

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGIC FORESIGHT WORKSHOPS

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What the tool does

The [Creating Academic Learning Futures \(CALF\)](#) was carried out over three years between 2008 and 2011 in partnership by [University College Falmouth](#) and the [Beyond Distance Research Alliance](#) of the [University of Leicester](#). It was funded by the [Higher Education Funding Council for England \(HEFCE\)](#) and managed by the [Higher Education Academy \(HEA\)](#). [CALF](#) aimed to create, explore and present for discussion a variety of plausible „alternative futures” for learning and teaching in higher education. As part of the [CALF](#) research project a model was developed for enhancing student employability through the participation in strategic foresight workshops. An outline of the model is presented here. The playbook manual for running strategic foresight workshops is available for download from the [CALF](#) project website.

Background to Student Employability

The UKCES report ‘The Employability Challenge’ (2009) offers one of the most comprehensive definitions of student employability:

“We take employability skills to be the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job.

They are the skills that must be present to enable an individual to use the more specific knowledge and technical skills that their particular workplaces will require.

They are:

- being ready to participate, make suggestions, accept new ideas and constructive criticism, and take responsibility for outcomes.
- using numbers effectively – measuring, recording measurements, calculating, estimating quantities, relating numbers to the job
- using language effectively – writing clearly and in a way appropriate to the context, ordering facts and concepts logically
- using IT effectively – operating a computer, both using basic systems and also
- learning other applications as necessary, and using telephones and other technology to communicate.
- self-management – punctuality and time management, fitting dress and behaviour to context, overcoming challenges and asking for help when necessary.
- thinking and solving problems – creativity, reflecting on and learning from own actions, prioritising, analysing situations, and developing solutions
- working together and communicating – co-operating, being assertive, persuading, being responsible to others, speaking clearly to individuals and groups and listening for a response
- understanding the business – understanding how the individual job fits into the organisation as a whole; recognising the needs of stakeholders (customers and service users, for example); judging risks, innovating, and contributing to the whole organization.” UKCES (2009, pp10–11).

Integration of strategic foresight and employability skills training

Strategic Foresight activities stimulate creative thinking about the future of individuals, organisations or societies. Future foresight programmes have been successfully used for pro-actively anticipating and managing change in numerous industries. Foresight activities can be used for managing day-to-day work and in planning strategies for career advancement for students and professionals. The CALF Futures Programme has run successfully in the Medical School of the University of Leicester, with student representatives of the Student Union and the student newspaper at the University and reflects a high level of conceptual, developmental and technical competence.

Students participating in the programme learn and practise creating strategies and scenarios for the future in an area of employment or academic interest. They identify employability pathways supporting their future career plans and identify skills and attributes they need to develop, relevant to a professional, work-based context.

Outline of the programme

The programme has two stages:

1. Stage One: Students participate in a workshop on developing successful CVs.
2. Stage Two: Students use the acquired skills and knowledge to produce a CV and employability statement focused on a career path of their choice.

Stage One is run in collaboration with the Students Career Support Services of the university or college.

Stage Two is run by a Learning Futures facilitator using the model described here. Students engage in online or face-to-face activities aimed at achieving the learning outcomes of the programme and listen to presentations of expert speakers. Students work to challenge their own skills and assumptions about the future of employment, leadership and strategy.

How much student contact/study time is required?

Total of 15 hours:

- One hour to attend a presentation on developing successful CVs.
- Three hours for a face-to-face group event for future scenario-building techniques.
- Three hours for a face-to-face event on effective decision-making, negotiation and persuasion.
- One hour for practice in using electronic media for successful communication.
- Two hours for guided preparation of an individual scenario for future employability.
- Two hours for independent preparation of an employability statement and CV based on the individual scenarios.
- Two hours and thirty minutes for a face-to-face group event, where each participant presents their scenario using creative multimedia.
- Thirty minutes consultation with a Careers Advisor on improving the individual employability statement and CV.

What are the learning outcomes for the programme?

- Acquired knowledge and skills for developing effective CVs.
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- Knowledge and skills necessary for developing successful strategies and future scenarios, target-setting and planning for future employment.
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- Improved skills for independent and group problem-solving and decision-making.
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- Improved self-presentation and communication skills.
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- Improved skills for multi-tasking, time-management and prioritising.
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- Improved skills for identifying and validating sources of information.
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- Improved networking and team-working skills.
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- Improved skills for communicating ideas effectively, using a variety of media in diverse settings, making effective presentations, including impromptu presentations.

