

FBL Employable YOU - 16 June 2022 - Transferable YOU-I2oIXvl-728-720p- 1655463510014

PROFESSOR: Welcome back. Great to see you again in this second session. Hopefully you were in the first one as well. This second session is looking at transferable you. We're looking at the types of skills that you can expect to develop during your studies that employers will find useful and valuable. We've still got George and Matt on the help desk with us, and they'll be answering your specific questions. And HJ is here. So HJ, we didn't get a chance to get the comments from the previous session. So would you like to run us through some of the points made at the end of the last session?

HJ: Yeah. Well, we did talk about cats being good for our well-being, but Alison pointed out that it's not good when they sit on your keyboard. Your tutor may be a bit confused with all the output that cats end up doing. Tony, for his well-being, tries to walk around the block. It's always good to get some fresh air and clear your head. And we've got some great questions as well for our guests coming up.

So I know you're introducing guests from two different sectors. And Natasha is wondering, how in demand are foreign languages? And Mohammed is asking, how would you describe an open degree to an employer as well? So it'd be great if we can help Natasha and Mohammed out with those questions. I know our fantastic guests will probably have lots of experience and knowledge to help us with that.

PROFESSOR: Absolutely. Absolutely. So we'll make sure we cover those as we go through the chat. So my guests in the studio today are Pam. Pam's a solicitor and a director at Lewis Rodgers. Oh, we've got a dog with us. Not mine, for a change.

PAM WATSON: Not mine.

PROFESSOR: We've got Sam, who's one of our student experience managers. And we've also got Andrea, chief people officer at East Kent Hospital. So we've got a real range of people who can give us some insights today. Now, you've got a question going across the screen at the moment asking, what skills are you learning at the moment that you think could be used in the workplace?

So if you want to start answering that, and we'll come back to your comments in a few minutes. And we're going to start with Sam. So Sam, we build employability skills into our modules in FBL. So could you tell us about them and how we expect students to use them in the workplace?

SAM WOODS-PEEL: Sure. Study skills are not just useful for studying, although obviously, they're very useful for studying. But you can use them in a work context as well during your degree, but also after graduation. For example, B100 introduces students to accounts. Now, it may be that they don't want to go into accountancy, but they will use their accountancy skills when they get into the world of work because everybody works for a business in one way or another, unless you work for the government.

And so you will need to understand accountancy and how it works in order to make the most of your business. And it's something that law students will study as well. If you're on the new law degree, you will study solicitor's accounts at stage three. If you're on the old law degree and you're going off to qualify as a solicitor or a legal exec or a barrister, you will study accounts along the way, but you will do it in a post-graduate way.

So accountancy and those skills of being able to understand numbers is really, really important. Being able to add and subtract will mean that your business won't go bust at a very basic level. The other thing that I wanted to mention was W360 Justice in Action, which is one of the stage three modules on both the old and the new degree, deals with real-life cases.

It's an action project where you deal with somebody who's actually got a problem. And it can be very traumatic. And so those students on W360 do vicarious trauma training to help them cope. Vicarious trauma is when it hasn't happened to you, but it happened to somebody else who is telling you, and you are absorbing their trauma. And that can be very difficult to cope with.

And so the students on that particular module do learn how to cope with that sort of thing. And that sort of skill can be used in all sorts of situations. Yes, in the legal profession if you go into personal injury, crime. All sorts of terrible things happen to people. But it's not just the legal profession.

If you're going to social work, if you're going to the police force, anything where trauma happens is useful to learn how to deal with it when it's happening to somebody else, not you. That course books up very quickly because it's very popular because of this skill level that they give you. But another study skill that you will come across a lot is reflection, the ability to reflect on how your study is going and how to improve your study.

If you can get really good at reflection, that can really help you in your workplace as well because of course, your employer wants you to reflect on the job that you're doing and work out how to do it better because that will make your business better. And that's the same whether it's the legal profession or any other business. Your employer wants you to reflect on what is going well, keep doing that, and what isn't going so well.

Change things, make it better, do better, make more money. Ultimately, that's what reflection is all about. So you might not like it during your study, but it is a very, very useful skill for the workplace.

PROFESSOR: Absolutely. And I think, Sam, we've got lots of also students who are agreeing with the points that you're making. They're developing these skills. HJ, what sort of skills are that the students saying they're developing? What are they able to take into the workplace?

HJ: Well, there's lots of skills, as always, in the chat. And the fact that we're recognising them, that's a big thing as well because sometimes it can be hard to think what we're picking up as we're going along. And then we really reflect on it. So Luke says organisational skills and prioritising. Jonathan says frameworks, such as SWOT, STEEPLE, risk assessments, which provide a simple, but effective way to manage yourself and teams.

Tony says how to manage and interact with different stakeholders, how to think about communications, how to read accounts, how to keep going. Eileen says, I have many skills and will have gained more with the OU degree. Absolutely right. And Natasha, I loved Natasha's comment. She says to follow through no matter what life throws at me, to collaborate with people from all over the world, and to use digital technology for learning communication. And a joy that evolves constantly.

PROFESSOR: Absolutely. So some really good skills we're already starting to see. We're going to come to Pam in a moment. But I just want to remind you all there's a widget. We love a good widget. And if you're studying a law degree at the moment, tell us where you're at with your current studies. And we'll come back to that in a moment.

So, Pam, what skills and knowledge does your law firm look for when it's looking for new candidates? And this is quite personal. I was talking to Kyle last night, who was really excited about your answer here. So I

don't know if Kyle's in the chat box. So what do you look for when you're looking to bring new people into the firm?

