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ENHANCING BUSINESS STUDENTS' EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AWARENESS

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Abstract. *Employability skills have become vital in helping recent graduates distinguish themselves in the competitive job market, transcending disciplinary boundaries. Dissatisfaction with graduates' communication abilities has been a long-standing concern in academia and the workplace. The shift from traditional lecture-based instruction to active learning has prompted changes in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and technical communication courses globally. These changes encompass well-developed professional communication skills, collaborative work practices, effective self-management, and social responsibility. This study addresses the imperative of understanding and addressing the skill prerequisites of the corporate sphere, as employers increasingly seek competencies beyond academic qualifications. The study employs a student-centered approach, allowing students to align these skills with real-world job requirements. The Experiential Learning Theory by Kolb serves as the theoretical foundation for this approach. The results indicate that this teaching method, emphasizing learning by doing, received positive feedback from students. It not only provided insight into the skills required by the labor market but also improved students' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, students found that this approach prepared them for their future careers. In conclusion, this research emphasizes the importance of equipping students with employability skills through authentic, context-based learning. The findings underscore the need for a shift from teacher-centered practices to more student-centered, collaborative learning environments that foster student autonomy and responsibility. The research closes with limitations and suggestions for further research.*

Key words: *Sensitizing business students to employment skills, labor market requirements, business students, employability, job advertisements, specialized technical knowledge, awareness*

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, dissatisfaction with the communication skills of university undergraduates and graduates in both academic and professional settings has been a persistent issue (Kleckner & Butz, 2021; Fraser et al., 2019; Romgens, Scoupe & Beausaert, 2020). Consequently, over the past three decades, educational institutions have transitioned from a lecture-centered instructional approach to an active learning paradigm. In this paradigm, learners assume greater responsibility for their own learning, while instructors

serve as guides and facilitators. This shift in focus towards fostering excellence in communication and employability skills has led to significant changes in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and technical communication courses worldwide (Mainga, Daniel & Alamil, 2020). These changes encompass the development of professional communication skills, collaborative work practices, effective self-management, and a clear understanding of social responsibility (Ankit & EL-Sakran, 2020; Chun, 2010; Clarke, 2018; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011; Eduarda & Mosquera, 2020; EL-Sakran, Prescott & Mesanovic, 2013; Prescott, El-Sakran, Al-Assaf, Albasha & Aloul, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2016).

Hence, comprehending and addressing the skill prerequisites of the corporate sphere presents a formidable endeavor. In today's economic landscape, employers seek competencies that extend beyond academic qualifications (El-Sakran & Prescott, 2017). Graduates are now expected to possess not only the technical proficiencies required for job execution but also a crucial array of employability skills, which encompass aptitude, communication, attitude, problem-solving abilities, effective teamwork, and more. As Romgens, Scoupe, and Beausaert (2020) point out, employability skills encompass various attainments, including competencies, cognitive understanding, and personal attributes (see appendix A). These skills enable graduates to secure, maintain, and excel in their job roles, and are often referred to as job readiness skills. Employability skills can be categorized into three fundamental domains: (a) basic academic skills, (b) higher-order thinking skills, and (c) personal qualities. Basic academic skills encompass writing, reading, and communication. Higher-order thinking skills include reasoning, problem-solving, and learning skills, while personal qualities encompass attributes like teamwork, self-motivation, leadership, and more. In a similar vein, Leroux and Lafleur (1995) categorize employability skills into three groups:
- Academic Skills - Communication, Critical thinking, Problem Solving, Life Skills.
- Personal Management Skills - Goal Setting, Positive Attitude, Self-Esteem, Initiative.
- Teamwork Skills - Interpersonal Skills, Leadership Skills, Respect for Others, Learning Skills.

Collectively, these elements enhance the prospects of recent graduates in securing employment and succeeding in their chosen professions. This not only benefits the graduates themselves but also contributes to the labor force, the broader community, and the economy at large. Consequently, in today's competitive job market, the cultivation of employability skills has taken on paramount importance as graduates aim to distinguish themselves in the eyes of potential employers. This imperative transcends disciplinary boundaries, with academic fields spanning the sciences, business, and engineering devoting considerable attention to enhancing communication competencies essential for effective workplace integration, as noted by Knight and Yorke (2003).

As a result, employability has emerged as a critical concern for numerous stakeholders in higher education. This concern is further emphasized by well-documented employer perceptions of deficiencies in undergraduate communication skills, as highlighted by Kleckner and Butz (2021). On a global scale, numerous studies have explored the extent to which higher education institutions align with the demands of employers. Some of these investigations, such as those conducted by Ismail et al. (2020), Damoah et al. (2021), and Kwarteng and Mensah (2022), have indicated employers' dissatisfaction with the quality of graduates produced by academic institutions. Consequently, a multitude of research endeavors, exemplified by the work of Tan and Laswad (2015) and Mistry (2021), have sought to investigate the employability skills demanded by the business labor market. For instance, Tan and Laswad (2015) discerned that employers actively seek candidates

possessing not only technical proficiencies but also non-technical skills, such as organizational acumen and adept communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking abilities.

