



Academic Advising for Employability Toolkit

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In partnership with:

MANCHESTER
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Glossary

Term	Definition
Academic adviser (AA)	A member of academic staff who meets and communicates regularly with a student to offer guidance and support with academic matters and personal development and may in some circumstances also play a role in pastoral support.
Employability	<p>Defining employability is not easy and there have been many attempts: We are using the definition offered in the HEA Employability Framework (https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/4_8_Employability_framework_0.pdf) on pages 5-6.</p> <p>Employability is a lifelong process; applies to all students whatever their situation, course or mode of study; is complex and involves a number of areas that interlink; is about supporting students to develop a range of knowledge, skills, behaviours, attributes and attitudes which will enable them to be successful not just in employment but in life; is a university-wide responsibility; is about making the components of employability explicit to students to support their lifelong learning.</p> <p>What it is not. It is not about replacing academic rigour and standards; not necessarily about adding additional modules into the curriculum; not just about preparing students for employment; not the sole responsibility of the Careers Department; not something that can be quantified by any single measure.</p>

Introduction

It goes without saying that students, like all groups in society, cannot be pigeonholed, categorised or herded like sheep towards a particular future. As a result, the vast body of individuals in the higher education sector requiring our academic guidance will come to meet us at some point in their own journey towards what we call employability. The point on this journey will vary according to their personal characteristics and we must work with the student as an individual. Some students will have arrived and appear eminently employable, having prepared effectively for a chosen career since school. Others, like University of Manchester student Emma, feel lost: "I have very few positive feelings about the idea of the big wide world and a job. I have no idea about what I want to do, or even where I want to work, so yeah, I just have no idea." Consequently, the academic adviser looking to support all of their students in their employability does not have an easy job. What we all have however, both student and academic, is the ability to listen, to think intelligently, to ask questions and to reflect on progress; building as we engage these skills, the confidence to make decisions and take action. Many of us, academics and students alike, will sometimes fail to use these abilities for this purpose, feel time-pressured, daunted by options and not entirely confident in our ability to say and do the most effective things. It is with this challenge before us that we established an institution-wide group, made up of academic advisers from four faculties (covering all educational domains), professional support services, students, employers and alumni to design a toolkit to support academic advising for employability.

The cross-faculty nature of this development programme is important because the aim of this endeavour was to develop a generic toolkit to support academics working in any discipline to confidently and effectively guide students in this important area of their personal development. It is intended to be adaptable to allow individual departments and programme leads to embed in the toolkit the most appropriate resources and links for their discipline. To meet this aim, we first needed to define the particular role of the academic adviser in supporting employability and to understand the challenges inherent in this role. To complement this, we needed to understand students' perceptions of the role of academic advisers in supporting them in developing their employability and how this might fit into the broader advising role. To realise this aim, we conducted qualitative research with students and academics at the University of Manchester and the results informed our approach and the design of our advising model and wider toolkit. The results of our research, the outline of our guiding principles, and the core model that underpins the toolkit are presented below.

The model and toolkit are intended to be embedded in an academic advising-facing interface/dashboard and to form the standard for advising for employability for an institution. To this end we have presented suggested formats, resources and workshop slides for showcasing the model and toolkit.

Research

Published research

This cannot be an exhaustive review of the literature around student employability. We focused on the results of research into the psychological, individual difference factors that predict students' engagement with 'career enhancing behaviours'. For the purposes of informing our model and toolkit design, we further focused on the key finding that students who are high in 'career self-efficacy' (confident in their own ability to influence their future career goals) are the most likely to engage in effective behaviours. Consequently, our advising activities should similarly focus on building student confidence in this domain.

Our research

This is a very brief summary of our research and is not intended as a full academic report.

Data collection: Focus group and interview

We conducted five focus groups with a total sample of 40 students. Students were recruited from non-vocational programmes across four faculties: Medical and Human Sciences, Life Sciences, Engineering and Physical Sciences, and Humanities, and each faculty was represented in a focus group. We interviewed 25 academic advisers, again representing four faculties. We conducted a thematic analysis of the transcribed data. What we present below is an executive summary of findings and is not intended to take the place of an academic research report. Quotes are indicative of ideas organised thematically.

Students

As expected, the experiences that students had were very mixed, ranging from advisers who listened to the student, were interested, engaged and knowledgeable: "She encouraged me to engage....and I felt I could talk about anything, including what I can do in the future," to those who did not seem interested, confident or knowledgeable: "I tried to talk about doing a different career, and he said, oh, what do you want to do? And I said, I don't know, I want more options, and he was like, go and do research or something like that, so not very helpful at all."

Some students had experienced academic advisers who only knew about careers in their field and that is not helpful if they didn't want to follow that path, or wanted to explore options: "I think the information they give is very one-dimensional because that's the only information they have."

