Employability in the Core Online Curriculum: Good Practice Guide

This Good Practice Guide documents the process of enhancing discipline-specific employability competencies in the virtual learning environment (VLE) in the MSc Global Mental Health Programme, College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences, University of Glasgow. An in-depth look into the key project phases is provided, including job market analysis; discipline-specific employability framework development; and curriculum auditing and enhancement. This resource concludes with good practice recommendations and a short compendium of employability-focused online learning enhancements and further resources. This Guide is intended to support all teaching staff interested in systematically integrating employability into online learning, across both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and across colleges.

This work was funded by the Learning & Teaching Development Fund. For questions or feedback, please contact the Project Lead, Dr Dimitar Karadzhov.

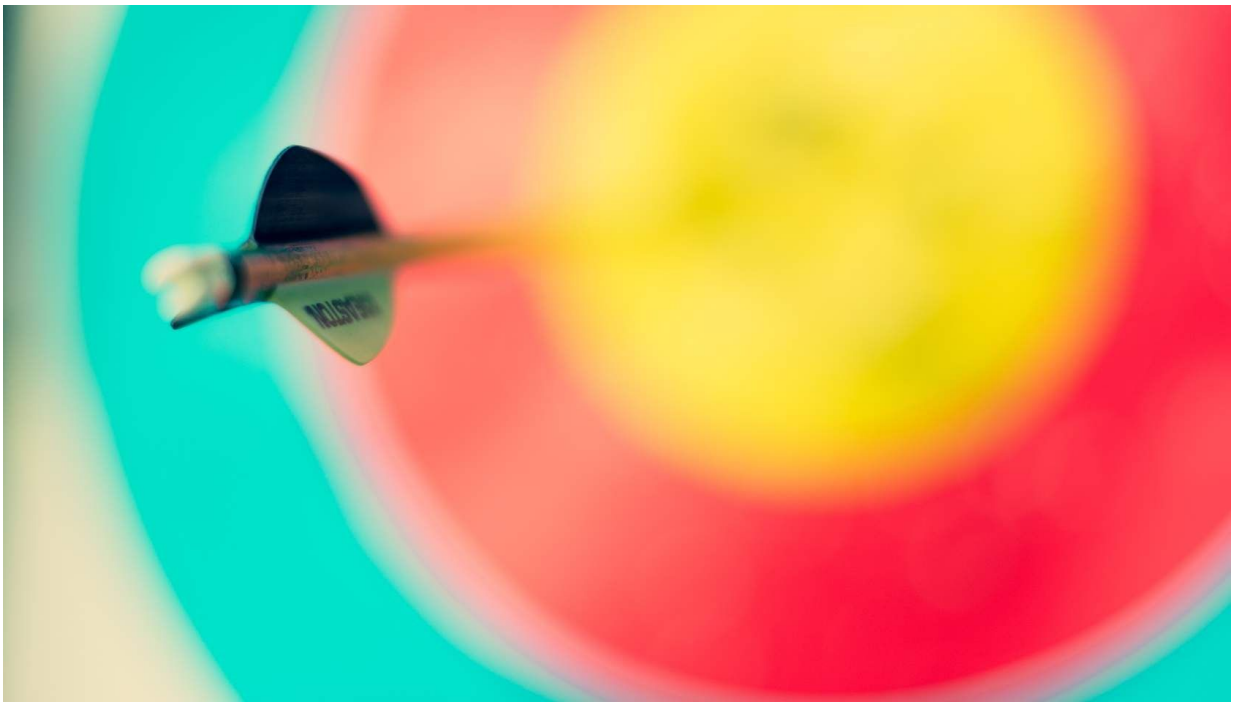
- Why Embed Employability in the Core Online Curriculum
- Job Market Analysis
- Employability Framework Development
- Curriculum Audit and VLE Enhancement
- Support for Educators

Why Embed Employability in the Core Online Curriculum

This section outlines the context for the learning and teaching development project, 'EEVE - Enhancing Discipline-Specific Employability Skills and Awareness via the Virtual Learning Environment', which was implemented in a postgraduate taught (Master's) programme at the University of Glasgow College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences.

1

The benefits of tailored, discipline-specific employability training, over and above standalone university employability modules, have been well documented (Scott & Willison, 2021). Embedding employability skills within the core curriculum has at least three main benefits:



1. Students are more likely to engage in activities which are not perceived as increasing their study burden (Rees, 2021).

2. It may foster student engagement and motivation – critical ingredients in active online learning (Cachia et al., 2018; Czerkawski & Lyman, 2016).

3. It creates a more equitable learning environment in which online distance learning students are not excluded from employability development opportunities (Butcher & Rose-Adams, 2015; Heymann et al., 2022).

This approach is also reflective of the UoG MVLS Education Strategy's focus on embedding employability into curricula. While generic frameworks for promoting employability in the curriculum exist, they are rarely focused on the VLE – indicating the importance of good practice case studies in this area (Rees, 2021).

2

Case Study: MSc Global Mental Health Programme

Similar to other disciplines such as psychology and geography, global mental health is a professionally diverse field, which does not have 'direct links to industry and a natural path from education to employment' (Blackmore et al., 2016, p. 23). This presents unique challenges to identifying and supporting students' awareness and acquisition of subject-specific and transferable skills, including negotiation, co-production, design thinking and trauma sensitivity. This highlights the need for curricular innovation in this area and underscores the transferability of the project learnings across a range of programmes.

The MSc Global Mental Health Programme has two modes of study: on campus and online distance learning. Notably, the on-campus students have access to comprehensive self-taught online learning modules, on top of attending live classes. The online learning modules are delivered via the Rise 360 learning platform and hosted on Moodle. This enables a 'flipped classroom' approach, whereby some of the live sessions become spaces for elaboration and discussion of the online learning activities – fostering active and collaborative learning. This makes online learning a cornerstone to the teaching provision in the Programme.

The 'EEVE' Project: Enhancing Discipline-Specific Employability Skills and Awareness via the Virtual Learning Environment

The 'EEVE' Project (Enhancing Discipline-Specific Employability Skills and Awareness via the Virtual Learning Environment) took place between September 2022 and July 2023. The distinctiveness of this project lies in its systematic identification and integration of a comprehensive range of in-demand discipline-specific competencies within the core online teaching. The project's guiding principles are accessibility and equity, alignment, and empowerment.

Accessibility and Equity

We believe students should benefit from discipline-specific employability activities, tools and resources regardless of social capital, geographical location or mode of study. We are particularly committed to ensuring online distance learning students receive accessible employability-focused, curriculum-based support.

Alignment

We recognise the value of embedded, curriculum-based employability development activities, alongside well-established extracurricular employability development opportunities such as internships, placements and workshops. We also believe employability can be constructively aligned with the curriculum, including in online learning, and perceived as an organic part of the core teaching. We propose that true alignment is achieved when students develop their employability skills while 'engaging with their subjects in a critical and in-depth way' (Rees, 2021, p. 665).

Empowerment

Staff Empowerment
Academic staff should possess up-to-date knowledge of relevant sectors and industries, and their respective requirements. This will help bridge the frequently reported chasm between employer expectations and requirements, and graduate attributes (Osmani et al., 2019).

Student Empowerment
Students should recognise their academic degrees as a meaningful step towards a desired career, and be equipped with the support and tools to explore viable career paths by the University.

Reference Materials

Why Embed Employability in the Core Online Curriculum References.docx
24.8 KB

Job Market Analysis

This section provides an overview of the job market analysis methodology used in the EEVE Project.