How are the learning outcomes achieved through the Learning Futures model?

Skill	Activity in the Strategic Foresight Workshop
Self-confidence, self-promotion and presentation, reflection skills and balancing views	Students will be required to present their ideas and thinking during each of the CALF meetings, both face-to-face and online, using a variety of media – Power Point presentations, Adobe Connect presentations, podcasts and wikis, ad-hoc and with preparation.
Problem-solving skills	Students will learn and practise the use of cognitive mapping techniques. It is a method widely used in Operational and Strategy Research to structure and analyse problems in terms of causes and consequences, using interviewing and visualisation of data.
Multi-tasking	Students will be involved in activities requiring handling a number of cognitive and operational tasks.
Willingness to learn	Students will learn how to prepare cognitive maps, scenarios, make presentations and produce podcasts independently and collaboratively.
Keeping up-to-date with relevant developments in the field of interest, identifying and validating sources of information, combining information	Students will be engaged in producing scenarios for the future of one area of employment of their choice, one area of learning of their choice and an individual strategy-scenario for personal development using cognitive mapping methods and analysing information from a rich variety of sources.
Gaining new knowledge in areas outside of	Students will learn how to prepare cognitive maps,

the immediate job	scenarios, make presentations and produce podcasts independently and collaboratively.
Action planning/target setting	Students will learn and practise the use of cognitive mapping techniques. It is a method widely used in Operational and Strategy Research to structure and analyse problems in terms of causes and consequences, using interviewing and visualisation of data.
Time-management, working under pressure, prioritising	Students will be involved in activities requiring handling and prioritising a number of cognitive and operational tasks.
Ability to work independently	The programme will involve independent research and decision-making for the preparation of scenarios and analyses.
Networking skills and team working	The activities will involve identifying, building and maintaining social networks face-to-face and online.
Contributing to group problem-solving	Students will learn and practise the use of group cognitive mapping techniques. It is a method widely used in Operational and Strategy Research to structure and analyse problems in terms of causes and consequences, using interviewing and visualisation of data.
Communicating ideas effectively, using a variety of media in diverse settings, making effective presentations, including impromptu presentations (pitch)	Students will be required to present their ideas and thinking during each of the CALF meetings, both face-to-face and online, using a variety of media – Power Point presentations, Adobe Connect presentations, podcasts and wikis, ad-hoc and with preparation.
Initiate change for improvement	Students will learn and practise the use of cognitive mapping techniques. It is a method widely used in Operational and Strategy Research to structure and analyse problems in terms of causes and consequences, using interviewing and visualisation of data.
Adapting to change	Students will be engaged in producing scenarios for the future of one area of employment of their choice, one area of learning of their choice and an individual strategy-scenario for personal development using cognitive mapping methods.
Identifying essential components of a problem	Students will learn and practise the use of cognitive mapping techniques. It is a method widely used in Operational and Strategy Research to structure and analyse problems in terms of causes and consequences, using interviewing and visualisation of data.
Making decisions based on thorough analysis of a situation	Students will learn and practise the use of cognitive mapping techniques. It is a method widely used in Operational and Strategy Research to structure and analyse problems in terms of causes and

	consequences, using interviewing and visualisation of data.
Recognising the effect of decisions made in short and long term	Students will be engaged in producing scenarios for the future of one area of employment of their choice, one area of learning of their choice and an individual strategy-scenario for personal development using cognitive mapping methods.
Generating alternative routes in meeting objectives, providing novel solutions to problems	Students will learn and practise the use of cognitive mapping and TRIZ techniques. Cognitive mapping is a method widely used in Operational and Strategy Research to structure and analyse problems in terms of causes and consequences, using interviewing and visualisation of data. TRIZ is model-based technology for generating innovative ideas and solutions for problem solving, widely used in Technological and Artistic Design. It provides tools and methods for use in problem formulation, system analysis, failure analysis, and patterns of system evolution
Writing reports, writing internal and external communications	
Recognising ethical implications of decisions	Students will be engaged in producing scenarios for the future of one area of employment of their choice, one area of learning of their choice and an individual strategy-scenario for personal development using cognitive mapping methods.
Giving direction and guidance to others	Students will be engaged in group exercises requiring them to help their peers to learn a skill of their choice.
Conceptualising a future (for academic discipline, area of employment, personal)	Students will be engaged in producing scenarios for the future of one area of employment of their choice, one area of learning of their choice and an individual strategy-scenario for personal development using cognitive mapping methods.
Technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks	Students will be involved in activities routinely requiring the use of web-based and hardware technologies for recording podcasts, analysing data, handling audio-visual equipment.

