

*Use the Most of Work
Learning:*

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Work Integrated Learning: Benefits for the Student **2**

Competencies **3**

- 1. Communication Skills 4
- 2. Self-Confidence 5
- 3. Customer Relationship Management 6
- 4. Enthusiastic Participation **APP**° 6

The following nine key competencies are derived from retrospective graduate feedback. Students in the work place should focus on developing these competencies if they wish to develop personally and professionally during their Work Integrated Learning experience.




Context

Communication includes speaking (e.g. one-to-one discussion, meetings, group forums, via telephone), writing (e.g. emails, letters, reports) and listening (i.e. with the intention of empathising with others).

It is worth remembering that during face-to-face contact, words only comprise 7% of the impression you make, whereas your tone accounts for 38% and your associated gestures account for 55%, e.g. eye contact, body language and handshake.

Hints and Tips for Students

- Make a good first impression by dressing appropriately, making eye contact and offering a firm handshake;
- Think about your audience because different people respond to different styles of communication;
- Use the English language correctly both in oral and written communication;
- Think of all written communication as a formal document, including emails, letters and reports;
- Rather than rely on email, endeavour to communicate in person, either face-to-face or via phone;
- When initiating conversation, always ask the respondent if they have a moment to talk;
- Seek opportunities to engage others in conversation, speak publicly or make formal presentations whenever possible;
- Know the name and role of the



“Relax and enjoy the experience rather than becoming overawed... and understand that asking questions is not a weakness.”

Hints and Tips for Students

- Before you start, work with your workplace supervisor to establish what is expected from you and the goals you are aiming to achieve;
- Attempt everything to the best of your ability, but don't forget to enjoy the experience;
- Focus on what you do know and how much you are improving every day, rather than what you don't know;
- Absorb carefully how your supervisor and those around you conduct themselves professionally;
- Learn what you can from others by watching and listening carefully – then ask questions if there is something you don't understand;
- Remember that asking questions is not a weakness because asking for help actually shows a willingness to learn;
- Request feedback and be prepared to take on constructive criticism without being defensive;
- Be open-minded about the new things you learn and the advice you are given because too much pride will inhibit you from trying new ideas;
- Reflect positively on your mistakes because nobody is perfect and throughout life we improve by reflecting on better ways of doing things.

Context

Self-confidence among students in the workplace is important because, having become used to the academic environment where their performance is quantified by grades, their performance in the workplace is subjective, i.e. based on the perception of others.

Newcomers to the workplace must therefore be patient and realistic in the knowledge that it is impossible for them to know everything about the organisation from the outset.



“Try to look through a different lens and put yourself in the shoes of the customer.”

Context

Success for all organisations is about pleasing the customer – either by the provision of an efficient service or an excellent product.

To please the customer, it is paramount to first understand their needs and desires. To elicit this information, organisations invest time, money and energy into nurturing their customer relationships. Students in the workplace must therefore understand the importance of interacting with each stakeholder group appropriately.

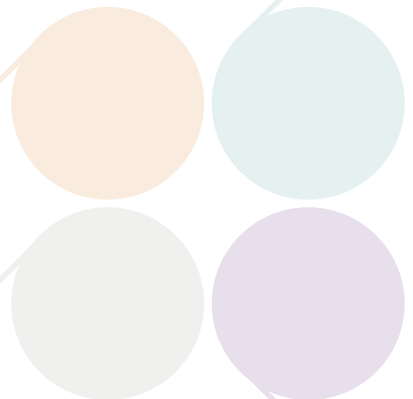
Hints and Tips for Students

- Ask your workplace supervisor to brief you on the customers of their organisation;
- Research your customers so that you are able to think about your role through their eyes;
- Remember that the better you know your customers, the more informed you will be to do your job;
- Attend as many events as possible to interact with your customers;
- Investigate as many sources as possible to understand what makes great customer service;
- Respect all customers and realise that your role only exists because you have them.



Context

'Customer Relationship Management' (CRM);





“Be familiar with Microsoft documents, including Word and Excel, as well as other computer programmes and computers in general.”

Context


Students in the workplace have a unique opportunity to apply theory to practice and develop real-life knowledge of the industry.

Work placements also encourage the development of business skills that would not ordinarily be found among students, e.g. Project Management and / or computer software skills.

Students in the workplace should take this opportunity to prepare themselves for life after graduation by absorbing as much business and industry knowledge as possible.

Hints and Tips for Students

- In preparation, research the organisation and the key people within the organisation;
- Ask your supervisor questions about the organisation that will help you to gain an overall perspective of the ‘bigger picture’;
- Seek opportunities to develop generic business skills, e.g. marketing and project planning;
- Familiarise yourself in advance with Microsoft programmes, including MS Word and MS Excel;
- Ask colleagues about working efficiently on computers, e.g. keyboard shortcuts and workplace related functions such as ‘out of office’ replies.