Some students felt that their advisers didn't have much time for them beyond considering their academic work, so did not feel confident in asking for guidance or starting discussion about

their future: "She's very good at making sure work gets done, and saying, well, this is your grade, you need to improve that one but that module is doing OK, but any time it comes to anything outside of that, she doesn't have much time for you."

Students felt that advisers should have access to resources that they could signpost students to "just a directory that every single lecturer has access to...some more centralised pot of information that they can more easily look into to find the right person, even if they can't give you it themselves".

Students would like guidance that helps them to work out how to find their way, and get some feedback on what they are doing. They want some reassurance that they are doing the right things: "[She says] go away and research them yourself because I can't make decisions for you. And it's like, no, I don't want you to make decisions, but give feedback on how my decision-making is going."

There was an awareness that academic advisers often don't know how to advise in this domain. Students accept this but would appreciate the academic listening to them and then making suggestions, and offering the best signposting: "I also think on the same level that if they don't know anything they're sort of afraid to accept that, and won't say to you, I don't know a lot about this.....if they were given a day's training on active listening, so they know how to let you talk about your options and that kind of thing without pushing you, and then also giving them better access to information to give to you."

In summary, students appreciate that academics are not careers advisers but think they should offer guidance, have sources of information to guide students and most importantly that they are willing to listen and work with the student to make plans and to evaluate progress.

Academic advisers

Some academic advisers felt that advising on employability was not part of their role and those who expressed this view believed that the goal of higher education is not to produce employable graduates: "Doing a degree allows student to study, think and grow, it is not about churning out a workforce." Related to this, is a concern that it is a poor use of academic time: "I am paid to do research and to teach, and that is what I am good at, why waste the university's resources asking me to do something I was never trained to do?"

Others want to help students in their future goals, but when these involve working outside of academia or a general field (e.g. Law/Politics/Engineering/Psychology) they do not feel qualified to offer careers advice because they are not experts, and many have stayed in academia for much of their careers: "I don't even know if I am employable outside academia, or how I would make myself employable if I wanted to change." This type of sentiment was the most common among our interviewees. There was a clear desire for students to get the best advice, coupled

with a concern that academics are not the best to deliver it: "It does feel like we're letting them down a bit because I don't have the best knowledge and they might get less effective support than if an expert supported them."

Unsurprisingly, academics feel most confident in advising students about further study: "For those students who want to do an MSc course or go on to PhD, I can offer great advice, but if they want to go into marketing or something, I don't have a clue what they should do." Those who expressed concerns about the quality of their advising, felt that training is important but there was no clear consensus on what the training should involve.

Academics seemed most keen to help students think about skills they have acquired during their studies, and realise that these skills can stand students in good stead for future careers. There was a strong focus on being keen for students to see their degree as becoming a life-long independent learner, and that where this fits with employability, they felt confident in supporting this: "Just like in their studies, it is not about me telling them how to go about being employable, it is about us supporting students to work it out for themselves.....employers want the same qualities as we do, an independent learner."

In summary, there is a barrier to overcome because some academic advisers simply do not consider supporting employability to be part of their role or the role of higher education institutions. Academic advisers who do agree that they are well placed to offer employability support, lack confidence in their ability to give effective guidance and feel most confident when they can use personal knowledge. It is interesting to note that no academic advisers reflected on the match between guiding students on a topic where both lacked expertise, with their skills as intelligent listeners, problem-solvers and as researchers who ask reasoned questions.

Alumni

Our research with alumni was more limited. At the point of reporting, only four interviews with alumni had been conducted and transcribed. Clear points were apparent in all four interviews:

1. Choosing what they wanted to do was the most difficult decision they had ever made.
2. They wished that they had made more of the opportunities available to them at university and made the most of the free time they had.
3. They hadn't started thinking about what they would do until their final year or when they graduated, and this made the decision very stressful.
4. They wished someone had helped them to realise that their first job didn't mean they were stuck in that career forever and that all experience is valuable.

Four principles for the development of the toolkit

From the key findings of our research with academic advisers, students and alumni, we devised a set of principles through which to develop the toolkit.

Academic advisers are not recruiters or careers consultants

We should not expect them to develop specialist knowledge of student employability or the graduate jobs market. We cannot expect them to keep up-to-date with the vast number of deadlines for graduate schemes, internships, and other opportunities; nor with changing application, interview and assessment centre practices

Academic advising should make use of and not seek to reproduce the infrastructure and wealth of resources around employability

Universities generally have substantive materials on employability and there is a wealth of excellent information and support provided by the Higher Education Academy and other institutions. Rather than developing materials for supporting their students with their employability, academic advisers' time is better spent helping students to make the most use of such existing resources.