1

Understanding Employers' Needs

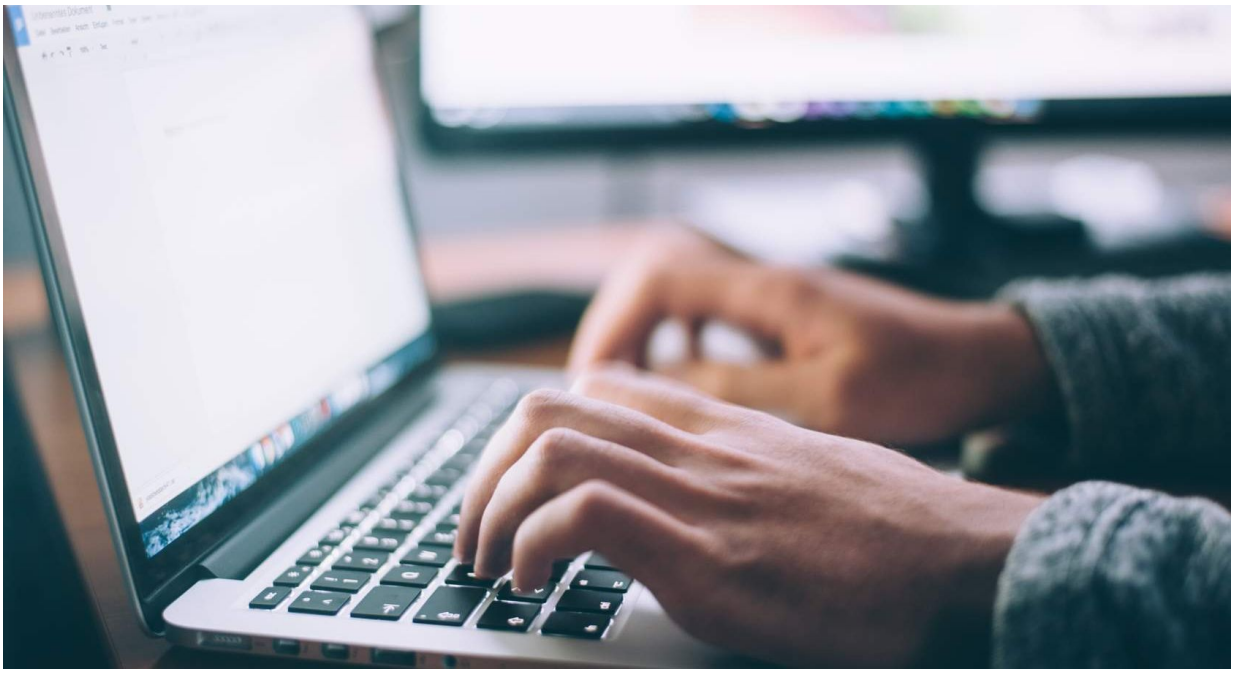
Job advertisement analysis is a time-efficient and naturalistic method for obtaining a snapshot of in-demand roles and competencies in the global job market (Wellman, 2010). Other approaches to optimising the alignment between curricula and employers' needs exist such as employer surveys and industry partner involvement in curriculum design (Abelha et al., 2020). Albeit valuable, these approaches were not taken in this project due to the highly dispersed nature of global mental health jobs – in terms of sectors and geography. This meant that relying on data from individual employers will likely fail to capture the breadth of relevant roles and competencies.

The systematic assessment of the job market aims to bridge the commonly observed discrepancy between curricular provisions and rapidly changing industry landscape and requirements (Abelha et al., 2020; Hennemann & Liefner, 2010).

Methodology: Job Search

The search strategy aimed to capture a range of sectors and professions that graduates could potentially go into after completing the Global Mental Health course. Global mental health was defined here as: “an evolving field of research and practice that aims to alleviate mental suffering through the prevention, care and treatment of mental and substance use disorders, and to promote and sustain the mental health of individuals and communities around the world” (Collins et al., 2020).

The following jobs sites were searched: LinkedIn, UN Jobs, Charity Job, Rethink Mental Illness, NGO Jobs Africa, Mind, MHInnovation.net, Ghana Current Jobs, NHS Jobs, jobs.ac.uk, and Indeed.



Using the following key words: advocacy, psychosocial support, counsellor, mental health policy, consultant, capacity development, researcher, research assistant, graduate teaching assistant, advisor, psychologist, social worker, and support worker. Jobs were selected according to several criteria:

Diversity of Roles, Sectors, and Employers

The selection of highly diverse sectors and job families was informed by a pluralistic conceptualisation of GMH (Rajabzadeh et al., 2021).

Suitability for Graduates

Jobs that would appeal to students early in their careers in global mental health were included, such as entry level jobs and internships. Jobs that required more experience were also included to reflect the more progressed career stages of many GMH graduates. These jobs also offered more insight into the knowledge, expertise and values that are needed to work in each sector should a graduate want to move into that area of work.

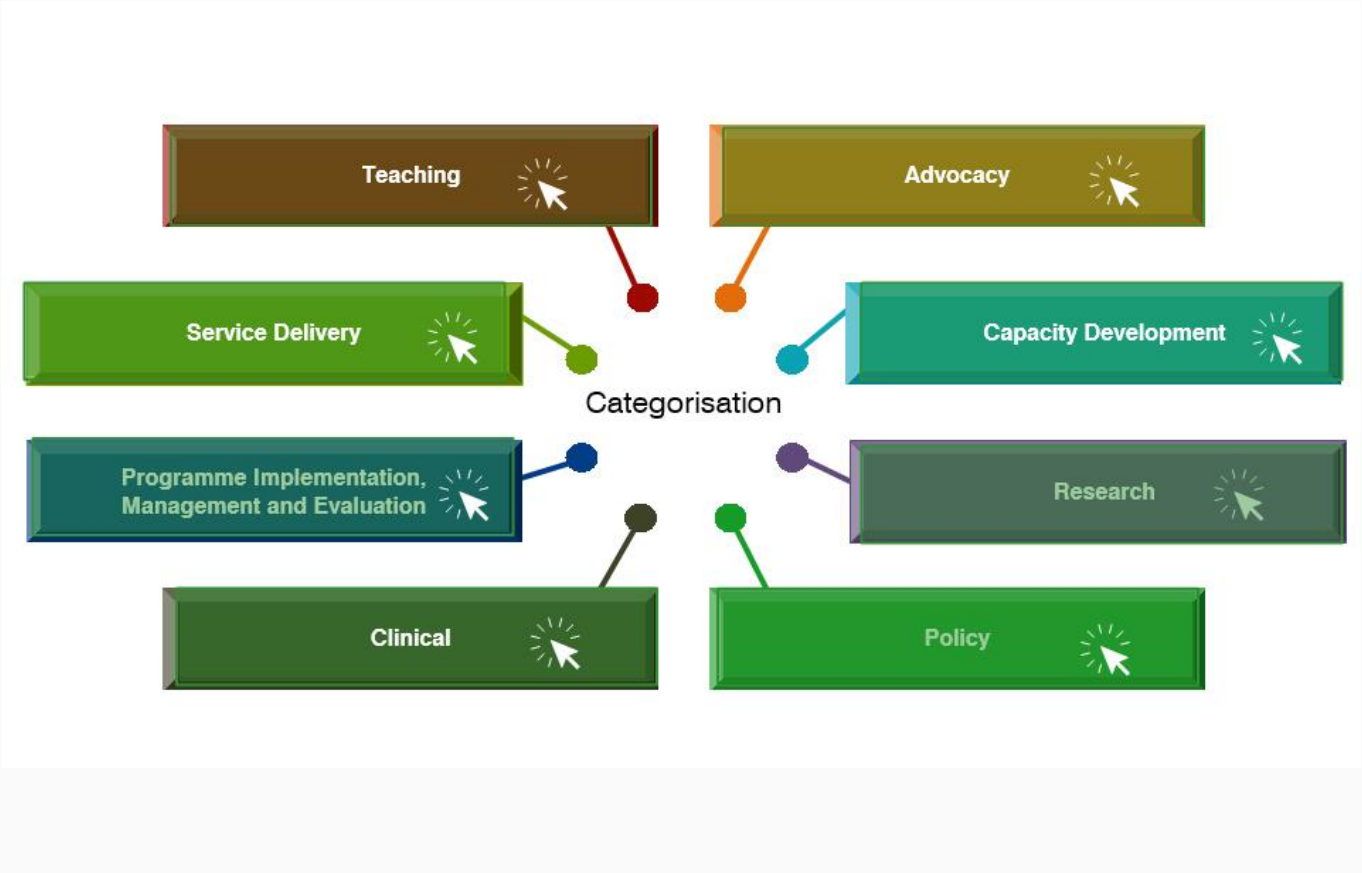
Location

A good geographical spread was needed to reflect the international nature of the course and overseas

Depth of Descriptions	Job listings with rich descriptions of roles and candidate profiles were selected.

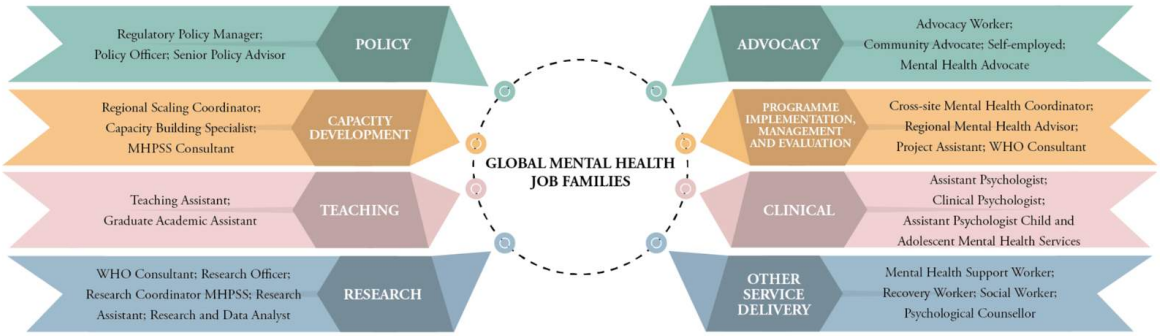
Categorisation

Job listings were then organised into categories according to their job family. Eight broad job families were discerned: advocacy (7 ads); capacity development (8 ads); clinical (5 ads); policy (7 ads); programme implementation, management and evaluation (12 ads); research (15 ads); service delivery (12 ads); and teaching (4 ads). The more heterogeneous the job family (that is, the more diverse competencies being present across ads), the more exemplars were included.



