so each person or pair in a small group looks at 1 or 2 generic job profiles or ask the individual tutee to pick one or two options to explore.
- Take them through one job profile to show the detail and breadth of information it provides. You may wish to read a case study together.
- Read and feedback initial thoughts or set as ‘homework’ to bring back next time. Ask for reflections on the list.

*This will stimulate curiosity, stimulate more and produce more clarity around potential career paths, not necessarily all subject related.*



# What do students in their degree programme do after University?

- Explore the Graduate Outcomes statistics for your subject and discuss it. Use tableau or your Careers Consultant as a data source but ensure you maintain confidentiality requirements.
- Ask student(s) to explore one of the graduate destinations/job profiles it mentions and to feedback 3 key learning points to you or the group and share how to find out more.

*This will achieve an initial foray into researching career options, develop curiosity and build courage.*

# What values will underpin your career direction?

- Select an employer related to your degree programme who has clearly laid out values. E.g. NHS.
- Ask the student or group to read about the organisation's values and decide which ones resonate most with them and which do not.

EITHER:

- Ask them to consider where they have demonstrated their top-rated value.

OR:

Ask them to expand on their understanding of their values by doing a [values-based questionnaire](#).

*This activity helps to scaffold exploration of organisations via values, builds clarity of career identity.*

# What strengths would you need to do job X well?

- Take a detailed job advertisement or the first two parts of a [Prospects Job Profile](#).
- Ask students to read it and identify the key strengths needed to do the job well. Create a list.
- Ask students to consider if they would be able to do the job and share evidence of where they have used those skills before.
- If not, what might they need to do to develop? Use the work experience framework above and referral resources later in this guide to connect to opportunities to do so.

*This stimulates curiosity by scaffolding the research of job requirements and creates momentum by modelling the review of job options and establishment of development needs.*

# Think Social Diversity

If you tutor students who come from widening participation backgrounds, you could help them build their employability from whatever unique position they are in. Part of this is developing what is called their social capital (who they know). This works best in a group.

# Who do you know in a job related to your degree?

- This activity involves building a mind map of contacts who work in roles or know people in roles related to their degree.
- Provide some headings to help such as family, friends, previous employers, tutors/lecturers, course peers, careers/placement staff, LinkedIn etc.
- Get students to think laterally e.g. knowing someone at a relevant company, but not necessarily in the right role.
- Discuss the concept of [informational interviewing](#) and the value of 'social capital'.
- Set some homework to ask their contacts who else their contacts know and get them to bring them back to next session and expand the mind map further.
- Encourage them to bring learning from an informational interview back to the group.

*This exercise can support exploration, curiosity, overcoming fears and expand the networks of some widening participation students.*

# Scaffolding reflexivity and goal setting

Until most people reach their mid-20s, reflection can be more challenging due to when the brain develops this faculty. This first exercise supports reflection about prior experiences to help develop career identity and was developed by Victoria Godsell (Careers Consultant). The second supports goal setting and was created by Emma Butler (Careers Consultant) and Claire Newbold, Teaching Fellow).

# Developing Career Identity

- Ask students to reflect on their experiences to date. Ask them to identify something they are good at, something new they recently learned, something they found challenging, something they enjoyed.
- Ask students to share what they come up with and to describe what they think it says about them.
- Ask if each of these are attributes/skills they'd like to use going forward?
- Ask students to suggest what roles or activities they might use those attributes/skills in in the future.

*This scaffolds reflection about experiences, learning from them, building self-awareness and career identity and is an essential facet of employability.*

# What do you want to achieve by the end of this academic year to become more employable?

- Ask students to opt for one of three suggestions: improve academic results, get more involved in university life or find a summer internship or placement?
- Discuss as a group what the steps might be and include suggestions from the work experience framework and the referral information later in this presentation.
- Ask students to jot down their own first 2/3 steps and revisit at the next tutorial to see progress, or you could ask them to share virtually.

*This encourages students to take action to build employability*



# Professional Development 'Litmus Test'

Checking in regularly with where your students are at with employability and career identity may be all you need to do, alongside referring them to the many opportunities available to them. This resource provides you and your tutee with a focus so they can do just that.

# Professional Development 'Litmus Test'

The activity asks tutees to rank themselves on a continuum for the following aspects of employability:

1. Career direction.
2. Career anxiety.
3. Levels of experience.
4. Knowledge of labour market.
5. Knowledge of career options.
6. Understanding job requirements.
7. Knowing how to develop skills/abilities.
8. Ability to make applications.
9. Ability to cope with selection processes.
10. Handling nerves about selection processes.

The '[litmus test](#)' then provides the tutor and tutee with links to web pages for resources that will help them with each aspect of employability.



# Thank you

We hope you found this guide useful and if you would like support in developing these ideas for your own tutees, then approach the Careers Consultant for your school.