Nevertheless, substantive evidence, as presented by Yıldırım and Kurbanoğlu (2022), Okolie et al. (2020), and Ramli et al. (2010), suggests that university students often lack a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental constituents of employability skills. In light of these considerations, acquiring knowledge of the attributes and competencies sought by employers in prospective job candidates becomes an imperative endeavor.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The primary aim of this study is to expound upon the methodologies employed in imparting essential contemporary labor market skills to undergraduate students, with the intention of offering guidance for educators in other academic institutions. Additionally, this paper outlines the processes used to contextualize these skills within the framework of the Writing for Business course (refer to Appendix B). The study also delineates the procedures implemented for assessing the transfer of communication skills in students' work beyond the scope of the aforementioned course. Specifically, this research seeks to heighten the understanding of employment-related skills and their corresponding definitions among senior students enrolled in the "Writing for Business" course at a private English-medium university in the United Arab Emirates. This objective will be realized through a meticulous examination of a comprehensive list of these skills (consult Appendix A).

3. CONTEXTUAL MODIFICATIONS

Within this course, students are expected to acquire various technical communication skills essential for their academic pursuits and future employment during internships and after graduation. Similar to other English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, students are instructed in composing various technical written communication genres intended for assumed and hypothetical audiences, thereby lacking authenticity and the genuine engagement of writing for a real readership. Consequently, it was suggested that a team-based research component be incorporated into the course to provide training in a spectrum of collaborative communication and academic skills relevant to the workplace. Given that the course curriculum encompasses research skills and other critical communication abilities, the researcher has integrated the majority of the communication skills outlined in the course's learning objectives into the research project (a condensed version of the course syllabus can be found in Appendix B). This decision was made under the assumption that project-based teaching and learning can offer a suitable context for introducing, cultivating, and implementing not only research skills but also the technical communication skills outlined in the course's learning objectives. Furthermore, students are required to draft their resumes, internship or job application letters in response to actual internship/job advertisements (see Appendix C), and participate in mock interviews with their team members.

4. Literature Review

The employability skills of recent university graduates have been a subject of growing concern in various academic and professional contexts. This concern resonates among multiple stakeholders, including university administrators, employers, government ministries, graduating students, and others (Clarke, 2018; Romgens, Scoupe & Beausaert, 2020; Mainga, Daniel, & Alamil, 2022; Succi & Canovi, 2020). For example, Mainga, Daniel, and Alamil's (2022) study emphasizes the necessity of identifying communication skills that hold significance in the labor market and calls for an examination of the disparities in perceptions regarding the development of academic, personal management, and teamwork skills among graduates themselves, educators, and prospective employers. Additionally, this research underscores the importance of student-centered learning approaches and innovative integrative pedagogies in fostering relevant employability skills among graduating students.

In a related study, Sabbah (2020) investigated communication skills, encompassing listening, speaking, understanding others, and emotional control, among undergraduate students. Her findings revealed that university students exhibited commendable proficiency in three dimensions of communication skills, namely listening, speaking, and understanding others, while the level of emotional control was moderate. Notably, no statistically significant differences were observed in communication skills concerning gender, faculty, or academic year. Consequently, universities are encouraged to introduce a variety of activities aimed at enhancing students' communication skills to better prepare them for the challenges posed by the globalized world.

In line with this perspective, Shrestha (2021) underscores the indispensability of communication skills for the employability and academic success of business graduates. Her primary focus was the development of an online English communication course tailored to business management students. Similarly, Kalogiannidis and Papaevangelou (2020) argue that a robust communication chain between employees and management is crucial for the smooth operation of businesses. Furthermore, Shah, Fatima, and Naseer (2020) conducted a study investigating the influence of communication skills on the academic achievement of university students, scrutinizing differences across groups based on gender, locality, semester, and program of study. To assess this, the researchers devised two questionnaires. However, the outcomes of the research indicated that students' communication skills had no statistically significant impact on their academic performance.

It is essential to highlight that the studies mentioned primarily focus on external assessments of students' employability skills across various majors. Given that previous investigations (i.e., Ali et al., 2014; Holmes, 2013; Ismail et al., 2020; Ramli et al., 2010; Romgens, Scoupe & Beausaert, 2020; Succi and Canovi, 2020; Yıldırım and Kurbanoğlu, 2022) predominantly compare perspectives regarding graduates' employability skills, it becomes apparent that a shift towards eliciting self-assessments from students is warranted. Such an endeavor would involve requesting students to identify the communication skills applicable to the job or position they have chosen, thereby fostering awareness of workplace prerequisites, as exemplified in this research.

5. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the procedures employed to instruct academic and workplace communication skills in the context of the Writing for Business course (refer to Appendix B). Students were tasked with associating these skills with a job or position relevant to their major, and identifying the skills applicable to that role (see Appendix A). In essence, students were instructed to source internship or job advertisements from online platforms. Subsequently, they were required to carefully analyze the position descriptions and responsibilities and highlight the skills outlined in the provided employability list. These identified skills were then categorized into three distinct groups:
- Education-related skills
- Experience-related skills
- Personality-related skills

Following this activity, where the job requirements were deconstructed, the students, along with the course instructor, delved into the detailed descriptions of each skill on the list. This intervention was strategically positioned before their graduation, affording students the opportunity to develop any deficient skills and further enhance those already in their possession.

At a later stage in the course, students were tasked with using the same job advertisement or finding another recent one relevant to their field of specialization. They were required to tailor their resumes accordingly, including a dedicated section titled "Personal Attributes," which exclusively listed key employability skills acquired during the course and essential for the advertised position. Subsequently, they were introduced to the process of crafting either an internship application letter (IAL) if they were pursuing training or a job application letter (JAL) if they were nearing graduation.

To further prepare students for the job market, they were directed to simulate a mock interview within their research teams, aligning with the position for which they had crafted the resume and letter. It is noteworthy that students were instructed to research common interview questions online and familiarize themselves with potential answers, while also recognizing the need for customization to suit their individual circumstances.

The subsequent section provides a demographic overview of the students who participated in this research.

5.1. Participants

A total of 144 business students, representing diverse genders, nationalities, and academic majors, were involved in this study. Their majors were categorized as follows:

|	
Finance	31%
Management	24%
Marketing	23%
Accounting	9%
Design Management	8%
Economics	5%

At the end of the course, students were asked to rate the teaching method (i.e. learning by doing) by responding to a short survey comprised of 5 questions on a scale of five and one open-ended question as follows:

1. The use of the employment skills sheet was useful:
    Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
2. This hands-on-analysis of the employment list and the requirements in job advertisements helped me learn what the labor market requires of me:
    Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
3.   I think this was a good practice for my future career:
    Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
4. The analysis of the employment list and the requirements in job advertisements introduced me to skills that I have never heard of before:
    Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
5. Through this analysis of the employment list and the requirements in job advertisements, I believe I am now ready for the labor market:
     Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

These were followed by the below open-ended question:
- Describe briefly your key learning from this teaching method.

Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory has been embraced as a theoretical framework within the context of this study. Kolb's theoretical framework expounds upon the mechanisms by which individuals acquire knowledge through experiential engagement. Given that learning serves as the fundamental mechanism for navigating life, individuals can harness this cognitive process across a spectrum of educational, developmental, and transformative contexts. The experiential learning process, as posited by Kolb, underpins performance enhancement, fostering both learning and personal development. To further elucidate Kolb's perspective, he asserts that "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (1984, p. 38). This theory offers a cyclical model of learning, delineated by four distinct stages, as illustrated below:
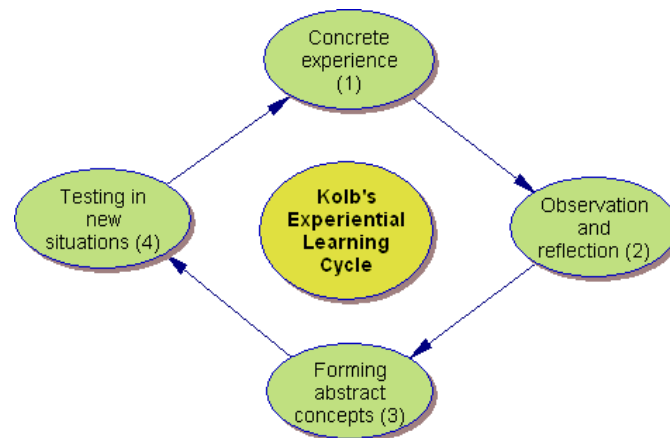
In a pedagogical context, the following stages hold significance:

- Experiencing (Concrete Experience): The commencement of the learning process occurs when a learner employs their sensory faculties and perceptions to actively engage with their immediate surroundings and experiences.
- Reflecting (Reflective Observation): Subsequent to the experiential phase, the learner engages in a period of introspection during which they contemplate the events and occurrences, thereby synthesizing their emotional responses with cognitive insights derived from the experience.
- Thinking (Abstract Conceptualization): This phase involves intellectual engagement, where the learner employs critical thinking to formulate conclusions and construct theoretical frameworks, concepts, or general principles which may subsequently undergo empirical testing.
- Acting (Active Experimentation): In the final stage, the learner proceeds to put their constructed theories into practice by actively testing them. This empirical testing is instrumental in obtaining feedback and, ultimately, shaping the course of future experiences.