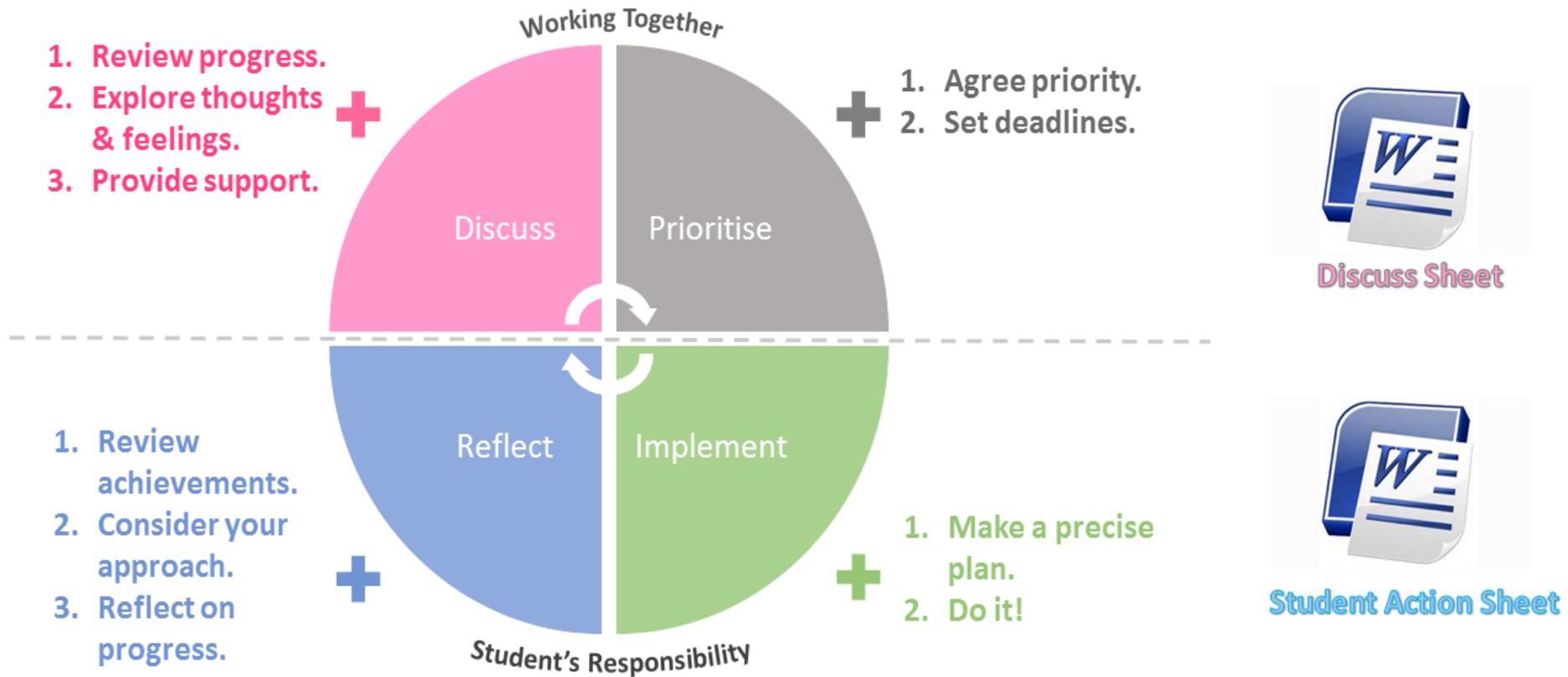
Academic advisers should draw on their knowledge of their discipline, on their skills as problem solvers and thinker and knowledge of their advisees to support students

Academic advisers are best placed to offer advice and guidance on a personalised level. Some students lack the confidence or motivation to engage with their employability. Academic advisers should make use of their relationships with students to really tailor their discussions and reflections to encourage and motivate advisees appropriately. Academic advisers can help students to get started in thinking about employability, encourage them to continue to be proactive and to make concrete plans.

Supporting students with employability should be as practical as possible

Employability is generally just one element of academic advising, and so has to be supported within existing constraints on time, expertise, and so on. The toolkit should recognise time constraints and be concise, effective and easy to use. It should be practical and flexible for use across disciplines and with students who are more or less confident and engaged.

Academic Advising for Employability Toolkit



Discuss

Initial meeting

What stage are you at in terms of thinking about and preparing for your future beyond University?

Possible discussion prompts:

1. Careers of potential interest.
2. How their motivations and values might link to possible careers.
3. Academic topics they might like to build on.
4. Extra-curricular activities.
5. Work or voluntary experience.
6. Awareness of and engagement with the wider careers support systems.
7. Their sense of preparedness for the future.
8. How confident they feel about preparing for the future.

Follow-up meetings

What actions have you taken and what has this achieved in terms of addressing the agreed priority?

This discussion should be based on the student's completed action sheet (or where this has not been completed, a verbal report). The adviser should encourage the student to reflect candidly on what has been achieved, whether their implementation strategy has been effective and efficient (for example, has the student made use of relevant resources and support systems) and how they can overcome any obstacles.

