Embedding employABILITY thinking: An overview

Professor Dawn Bennett
EmployABILITY is more than skills. We focus on ABILITY

“the ability to find, create and sustain meaningful work across the career lifespan.”

Our focus is the development of EmployABILITY thinking

EmployABILITY thinking engages students in their cognitive and social development as capable and informed individuals, professionals and social citizens.
EmployABILITY is not

- limited to skills
- the same as employment
- a process that stops at graduation
- a job
- developed exclusively in the workplace (WIL)
EmployABILITY thinking is a strength-based, metacognitive approach delivered by the non-expert within the existing curriculum.
Our challenge is to overcome the challenges for educators:

- Lack of time
- Lack of resources
- Lack of expertise
EmployABILITY thinking parameters

• Free of charge;
• No extra time, resources or expertise for teachers;
• Validated measure in an online tool completed in <20 minutes, creating a student personalised profile report;
• Resources online, to enable greater access;
• Formative tool and resources;
• No surveys: students must get out more than they put in;
• Agentic approach to enable strategic and just-in-time learning;
• Resource-rich platforms for educators and students;
• Research enabled.
Why is employABILITY so important now?

- Shifting large corporations and more SMEs
- Virtual workplaces
- Self-directed, highly cognitive work
- Distributed organisations
- Flexible patterns of work
- Multiple concurrent employers/clients
- Home-based, isolated work
Graduates are as employable as ever

Australian graduate employment rates and GDP 1985ff (ABS data)
However, graduates’ work is increasingly complex

- Medical studies
- Civil engineering
- Mechanical and industrial engineering
- Nursing
- Business and management
- Teacher education
- Computer sciences
- Communication and media studies
- Language and literature
- Other natural and physical sciences
- Biological sciences
- Performing arts

Types of work
- Full time
- Part-time
- Self-employed

Australian Destinations Survey 2013, raw aggregated data provided by the Australian Government (Bennett, Richardson & MacKinnon, 2017)
Students start by completing the online tool.

Students decide whether or not to include their responses in the research database.

Responses are anonymised; each participating institution has ethical approval to work with the anonymised data from their students.

Research is cohort- or program wide and, in some cases, longitudinal.
The measure is grounded in social cognitive theory and includes the following considerations:

- Self-management and decision-making (self and career, self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, self-esteem);
- Professional identity construction related to academic work and future work;
- Person-centred conceptualisations of self and employability including the citizen-self;
- Emotional intelligence; and
- Self-assessment of learner and graduate skills/attributes.

Students also respond to five open-ended questions about work experience, work and study intentions, their degree program and their motivations.

The online tool incorporates a validated measure known as Literacies for Life© (L4L), Bennett (2017)
The profile tool creates a personalised profile report

How do I use this profile?
First, explore the interactive Literacies for Life model. Next, use this personalised employABILITY profile to explore each of the Literacies for Life in turn.

Your profile includes reflective questions and links to employABILITY student resources. There is no right or wrong way to use the resources; take your time and focus on what is interesting and important to you right now.

The questions and challenges are designed to help you understand and develop each literacy. Each one refers to a crucial facet of graduate success.

Answer the reflective questions alone or with peers, and use your responses as the basis for discussion with career advisors, lecturers and people in industry.

Student starter kit:
Personalised employABILITY profile

Profile prepared for: Sample student report
Date: 22/03/2019

Literacies for Life
Developing Employability Initiative
Curtin University, Australia

Sources of advice
Great sources of advice: The university's careers service and student support office, program coordinators, counselling services and trusted members of your personal and professional network.

Would it help to read about careers in your field? If so, click here to find career stories. Before you read the career stories, make a note of the things you would like to look out for.

Make it count!
Each employABILITY student resource includes a section titled Make it count! The Make it count! section prompts you to take what you developed in the resource and transfer it to your studies, everyday activities, career planning, CV or professional portfolio.

Collect evidence at every opportunity and add it to your portfolio and CV so that you can find what you need when it comes to assessing your progress.

Unsure about professional portfolios?
There are many free portfolio websites and programs, such as Adobe Portfolio. Your institution may also have a commercial portfolio platform which you can access for...
EmployABILITY thinking is illustrated as a simple chart

My results

The radar or web chart below illustrates your self-assessment in each of the six Literacies for Life, arranged radially around a central point. The closer the shading comes to the outside of the chart, the higher you self-assessed in that literacy.