“Always think what else you can do in a situation: how can you make it better? What more can you do when you have ‘nothing’ to do?”

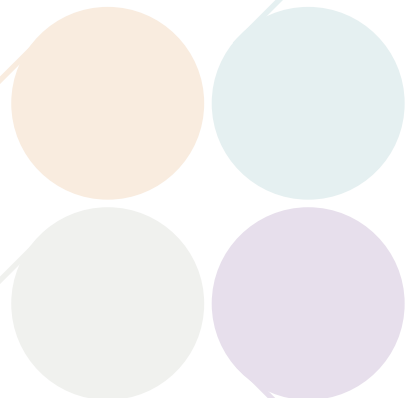
Hints and Tips for Students

- Set some personal and professional development goals that give you direction;
- Take responsibility for organising your own work placement with the help of your supervisor, or by leveraging your own contacts;
- Take ownership of your project(s) and use your initiative to develop your role;
- Challenge yourself to think creatively by drawing inspiration from a variety of sources, including what you have learned on-campus and, not least of all, your intuition;
- Think ahead so that you have some ideas about what to do next and don't always wait for instruction;
- Provide suggestions to your supervisor or think through some possible solutions if you think you have a problem;
- Ask questions and make suggestions to demonstrate that you are trying to think for yourself;
- Remember that future employees are often interested in examples of when you have used your initiative.

Context

Feeling confident to ask for help is a positive attribute, but becoming dependent on other people's instructions is not.


It is important to remain pro-active not re-active because employers value people who use their initiative to overcome problems and who think creatively (outside the box) to add value.





Context

Like all employees, students in the workplace will be required



“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know. Ask your contacts whether they can help you expand your personal networks.”

Hints and Tips for Students

- Introduce yourself to as many people as possible;
- Identify like-minded people that you might want to work with in the future;
- Keep a list of contacts and their profile, e.g. role, organisation, priorities;
- Research as much information as possible about new contacts so that you are able to leverage their association effectively in the future;
- Ask existing contacts if they are able to help you extend your network;
- Sell your capabilities modestly at every possible opportunity.

Context

Relationship building is important in most industries and therefore there are clear advantages to being well known for the right reasons.

Building a network of contacts is the best way to maximise your job opportunities in any career.

Context

Professional ethics is about respecting the culture of an organisation while maintaining your own personal integrity. At the very minimum, organisations expect employees to be honest, trustworthy, courteous and conscientious.

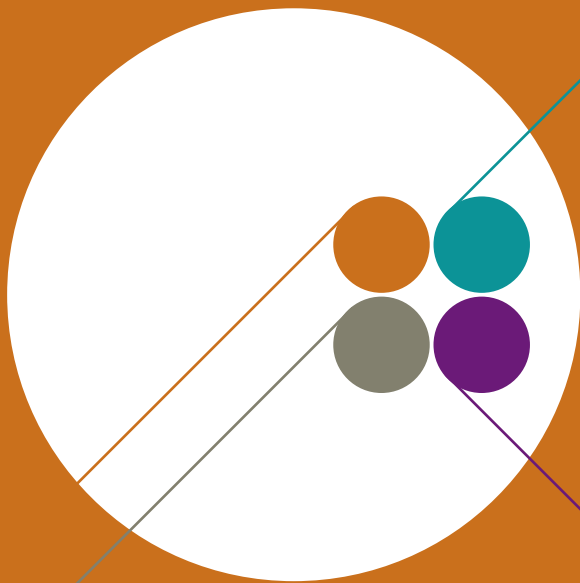
Hints and Tips for Students

- Be loyal to the organisation;
- Be professional by treating your work placement as you would a permanent job and realise that everything you do counts towards the impressions that you make on other people;
- Remember that bad impressions reflect badly on yourself and your university/ programme;
- Always be respectful of others because people always remember the way you made them feel;
- Use professional language because colloquial language may offend some people;
- Enquire about the values, codes



'Reflection' should be an explicit learning objective of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences. The objective of reflection is to learn from experience by reflecting in action (reflection which occurs in the midst of experience) and through reflection after an event (reflection on action). Students are advised to undertake the following sequential stages:

- **Work Description** – Describe your experience in detail, including: what you were doing; what other people were doing; the context of the event; what happened; and the overall outcome.
- **Feelings and Thoughts** – Reflect on your self-awareness by recalling what was going on inside your head, including: how you were feeling when the event started; what you were thinking about at the time; how the event made you feel; how other people made you feel; how you felt about the outcome of the event; and what you think about the event in hindsight.
- **Evaluation** – Consider what was good and bad about your experience.
- **Analysis** – Break the event down into component parts to be explored separately in detail, including: what went well; what you and others did well; what went wrong; and what you or others did that could be improved.
- **Conclusion and Synthesis** – Make some concluding judgments based on the information you explored during the 'analysis' stage.
- **Action Plan** – Think forward in anticipation of encountering a similar experience and reflect on what you would do the same and what you would do differently.



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