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Employability in Higher Education

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In the next 70 minutes ...

- What is employability in Higher Education (HE)?
 - Why is employability important?
 - How can we help our students to develop their employability?
 - Some examples of employability development activities that may be helpful for your own practice
 - Can we (should we) measure employability development?
 - Employability at the institutional level
- ... and possibly the opportunity for some origami!

What does the term employability mean to you?



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So what is employability in HE?

- There is a reason why it is called a slippery concept
- Is it just about being able to gain a 'graduate job'?
- What is a 'graduate job'?
- If a graduate is unable to secure a 'graduate job' on completion of their studies, have we as employability developers failed?

A key issue

Employment and employability are not the same (but the two concepts are often conflated). Perhaps because they both begin with 'employ'?

Some thoughts on this key issue...

- ‘Employability is not just about getting a job; it is about developing attributes, techniques, or experience for life. It is about learning, and the emphasis is less on “employ” and more on “ability” ...’ (Harvey, 2005, p13)
- ‘We interpret “employability” in terms of a graduate’s suitability for appropriate employment. It is quite different from actually getting an appropriate job, which is dependent on factors such as the state of the economy and patterns of discrimination in the labour market.’ (Yorke & Knight, 2007, p 158)

It is employers who convert graduate employability into employment

We as employability developers have no influence over:

- Type of Higher Education Provider attended
- Student location and mobility
- Subject of study
- Previous work experience
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Social class

(Harvey, 2001)

Further thoughts ...

‘There is a strong consensus that employability is about more than obtaining employment, and that Higher Education Providers should not focus simply on supporting students to get their first job but instead support them in building positive and meaningful careers and to participate meaningfully in society.’

(Artess, Hooley & Mellors-Bourne, 2017)

More recent debates further support the notion of employability as a process rather than as an outcome (Smith, Bell, Bennett & McAlpine, 2018)

Employability - definitions

- ‘Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose, secure and retain occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful.’
(Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; 2012)

More recent definitions stress the importance of meaningful work

- ‘Employability is the ability to find, create and sustain meaningful work across the career lifespan.’ (Bennett, 2018).

So to summarise ...

‘Although there is no globally accepted definition of the term graduate employability, most people now recognise that it is much more than ‘just teaching students how to write a CV’, nor is it simply about graduates ‘getting a job,’ or engaging in basic skills development. A distinction needs to be made between ‘employment’ as a graduate outcome, and the notion of ‘employability,’ which is a much broader concept as it relates to HE pedagogy, and to personal and career development activities. Employability is not something that a person obtains and gains for life, as they do for example with a degree qualification. Rather, it is a lifelong process.’ (Dacre Pool, Gurbutt & Houston, 2019)