PAM WATSON: Well, obviously, academic skills are important. We need to know that somebody is capable of learning and passing information on because your job is to give advice to people. However, I work in child protection law, which requires a lot of empathy. So it's quite interesting to listen to Rosie this morning when she was talking about being resilient and the skills that resilience can bring to you because that clearly allows you to learn how to empathise.

If you understand how it feels to have a negative experience, then you can pass that on to your clients. That will help you to work with them more effectively. For me, people experience is one of the most important factors that I'm looking at. So any skills, really, any skills that you may have or may have developed over the years working with people is exceptionally important.

Bar work. People may laugh at that and think that's nothing to do with law. But do you know what? If you can deal with a difficult client in a bar, you can deal with a difficult client in an office. Absolutely perfect. I was also interested to hear the question coming across about foreign languages. Just as an example, at the moment, I work in Cheshire, which we come under the Merseyside legal region. At the moment, I have French-speaking Gabonese. I have Afghani.

I have dealt with many, many, many Polish clients, Eastern European, Romanian, Slovakian. I have both of those at the moment as well. So yeah, foreign languages are absolutely welcomed, welcomed with open arms. We will often get people coming in. They can't speak any English, and I'm on Google Translate.

PROFESSOR: Absolutely.

PAM WATSON: So any language you have, fabulous. Can I also say that I was really interested to hear some say about the vicarious trauma ability that you're running at the OU. That is amazing because it can be very difficult to deal with some of the cases that we do deal with. I mean, I work exclusively in family law, but exclusively in child protection.

That incorporates injuries to children, deaths to children, sexual abuse, et cetera. Extremely distressing. So please, please take advantage of that.

PROFESSOR: Thank you. That's excellent. And I could sit and talk for hours. But unfortunately, we haven't got hours. But thank you for introducing us to those ideas. I just wanted to quickly flash up the widget on those of you studying law. At the moment, we've got 63% of you are at level 1, 25% of you at level 3, and the post-grad, we've got 13% of you at postgrad at the moment.

So that's brilliant. Great to see we've got some law students with us. HJ, I'm going to come to you at the end if we've got time just to get some more comments. But I want to go on to Andrea next and just ask Andrea, what do you look for when you're recruiting?

So when you're looking for new candidates, who will make it through to an interview? And keep your eyes open for the widget that's asking you about what you're going to do when you graduate. So Andrea, what do you look for?

ANDREA ASHMAN: Yeah. Well, it was fascinating, actually, just listening to Pam there because in reality, a lot of the qualities that are required for people studying law and looking to get into the legal profession are incredibly transferable across all professions. And my background within the NHS and the public sector, they are definitely skill sets that we look out for. But in reality, we advertise all our jobs on an open

platform because we want to attract people who are genuinely interested in working within the health care profession.

But it's important to emphasise that it's not just about doctoring and nursing. It really is about all of the other roles, professional roles, that are required to support what is an immensely huge organisation. And we are looking for people who are able to bring their professional skills. The really important thing is to make sure that people, when they apply, have a good CV, that they complete the application form because we do require an online application form to be completed because it's asking for some very specific information.

And somebody who can't complete an application form, in whatever guise, is not going to pass that first hurdle for shortlisting. So it's really, really important that people do complete that accurately and with full, honest information. We do undertake a DBS check, Disclosure and Barring Service check, just to make sure that there is nothing in an individual's background that could be of a potential concern.

And particularly, in our organisation, we're thinking of things such as safeguarding. And, again, interesting to hear some of the comments with regard to that. But that thing about making sure the application form is completed, read the question on the application. What is it asking of you? What is the job about?

And then make sure you answer the question. This is like going back and doing your OU exams or your school exams. Read the question first, and then fill in the answer. Don't give the answer you want to give. That's absolutely fundamental.

The thing to say about DBS checks and things, just if I touch back on that, there are some offences which will never ever be filtered off of a criminal record check. But all the usual standards of checking apply. But there are one or two that are particularly critical. It is better to be honest and disclose and tell us in advance. And that goes for any employer, in all honesty, because then we can discuss that with you.

Of greater concern is the integrity of the candidate. And if somebody hasn't shared that information, we're not in a position to make a judgement call. And if we find out about it later on, that's when it really does become a problem. So that's just a little bit of a word to the wise. And I think we're not naive enough to not recognise that there are follies of youth. We all have different experiences as we go through life. So that's quite key.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

PROFESSOR: Oh. Unfortunately, I'm going to have to interrupt you because we're-

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

But no. Some fantastic advice. And I think the tip about treating an application form like an assignment or an exam is a really good one. In the same way you have to answer your questions on the TMAs, do the same on the application.

We've just got a few seconds to have a quick look at the widget that you've been filling in about knowing what you want to do when you graduate. And, HJ, I'll let you talk through this and give us any final comments that have come through the chat box.

HJ: I think some people are bit like me when they answered this. So 29% of people are very sure they know exactly what they want to do when they graduate, which is fantastic. 36%, not sure. 7% saying it depends on the degree classification. And 33% say really, no idea. I mean, I graduated about five years ago.

I'm in a job now, and I still don't know what I want to do when I grow up. So I now have that feeling. But normally, an interest comes where you least expect it. So not knowing now, there's nothing wrong with that, taking it step-by-step.

If you know, fantastic. If you don't, that's fine. You'll find, along the way, in your journey, what you're really passionate about and how you can apply that in the workplace.

PROFESSOR: OK. Thank you, HJ. That's fantastic. And Sam, Pam, and Andrea, thank you so much for your contributions. We'll have to have you back for a full hour. I mean, 15 minutes just isn't long enough. So just to let everybody know, we're about to go into the final session, making the most of you, looking at what you already have and presenting it in the best way. And while we're having the changeover, there's a short video playing that's going to be looking at balancing study, work, and life. So thanks again to my guests. Great, and I will see you all back here in a few minutes. Thank you.