

RESOURCES FOR STUDENT MUSICIANS - EDUCATOR GUIDE

Turning on the careers light

This is a crazy workshop and it explains why I keep a purple feather boa and a Viking helmet in the office! I have run this workshop with students in the arts, educations and the sciences, and it has terrific results every time. This is a wonderful workshop to run at the start of the academic year.

Perhaps the most important attribute for graduates is a willingness and ability to keep learning. This takes time to develop, but we can kick-start it with activities such as this one. The message for students is to think outside the square, to recognise that success means to be intrinsically satisfied with what you do, and to open every door by engaging with all their courses, career counselling sessions, work experience opportunities, etc.

Before the workshop, for which you need a couple of hours, ask students to look up the word 'doctor', 'artist', 'engineer' etc. in a dictionary. Use this as a springboard for an initial discussion. (Music students will have looked up the word 'musician' in Grove's Dictionary of Music and will have found that it isn't there.) Use the dictionary definitions as a prompt to talk about how students would define a professional for themselves.

If you are planning well ahead, consider integrating elements of 'Role of a musician' into a previous class. Both this and the dictionary definitions work well as a quick, online quiz with the students' input displayed on the screen, using a program such as [Hotseat](#).

RESOURCES FOR THIS ACTIVITY

Archive box, bags or packs containing an assortment of items. For example,

- Feather boa
- Viking helmet
- Sample contract
- First aid kit or band aid
- Blank business plan, business card, calculator, organiser
- Passport application form
- Grant application
- Marketing materials
- Telephone
- Teddy bear
- Apple



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- Beginner book or teaching schedule
- Blank diploma/certificate
- Crystal ball
- Some music notes/tools
- Toy trumpet
- List of personal attributes
- A scribe sheet per group, with two columns headed Role/Activity and Skills and attributes (a template of which is attached)

I use present bags, paper shopping bags, shoe boxes, etc. to gather the materials. It is more interesting if each group gets to open a package and it keeps everything together for the next time.

You can use just about anything. I always throw in something new and it's great to see what students make of it. However, some things are always there and have a particular purpose. For example, the feather boa might represent the passion that drives a career; the Viking helmet might represent strength; and the first aid kit might represent the need to stay physically and mentally well.

PROCESS

Hint: Groups of three students works best

1. Begin by asking students what they love to do. Give examples of your own likes and dislikes both within and outside of the profession, and students will join in with their own views.

I use this as a class discussion and (later) as a personal reflection. Questions posed for reflection:

- a. What is a "successful" musician to you?
- b. What skills and attributes are required to build and sustain this career?

2. Activity to get everyone loosened up and thinking:

Students divide a piece of paper into 4 boxes and title the boxes: skills, attributes, likes, and dislikes. They write 3 things in each box and then put the paper aside. No one else needs to see it.

Hint: Whilst they are doing this, do it yourself.

3. A package is given to each group, which has assigned a scribe.

Some packages relate most to skills, some to attributes, and some to activities or roles. Some are obvious and some less so. The challenge for students is to think about how each item relates to their current and future lives, and to write at least one word in each column of their scribe sheet.

After 5 minutes, the groups pass their package to the right. Continue until the groups have experienced several packages.

Hint: Suggest that students think about planning lives, rather than careers. This will encourage them to think broadly. Have a break after this activity.



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4. The words from the scribe sheets are now transferred onto a flip chart/ Ppt slide and everyone contributes and discusses what's there, often with much hilarity. Here are some real examples of student responses:

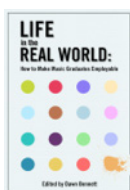
Viking helmet: being a good actor; commitment; costume/set design; strength; dedication; resilience; vibrant personality.

Teaching schedule: education; working well with others; confidence; patience; being loud; being able to explain what you know; making a living.

5. As a follow-up activity, send the results to students by email. Challenge them to consider each package and the words put against them, and to compare these to the words they wrote at Step 2. The reflective task, which doesn't have to be shown to anyone else, is to develop these boxes in light of the workshop and activities. Most students will swap words around and add more. This is a useful moment to explain that they will be swapping and changing throughout their careers. They can also mark areas that need development, those at which they are strongest, and so on. This leads to career action plans, with a follow-up activity available at [Career Action Plan](#).

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS, USING MUSIC AS AN EXAMPLE:

1. How does this object relate to life as a musician? (Always define a performer as a performer and a musician as someone who practices in music in one or more specialist roles.)
2. If you made a literal translation, try to find a metaphorical one this time (and vice versa). For example, an apple might be interpreted as something healthy to eat and also as an image that represents a teacher; a Viking helmet might have a metaphor of strength and also a literal interpretation as something to wear when singing Wagner!
3. Think about your experiences in music. How might some of these interpretations and words relate to your own experience? Common themes are travel, health and wellbeing, stress, theatre.
4. Share and discuss student responses in whatever ways are appropriate. As always, share your own experiences whenever you can.
5. This activity can also work very well with faculty, prompting them to think about their own diverse experiences and how these might inform the career development of students.



This resource comes from *Life in the Real World: How to Make Music Graduates Employable*, published by Common Ground in 2012. Purchasers of the book are permitted to download all of the tools and resources.

If you have yet to purchase the book, please order it from [here](#).

This resource was contributed by Professor Dawn Bennett, Curtin University.

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Role/Activity	Skills and attributes

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