Assessment of Employability Learning Outcomes from the Strategic Foresight Workshops

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Mark
Knowledge and skills for developing effective CVs.	The student has clearly formulated the purpose and aim of their CV.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The content of the CV is well-structured with appropriate headings.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The CV contains evidence that the student has critically analysed their personal interests, qualities, achievements and has made connections to their chosen field of employment.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The student has sought and received feedback on their CV from a Careers Adviser.	Check
	The student has provided evidence of the skills and attributes developed during the project relevant to the targeted professional context.	Min 0 – Max 4
Knowledge and skills necessary for developing successful strategies and future scenarios, target-setting and planning for future employment.	The prepared scenario is well-structured around a problem in a career field which is clearly analysed and defined.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The prepared scenario is based on analysis of probability, feasibility, impact, actors, stakeholders, drivers and environment, power groups and interest groups relevant to the chose career field.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The scenario contains analysis of the student’s personal interests, qualities, achievements and there are clear connections to a chosen field of employment.	Min 0 – Max 4
Improved skills for independent and group problem-solving and decision-making.	The student has produced a cognitive map structuring the problems identified in their scenarios and their chosen career path in terms of causes and consequences.	Min 0 – Max 4

	The student has based their cognitive maps on individual interviews and group discussions, using the appropriate methods for producing group and individual cognitive maps.	Min 0 – Max 4
Improved self-presentation and communication skills.	The student has produced a podcast or videocast: where delivery is smooth and well-rehearsed, with effective and clear enunciation, correct grammar, in style appropriate for the audience; sources of content are credited appropriately; using well-researched informative sources; with vocabulary enhancing content; with music and imagery enhancing the understanding of the content; with technical production where recording is done according to standards, with smooth transitions, appropriate volume level and length.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The student has delivered 2 face-to-face presentations and has participated in 2 online discussions during the programme, where they have clearly delivered key information about the relevance, in terms of their employability/future career plans, of the skills, knowledge and interests that they had previously and have gained during the project.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The student has identified and communicated skills, abilities, achievements and experiences that can help them market themselves effectively to employers During their presentations, in their scenario and CV.	Min 0 – Max 4
Improved skills for multi-tasking, time-management and prioritising.	The students has demonstrated ability to handle a number of cognitive and operational tasks with conflicting priority within set time constraints, ad-hoc and with preparation.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The CV of the student demonstrates ability to prioritise information according to the chosen employer/career path.	Min 0 – Max 4
Improved skills for identifying and validating sources of information.	The student has based their scenario and employability statement on a variety of appropriate, well-researched and informative sources and has well-edited quotes from “expert” sources. Quotes and sources of information are credited appropriately.	Min 0 – Max 4

	The student has demonstrated understanding of the graduate job market and broad industry trends in their chosen employment area.	Min 0 – Max 4
Improved networking and team-working skills.	Student has actively participated in the use and discussion of the applications of social networking tools (e.g. Linked In, Twitter) for locating job opportunities in their chosen employment field.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The student performed all duties of assigned team role and contributed knowledge, opinions, and skills to share with the team. Always did the assigned work volunteered and initiated collaboration.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The student has participated and lead discussions, demonstrating grasp of argumentation and rhetoric techniques for facilitating constructive and effective decision-making through formulating statements, questions; criticising arguments through questions.	Min 0 – Max 4
	The student has practised and reflected on the use of technology for teleconferencing, delivering presentations from a distance (Adobe Connect, Elluminate, etc.) and their application in employment situations (e.g. when a job interview is conducted over the Internet or using Skype, etc.)	Min 0 – Max 4
		TOTAL Min Pass 25 (i.e. if a student receives only the minimum points for each outcome they will not be able to pass) Max 84