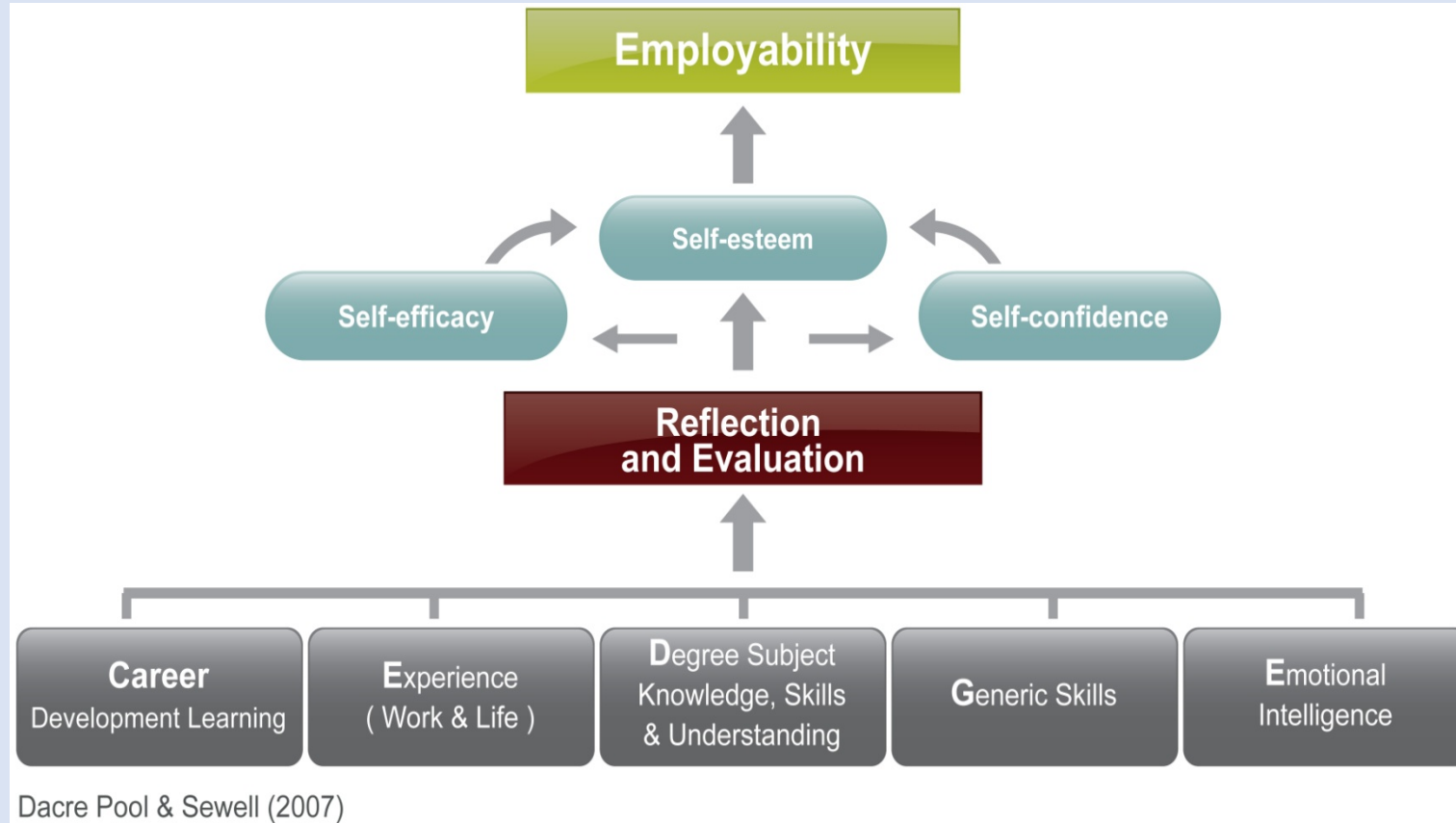
Why is employability development in HE important?

It is important for:

- Students – by coming to HE they are investing in their futures
- Supportive others – families and communities who support and invest in students and their futures
- Employers – have specific needs in terms of graduate knowledge, skills and attributes
- Higher Education Providers – excellence in graduate employment and employability enhances reputation and global standing
- The economy – vital to economic growth and supports both social and cultural development

(HEA/Advance HE, 2016)

The CareerEDGE Model of Graduate Employability



Career Development Learning

Experience (Work & Life)

Degree Subject Knowledge, Understanding and Skills

Generic Skills

Emotional Intelligence

Career Development Learning in HE

Curricular	Extra-curricular	Employer engagement
Career support within the curriculum – e.g. building career development learning into the learning outcomes of subject disciplines or teaching career management as a subject in itself (e.g. career planning modules)	Information and resources such as websites and career libraries	Careers fairs and employer talks
Personal development planning processes for students, e.g. encouraging students to engage in writing/journaling to aid their career reflections	Career counselling	Employer mentoring and e-mentoring
	Employability and careers awards	Placements and other types of work experience

Adapted from Artess, Hooley & Mellors-Bourne (2017)

Experience – work and life

- The Wilson review (2012) recommended opportunities be made available for all students to acquire work-related experience during their degree studies.
 - Placements (including sandwich degree programmes)
- But other types of work-related experience are also valuable
 - Part-time/Casual/Holiday work experience
 - Volunteering
 - Live projects to an employer's brief
 - Student club and society roles

Degree subject knowledge, skills and understanding

Generic Skills

- Sometimes referred to as transferable skills or core skills and the term 'skills' in itself is controversial. Some prefer the term 'graduate attributes'
- Employers list essential skills and attributes in their recruitment documentation, so it is important our students know about these and how to provide evidence to support how they have developed them
- Some examples that have appeared (and continue to appear) in various research publications over the last 30 years: communication, creativity, commercial awareness, flexibility/adaptability, numeracy, problem solving, team-working, time management, etc.