Your self-assessment relates to your confidence. It will change according to your circumstances and experiences, so use it as a prompt for analysis and action rather than as a score card.
Basic literacy 3: Using digital technologies for work and learning

Digital literacy involves finding, using and disseminating information in a digital world.

- How confident are you in learning and using the digital technologies associated with your studies?
- How proficient are you at using digital sources to gather reliable information about career opportunities?
- How confident are you when interpreting large datasets?
- How aware are you of your online presence and the messages it gives to others?

Beside your studies, what are you doing to enhance your employability?

You answered a similar question in the self-assessment tool. This is what you wrote.

I am attending industry events aimed at students to broaden my knowledge and meet professionals in the industry.
Resources are embedded to ensure easy access

aspects of your employABILITY?

- To what extent will your university program prepare you for graduate life?
- What new opportunities can you access through your institution?

EmployABILITY development is a partnership. What are you doing to develop your employability?

Think of something you could do in the next 30 days and commit to it!

Note the common themes and remember to collect evidence as you go.

- Refine and retain great assessment pieces
- Ask for testimonials and references when you work or volunteer
- Collect certificates
- Digitise media releases

And remember, keep the evidence in your portfolio.

These text boxes link to embedded resources

What are your employability strengths?

Notes
Cohort summaries for teachers illustrate student thinking

We just arrived! We have lots to learn.

We are really keen to be engineers.
Weighted word clouds help inform discussion

Beside your studies, what are you doing to make yourself more employable?

For how long do you intend to work in your discipline?
We created separate spaces for educators and students

Educator site: https://developingemployability.edu.au/
Student site: https://student.developingemployability.edu.au
There are 70 student resources and almost 60 educator guides on the two sites. Everything is shared under a Creative Commons license.

Data from the tool is creating a unique picture of student thinking and confidence. Collaborators are encouraged to join the international cohort of researchers.
Every student resource includes a ‘make it count’ box which challenges them to take their learning forward, collect evidence or reflect.
The 10-step employABILITY process

1. Register with the EmployABILITY Development initiative;
2. Engage with the LinkedIn Community of Practice and the careers service;
3. Upload the student online self-assessment tool to LMS;
4. Incorporate the tool as an assessment item, required reading or class activity;
5. Identify a single employability touchpoint where employability thinking can be made explicit (one point per unit);
   - For a teamwork activity or assignment, add the teamwork resource;
   - For a placement or industry visit, add this careers panel resource;
   - For a reflection, add this critical reflection resource;
   - For a mock job application, add this cover letter resource.
6. Students create a personalised employability profile using the online self-assessment tool, (15-20 minutes).
   - The tool is part of the Student Starter Kit;
     Create your own personalised profile (write “test” where it asks for a student number).
7. Use the resources at each touchpoint;
8. Pass on the process to a lecturer who will teach at least some of the students the following semester;
9. Encourage students to reflect on, review and re-create their profiles and thinking each semester;
10. Engage with the data to identify areas of need and interest and to underpin educational research.
How to incorporate employABILITY thinking

EmployABILITY thinking touchpoints are places in the existing curriculum where students make links between their learning and their future lives and work. The touchpoints need no extra time, resources or expertise.

First, we look for a touchpoint

On successful completion of this unit students can:

1. Interpret spatial design and place making through conjectures in response to site opportunities and constraints
2. Generate ideas and concepts as the basis for designing small projects in terms of space, form and structure
3. Explore, interpret and synthesis space, form and inhabitation, recognising human culture as manifest in the built environment
Example 1: first year planning students

In this case, we can use an existing reflection task as an employABILITY thinking touchpoint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Value %</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
<th>Unit Learning Outcome(s) Assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment schedule</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Value %</td>
<td>Date Due</td>
<td>Unit Learning Outcome(s) Assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>0 percent</td>
<td>Week: 2, Day: Wednesday 7 March Time: Noon.</td>
<td>1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>50 percent</td>
<td>Week: 10, Day: Monday 30 April Time: 4 pm</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>50 percent</td>
<td>Week: 14, Day: Monday 28 May Time: 4 pm</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example 1: first year planning students

We can upload an educator guide for lecturers and tutors.

Maximise learning with critical reflection

What is critical reflection?