Industry Mapping

This job family categorisation was disseminated to the students via an infographic, which aims to boost industry awareness.



Note MHPSS: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Additionally, word clouds were created for each job family as accessible visuals of the most frequent words in the ads. An example of the Clinical job family word cloud is presented.

Content Analysis of Job Advertisements

The search (data collection) phase was conducted from 22nd September - 26th October 2022. They were then imported into the data analysis software package, NVivo 12 (university licence available), and coded line by line for relevant competencies using qualitative content analysis. The analysis focused on the job description, person specification and, where relevant, on the employer or organisation description.

First, snippets from each advertisement corresponding to discrete competencies (e.g. accountability, professionalism, experience of working in a LMIC) were coded. Then, the long list of codes were reviewed by two team members and grouped into sub-categories based on their similarity. Following this, the sub-categories were clustered into higher-level, more abstract categories. Descriptions were added to the codes, sub-categories and categories on NVivo to ensure consistency. To aid the categorisation, concepts from the literature were occasionally applied. For example, the concept of personal resources was adapted from Kasler and colleagues (2017), and defined here as traits and competencies that promote coping, resilience and thriving in the workplace. An illustration of the coding process is presented.

Ad Excerpt	Code	Sub-Category	Higher-Level Category
Flexibility to respond to changing and challenging circumstances	Flexibility and adaptability	Personal resources	Self
Emotionally resilient	Resilience and grit		
Can remain calm under pressure	Composure		
Positive and flexible attitude to work	Positivity		

Reference Materials

DOC

Job Market Analysis References.docx
14 KB

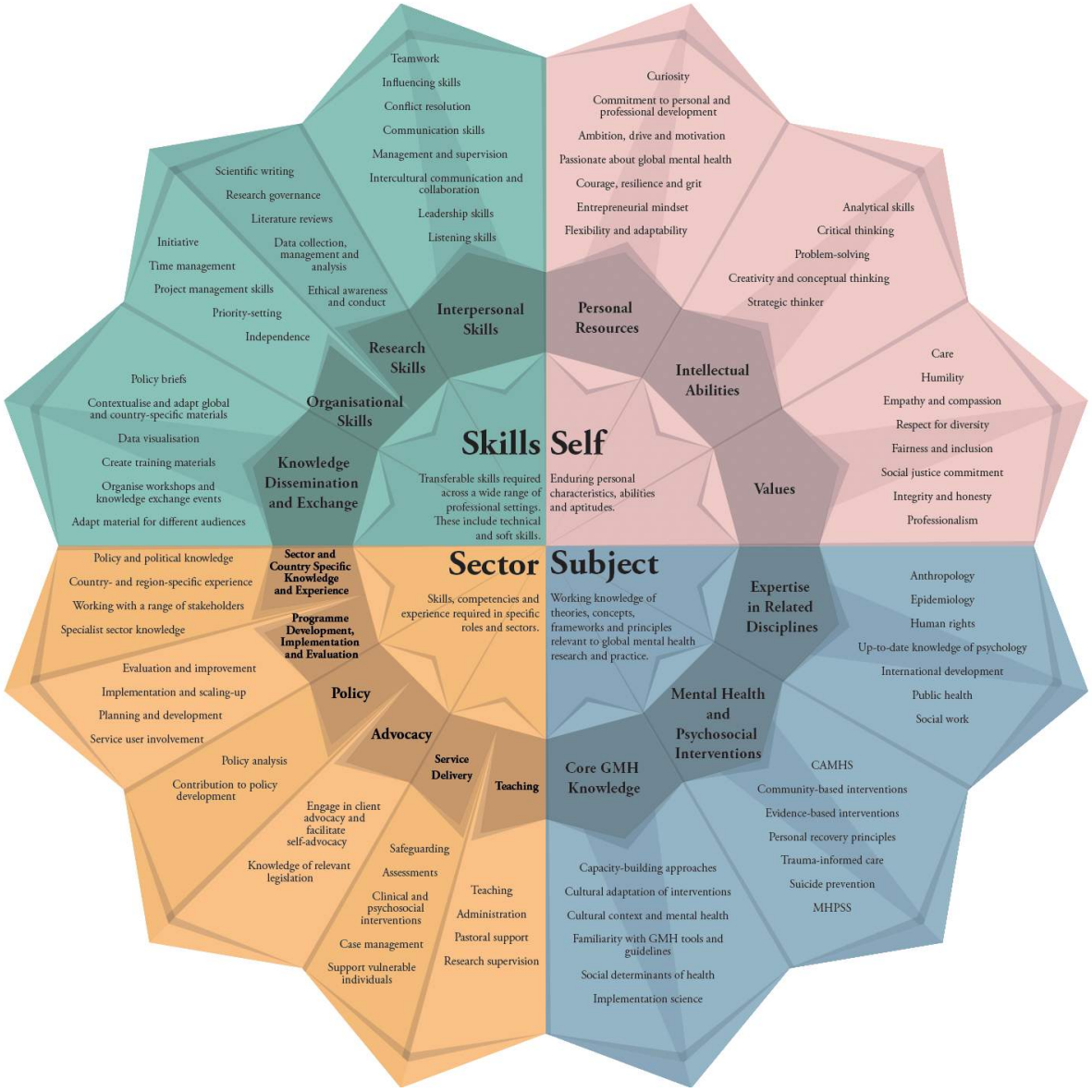
Employability Framework Development

Approximately 200 distinct skills and competencies were derived from 70 job advertisements. This reflected the fine-grained (line-by-line) qualitative content analysis, together with the multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral nature of the rapidly evolving discipline of global mental health. This diversity of competencies was welcome; however, it presented challenges to the development of a coherent employability framework 'from the ground up'.

1

The '4S' Discipline-Specific Employability Framework

The initial multi-sectoral global mental health employability framework was developed via the qualitative content analysis of the job descriptions. Four meta-level categories were found to accommodate the main categories and sub-categories generated by the qualitative content analysis: Self; Skills; Sector; and Subject. After all stages of analysis were completed, common themes emerged, and a '4S' employability framework was created to reflect these. The organising components of the framework and the working definitions generated for each one are as follows.


Skills
Transferable skills required across a wide range of professional settings. These include technical and soft skills.
Interpersonal Skills
Teamwork
Influencing skills
Conflict resolution
Communication skills
Management and supervision
Intercultural communication and collaboration
Leadership skills
Listening skills
Research Skills
Scientific writing
Research governance
Literature reviews
Data collection, management and analysis
Ethical awareness and conduct
Organisational Skills
Initiative
Time management
Project management skills
Priority-setting
Independence
Knowledge Dissemination and Exchange
Policy briefs
Contextualise and adapt global and country-specific materials
Data visualisation
Create training materials
Organise workshops and knowledge exchange events
Adapt material for different audiences
Self
Enduring personal characteristics, abilities and aptitudes.
Personal Resources
Curiosity
Commitment to personal and professional development
Ambition, drive and motivation
Passionate about global mental health
Courage, resilience and grit
Entrepreneurial mindset
Flexibility and adaptability
Intellectual Abilities
Analytical skills
Critical thinking
Problem-solving
Creativity and conceptual thinking
Strategic thinker
Values
Care
Humility
Empathy and compassion
Respect for diversity
Fairness and inclusion
Social justice commitment
Integrity and honesty
Professionalism
Sector
Skills, competencies and experience required in specific roles and sectors.
Sector and Country Specific Knowledge and Experience
Policy and political knowledge
Country- and region-specific experience
Working with a range of stakeholders
Specialist sector knowledge
Programme Development, Implementation and Evaluation
Evaluation and improvement
Implementation and scaling-up
Planning and development
Service user involvement
Policy
Policy analysis
Contribution to policy development
Advocacy
Engage in client advocacy and facilitate self-advocacy
Knowledge of relevant legislation
Service Delivery
Safeguarding
Assessments
Clinical and psychosocial interventions
Case management
Support vulnerable individuals
Teaching
Teaching
Administration
Pastoral support
Research supervision
Subject
Working knowledge of theories, concepts, frameworks and principles relevant to global mental health research and practice.
Expertise in Related Disciplines
Anthropology
Epidemiology
Human rights
Up-to-date knowledge of psychology
International development
Public health
Social work
Mental Health and Psychosocial Interventions
CAMHS
Community-based interventions
Evidence-based interventions
Personal recovery principles
Trauma-informed care
Suicide prevention
MHPSS
Core GMH Knowledge
Capacity-building approaches
Cultural adaptation of interventions
Cultural context and mental health
Familiarity with GMH tools and guidelines
Social determinants of health
Implementation science

Employability Framework Overview - Accessible Version

The Framework is organised around four central domains: Skills, Self, Sector, and Subject. The following pages provide an accessible overview of the different components of each domain.

