

The University has accepted the following definition of employability as articulated in 'Future Fit: preparing graduates for the World of Work' published by UUK/CBI (2009)

“A set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy”

The University has agreed the following attributes as important in the development of an employable graduate: self management; teamworking; business and customer awareness; problem solving; communication and literacy; application of numeracy; application of information technology.

Self management – readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, resilience, self-starting, appropriate assertiveness, time management, readiness to improve own performance based on feedback/reflective learning

Teamworking – respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions, and awareness of interdependence with others

Business and customer awareness – basic understanding of the key drivers for business success – including the importance of innovation and taking calculated risks – and the need to provide customer satisfaction and build customer loyalty

Problem solving – analysing facts and situations 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 (e.g. measuring, weighing, estimation and applying formulae).

Application of information technology – basic IT skills, including familiarity with work processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines

Underpinning all these attributes, the key foundation, must be a **positive attitude**: a 'can-do' approach, a readiness to take part and contribute, openness to new ideas and a drive to make these happen.

BUT

HOW WILL THESE SKILLS BE DEVELOPED THROUGHOUT YOUR EARTH SCIENCE DEGREE?.....

A degree from the School of Earth Sciences gives you the opportunity to gain many of the employability skills that employers look for in graduates

FIELDWORK

As undergraduates at the School of Earth Sciences you have the opportunity to learn field research skills. You will learn observation, measurement, recording and interpretation of geological and geographical data, as well as more specialised techniques. This will involve studying on land and on boat. This experience is often the reason you have chosen to study geology and geography in the first instance and is always fondly remembered by graduates. Just as importantly, though, these experiences will enable you to develop essential employability skills. You will **work in a team** on many of the field trips and the nature of the activities will require you to look out for yourselves and others continually from a health and safety point of view. You will need to plan your time and **problem solve** on a daily basis and **communicate and work effectively with others** to achieve your deadlines. The production of a field notebook will also ensure you develop your **written communication** skills with an emphasis on clear and concise recording and accuracy. Field trips will often culminate in group presentations, giving you further opportunities to **work in a team**, whilst also developing essential presentation skills, a skill much sought after in many workplaces.

IT/ APPLICATION OF NUMERACY

Your **IT skills** will be continually developed and improved throughout your degree. Many modules will involve web-based e-learning and detailed literature research via internet search engines, library sources and background science notes on Blackboard. You will become literate in varied applications such as Excel, Coreldraw as well as with ArcGIS for manipulating and displaying spacial data. This ability to learn and become familiar with a large number of IT applications will stand you in good stead for learning new applications in the workplace after graduation.

Many modules, such as Geophysics, Paleoecology and Physical Processes in Coastal Environments, for example, will also go some way to developing your **numeracy skills**. You will learn to analyse scientific data, sometimes using quantitative skills such as algebra and geometry. This, in turn, will develop your **problem solving skills**.

PROJECT/SCIENTIFIC REPORTS

In the third year of all BSc and MEdSci degrees you will do a project or dissertation worth 30 credits. These projects all require a significant amount of independent study and will really build upon the **self-management skills** you have learnt so far. It will be up to you to plan, prioritise and **problem-solve** as required to produce a detailed scientific report to reflect your understanding of the project you have been allocated. This may involve map work, laboratory analytical work or a substantial exercise in data acquisition and analysis. Whatever the project, all students will significantly develop the all-important employability skills **of self-management, communication, problem solving, application of IT and application of numeracy skills** as you bring together various forms of evidence in a written report.

RESEARCH SKILLS (MEdSci)

In addition to the third year project, all MEdSci students will take the 20 credit module “Research Tutorial” in their third year. This module will introduce students to a range of research methods applied in the Earth Sciences field and will prepare you for undertaking the Research Project in your final year.

Throughout your 60 credit final year project you will learn to critically evaluate and analyse research design and will learn many of the skills necessary for employment in a research position. As with your third year project, this research demands independent study, teamed with an ability to discuss problems as they may arise with your project supervisor. All the employability skills of **self-management, application of numeracy and IT, communication skills and problem-solving skills** will come into play during this project.

PLACEMENT YEAR

All students have the opportunity to opt for a placement year between years 2 and 3 of their study. This is an excellent chance to develop your **business and commercial awareness skills**, a skill often cited as lacking in many of today’s graduates. Committing yourself to working for an employer in the field of earth sciences or marine geography will also develop many of the other highly sought after employability skills. Being selected for the placement in the first place is not easy and will require you to develop your application, interview and presentation skills, but the rewards are worth it – placement students have a very good record generally in gaining employment following their degree, due partly to the excellent evidence of employability which they can present to an employer. As a placement student for the year you will gain excellent experience in **teamworking, IT, problem-solving and communicating** both with clients and staff verbally and also in writing. In some cases, research work carried out during the placement year can contribute to your project in the third year.

CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS (CMS)

CMS sessions delivered in year 2 will show you how to make sense of the **employability skills** developed throughout your degree and help you articulate these skills effectively both on paper and at interview to an employer. This link between academia and employment is essential, especially for those wanting to enter employment straight after their study. The Careers Service is available to help you further with this throughout all stages of your academic degree

The Careers Service has a full programme of fairs, employer presentations and employer-led skills sessions that give undergraduates opportunities to meet employers and start developing their **commercial awareness** skills. Furthermore, this insight will allow you to better prepare for the job search and application process.