Tips for successful conversations

1. Acknowledge that making future plans involves difficult decisions and there's no expectation to provide immediate or fixed 'answers'.
2. Emphasise that they have already taken positive steps (e.g. coming to university).
3. Reassure them that having a clearly defined goal isn't necessary as a starting point, taking small steps to broaden their experience can help to generate ideas.

4. Getting 'future ready' is not just about study, there are many other (fun) experiences students can gain while at university which will help to develop their interests and skills.
5. There are lots of services and resources around the university that can help – they should access them to discover the support available (see the 'useful resources' tab for pointers).
6. There might be setbacks along the way, it's important that they keep their options open and think about a Plan B.

Using the student action sheet

Based on your conversation, agree a **priority** and set a deadline in advance of your next meeting. These should be documented on the action sheet - print or email a copy to the student.

The priority should target a reasonably broad focus for development. For students who struggle to identify a priority, suggestions might include:

- investigating different career options;
- reflecting on interests, skills and aptitudes;
- gaining experience;
- making connections;
- preparing for applications.

While the adviser and student should work together to agree a priority, it is the student's responsibility to work out what actions they should take in order to address that priority. The adviser should be clear that the student is expected to create and document their implementation plan and to make useful reflections on progress using the action sheet, and to then bring this to their next meeting.

Student action sheet

Prioritise

Following the discussion with your adviser, what priority have you agreed?

Deadline: [Click here to select a date.](#)

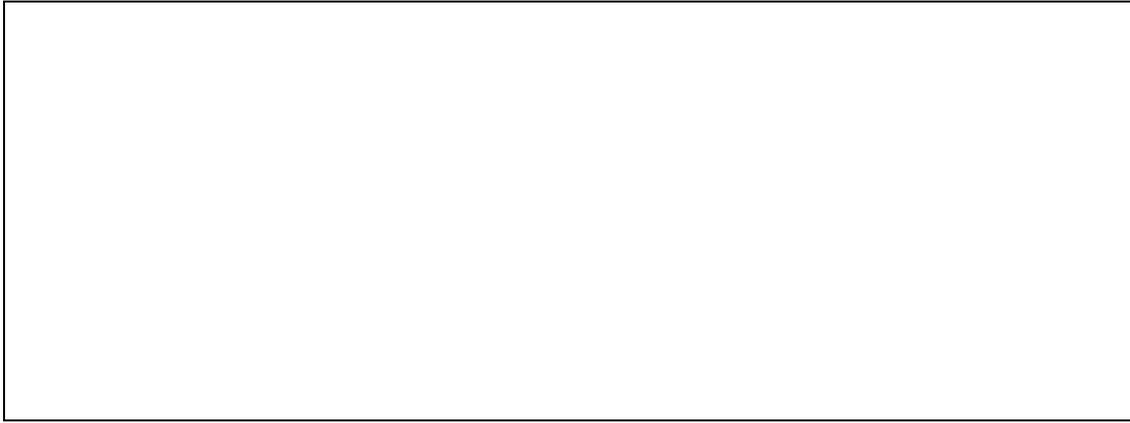
Implement

What actions do you plan to take to address your agreed priority?

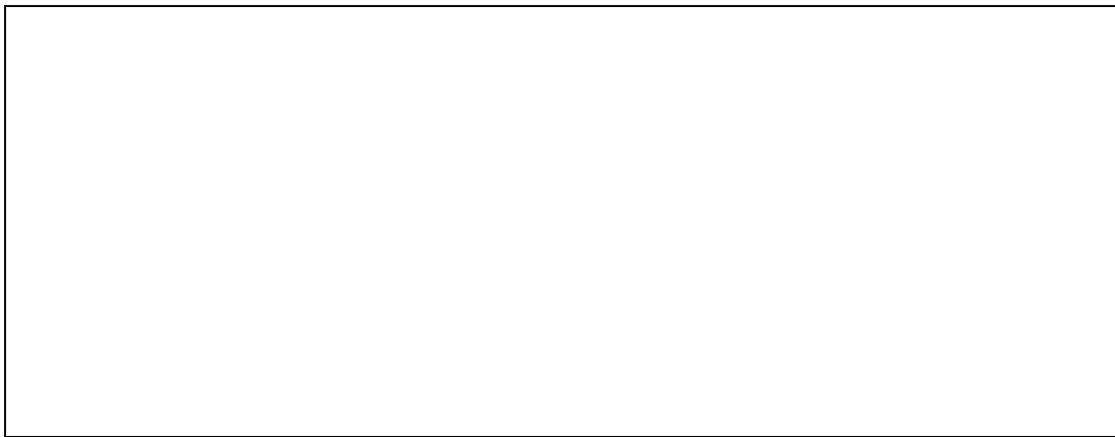
Reflect

What have you achieved?

