

Designing in employability: individual activity

Collection: Course design

Resource: Designing an English degree programme

Approximate duration

One hour

Learning outcomes

This activity is designed to help you focus on the processes involved in the design and launch of an English degree programme. Carrying out this activity should help you

1. acquire insight into how institutional procedures and cultures impact for good or for ill on teaching situations and aspirations;
2. acquire the confidence to propose and argue to colleagues for a new form of assessment, of teaching, or module, e.g. an employability module;
3. acquire a critical understanding of curriculum and its constituent parts in any given degree and how these relate to a students' employability prospects.

Introduction

Some English lecturers feel that focusing on employability is an unwelcome demand on scarce time and that it cannot be a significant priority. This situation is changing, however: many English departments now expend a great deal of energy helping their students think about future employment possibilities.

Perhaps it helps to think of employability as a set of achievements – not only skills, but also understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain



1 | *This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.*

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employment and be successful in their chosen occupations--achievements that most academics either value in their own right or are necessary for academic success.

Activity

1. How might you integrate employability into an English degree programme?

Watch the video below, in which Marion Wynne-Davies (University of Surrey) talks about the ways in which the new English degree at the University of Surrey highlights the importance of employability to English students. (We are very grateful to our colleagues for allowing us into their classrooms, lecture halls and offices to observe and discuss their teaching. As you work with these examples of teaching and course design please keep your commentary focused upon the activity and refrain from criticisms that would be unhelpful or unkind in a face-to-face encounter.)



[The design of an English programme 2](http://vimeo.com/21604863) from [English Subject Centre](#) on [Vimeo](#).

If you would like to know more about the Surrey degree, you might like to watch the full interview with Marion (below).

2. At the University of Surrey, as Marion explains, employability and 'relevance' are built into the very structure of the degree. But if you are teaching on an established degree programme there are still plenty of options. One option is to (a) highlight/make explicit the skills the students are developing through their subject-specific work on their modules, and (b) suggest how these skills might be applied in a work context. (You



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could also develop this into a group or individual activity, asking students to think about this topic and share their ideas with one another.)

3. Several lists have been produced of capabilities that employers value in graduates. One 'top ten' reads as follows:

1. Motivation and enthusiasm
2. Interpersonal skills
3. Team working
4. Oral communication
5. Flexibility and adaptability
6. Initiative/productivity
7. Problem solving
8. Planning and organisation
9. Managing own development
10. Written communication

For each of these items, write down elements in your degree programme that help students develop the relevant skills/attributes.

4. Are any of the top ten unrepresented, or weakly represented? How might you adjust or supplement your degree programme to make up for this? Write down further notes under the relevant number or numbers.

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

- **Core Knowledge 2:** Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- **Professional Values 3:** Commitment to the development of learning communities
- **Professional Values 4:** Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity

More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the *Subject & Pedagogy* collection in HumBox.

<http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/>



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Resources in the Course design Collection

- Course design: introduction to the collection
- Designing an English degree programme: resource overview
 - **Designing in employability: individual activity (*you are here)**
 - Designing in employability: group activity
 - Managing transition from A Level: individual activity
 - A delicate balance: group activity
 - A delicate balance: individual activity
- Designing an innovative English Literature module: resource overview
 - Location, location, location: individual activity
 - Location, location, location: group activity
 - Questions, questions
 - Integrating research into a module: individual activity
 - Integrating research into a module: group activity
- Filling the gaps: resource overview
 - Filling the gaps between sessions: individual activity
 - Filling the gaps between sessions: group activity
- Adapting a module: resource overview
 - Adapting a Literature module: individual activity
 - Adapting a Literature module: group activity
 - Pacing it out: individual activity
 - Curriculum framing
- Mapping and applying desirable student attributes: resource overview
 - Imaginary modules: individual activity
 - Imaginary modules: group activity
- Designing a creative-critical module: resource overview
 - Thinking about modules: individual activity
 - Thinking about modules: group activity



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