Skills	Transferable skills required across a wide range of professional settings. These include technical and interpersonal skills.
Self	Enduring personal characteristics, abilities, and aptitudes.
Sector	Skills, competencies, and experience required in specific roles and sectors.
Subject	Working knowledge of theories, concepts, frameworks, and principles relevant to global mental health research and practice.

Skills

Interpersonal Skills	Teamwork Influencing skills Conflict resolution Communication skills Management and supervision Intercultural communication and collaboration Leadership skills Listening skills
Research Skills	Scientific writing Research governance Literature reviews Data collection, management, and analysis Ethical awareness and conduct
Organisational Skills	Initiative Time management Project management skills Priority-setting Independence

Knowledge Dissemination and Exchange	Policy briefs Contextualise and adapt global and country-specific materials Organise workshops and knowledge exchange events Adapt material for different audiences

Self

Personal Resources	Curiosity Commitment to personal and professional development Ambition, drive, and motivation Passionate about global mental health Courage, resilience, and grit Entrepreneurial mindset Flexibility and adaptability
Intellectual Abilities	Analytical skills Critical thinking Problem-solving Creativity and conceptual thinking Strategic thinking
Values	Care Humility Empathy and compassion Respect for diversity Fairness and inclusion Social justice commitment Integrity and honesty Professionalism

Sector

Sector- and Country Specific Knowledge and Experience	Policy and political knowledge Country- and region-specific experience Working with a range of stakeholders Specialist sector knowledge
Programme Development, Implementation, and Evaluation	Evaluation and improvement Implementation and scaling-up Planning and development Service user involvement
Policy	Policy analysis Contribution to policy development
Advocacy	Engage in client advocacy and facilitate self-advocacy Knowledge of relevant legislation
Service Delivery	Safeguarding Assessments Clinical and psychosocial interventions Case management Support vulnerable individuals

Teaching	Teaching Administration Researcher supervision Pastoral support

Subject

Expertise in Related Disciplines	Anthropology Epidemiology Human rights Up-to-date knowledge of psychology International development Public health Social work
Mental Health and Psychosocial Interventions	CAMHS Community-based interventions Evidence-based interventions Personal recovery principles Trauma-informed care Suicide prevention MHPSS
Core GMH Knowledge	Capacity-building approaches Cultural adaptations of interventions Cultural context and mental health Familiarity with GMH tools and guidelines Social determinants of health Implementation science

Employability Framework

Employability_Framework.pdf
692 KB

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Consultation Round

Next, a consultation process took place, whereby stakeholders such as GMH experts, alumni, and educators were asked to review the initial Framework and comment on its contents, structure and utility. The Careers Service was consulted during the developmental stages. Stakeholders were sent the draft Framework and asked to review it and complete an online survey. Inspired by the methodology for developing Vitae's Researcher Development Framework, the following questions were asked:

- ☐ Do you believe the Framework would be useful to global mental health students? Justify your response.
- ☐ Do you believe the Framework would be useful to other global mental health stakeholders such as practitioners, trainees, researchers and/or educators? Justify your response.
- ☐ Is the structure of the Framework appropriate, clear and logical?
- ☐ Is the language used in the Framework appropriate and consistent with your realm of work?
- ☐ Please comment on whether the core dimensions, sub-dimensions and exemplars fit well together.
- ☐ Is there a sufficient level of detail in the Framework?
- ☐ Do you recognise yourself in this framework? Would you be comfortable describing yourself in these terms?
- ☐ Are there any important skills, aptitudes or areas of experience that have been omitted?
- ☐ Please share with us any other feedback you may have about this work.

Benefits of a Discipline-Specific Employability Framework

Stakeholder feedback was used to validate and refine the Framework. For instance, the feedback helped identify ambiguous terms and scientific jargon, which were edited for clarity. The feedback also illustrated a range of potential uses of the Framework for students, learner, educators and other professionals. The Framework can provide a range of support to various communities related to global mental health.

Current Students	Aid current students in career planning, including job applications, and in promoting self-awareness and reflection on professional and academic progress.
Prospective Students	Aid prospective students in better understanding what the Master's Programme can equip them with.
Employers	Aid employers in better recognising the range of skills graduates will possess, and configuring appropriate graduate positions accordingly.
Educators	Aid educators in designing programmes aligned with the job market.
Career Advisors, Mentors, and Educators	Aid career advisors, mentors, and educators in advising students on viable career prospects and appropriate training opportunities.
A Common Language	Help create a common language of core global mental health competencies across geographical settings and across various stakeholders.
Continuing Professional Development	Encourage lifelong learning and continuing professional development. For example, it can instruct the creation of short courses.

"**Looking through job descriptions and person specifications for jobs in the sector is exhausting and time-consuming. Having this overview can help students know what they can expect and what they might need to brush up on before the job search.**"

- Zofia Zukowska, Global Mental Health MSc alumnus

Learning and Career Navigation Resource

Even before its application to curricular enhancement, the discipline-specific Employability Framework serves as a standalone learning and career navigation tool for students. The Framework can:

- Help students identify extracurricular activities to target identified priority developmental areas
- Be adapted into a competency self-assessment questionnaire, which can enable students to monitor progress during and after their studies
- Enhance students' industry awareness
- Boost students' motivation
- Serve as a tool to facilitate tailored careers workshops and seminars
- Provide students with an up-to-date language they can use in their CVs and job interviews
- Help students more effectively link what they are learning at university with the competencies required in their desired profession

The Framework was adapted into a career self-assessment log. The self-assessment log is intended to aid self-reflection, career awareness, planning and development, and progress monitoring. It can be undertaken at various points during one's studies to reflect shifting priorities, accumulated experience and progress made against prior developmental objectives. It can also assist learners with articulating personal and professional attributes, skills and experience in future job applications.

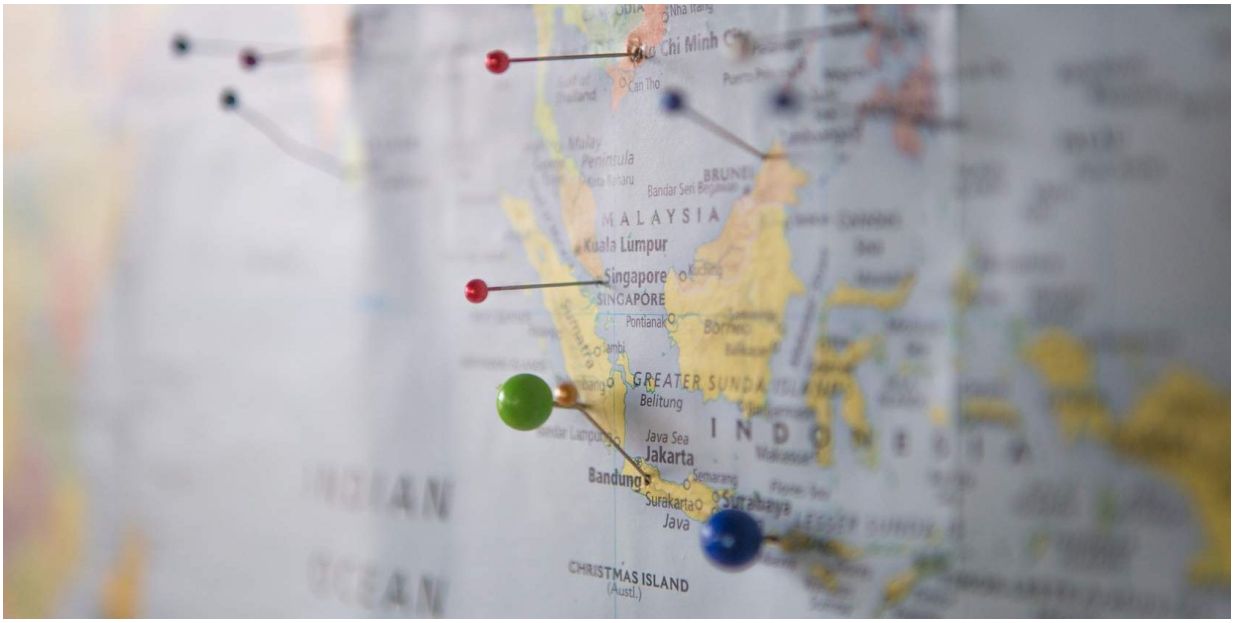
PDF **GMH Career Self-Assessment Log Template.pdf**
173.9 KB

"It was a delight to be included in this project. Through a practical approach the project has established accurate destination information and provides students with a valuable resource to prepare for roles post graduation and in the near future. Used well, it should provide them with a competitive edge over other candidates. This could be used across disciplines and sectors."

