

*An Anatomy of Employability:
Graduate Capabilities for the Creative Arts*

A collaboration between The Glasgow
School of Art and Bucks New University

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Employability can be defined as:

‘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.’

Professor Mantz Yorke (2004) *'Employability in Higher Education: what it is - what it is not'*, HEA/ESECT

Discuss in relation to art and design teaching and learning

Project Aims

- To articulate and develop discipline specific modes of delivery for employability in Fine Art, Design and Media using the Beverley Oliver model, *Assurance of Learning for Graduate Employability*. (Determine capabilities; Map inputs; Evaluate outcomes; Plan enhancements)
- To ascertain the skills required for early professional success, to ensure that students understand what is expected of them beyond graduation and how to achieve it.
- To recognize and articulate the existing strong skills base amongst the student body and the wealth of employability activity that takes place outwith the curriculum.

Project Aims

- To co-design employability content with student researchers and for students to be critically engaged with their professional development.
- To better understand the contribution to employability of a range of practices and to highlight where these may be further developed in the curriculum.
- To evaluate and disseminate our findings and engage a wider audience in their development.
- To broaden the understanding of employability skills and how we discuss them in and across the disciplines
(*Anatomy of Employability*)

How we did it

Glasgow School of Art

Painting , Printmaking, Photography, Environmental Art,
Sculpture

Bucks New University

Fine Art, Design (Furniture, Textiles, Silversmithing,
Jewellery & Ceramics)

Media (Advertising And Graphics)

How we did it

New learning and teaching activities emerged:

- Student focus groups
- Staff consultations and feedback
- Student-led workshops
- Staff-led workshops
- Pecha Kucha
- Residency
- Mapping exercise (employability activities)
- Dissemination seminars

Key debates:

- Difference
- Language
- The Studio
- Self-efficacy
- Visual Literacy
- Mapping
- Student engagement

Outcomes

- To inform policy of employability enhancement across the sector, through engagement and discussion within sector.
- To create models for working with employability which are accessible across the sector.
- To disseminate the findings of the project and be part of a sector wide discussion around employability.
- To enhance the understanding and engagement with employability within the partner institutions.
- To work with students to improve access and provision of employability related activity in partner institutions.

Outputs: going forward....

- *Anatomy of Employability* website (launch May)
- Events
- Conference presentations (internal/external)
- Social Media presence
- Formation of student-led Creative Enterprise Society (GSA)
- Student focus group to lead rethinking transferable skills delivery within the curriculum (GSA)
- Redevelopment of assessment process and documentation to reflect up and articulate employability learning (GSA)

What we learned

- Student-led change is a key way forward
- The language of employability is an issue
- Employability activity is largely implicit rather than explicit
- Design students have different employability learning and teaching needs from those of fine artists
- The Studio is a powerful site of employability teaching and learning
- Confidence and self-efficacy are major themes to address

What we learned

- The concept and implementation of ‘embedding’ employability in the curriculum needs reframing
- Explicit assessment of and reflection on employability learning is crucial for students to be able to articulate their skills
- A cultural, paradigm shift in some academics’ thinking needs to be managed in order for support for the employability agenda is increased
- Visual literacy is largely lacking from the debate about employability

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