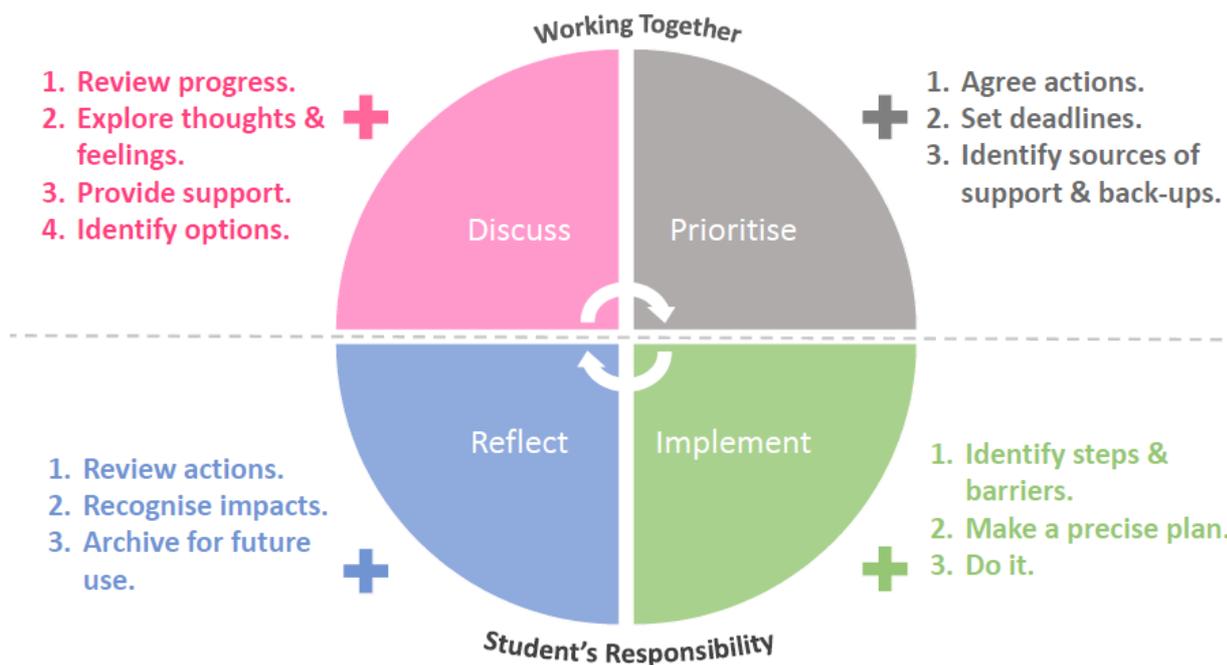
Did you face any barriers? Should you have done anything differently?



How has this helped you to prepare for your future?



Making the most of the toolkit



Using the model

The model aims to generate a constructive conversation which motivates and directs students to take action and encourages reflection on their development. The **Discuss** and **Prioritise** steps are completed by the student and adviser together, during a one-to-one advising meeting. The **Implement** and **Reflect** steps are undertaken by the student independently, and help to inform subsequent advising meetings. In this regard, the model is cyclical: following the first meeting and student actions, subsequent meetings will review and build upon progress made.

Discuss

The purpose of the discussion is to identify what stage the student is at in terms of thinking about and preparing for their future (particularly in the initial meeting), or the progress they have made since the previous meeting. It also serves as an opportunity to address issues around motivation and confidence which may act as barriers to progress.

The **Discuss** sheet provides advisers with a broad opening question to initiate discussion about the student's feelings, struggles, progress and plans for the future. The sheet also provides a list of prompts, as well as tips for successful conversations. During follow-up meetings this discussion will be based on the actions and progress documented in the student's action sheet, and on any struggles they've had in trying to implement their plans.

Some students will approach the end of their degree fully prepared to achieve their career goals, but others will still lack confidence and be unclear about what they want to do or how they're going to move on after graduation; different students will need different help through use of the toolkit. For those with no clear goals and poor motivation or confidence to make progress in preparing for their future, the discussion should focus on encouraging them, and helping them to make plans and engage in activities that will help them to build more self-efficacy. For those who are already focussed on a goal and engaged in action to achieve it, the discussion should be used to reflect on progress, identify gaps in preparation and provide support in response to set-backs or lapses in motivation and confidence.

Crucially, the adviser is not expected to know about different careers. Indeed, exploring and researching their options is the responsibility of the student. Instead, demonstrating interest and asking the student about their plans is the adviser's role. This may highlight that students need to do more to ensure that they fully understand what a career of interest entails and how to pursue it.