- Fiona Stubbs, Careers Manager Team Lead, University of Glasgow

Fostering a Community of Practice

The strong interest in the new Global Mental Health Employability Framework shown by experts and alumni was reassuring, and can help foster a community of practice around professional development in this discipline.



The Framework could also foster conversations with industry and community partners regarding graduates' and employees' competencies and the shifting demands of the workplace. It is hoped this tool will provide impetus for strengthening the Programme's international collaborations focused on teaching, training, knowledge exchange and capacity-building.

Alignment with the University of Glasgow Graduate Attributes

Reassuringly, the discipline-specific global mental health employability framework aligns well with the University of Glasgow's graduate attributes. For example, key personal characteristics such as professionalism, creativity, curiosity, determination, adaptability, resilience and perseverance are featured in the graduate attributes. Over and above the graduate attributes, the Framework highlights:

- Specific professional values central to global mental health practice
- The importance of cross-disciplinary knowledge
- Entrepreneurship as a key personal resource
- Various forms of knowledge dissemination used in global mental health practice
- Relevant stakeholder groups, particularly service-users
- A broad range of professional activities across sectors including advocacy, policy, programme evaluation, and teaching
- 'Self-skills-sector-subject' as a useful heuristic for career self-management

Curriculum Audit and VLE Enhancement

The job market analysis and the resultant Employability Framework guided curriculum audit and the identification of opportunities to integrate employability-focused online learning enhancements.

Curriculum Audit

Curriculum auditing refers to '[…] testing how and where employability-related learning is incorporated into curricula – and where there might be gaps' (Yorke & Knight, 2006).

The auditing can be done using more formal or more informal approaches. In this project, both informal and more formal approaches were used. The Employability Framework prompted useful Programme team discussions during staff meetings as to how employability-focused teaching can be enhanced in both our on-campus and online distance learning programmes.

The Framework informed the development of a curriculum auditing tool (see excerpt). The Programme Director and the Course Coordinators engaged with the tool to identify strengths and developmental opportunities in the current offering from an employability perspective.

Employability Framework

Job Market Analysis Insights: The job market analysis produced a comprehensive GMH employability framework comprising numerous in-demand skills, aptitudes and areas of experience and expertise

Curriculum Auditing Prompt: To what extent are the Programme ILOs, structure and assessments consistent with the Framework?

Response (e.g. Brief Summary of Current Offering):

Development Opportunities:

Creativity

Job Market Analysis Insights: Creativity, curiosity, innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset emerged as commonly sought after personal qualities.

Curriculum Auditing Prompt: What opportunities do students currently have to develop these in the Programme?

Response (e.g. Brief Summary of Current Offering):

Development Opportunities:

Values

Job Market Analysis Insights: Employers frequently emphasise the importance of values such as fairness, inclusion, humility, compassion and respect for diversity.

Curriculum Auditing Prompt: Are students currently being encouraged to reflect upon their core values and how they fit into their chosen career path?

Response (e.g. Brief Summary of Current Offering):

Development Opportunities:

Knowledge Dissemination

Job Market Analysis Insights: Disseminating information in a variety of mediums to academic and non-academic audiences was another important set of skills.

Curriculum Auditing Prompt: How are various knowledge dissemination approaches being developed and assessed in the Programme?

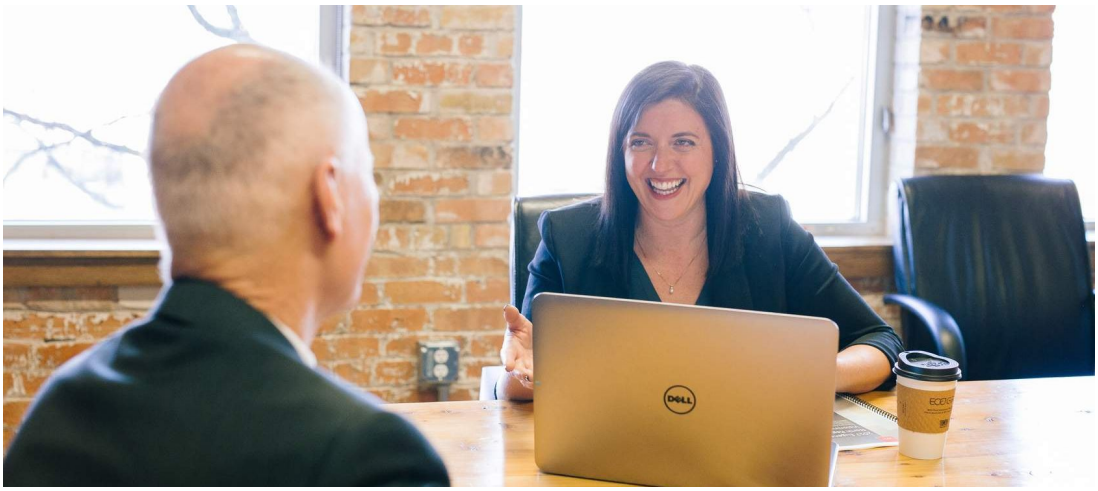
Response (e.g. Brief Summary of Current Offering):

Development Opportunities:

Guidance on Curriculum Auditing

For further guidance on curriculum auditing, see Yorke and Knight (2006, p. 9-11). Following this auditing exercise, the foci and format of the employability-focused enhancements were decided upon.

Foci of the Employability Enhancements



The job market analysis illuminated several in-demand competencies that should be developed as part of the core curriculum.

Values

Employers placed an emphasis on candidates' values being consistent with the organisation's. Therefore, students should be encouraged to reflect on their core values and be prepared to discuss how those could be challenged and upheld in different professional settings.

Entrepreneurial Mindset, Creativity, and Strategic Thinking

Having an entrepreneurial mindset, strategic thinking, creativity and problem-solving abilities were frequently demanded by employers.

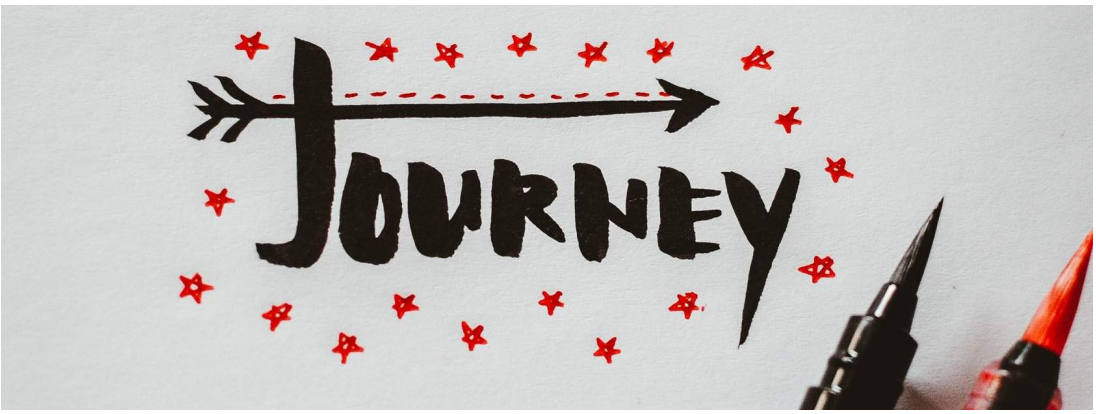
The job market analysis highlighted the interdisciplinary of global mental health. Specifically, it prompted the Programme Team to collaborate with the School of Social and Political Science (specifically, Urban Studies) and the Adam Smith Business School on developing online teaching materials focused on previously underexplored topics such as social enterprise, civil society and non-governmental organisations.

Guidance on entrepreneurship education is available from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Knowledge Dissemination, Influencing Skills, Policy Skills

Knowledge dissemination, influencing skills, and policy analysis and development: The job market analysis identified writing policy briefs as an in-demand skill, together with the more generic skills of preparing and adapting materials for different audiences. Influencing skills, including policy influence, are other commonly sought-after competencies.

Sector Knowledge



Relevant sector knowledge and experience also emerged as important competencies.