According to Alkan (2016), the stages or processes of experiential learning have the potential to enable students to gain awareness of their professional identities, critically evaluate their actions, and acknowledge the significance of their suspicions (p. 22). Alkan concludes that experiential learning exerts a positive influence on learners' academic achievements and educational outcomes by guiding them through the iterative process of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting in response to their own experiences.

In this educational context, the instructor serves as a facilitator who guides students through this sequenced process (Seaman, 2019). For example, prior to introducing students to a list of essential skills, they are instructed to search online for sample internship or job advertisements and assess the associated requirements. Similarly, when directed to online sources to identify common interview questions and formulate responses, the same pedagogical approach is employed. Following this experiential practice, learners, under the instructor's mentorship, engage in a reflective process, evaluating the aspects that went well and those that necessitate further refinement. After this reflection and cognitive evaluation, learners progress to the subsequent stage, during which they actively apply their insights and reflections in practical scenarios, such as conducting interviews outside of the classroom. Through this iterative cycle of experiential learning, students amass a reservoir of new experiences that can be effectively drawn upon when confronting analogous situations in their future pursuits.

6. RESULTS

The acquisition and assimilation of essential workplace communication skills outside of their pertinent contextual frameworks does not assure full engagement of students in the educational process and may prove fruitless, as indicated by prior studies (Mercer, 2006; Yu, 2008; Chun, 2010). The contextualization of these skills, however, serves to illuminate students on their proper and fitting application in genuine communication scenarios (Predmore, 2005). In light of the empirical evidence presented in this study, it is imperative that students are afforded the opportunity and guidance necessary for them to attain these proficiencies.

The findings from this research reveal that the utilization of authentic activities has offered substantial support for the collaborative construction of knowledge, facilitated student reflection, enabled coaching and scaffolding by the course instructor during critical junctures, and rendered the assessment of learning within the tasks authentic. Furthermore, learners actively engage in the resolution of real-world problems, are introduced to novel knowledge, and subsequently apply this newly found knowledge to authentic tasks, thereby integrating it into their own cognitive framework.

Moreover, the survey results indicate that the simple steps offered were well received by the students. Responses were as follows:

Table 1 Responses to the survey questions

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The use of the employment skills sheet was useful	-	-	-	95	49
2. This hands-on-analysis of the employment list and the requirements in job advertisements helped me learn what the labor market requires of me	-	-	-	94	50
3. I think this was a good practice for my future career	-	-	1	89	56
4. The analysis of the employment list and the requirements in job advertisements introduced me to skills that I have never heard of before	-	-	3	97	50
5. Through this analysis of the employment list and the requirements in job advertisements, I believe I am now ready for the labor market	-		5	92	57
Total	-	-	9	467	262

The analysis has yielded positive assessments from students, as illustrated in Table 1 above. Furthermore, the use of authentic job advertisement samples has provided a practical representation of the labor market's demands. Undoubtedly, students' comprehension and awareness of their individual strengths and weaknesses are of paramount importance in the context of successful job applications and their future careers. Consequently, fostering such awareness can facilitate the utilization of their strengths while addressing any existing weaknesses. Moreover, they can employ the knowledge gained through this exercise as evidence of their possession of the necessary skills. Regarding the open-ended question, a majority of students expressed the view that they had experienced personal growth as a result of their participation in the activities. The following are some of their testimonies:

"I have acquired the knowledge of effectively demonstrating transferable skills within a CV by incorporating a section dedicated to personal attributes, commonly referred to as 'Soft Skills.'

Furthermore, students have reported that their participation in these activities has significantly enhanced their perspective in two specific domains. Firstly, their engagement has provided them with insights into the skills that employers expect graduates to possess as they

enter the workforce. The following quotations highlight this aspect: "This course was valuable in encouraging me to contemplate how employers value a diverse skill set. I had not previously given much thought to the qualities sought by employers in candidates until I participated in this course." "It broadened my understanding and shed light on what companies truly seek in potential candidates."

The activities integrated into this course have also offered students valuable insights into their own interests and skill sets. Moreover, students have acquired various lifelong learning skills, enabling them to access online resources for interview preparation, whether they are face-to-face, online, or phone interviews. They have also gained knowledge about the assessments that prospective companies may employ to screen applicants."

7. DISCUSSION

This investigation has elucidated that experiential learning yields remarkable success in facilitating students' acquisition of essential employability skills crucial for the contemporary labor market. Moreover, substantial evidence substantiates the assertion that the manner in which individuals perceive their employability exerts a significant influence on outcomes that prove advantageous for both organizations and individuals. These favorable outcomes encompass enhanced performance, as exemplified in studies authored by De Cuyper et al. (2011) and De Cuyper and De Witte (2011). Furthermore, empirical research conducted by De Vos, De Hauw, and Vander Heijden (2011) attests to the association between perceptions of employability and augmented career success. Additionally, a discernible link between perceptions of employability and elevated well-being and life satisfaction is manifest, as illustrated by investigations conducted by De Cuyper et al. (2011), Eduarda & Mosquera (2020), and Silla et al. (2009).