Some students will not engage with this process, failing to take any action in advance of follow-up meetings. Whilst this may be frustrating, it also presents an opportunity to explore the reasons for their failure to engage. This is how the cycle is designed. Where students lack motivation, the discussion should highlight the value of taking early action, and the importance of engaging in activities that will help them to explore their options. Ongoing meetings can then be used to review progress in their self-motivation and will hopefully provide some impetus. However, for others, a failure to make progress may reflect a lack of confidence to carry out certain actions (e.g. joining societies, accessing support or gaining workplace experience) or a more general sense of unease about the prospects of life after university. In these cases, the discussion should provide reassurance, emphasising their existing skills, knowledge, aptitudes and accomplishments; or, where appropriate, signpost students to support services that can help them further.

Prioritise

Before closing the discussion, the student should be asked to identify a priority focus for development. Together, the adviser and student should agree what would be appropriate and constructive, given the preceding discussion (some suggestions are provided on the **Discuss** sheet).

The priority should be documented on the action sheet, along with a deadline set in advance of the next advising meeting. Obviously, this is also a good time to set a date for the next meeting. The adviser should provide a copy of the action sheet to the student, and be clear that the expectation is that they should complete it and bring it to their next meeting, or email it to the adviser in advance. Advisers should also explain what is required in each section of the action sheet, using the completed examples provided in the toolkit. Getting students to complete the action sheet is not just a box-ticking exercise. Research shows that planning

small, practical steps and reflecting on successes and obstacles helps to boost confidence and self-efficacy, both of which are key to successfully achieving broader goals.

Implement

This step should be carried out by the student independently. The aim is to encourage the student to break down the broad priority set during the meeting into a series of practical actions. They should use this space in the action sheet to document the actions they intend to take. Advisers should instruct students that it is expected that they will find resources and sources of support in implementing these plans, for example through the careers service, peer networks, employers, voluntary organisations, etc. It is important that students are given responsibility for identifying these actions and seeking other sources of support in order to build their self-efficacy in this area. However, for students who have made little progress by the follow-up meeting, the discussion could consider whether there were weaknesses or gaps in this implementation plan and how they can construct more effective plans.

Reflect

This step encourages students to consciously evaluate what they have achieved, the success of their approach and the broader progress that they have made in preparing for their future. If carried out well, reflective practices can motivate personal development, build self-efficacy and confidence, highlight barriers to success and help to modify future behaviour. However, it does take practise to develop this skill. During follow-up meetings, the adviser should encourage the student to provide more depth where the reflection provided is limited or superficial. Where this discussion highlights barriers to progress, the adviser and student should consider how these could be addressed in the future.

Supporting materials

The next section is designed to help you use the toolkit and give an idea about useful resources that could be added to the toolkit to assist academic advisers in giving advice and signposting students to relevant information.

In this section:

- examples of completed student action sheets;
- a guide to completing the reflection on the student action sheet;
- general links to web resources;
- employability skills portfolio.

Student action sheet

Prioritise

Following the discussion with your adviser, what priority have you agreed?

Get some experience relevant to pursuing teaching as a career.

Deadline: 1st December

Implement

What actions do you plan to take to address your agreed priority?

- Work out when I regularly have free time.
- Find local schools that I could get to easily.
- Write to schools asking if they have any opportunities.
- Arrange experience.

Reflect

What have you achieved?

- Applied to be a tutor with 'Explore Learning'.
- Prepared CV and covering letter, attended interview.
- Secured a paid (!) post.
- Completed training.
- Allocated a group of three tutees.
- Tutoring for two weeks (ongoing)

Did you face any barriers? Should you have done anything differently?

Had no success with letters sent directly to schools – they only give experience to students on teacher training courses. I should have gone to the Careers Service earlier – they told me about different tutoring schemes and helped with my application.

How has this helped you to prepare for your future?

I definitely don't want to be a teacher! I just don't have the patience to work with children. Although it means I need to explore other options, I suppose it is at least useful to exclude this.

I really enjoyed the training – we worked in groups to come up with strategies for dealing with different situations. I like the idea of working as part of a team, tasked with problem-solving – no idea what job this might be though.

I'm glad I've had experience of applying for a role – my CV is started and the interview wasn't terrible. However, they did ask questions I didn't have answers for ('think of a situation where...') so I need to do more research on what they might be looking for in future.

I'm more aware of the help available via the Careers Service.

Student action sheet

Prioritise

Following the discussion with your adviser, what priority have you agreed?

Find out about marketing as a career option.

Deadline 4th May

Implement

What actions do you plan to take to address your agreed priority?

Go to the Careers Service.

Read information about marketing.

Reflect

What have you achieved?

- Found out that marketing is a broad field with a number of distinct areas.
- Found out that a Masters course might be the best way to access a graduate level position.
- Found out about the option of internships.
- Signed up to be the publicity officer for the Hockey Society (I'm already a member of the team).

Did you face any barriers? Should you have done anything differently?