6

Flexibility, Perseverance, and Responsiveness to Change

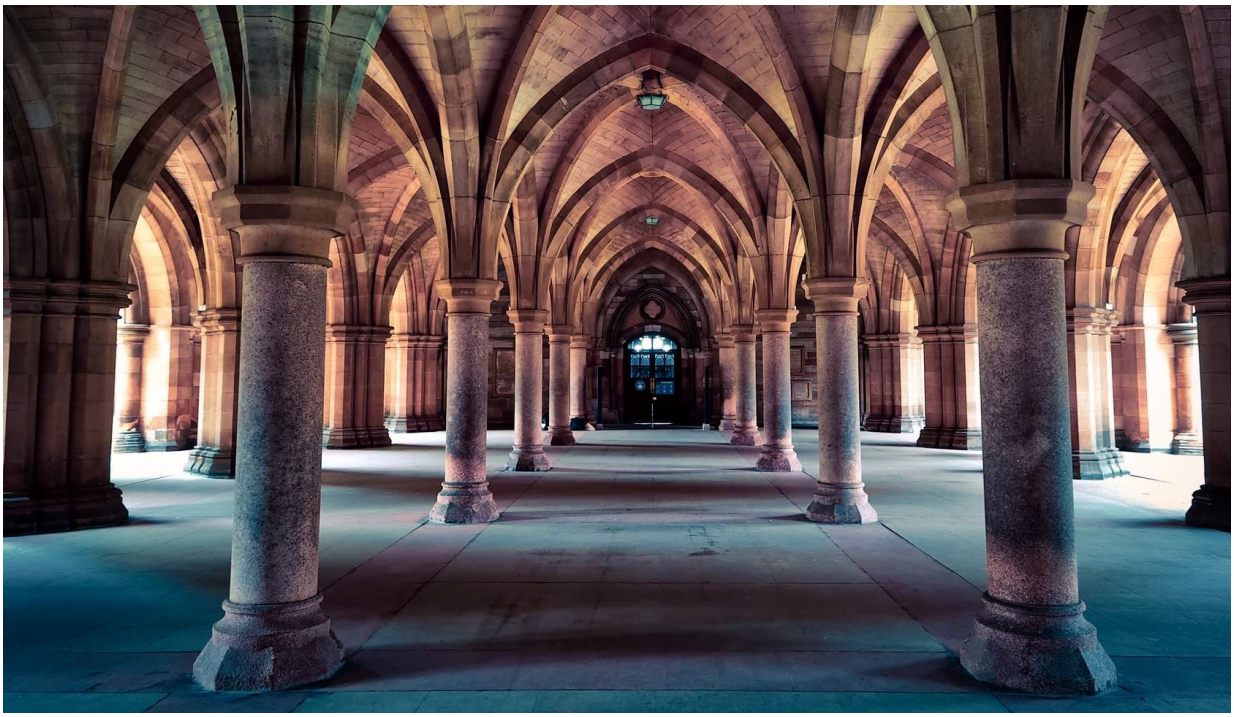
Flexibility, adaptability, perseverance, and responsiveness to change: Adaptability, resilience, curiosity, creativity and responsiveness to change emerged from the job market analysis as highly valued by employers. In addition, academic literature has demonstrated the importance of career adaptability for enhancing (perceived) employability (e.g. Monteiro et al., 2020).

3

Format of the Employability Enhancements

Four main employability enhancements were introduced in the form of rubrics integrated into the core online curriculum on Moodle (via Rise 360 Articulate). These were employability insights (EI), ideas into action (IA), futures thinking (FT), and reflective practice (RP). The latter three enhancement types (IAs, FTs and SRs) could also be used as the basis of on-campus tutorials.

These curriculum innovations are aligned not only with the University's Learning & Teaching Strategy and the Graduate Attributes, but also with the University's world-changing ethos - specifically with the following strategic themes:



- Solution focused and impact oriented
- Reimagining the curriculum ‘to prepare students for a challenging and changing world’
- Global engagement
- Accelerating innovation
- Fostering ‘an entrepreneurial and less risk-averse approach’

Employability Insights (EI)

This rubric features informative snippets that make explicit the link between core subject material and specific employability skills and competencies. This pedagogical approach reflects Daubney’s (2020) approach to **'extracted employability'**, whereby educators seeking to boost employability ‘should not focus on adding content but instead on extracting and surfacing what is already developed in the curriculum’ (p.90).

This approach is also consistent with von Treuer and Reynolds's (2017) assertion that educators should demonstrate to students how professional competencies and core subject learning 'meld together at the course

level' (p.6). Crucially, we ensured the EI activities were directly aligned with the core course content, and that they did not significantly increase students' workload.

- An ability to work with multicultural teams (Mental Health Technical Advisor, International Rescue Committee)
- Experience working with people with different cultural backgrounds (MHPSS Technical Advisor, International Federation of Red Cross)
- An understanding of the 'cultural dimension' of children's lives (Early Childhood Development Specialist, UNICEF, Tanzania)
- A high level of cross-cultural sensitivity (Programme Manager in Global Mental Health, Addiction and Implementation Science, University of Maryland)
- Experience of working or living in diverse communities and knowledge of cultural context related to mental health and wellbeing (Mental Health Personal Independence Coordinator, Mind UK)

Thumbnail

Employability Insights:
Drive, Grit, and Resilience

In light of the challenges highlighted in this section, reflect on the importance of personal attributes such as drive and ambition, resilience, grit and perseverance, and courage. In fact, those qualities are frequently required by employers when recruiting for positions in the policy and capacity-building sectors.

For instance, a job advert for a Senior Policy Advisor at the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (New Zealand) specified:

- Displays grit, courage, resilience, humility and integrity; manages reactions and demonstrates composure and consistency in their behaviour and emotions
- Demonstrates achievement drive, ambition, optimism and a delivery focus; makes things happen and achieves ambitious outcomes

Reflect on how personal and professional challenges and other experiences have enabled the development of some of those attributes.

Ideas into Action (IA)

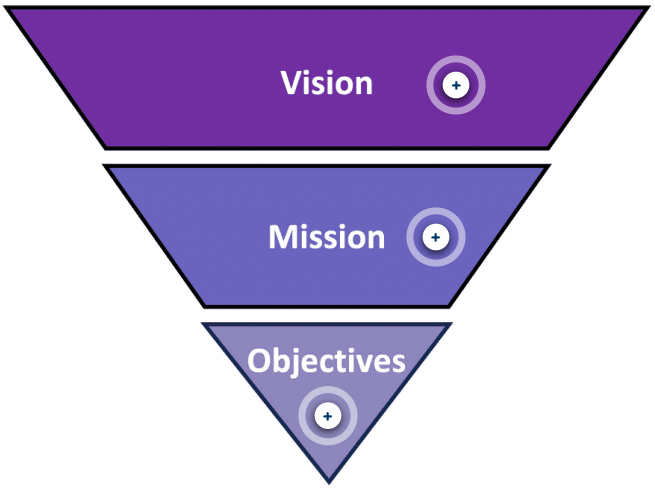
These are action-oriented, authentic learning activities that closely resemble real-world roles, procedures or responsibilities. They seek to develop students' entrepreneurial, problem-solving and creative capabilities.

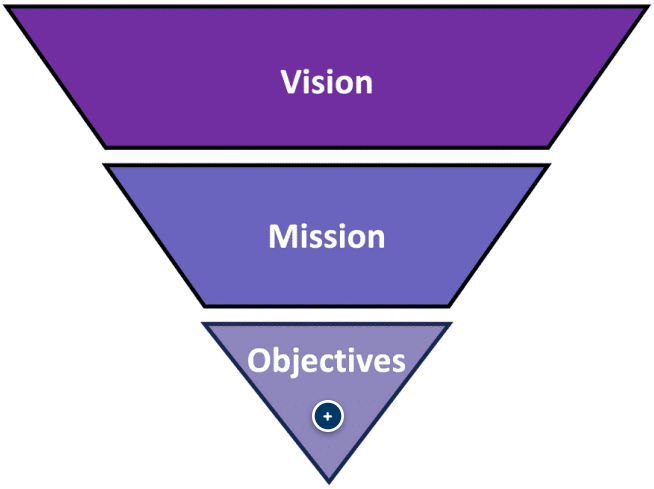
By their nature, these activities are considered more advanced, and require a good grasp of the core subject material and a basic understanding of the relevant sector and/or policy context. They are highly appropriate for

group in-class and online distance problem-based learning. The example below has been extracted from a newly developed learning resource titled 'How to Start an NGO'.

Establishing an NGO

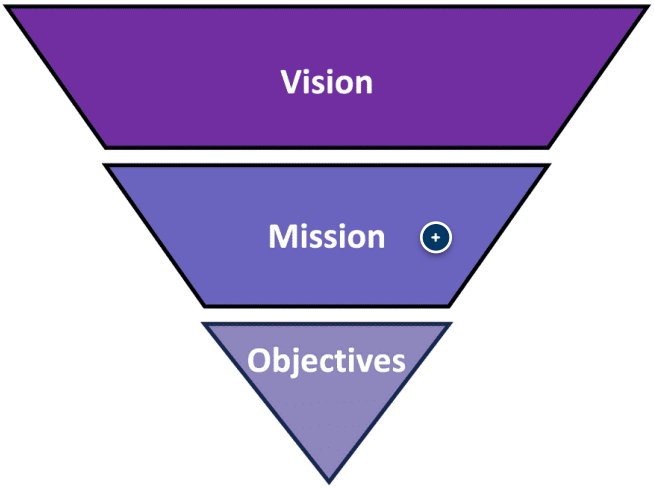
There are a multitude of factors to consider when trying to establish a new NGO. Building a solid foundation is vital. The crucial initial steps include identifying a mission, establishing relationships with beneficiaries, and planning how to raise funds. These steps help ensure the sustainability of the organisation - that the organisation can successfully fulfil its mission, meet the needs of its stakeholders, and continue its work in the long run, in the local socio-political and socio-economic climate. Establishing a clear vision, mission, and objectives provides clarity, direction, and helps to engage individuals who are passionate about the organisation's cause.