8. CONCLUSION

This study posits that one should not assume that students inherently possess an understanding of the prerequisites of the labor market. Instead, it is imperative to familiarize them with these requirements and elucidate their significance. In conclusion, this research underscores the following key points:

- A shift from teacher-centered practices to collaborative learning-centered environments for students is advocated, aimed at fostering greater autonomy, confidence, and responsibility among students.
- The study emphasizes Swales' (1990) concept of "community membership" by exposing students to and providing access to the communication skills necessary in academia and the workplace.
- Learners should be afforded genuine opportunities to compose their own texts, engage in authentic communication tasks with real audiences, and reflect on the outcomes of their communication processes.
- Students must be instructed in the practical use of language for real-world purposes. Rilling and Dantas-Whitney (2009) aptly argue that the objective of using and creating language for real-world applications is to infuse authenticity into the learning experience, rather than merely into the texts themselves.

- Students should study course content and subsequently apply the knowledge they have acquired in real-life, task-based activities.
- Instructors play a crucial role in helping students acquire "transferable skills and knowledge" (Chun, 2010; EL-Sakran, 2018) that they can use throughout their studies, internships, and post-graduation.

In light of these considerations and based on reflections on students' individual learning experiences, the researcher acknowledges the significance of acquainting students with the demands of the job market. Thus, it is imperative to enhance the employability of tertiary-level students by equipping them with the skills mandated by the labor market (Fitzgerald, 2016). Nonetheless, the overarching question that requires resolution is as follows: Can these students effectively compose well-crafted job application letters for their prospective careers? Addressing this question necessitates a subsequent investigation of these students. Furthermore, an area warranting further scrutiny pertains to an analysis of the job application letters created by these students with regard to their informational content, thereby elucidating the extent to which these proficiencies are manifested within their written communications. It is also crucial that the findings reported here are corroborated by additional research involving a larger cohort of students.

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<div align="center">APPENDIX A</div>

The Employability Skills Framework is a set of nine key skills that are important for success in work and life. They are grouped into three categories: Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships, and Workplace Skills. The framework was developed by the U.S. Department of Education to help educators and employers identify and teach these skills. Some examples of employability skills are communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and self-management.

Retrieved from: Microsoft Word - 8 Employability Skills.doc (education.vic.gov.au)

Employability Skills Framework

All young people need a set of skills and attributes that will prepare them for both employment and further learning. The Employability Skills Framework includes what employers think makes a good employee. The personal attributes and key skills are shown in the table below.

Personal attributes **… that contribute to overall employability**

- **Loyalty**   • **Commitment**   • **Honesty and integrity**
- **Reliability**   • **Enthusiasm**   • **Personal presentation**
- **Common sense**   • **Positive self esteem**   • **A sense of humour**
- **Motivation**   • **Adaptability**
- **Ability to deal with pressure**   • **A balanced attitude to work and home life**

Skill	Element – (aspects of the skill that employers think is important. Note – the mix and priority of these aspects will vary from job to job)
Communication … that contributes to productive and harmonious relations across employees and customers	▪ Listening and understanding ▪ Speaking clearly and directly ▪ Writing to the needs of the audience ▪ Negotiating responsively ▪ Reading independently ▪ Empathising ▪ Speaking and writing in languages other than English ▪ Using numeracy ▪ Understanding the needs of internal and external customers ▪ Persuading effectively ▪ Establishing and using networks ▪ Being assertive ▪ Sharing information