There's loads of information available online – I just needed to search for it. Realised I'd missed a big careers fair where I could have spoken with professionals working in marketing – I've put the next event in my diary and I'm going to prepare some questions before I go.

How has this helped you to prepare for your future?

I've realised I didn't actually understand what marketing involved. Now that I have a better idea, I think PR would be more rewarding than sales. It turns out that I already have some experience (I helped to publicise a charity game for my hockey team last year and did really well with spreading the word across social media) and I'm up for doing more of this (I've signed up to be the publicity officer). I hadn't appreciated that it might be useful to get a Masters, and I'm not sure I'll be able to afford this straight after graduation (or if I can be bothered with more study). I'm really keen to go for one of the marketing internships to see if there are other routes, or even just to earn some money and get more experience before committing to more study.

A guide to completing the student reflection sheet

This is to help students fill out the reflection sheet and prompt them to think about how their tasks went.

What have you achieved

- Did you learn anything about any broad career areas?
- Did you find out about specific careers you would be interested in?
- Do you feel more confident in knowing where you can get information from?

Did you face any barriers? Should you have done anything differently?

- Were there any challenges with planning your activity?
- Did things run smoothly when you carried out your priority?
- What did you learn about planning and organising your activity?
- How might you adapt to make your research or activity more effective next time?
- What the priority right? E.g., was it realistic? Did you stick to it or did you stray from it when you were researching?

How has this helped you to prepare for your future?

- Do you feel more prepared for life after university?
- Have you got a clear idea about what you might prioritise looking into further?
- Do you feel like you have a better understanding of what you could do as a result?
- Have you got a clearer picture about skills you might need for the area you are interested in?
- How do you think you could develop necessary skills?
- Do you feel confident that you can do what you need to do to realise your goals?

General links to web resources

Part of an academic adviser's role is to signpost to relevant information, as they cannot be expected to know everything themselves. Here are some ideas we have come up with during toolkit development which we hope would be useful for additional resources to support academic advisers signpost their students to further guidance.

HEA workstream

The HEA employability workstream is a useful starting point for literature on employability and also for networks of employability focused HE professionals and academics.

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/employability>

Institutional careers webpages

Professional institutes often have very helpful careers sections of their websites. They give details on how to apply for jobs in very specific areas, as well as a lot of information on further study. Good examples of these are the Royal Society for Chemistry and the British Psychological Society, but there are numerous others out there.

British Psychological Society <http://www.bps.org.uk/careers-in-psychology>

Royal Society for Chemistry <http://www.rsc.org/careers/>

External job search websites

We found that many students do not engage with the Careers Service properly. We wanted to make Academic advisers aware of different ways students who did not want to connect could still effectively research for jobs.

There are numerous websites with careers advice and guidance helpful for students.

PROSPECTS (<http://www.prospects.ac.uk/index.htm>) offers advice and advertises graduate jobs and voluntary experiences as well as more general careers advice and possible choices related to degree courses.

GRADUATE FOG (<http://graduatefog.co.uk/>) is a careers advice service 'for graduates who hate careers advice' It has useful blog and advice sheets as well as job hunter forums and job vacancies.

TARGET JOB (<https://targetjobs.co.uk/>) is a useful search engine for graduate level jobs. It also offers career advice.

Internships

Prospects have some really useful advice to help students identify what type of internship they want (in terms of summer placements, work shadowing etc)

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/work_experience.htm

Nearly all job recruitment websites (see above) will also have a section for internship vacancies. University Careers Services often advertise for them too.

It is important to stress that many internship vacancies are never advertised, and this is where it is really important to start building their own networks of people who could help them out by offering them some experience.

Many internship providers have come under fire for exploiting the work of their interns, using unpaid internships as 'cheap labour'. Intern aware is a campaign group to help interns understand what is and isn't acceptable behaviour from employers.

<http://www.internaware.org/>

Voluntary work

There are many different places where a student can find out about voluntary opportunities. In the first instance, it may be worth the student going to the students union to explore the volunteering advertised. There are some useful websites for finding voluntary roles.

Do it – be more <https://do-it.org/>

Charity Job <http://www.charityjob.co.uk/>

Postgraduate study

This is where academic advisers might feel most confident on giving advice, but Postgraduate Search is a useful website for students to explore further study.

<http://www.postgraduatesearch.com/>

LinkedIn

LinkedIn can be an invaluable tool for students looking for jobs. It can also be useful for academics who want to keep in touch with their alumni. These kind of networks should be able to help academic advisers give students better guidance on potential career paths. However, LinkedIn is very different to other forms of social media, so some advice for students and academics on how to create profiles and navigate the site could be really helpful.

International students

International students need tailored information regarding job markets back home, or how to find out about visa regulations if they wish to stay and work in the UK. Remember too that in meetings there might be cultural nuances that might pose a barrier to conversation between an academic adviser and their student. We would recommend talking to your Careers Service and the international office to design extra information to enhance international student's employability.

