

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 ARCHITECTURE DEGREE?.....**

The BSc Architecture course represents the first stage of professional qualification towards full membership of the Royal Institute of British Architects. It aims to progressively instil and consolidate a holistic approach to the process of creative “space” design, whether of new buildings, public places, or renewals / refurbishments of existing structures. The main emphasis throughout is focused on extensive, intensive, individual work in the design studio, as students develop and explore their own philosophies of architectural creativity, in response to progressively more complex project scenarios.

There is naturally a strong element of competitiveness between undergraduates in relation to their design ideas, but the close proximity of other students within the studio also ensures that they learn to assist each other’s thinking, without compromising their own originality and flair. This work is subject to critical review by Teaching staff, and forms the major element of assessment throughout the degree course.

In parallel with this, technical skills and knowledge are taught, developed and used, both to support ideas in practice, and also as a vehicle for their tangible expression e.g. drafting and model-making. These are also assessed as an integral part of each design review.

## **SO WHY ARE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IMPORTANT?**

Whilst the majority of Architecture students decide to continue their professional formation by undertaking an M.Arch degree to qualify for Part 2 of RIBA membership, a minority choose to pursue other, often non-architecture-related, careers options after graduating. During their first degree, Architecture students acquire and use many of the employability skills, but it may not be always immediately apparent what they are, and why they are of significance to potential employers. Listed below are insights into some of the ways that Architecture students have gained (or are gaining) these important skills during their undergraduate degree course at Cardiff university:

### **SELF MANAGEMENT**

Architecture is one of the most time-consuming courses at the University, and the advice given to students in their Handbook reflects this – “.. *You will be expected to work steadily almost every day, with, probably, one day off at weekends*“. The coincidence of Project deadlines, lectures and essays, mean that undergraduates become adept at managing their workload, especially as the demands of the course increase. The use of the Personal Development Plan, whilst not compulsory, is a highly useful tool for reflective comment and personal action, which finds application in many professional fields.

## **BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER AWARENESS**

The crucial importance of developing a clear design brief with the client is nurtured from the beginning. Lecturers act in the role of clients, with increasingly demanding requirements on students as their own expertise increases. Students learn about understanding and interpreting the client's needs, whilst working within the context of their own creative abilities, documenting ideas, whilst advancing the reasoning behind the choice of their proposed design solution. Cost and buildability constraints have to be explained in more depth to the client, and these aspects become of greater significance as the course progresses. Since much Architectural design work takes place in the arena of privately-owned practice, a specific module in the final year is devoted to Practice management and Economics, which has useful application in relating the consequences of decision-making on overall project costs.

## **APPLICATION OF NUMERACY**

All architecture students work with the concepts of dimensions, scaling and accuracy in the course of preparing proposals and finished drawings for their assessed work. Mathematical techniques also underpin much of the technical expertise that students develop, typically in calculating light levels, energy requirements, acoustic performance etc. The selection of appropriate materials and finishes develops students' ability to find, interpret and use complex collections of numerical data, both on-line and in published form.

## **APPLICATION OF IT**

Whilst free-sketching, modelling and drafting skills are extensively practised and refined throughout the course, students also develop competence in a variety of CAD packages. More advanced computer modelling tools are introduced as the course progresses, in particular the *ECOTECH* programme for the rapid assessment of design proposals from the point of view of maximising effective daylight provision to conserve energy use.

## **TEAM WORKING**

Although most of the course has a focus on the personal, individual effort of each student within the workplace of the design studio, there is nevertheless an underlying collaborative ethic present, even if the project work is not directly team-oriented. Specific small group-work is practised in the set project which is part of the "World Architecture" module in the first year.

## **COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY**

Architecture makes use of the visual medium as the principal way of communicating ideas about space and form, and this is reflected in predominant emphasis on studio work. However, the assessment of this material is by verbal presentation and Critical review in a group context, and undergraduates gain considerable experience in making presentations and arguing for the approach they have taken in front of tutors as well their peer group of students. Students are expected to make extensive use of the Architecture library in support of a number of essay /project requirements,

particularly during their first year of study. All written work has to be expressed in clear, grammatical English, as well as being written in an appropriate style.

### **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.