Team work … that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes	■ Working across different ages irrespective of gender, race, religion or political persuasion ■ Working as an individual and as a member of a team ■ Knowing how to define a role as part of the team ■ Applying team work to a range of situations e.g. futures planning, crisis problem solving ■ Identifying the strengths of the team members ■ Coaching and mentoring skills including giving feedback
Problem solving … that contributes to productive outcomes	■ Developing creative, innovative solutions ■ Developing practical solutions ■ Showing independence and initiative in identifying problems and solving them ■ Solving problems in teams ■ Applying a range of strategies to problem solving ■ Using mathematics including budgeting and financial management to solve problems ■ Applying problem solving strategies across a range of areas ■ Testing assumptions taking the context of data and circumstances into account. ■ Resolving customer concerns in relation to complex projects issues
Initiative and enterprise … that contribute to innovative outcomes	■ Adapting to new situations ■ Developing a strategic, creative, long term vision ■ Being creative ■ Identifying opportunities not obvious to others ■ Translating ideas into action ■ Generating a range of options ■ Initiating innovative solutions
Planning and organising … that contributes to long and short term strategic planning	■ Managing time and priorities- setting time lines, co-ordinating tasks for self & with others ■ Being resourceful ■ Taking initiative and making decisions ■ Adapting resource allocations to cope with contingencies ■ Establishing clear project goals and deliverables ■ Allocating people and other resources to tasks ■ Planning the use of resources including time management ■ Participates in continuous improvement and planning processes ■ Developing a vision and a proactive plan to accompany it ■ Predicting - weighing up risk, evaluate alternatives and apply evaluation criteria ■ Collecting, analysing and organising information ■ Understanding basic business systems and their relationships
Self management … that contributes to employee satisfaction and growth	■ Having a personal vision and goals ■ Evaluating and monitoring own performance ■ Having knowledge and confidence in own ideas and visions ■ Articulating own ideas and visions ■ Taking responsibility

Learning … that contributes to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes	▪ Managing own learning ▪ Contributing to the learning community at the workplace ▪ Using a range of mediums to learn - mentoring, peer support and networking, IT, courses ▪ Applying learning to 'technical' issues (e.g. learning about products) and ▪ 'people' issues (e.g. interpersonal and cultural aspects of work) ▪ Having enthusiasm for ongoing learning ▪ Being willing to learn in any setting - on and off the job ▪ Being open to new ideas and techniques ▪ Being prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills ▪ Acknowledging the need to learn in order to accommodate change
Technology … that contributes to effective execution of tasks	▪ Having a range of basic IT skills ▪ Applying IT as a management tool ▪ Using IT to organise data ▪ Being willing to learn new IT skills ▪ Having the OHS knowledge to apply technology ▪ Having the physical capacity to apply technology e.g. manual dexterity

From Employability Skills for the Future, 2002
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/employability_skills_for_the_future.htm
Employability skills summary

Employability skills
Employability skills are the "key skills and personal attributes you need to enter, operate and thrive in the new world of work." These are the transferable skills that we take with us from one work situation to another, just like a tradesperson carries their toolbox.

Key skills are:
- **communication;**
- **team work;**
- **problem solving;**
- **initiative and enterprise;**
- **planning and organising;**
- **self-management;**
- **learning skills; and**
- **technology.**

Personal attributes are:
- **loyalty;**
- **commitment;**
- **honesty and integrity;**
- **enthusiasm;**
- **reliability;**
- **personal presentation;**
- **commonsense;**
- **positive self-esteem;**
- **sense of humour;**
- **balanced attitude to work and home life;**

- **ability to deal with pressure;**
- **motivation; and**
- **adaptability.**

(*See* **http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/ employability_skills_for_the_future.htm**)

Employability skills sheet _____

Job _____

Skill and elements of skill	Very important	Not so important	Doesn't apply
Communication			
Listening & understanding			
Speaking clearly & directly			
Writing to the needs of the audience			
Negotiating responsively			
Reading independently			
Empathising			
Speaking & writing in languages other than English			
Using numeracy			
Understanding the needs of internal & external customers			
Persuading effectively			
Establishing & using networks			
Being assertive			
Sharing information			
Team work			
Working across different ages, irrespective of gender, race, religion or political persuasion			
Working as an individual & as a member of a team			
Knowing how to define a role as part of the team			
Applying team work to a range of situations e.g. futures planning, crisis problem solving			
Identifying the strengths of the team members			
Coaching & mentoring skills including giving feedback			
Problem solving			
Developing creative, innovative solutions			
Developing practical solutions			
Showing independence & initiative in identifying problems & solving them			
Solving problems in teams			
Applying a range of strategies to problem solving			
Using mathematics including budgeting & financial management to solve problems			
Applying problem solving strategies across a range of areas			
Testing assumptions taking the context of data & circumstances into account.			
Resolving customer concerns in relation to complex projects issues			

Skill and elements of skill	Very important	Not so important	Doesn't apply
Initiative and enterprise			
Adapting to new situations			
Developing a strategic, creative, long term vision			
Being creative			
Identifying opportunities not obvious to others			
Translating ideas into action			
Generating a range of options			
Initiating innovative solutions			
Planning and organising			
Managing time & priorities- setting time lines, co-ordinating tasks for self & with others			
Being resourceful			
Taking initiative & making decisions			
Adapting resource allocations to cope with contingencies			
Establishing clear project goals & deliverables			
Allocating people & other resources to tasks			
Planning the use of resources including time management			
Participates in continuous improvement & planning processes			
Developing a vision & a proactive plan to accompany it			
Predicting – weighing up risk, evaluate alternatives and apply evaluation criteria			
Collecting, analysing & organising information			
Understanding basic business systems & their relationships			
Self management			
Having a personal vision & goals			
Evaluating & monitoring own performance			
Having knowledge & confidence in own ideas & visions			
Articulating own ideas & visions			
Taking responsibility			
Learning			
Managing own learning			
Contributing to the learning community at the workplace			
Using a range of mediums to learn – mentoring, peer support & networking, IT, courses			
Applying learning to 'technical' issues (e.g. learning about products) and 'people' issues (e.g. interpersonal & cultural aspects of work)			
Having enthusiasm for ongoing learning			
Being willing to learn in any setting - on & off the job			
Being open to new ideas & techniques			
Being prepared to invest time & effort in learning new skills			
Acknowledging the need to learn in order to accommodate change			