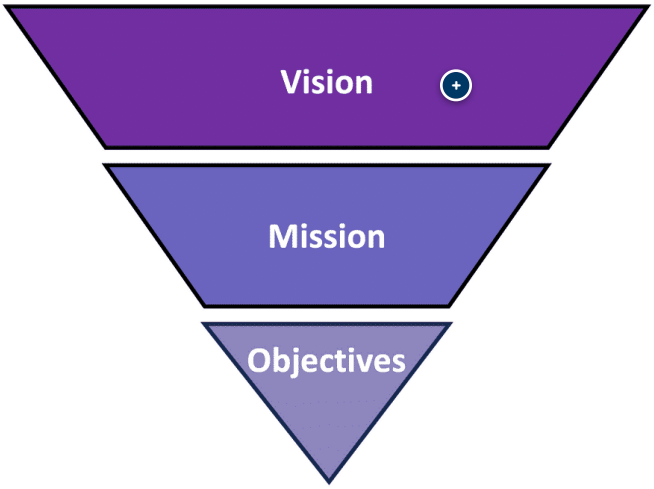
Objectives

Objectives are specific steps the organisation is planning to take to work towards the mission and vision. For example, ‘we will work towards a mentally healthy community by improving access to mental health care and reducing the impact of stigma. This will be done by training mental health first aiders in the community, delivering training anti-stigma training, and recruiting peer support workers.' Concrete objectives also enable organisations to remain accountable and achieve measurable results.



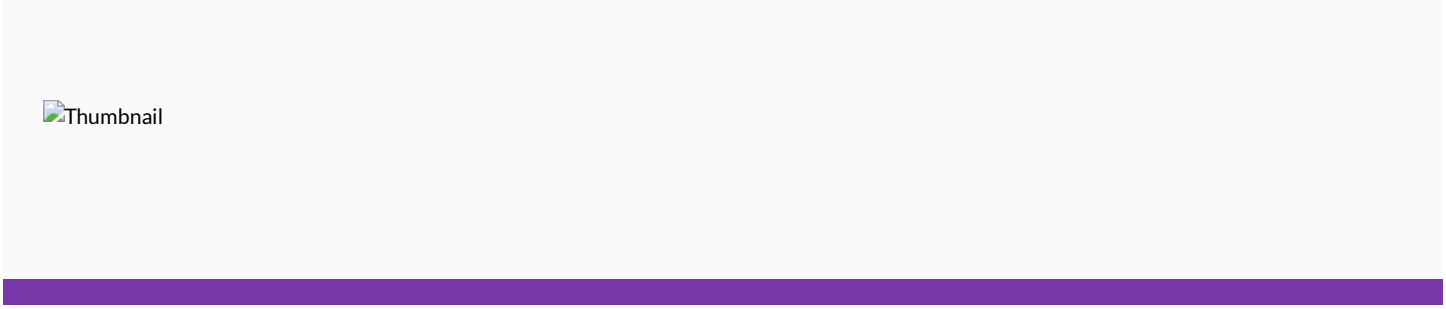
Mission

Mission articulates how the vision is going to be achieved. It narrows down the vision, for example, ‘we will work towards a mentally healthy community by improving access to mental health care and reducing the impact of stigma’.



Vision

Organisational vision is a declaration of what the long-term impact of the organisation will be. It is a broad idea, for example, ‘a mentally healthy community’.



Futures Thinking (FT): Employability as Adaptability

This rubric features learning activities aimed at enhancing students’ career adaptability and responsiveness to change. This curriculum enhancement was informed by the evidence linking students’ career adaptability to their (perceived) employability (Monteiro et al., 2020).

In this sense, employability is synonymous with exploring and taking up new career opportunities, responding effectively to change, and acquiring and applying knowledge from new challenges (Monteiro et al., 2020; Deeley, 2014). The ability to manage uncertainty is another attribute of career adaptability.

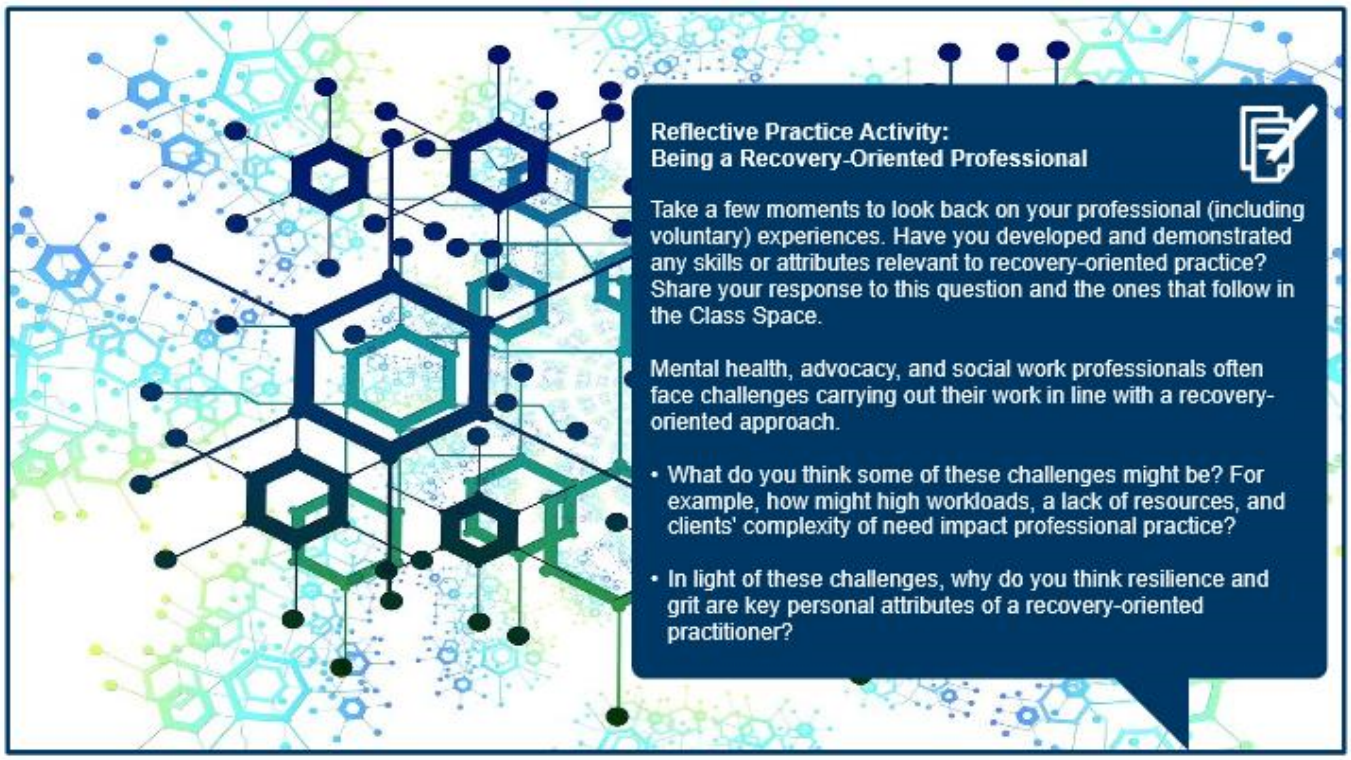
Examples:

- How can AI affect scaling-up mental health care in low- and middle-income countries?