Critical reflection will help students get the most from their learning experiences, from a teamwork assignment through to a formal work placement or an activity that didn’t work out.

Students need to learn how to challenge their conscious and unconscious values, beliefs and assumptions. Fisher (2010, p. 321) defines these as follows:
Learn from your experiences with critical reflection

Should I use this resource?

Yes! Critical reflection will help you get the most from your learning experiences, from a teamwork assignment through to a formal work placement or an activity that didn’t work out. Critical reflection strategies can be the key to better results and more confidence. They can save you lots of time by focusing your energies on what matters. The ability to reflect critically is also often tested in interviews by recruiting firms and employers, so pay this some attention!

What is critical reflection?
Strategy 1: Strands of reflection

This strategy uses a model originally developed for surgeons. The model relates to critical incident analysis. When using this template, organise your reflection into the four, broad strands with a heading for each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factual strand: Description of event</th>
<th>What happened?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What did you feel like, think and do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were the key moments (positive and negative)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why were those moments key?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective strand: Reflect on the experience as a whole</td>
<td>In retrospect, what would you change, and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What did you learn about yourself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What did you learn about other people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What new understandings arose from the experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-stratum strand: Understand your values, beliefs</td>
<td>What have you learned about being a member of your profession or discipline?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The resource gives students 6 templates for critical reflection, each of them linking the reflective task with their future lives and work.
Example 1: first year planning students

The templates are informative and use plain English.

Strategy 3: Critical reflection using Smyth’s reflection on action

Strategy 3 uses Smyth’s (1989) framework for ‘reflection on action’. The framework prompts us to understand our experiences at an individual level and in relation to the broader context.

In this example, the questions broaden the approach to incorporate our experiences before, in, and after action. Each heading on the left-hand-side might form a separate paragraph, or you may choose to create headings for each perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe</th>
<th>Inform (analyse)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What did I do?</td>
<td>• Why was I there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What did other people do?</td>
<td>• What was I feeling at the start?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What went well, and not so well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What was I feeling afterwards?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confront yourself</td>
<td>• What was I trying to achieve?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example 2: second year pharmacy students

We look for a single touchpoint.

through the assurance of learning processes in each unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On successful completion of this unit students can:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Discuss and demonstrate effective communication strategies to counsel patients and collaborate with health care professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Discuss risk management in the provision of pharmaceutical services and demonstrate accuracy in fundamental pharmaceutical calculations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Recognise the signs, symptoms, and complications of common dermatological, eye/ear disorders and minor wounds presenting in community pharmacy and deliver effective patient-centred care in the provision of prescription and non-prescription medicines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Discuss and evaluate the provision of pharmaceutical services within the Australian legal and ethical framework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Example 2: second year pharmacy students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>26-Mar-18</td>
<td><strong>Medicines &amp; Poisons Act 2014 (SA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2-Apr-18</td>
<td><strong>Medicines &amp; Poisons Regulations (SA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>9-Apr-18</td>
<td><strong>Medicines &amp; Poisons Regulations (SA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>16-Apr-18</td>
<td><strong>Medicines &amp; Poisons Regulations (SA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>23-Apr-18</td>
<td><strong>Medicines &amp; Poisons Regulations (SA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>30-Apr-18</td>
<td><strong>Pharmacy Act &amp; Regulations (SA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7-May-18</td>
<td><strong>Code of Conduct &amp; Code of Ethics (SA)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>14-May-18</td>
<td><strong>Privacy &amp; Confidentiality (SA)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. OTC counselling role-plays
6. OTC counselling role-plays, dispensing authority prescriptions and safety net scenarios
7. Free dispensing practice, OTC counselling
8. OTC counselling role-plays, Portfolio Assessment 2: dispensing checks for legalities and PBS compliance, 1 dispensing activity
9. OTC counselling role-plays and wound care
10. Mock Part A of exam – OTC case scenarios, ethics case, Portfolio Assessment 3: Counselling assessment 10 mins

The role-play activity will work well.
Example 2: second year pharmacy students

We upload a student resource based on international students’ accounts of WIL placements. We ask students to consider people from other cultural backgrounds when they do their role-play activities.

Finding other cultures at home

Scenario 1

Below, an international male student refers to the supervisor in a GP-based pathology lab where he is a 1st year nursing intern. The student describes how the practice sessions at university differed from those in the workplace. In particular, he found it difficult to work with older clients.