Technology			
Having a range of basic IT skills			
Applying IT as a management tool			
Using IT to organise data			
Being willing to learn new IT skills			
Having the OHS knowledge to apply technology			
Having the physical capacity to apply technology e.g. manual dexterity			

APPENDIX B

A	Course Number & Title	**ENG 225 Writing for Business**
B	Pre-requisite(s)	ENG 203 or ENG 204
H	Course Description from Catalog	Aims to develop skills in writing business documents such as CVs, correspondence, memoranda, short and long reports, and proposals necessary to communicate effectively in the business world.

I	Course Learning Outcomes and Assessment Instruments	**Learning Outcomes** Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:	**Assessment Instruments**
		Evaluate the effectiveness of sample business messages.	Assignments
		Compose structured research projects and proposals.	Business Research Proposal
		Formulate accurate and effective business messages.	Meetings Documentation
		Produce effective resumes and application letters and conduct mock interviews.	Job Documentation; Portfolio Design
		Demonstrate logical development of arguments, counterarguments, and refutation.	Final Business Report Project; Oral Progress Report

L Grading Scale, Grading Distribution, and Due Dates

Grading Distribution

Assessment	Weight	Due Date (Week #)
Participation	5%	Throughout semester
Assignments/Tests	10%	Throughout semester
Meetings Documentation	10%	Throughout semester
Business Research Proposal	15%	Week 6
Job Documentation: Résumé, Internship/Job Application Letter, & Mock Interview	3x5%=15%	Weeks 8 & 9
Oral Progress Report	10%	Week 10
Portfolio Design	5%	Week 13
Final Business Research Project	30%	Week 15
	100%	

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
This schedule is subject to change, but all changes will be announced in class.
Please check iLearn regularly.

#	WEEK	TOPICS & ASSIGNED READING	NOTES
1		Introduction to the course Consider possible topics for the Business Research Project	▪ Course breakdown, syllabus ▪ Call for forming research teams
2		Meetings Documentation	▪ How to call for meetings, write meeting agendas, and meeting minutes ▪ Consider possible Business Research Project topics. (Class participation)
3		Planning Reports and Proposals – How to write a business research proposal	▪ Finalize topic for Business Research Project. ▪ Team Meeting Documentation #1 is due at 11:59 pm on 14 September.
4		Business Research Proposal – Continued	▪ See lecture notes on iLearn.
5		Building Careers and Writing Resumes Start building your résumé	▪ Team Meeting Documentation #2 is due at 11:59 pm on 28 September. ▪ Find samples of effective résumés, and share them in class. Explain what makes them effective. (Class participation)
6		Start building your application letter.	▪ Find samples of effective application letters, and share them in class. Explain what makes them effective. (Class participation) ▪ Business Research Proposal is due on at 11:59 pm on 5 October.
7		Preparing for Interviews	▪ Prepare a list of the most commonly asked interview questions and share them with your classmates. (Class participation) ▪ Writing Thank-you Notes/Messages ▪ Team Meeting Documentation #3 is due at 11:59 pm on 12 October.
8		More on interviews	▪ Résumé & IAL are due at 11:59 pm on 19 October.
9		Designing and Delivering Oral Presentations Oral Progress Reports commence	▪ Instructor and teams provide feedback on presentations ▪ Recorded mock interviews are due at 11:59 pm on 26 October.
10		Oral Progress Reports Delivery	▪ Due during class time on 30 October and 1 November. ▪ Team Meeting Documentation #4 is due at 11:59 pm on 2 November.
11		Planning & Writing Business Messages Writing the Business Research Project	▪ Lecture notes and handouts on iLearn
12		Writing Positive and Negative Messages Writing the Business Research Project	▪ Lecture notes and handouts on iLearn ▪ Test 1 due during class time on 15 November.

13		Portfolio Design	▪ Portfolio Design submission is due at 11:59 pm on 19 November
14		Writing the Business Research Project	
15		Course Reflections	▪ Team Meeting Documentation #5 is due at 11:59 pm on 20 November. ▪ Final Business Research Project is due at 11:59 pm on 21 November.
		No final exam in course	Test 2 due during class time on 22 November.

