

What kind of graduate will thrive in the 21st Century?

THE ANSWER IS THAT ALL GRADUATES NEED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT. THIS NEEDS TO START TODAY. NOBODY ELSE WILL DO IT FOR YOU.

Develop a personal action plan. Some suggestions are detailed below:

1. Increase your self awareness.

- List your strengths and weaknesses. Continually update that list.
- Actively seek feedback from colleagues, staff, close friends, and family. Get outside your comfort zone.
- Notice which experiences really motivate you. Write them down.
- Make an effort to establish your underlying values and beliefs. You will not be comfortable if you do things which work against these values.

2. Gain relevant work experience

- This could be vacation work, voluntary work, work shadowing etc.
- Any work experience is useful. Customer contact work is particularly good.
- If you can't get paid work, voluntary work is always available just as useful.
- If you already have some work experience, try to make your next job more focussed on your intended career.
- Use family and friends first to find work. They are contacts you already have.
- Small business experience is good. You may be given more responsibility, and there may be a wider variety of jobs to be done.
- Spend occasional days work shadowing. This will help you to explore many more options.
- Think about what you have to offer your employer. This will enable you to sell yourself more effectively.

3. Develop skills for the workplace.

- They may be developed through the curriculum or in outside activities such as university clubs and societies.
- Become involved in teams.
- Take responsibility and initiative. Start something new and see it to completion.
- Make different kinds of presentations to different kinds of audiences, including factual and persuasive presentations.
- Make the most of opportunities to travel. Practise a language. Take an interest in the local culture, even the economy and politics.

4. Set aside opportunities to reflect on your learning.

- Use a learning log. Employers always look for evidence of skills learned.
- Seek support from colleagues or the careers service.
- Learn from both successes and failures. If an experience is painful, turn it in to something positive by learning from it. Recognise your own reaction to failures and disappointments, so you can cope better in future.

5. Use your contacts: develop the art of networking.

- Start with family and friends. Draw up a list of those who may be able to support you in your decisions or to help you find vacation work/work.
- When networking, ask people for advice. They are usually willing. Also ask them if they know of other people who may be able to help, and whether you can mention their name. Your network will expand and all kinds of help may result. Further details on networking is available in the Careers Centre.

6. Explore options.

- Read relevant newspapers and magazines. Talk to people (questioning, listening, recording). Visit the careers services. Use student and professional associations. Find out about the changing graduate jobs market. Visit careers fairs.
- Turn research into action. Be proactive. Set objectives and do some action planning.
- Make the most of applied projects. It can be a route into employment.

7. Practise negotiation skills.

- Negotiations occur all the time. Practise negotiation skills and recognise all the opportunities to develop them in everyday life.
- Recognise that negotiation within a long term relationship should aim for a win/win outcome.

8. Do something completely different.

- What makes you different from the other thousands of graduates?
- Perhaps you could learn a language, take up a distinctive hobby or set up a new voluntary organisation

9. Don't Panic! You don't have to be perfect.

- Tackle this action plan in manageable chunks and review your progress regularly.

Adapted from "Skills for graduates in the 21st Century": UK.

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