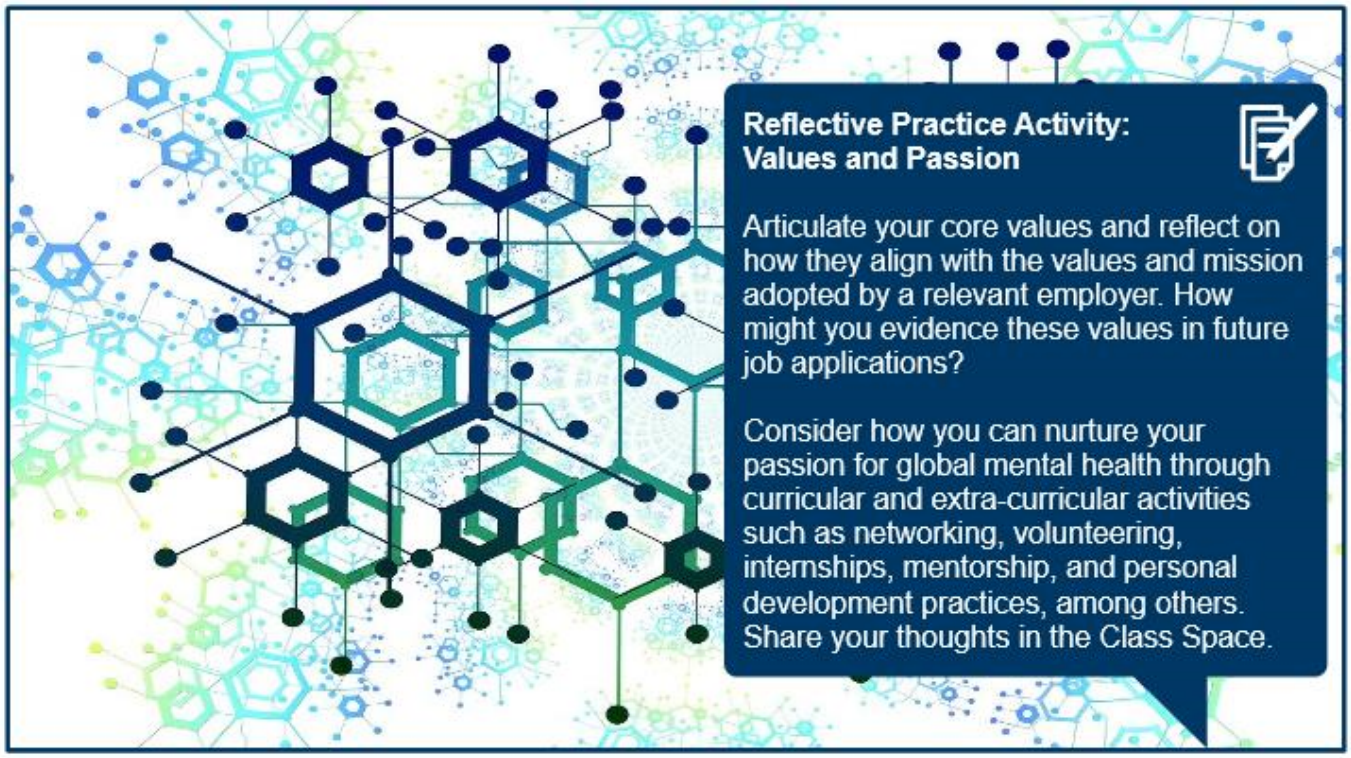
- COVID-19: How do we future proof community-based mental health services?
- How will the climate crisis shape the global mental health landscape?
- How can professionals, services and communities be better prepared to meet those current and future challenges?

Reflective Practice (RP)

These activities were designed to assist students with exploring their "personal strengths and competence limitations" and identifying "sources and means for solving existing and future professional activity problems." (Colomer et al., 2020, p. 4).



Reflective Practice Activity: Resilience, Adaptability, Courage, and Curiosity
Reflecting on the mission and scope of global mental health, why do you think personal attributes such as resilience, adaptability, courage, and curiosity are so fundamental for professionals in this field? Share your thoughts in the Class Space.



Curriculum Mapping

Using a curriculum-wide approach, those enhancements were mapped across the Programme's six 20-credit 10-week teaching modules (see example). This ensures an even distribution of the curricular enhancements. Where deemed appropriate, the existing course content was made more concise to ensure a manageable learner workload. Module coordinators and the Digital Education Unit team were closely involved in this process to ensure the constructive alignment, deliverability, and accessibility of the enhancements. In addition to the weekly (W) content of each of the Modules (M), the students were directed to the employability section of the GMH Programme Hub which provided guidance from previous students and details of the employability framework.

	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10
M1		RP/EI		RP						

	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10
M2					IA	EI		FT		
M3				RP						
M4							FT	IA	RP	
M5			RP	EI						
M6			EI			FT/RP		IA		

Weekly content (W); module (M); employability insights (EI), ideas into action (IA), futures thinking (FT), and reflective practice (RP)

Uptake of Resources

"**A particular strength of this toolkit is the development of the 4S model, the core model could be effectively transferred across different disciplines. The Self-Assessment Log is a wonderful addition, and something that could be introduced to students within Fresher's Week, and flagged throughout the core teaching material, encouraging students to maintain a continuous assessment and evaluation of their skillsets.**"

- Dr Sharon Greenwood, Programme Lead for Masters in Public Health

“This resource gives a lot of food for thought as well as practical suggestions of what can be achieved within the existing confines of the curriculum. I hope to adapt and introduce some of the ideas as I review learning resources for future use.”

- Sue Campbell, Programme Lead for the Masters in Health Services Management

Reference Materials

Framework Application- curriculum Audit and VLE Enhancement References.docx
14 KB

Support for Educators

This section offers prompts and recommendations to support educators with enhancing employability via the core curriculum. Printable versions are also available.

1

Prompts for Educators

The following prompts can be engaged by educators to explore and establish target areas where employability development would be appropriate.

- Have students expressed concerns over employability post-graduation? What are students' expectations about how the programme will equip them with employability skills? How can the teaching provision adapt accordingly?
- Do students possess a good understanding of the contemporary job market relevant to your discipline? Do they hold any erroneous assumptions or unreasonable expectations with regards to the range, nature or competitiveness of professional roles available?
- Is up-to-date information available about what key skills employers value the most? Have you spoken with employers about what key skills job candidates most often struggle to evidence? Can insights from these questions help adapt the curriculum?
- Have employers or alumni practising in the field been invited to deliver lectures or workshops? Have they participated in curriculum development?
- Does the Programme provide students with opportunities to reflect on, and develop, the more complex or abstract graduate attributes such as innovative thinking, resilience, perseverance, leadership and professionalism? Is there value in
- What would an employability framework for your discipline look like? Has it been updated to reflect contemporary job landscape?
- To what extent do the University Graduate Attributes capture the complexities and idiosyncrasies of professional activities in your field?
- Do teaching staff have up-to-date knowledge of the job market relevant to the discipline?
- Do teaching staff have a shared understanding of the term 'employability'? Is there acknowledgement of the various definitions adopted in the literature?
- Is there value in consulting with the Careers Service on enhancing employability in the core teaching?
- How do you monitor whether core course content aligns with key professional competencies, including transferable and discipline-specific ones? Are there opportunities to more explicitly demonstrate the link between course content with professional competencies?

discussing with students what these attributes look like in practice?

- Are students encouraged to reflect on their professional values, experience and skills, make professional development plans, and monitor progress during their studies? Are they offered practical support?

Prompts for Educators.docx
15.4 KB

2

Recommendations for Effective Adoption of Employability Practices

Consider the advantages of discipline-specific employability guidance	While general employability training and other resources are indeed useful, students also value professional guidance and tools targeted towards their discipline or desired job family.
Be receptive to various definitions and aspects of employability	'Employability' is not a static or unidimensional concept. It can refer to both students' objective employment outcomes and professional skills acquisition, and their subjective (perceived) competencies and potential. It can signify both a specific set of transferable and job-specific skills, and the generic capability of responsiveness to change.
Embrace collaboration as the lifeblood of employability-focused curriculum developments	Engage with various stakeholders – primarily the industry, subject experts, alumni, current students and career advisors.
Validate, refine, test, revise	Be open to piloting, validating and refining employability-focused enhancements on a continual basis. Incorporate questions about employability in routine course and programme student evaluations.
Engage students in career-awareness activities early	• Familiarise students with both discipline- or programme-specific and central University employability resources.

	• Establish a baseline of student's self-reported career awareness and professional skills. Assess progress mid-way and at the end of the programme. • Encourage students to keep a professional development log or portfolio.

Leverage Existing Pedagogical Best Practice but Dare to Innovate

Balance incremental curriculum enhancements with bolder, more experimental innovations.

As Rees (2021, p. 676) perceptively notes: '[…] to inspire our students we have to be inspirational, and to empower entrepreneurship and employability skills, we have to be entrepreneurial.'

Be Forward-thinking and Anticipate Change

Embrace change as inherent to the employability landscape. Consider the future of work, and reflect on what skills may become more and more vital to professional success.

Abelha and colleagues (2020) note: '[…] market demands are rapidly shifting, and intending to meet market requirements rather than acting proactively and preparing adaptable and critical professionals may have detrimental results. Stressing the importance of developing higher-order skills, even if not immediately sought for by employers, remains relevant.'

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16.5 KB

Useful Resources

Useful resources to support educators with enhancing employability in the curriculum are provided.

Useful Resources.docx

14.6 KB