APPENDIX C

Sample Internship Advertisements

<u>**Sample 1**</u>

Description

Company is looking for a qualified intern to join our marketing/advertising team. Our marketing department produces quality work for major companies in the Boston area and seeks an intern who can participate in various stages of print and online marketing campaigns. This intern should be prepared to work in a fast-paced team environment and will finish the internship having gained broad experience in various aspects of marketing.

Responsibilities

- Assist in the creation of signage, circulars, mock ups, email campaigns, online promotion, etc.
- Assist in the distribution or delivery of marketing materials
- Assist with the fulfillment of marketing offers
- Assist with the preparation and delivery of training materials
- Perform analysis of marketing and sales data
- Seek and analyze competitor marketing and sales materials both on and offline
- Prepare presentations
- Open and sort mail
- Enter contact information into contact management systems
- Provide support to social media efforts
- Monitor social media for trending topics to utilize on social media channels
- Maintain tracking report of public relations activity

Requirements

- Undergraduate student in Boston majoring in Sales, Marketing, or Advertising
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Extensive knowledge of social media
- Driven and hard-working
- Ability to take direction and multi-task
- PowerPoint, Word and Excel experience a plus

<u>**Sample 2**</u>

Internship Description

Company is seeking a motivated accounting intern who is ready to apply knowledge of financial terms and principles to an authentic real-world experience. The intern will assist with a wide range of duties, including analyzing data, preparing financial reports, and learning about varied accounting activities. This is an exciting opportunity for any student pursuing a career in finance.

Responsibilities
- Assist with month-end financial reports
- Post journal entries
- Help with accounts receivable, payable, and bank statement reconciliation
- Assist with audits
- Reconcile balance sheet accounts
- Collaborate with the finance team on yearly forecasting efforts
- Manage monthly tracking of physical inventory
- Support the payment processing team
- Perform credit checks
- Assist with data entry

Requirements
- Business, Finance, Economics, or Accounting major
- Proficient in Microsoft Office
- Aptitude for mathematics
- Basic understanding of financial and accounting principles
- Attention to detail
- Ability to multitask
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills

<u>Sample 3</u>

Internship Description

Are you a student interested in building real-world graphic design experience with an award winning team? We're a forward-thinking advertising agency looking for a talented and knowledgeable designer with fresh, creative ideas and an excellent eye for detail.

Come work for one of the area's leading advertising agencies and learn from some of the best in the business.

Graphic Design Intern Duties and Responsibilities
- Create and design print and digital materials
- Adhere to brand guidelines and complete projects according to deadline
- Retouch and manipulate images
- Use graphic design software and work with a wide variety of media
- Collaborate with the Creative Director and Graphic Design Manager to develop design concepts
- Receive feedback from the Creative Director and Graphic Design Manager and make necessary changes
- Assemble final presentation material for printing as needed

Requirements
- Graphic Design major preferred
- Basic knowledge of layouts, typography, line composition, color, and other graphic design fundamentals
- Experience with InDesign, Adobe Photoshop, and Illustrator
- Strong creative and analytical skills
- Compelling portfolio of graphic design work

<u>Sample 4</u>

Internship Description

Company, a small and fast-paced public relations firm, is looking for an intern interested in learning all aspects of the public relations field. The intern who fills this position should expect to learn the field from top to bottom and will complete this program ready to enter any public relations firm with excellent skills.

It's essential that applicants to this position have strong communication skills, demonstrate creativity, and understand the importance of attending to even the smallest details.

Responsibilities
- Monitor all forms of media
- Schedule and coordinate speaking engagements, appearances, photo shoots, and other special events
- Write press releases and other materials
- Screen phone calls
- Assist with mailings and print production
- Create interview preparation materials
- Compile contact lists
- Search for press clippings
- Create or update databases
- Greet guests and clients

Requirements
- Public Relations, Communications, Marketing or Journalism major
- Strong verbal and written communication skills
- Solid understanding of social media
- Writing skills
- Proficient with Microsoft Excel and other Microsoft Office applications

<u>Sample 5</u>

Internship Description

Apply your knowledge of finance to real-world financial modeling, analysis, and reporting with our experienced finance team. Our growth-oriented company is dedicated to providing you with valuable learning opportunities as you share your ideas and creativity with the team.

Finance Intern Duties and Responsibilities
- Assist with financial modeling
- Provide general accounting support
- Help with accounts receivable management
- Provide support for annual budgeting process
- Assist with statistical analysis and other special projects
- Present data-driven recommendations to the finance team
- Prepare monthly/quarterly financial analysis packets for management

Requirements
- Finance, Economics, or related major
- Minimum GPA of 3.0
- Strong verbal and written communication skills
- Highly motivated with a desire to learn
- Proficient in Microsoft Excel Top of Form