This student perceived older generations with great respect; however, he found that clients were easily annoyed when he asked lots of questions. The student reflected on the difference an approachable supervisor would have on his ability to manage client liaison.

... when you’re practising with each other [in class], you kind of know the person... [but] on the placement you usually handle all the generations. You have different beliefs and values in the younger generation, so it’s kind of difficult really because what they’re saying might not be, you might not understand, not [be] on the same page ... they kind of get agitated a lot, quite easily, so it’s something that I have to kind of look closely ... so with all my powers and...
Example 3: second and third year music students

We look for a touchpoint and find an industry visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. 13 March</td>
<td>Beginning to understand the project and analyzing the project brief.</td>
<td>Live performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 20 March</td>
<td><strong>SITE VISIT - CITY RECITAL HALL</strong></td>
<td>Today's class will be at City Recital Hall to meet with the CEO,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further details will be provided in Week 2. This will be your <strong>only</strong> opportunity</td>
<td>and to ask questions directly. You are encouraged to meet in your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>only</strong> opportunity to ask questions directly. You are encouraged to meet in your</td>
<td>groups following the visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 27 March</td>
<td>Introduction to project management fundamentals, with emphasis on scoping and defining</td>
<td>Productive feedback and group communication styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the project.</td>
<td>Coach attends (in lieu week 3).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We upload a student resource which requires students to create 3 questions of their own before the visit. This becomes a ticket!

**Example 3: second and third year music students**

**STUDENT RESOURCE**

Sample questions

1. What do you wish you had learned when you were an undergraduate?
2. Where do you want to be in five years' time?
3. What do you want to be doing in five years' time?
4. What was your first paid job?
5. Since you started in your career, what was your worst ever experience?
6. If you won the lottery this week, what would you change about your work?
7. What did you do in the year after you graduated?
8. What skills do you think all people in your profession need?
9. What attributes do you think all people in your profession need?
10. What graduate study do you recommend, and why?
11. What do you most love about what you do? Why?
12. What are the negatives of being employed full-time?
13. If you could go back in time to when you were 20, what would you do?
14. What do you do to relax?
15. What do you recommend we do whilst we are studying, to get ahead?
16. What is your dream job?
17. What in in your profession do you hate doing, and how do you avoid it?
18. Do you have any regrets about your career so far?
19. If you had the keys to Dr Who’s TARDIS, where would you go and why?
20. Who are your heroes? And, who is the most useful person you’ve met in your career, and why?

**Careers Panel Ticket: What do you really want to know?**

To gain entry, write your three panel questions here or add them to your phone:

1. 
2. 
3. 

[ADMIT ONE]
Example 4: The group assignment

We look for a touchpoint and find a group project.

### Summative assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>GQ/LO</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group plan 2500 words</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1, 2, 4,</td>
<td>Week 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual statement 1500 words</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>Week 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Project Report 5000 words (or equivalent) including Group work assessment (10/30)</strong></td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 6*</td>
<td>Week 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentation 20 min</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2, 4,</td>
<td>Week 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Formative assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Assessor</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group work survey</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Self and peers</td>
<td>To provide an indicator of group effectiveness and detect any group dysfunction.</td>
<td>Week 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example 3: second and third year music students

We provide a teamwork resource and ask students to use this when forming and working with their groups. The resource includes a self-assessment.

Creating a high-achieving group

‘Creating a high-achieving group’ is a simple activity that will help you to pinpoint strengths, identify possible future directions, and perhaps learn a bit more about yourself. The activities listed in each module are designed to be completed in small groups.
Top tips for employABILITY development

- Consistently engage students; make it explicit!
- Consistently engage staff; make it explicit…..
- Start by embedding one touchpoint per unit
- Follow the 10-step process every semester (every 6 months)
- Link individual initiatives to create an integrated program
- Adopt a metacognitive, institutional definition of employability
- Share good practice, including co-curricular
- Look for opportunities such as program reviews and common cores
Articles are housed on the educator site.

**Journal articles**

**2017**

**2016**
Thank you! Please be in touch

Educator site: https://developingemployability.edu.au/
Student site: https://student.developingemployability.edu.au

Professor Dawn Bennett