The UK council for International Student Affairs is a useful website that offers general advice to international students.

Disabled students

Disabled students face more potential barriers to employability. Most Careers Services have specialist advisers to help disabled students with employability. It is worth making academic advisers aware of additional support for students with visible and non-visible disabilities.

Employ-Ability offers advice and support for students with disabilities in the job market.

<https://www.employ-ability.org.uk/>

Employability portfolio

Part One: Background information

Do you have a clear career goal? Yes/No

If yes – what is it? (eg clinical psychologist; advertising; business grad scheme; civil service)

If no – are there areas that you know you are definitely not interested in? (eg I know that I don't want to go into 'business')

What are your personal strengths? (Describe yourself – tell me who you are. You have three adjectives to tell me your core strengths).

What are your weaknesses – or your main weakness? (Avoid 'perfectionism' – it is overused)

How can you improve or 'work around' your weakness(es)? (This is important – recognising that you have weaknesses is fine; seeing how you can improve them is better!)

Skills/competencies/qualities	<u>C</u>ontext Succinctly describe the situation and task *what*	<u>A</u>ction *How* did <u>you</u> meet the goal & *Why* did you choose to do it that way?	<u>R</u>esult What did <u>you</u> achieve?	<u>R</u>eflect What went well? How could you improve next time?	*Source of Evidence
Personal					
Confidence	Do you have a 'can-do attitude' about most things?				
Self-efficacy	Can you turn your 'can-do' attitude into appropriate and effective action?				
Resilience	Can you 'bounce back' after a setback; i.e. reflect and see a different path?				
Energy & enthusiasm	Do you look for new things to do and ways to improve?				
Flexibility & versatility	Can you respond to change and find new ways of working to fit				

	an unforeseen challenge?				
Calm under pressure	Can you stay focused when deadlines are approaching or multiple tasks are competing for your attention?				
Interpersonal					
Collaborative/ Team-working	Are you someone people want to work with? Do you 'work well' with others?				
Listening	Do you take the time to hear others' ideas and opinions?				
Communication	How effective are you in explaining your point and making yourself heard?				
Leadership & influencing	Do others look to you to take a lead and respond positively to your suggestions?				
Professional					

Thinking – analytical / judgement	Can you see the essence of a problem or issue – do you `see the big picture`?				
Thinking – problem-solving	Are you task/ solution-focused ?				
Time management & organising	Are you comfortable and confident in your ability to juggle multiple tasks effectively?				
Knowledge	Are you confident that you have the right knowledge for the job?				
Sector/client awareness	Do you keep up with developments in the sector you are interested in?				

Part Two: Skills Profile

For each skill/competency/quality, you should think of a time when you have demonstrated this skill/competency/quality and describe your experience in terms of the Context, Action, Result, and Reflection. You should also indicate the nature of the source of evidence*

You should try to answer each section using a *maximum of 150 words for each skill or competency* (there is no penalty for exceeding this – it is just a guide)

If you do not have any evidence for a particular skill/competency/quality you should leave it blank and address this in your action plan.

* **Source of evidence:** Education (E) ; Activities & Interests (I) ; Work Experience/Voluntary Work (W). Note: In the early stages of developing your portfolio you may find that many of your examples (sources of evidence) are taken from your academic experiences, but you should try to ensure that you can present examples from extra-curricular activities too. Employers tell us that 'generic' examples (for example using 'final year project' to demonstrate time management) does not allow students to stand out from the crowd because people tend to write very similar things (often been outlined in a curriculum handout). If you put E, I or W in the final column, you can see at a glance if you have limited sources of evidence across the range of skills.

****Note:** When filling in the table you may want to add skills that you think are particularly important for your chosen career. For example, if you want to become a teacher, you could add 'Guidance and Mentoring'; or if you want a career in marketing, you could add 'Client Focus/Awareness' or 'Media'

OR you can alter the wording to fit your career type. For example, you can alter 'Sector Awareness' to 'Commercial Awareness' if you want to employ for business graduate schemes. Or, to 'Policy Awareness', if you are applying for teacher training and want to refer to activities that you allow you to keep up with changes and debates in the education system.

Part Three: Aptitude

Many recruiters use aptitude and psychometric tests at the early stages of recruitment. You have access to resources to develop your skills and confidence in the aptitude testing domain. You should indicate how confident you are that you would successfully 'pass' the tests.

Aptitude assessments	Confidence rating
Verbal	Not at all confident / fairly confident with practice / confident / very confident/ don't know
Numerical	Not at all confident / fairly confident with practice / confident / very confident/ don't know
Abstract/logical	Not at all confident / fairly confident with practice / confident / very confident/ don't know

Situational judgement tests	Not at all confident / fairly confident with practice / confident / very confident/ don't know
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