Emotional Intelligence

- EI has been a topic of much discussion and debate in the academic literature (e.g. Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2018)
- EI includes the abilities to perceive emotions (in ourselves and others) to access and generate emotions to assist with thinking and decision making, to understand emotions and to reflectively regulate emotions (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004)

Emotional Intelligence

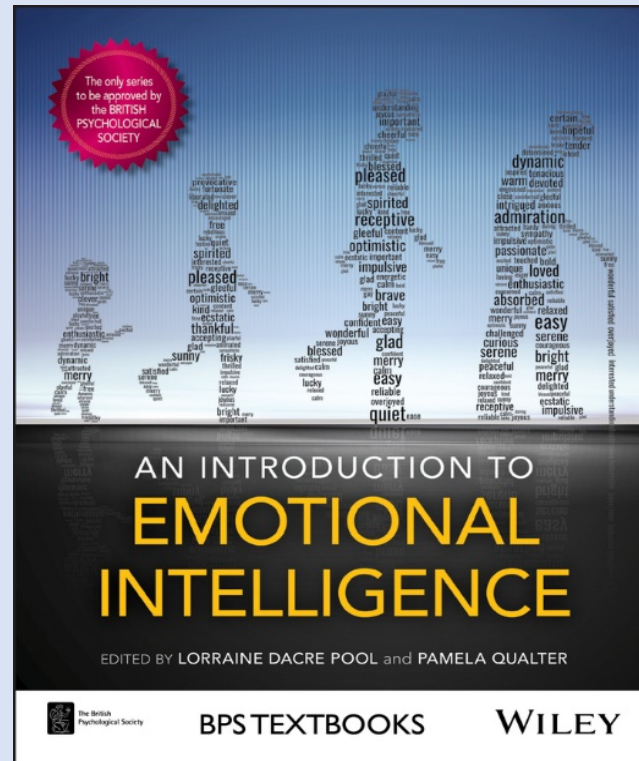
Higher levels of EI predict:

- Academic achievement (Qualter et al, 2012)
- Success in a job interview situation (Nelis et al, 2011)
- Performance in the workplace (Cote & Miners, 2006; O'Boyle et al 2010)
- More effective decision making (Yip & Cote, 2012)
- More effective leadership (Walter, Cole & Humphrey, 2011)
- Better social relationships (Lopes et al, 2004) which will help graduates to build their 'social capital'.
- Higher salary levels when examined ten to twelve years after entry to the workplace (Rode et al, 2017)

Emotional Intelligence

- It is something we can teach and our students can develop (Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012)
- Some evidence-based strategies that have the potential to enhance EI and resilience in students include: mindfulness approaches, reflective practices (e.g. narrative writing, logs, journals), peer mentoring/coaching and experiential learning (e.g. case studies, role-plays, simulations) (Grant & Kinman, 2013)
- Interdisciplinary activities may be particularly helpful in relation to the development of emotional competence (Pertegal-Felices et al, 2017)

If you are interested in the subject of
Emotional Intelligence



Text book – published 2018

Reflection

- ‘Reflection in education is a process through which learners look back on learning experiences and articulate them in some depth in order to extract the maximum learning gain.’
- Can be captured with e.g. reflective learning logs, reflective essays, portfolios/e-portfolios

(Artess et al, 2017)

Self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem

- Having an opportunity to access employability development activities and then reflect on them, should result in students developing their self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The concept of 'resilience' is closely linked.

The Employability Development Profile (EDP)

- Uses CareerEDGE as a practical framework to structure discussions around employability issues with students.
- EDP – a brief questionnaire that encourages students to identify their employability strengths and areas for improvement.
- It also encourages them to think of evidence to support their strengths and develop an action plan for making improvements.

CareerEDGE

Employability Development Profile

Name: Date:

UCLan Student Number: Year:
e.g. Year 1/2/3/Other

UCLan Email Address:

Tutor / Advisor:

Age: Gender:

Current Course Title:

Course Code
(if known):

My Current Career Aim is:

Are you interested in self-employment? YES/NO

Do you have an idea that might be developed into something of social, cultural or economic value? YES/NO

The UCLan - CareerEDGE: Employability Development Profile

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Neither agree or disagree	5 Slightly agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree
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Please respond to the following statements. This is a personal development tool that should help you and your tutor / adviser to identify possible areas for development over the next year. It is therefore important that you try to answer as honestly and accurately as possible.

Career Development Learning

1. I know what kinds of work would suit my personality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Apart from money, I know what I want from my working life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I know where to find out information about jobs that interest me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I know what I want to do when I finish my degree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I know what is required for me to successfully secure the sort of work I want to do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Experience Work/Life

6. I have a lot of work-relevant experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I can explain the value of my experience to a potential employer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Degree Subject Knowledge

8. I am satisfied with my academic performance so far	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My academic performance so far is in line with my career aspirations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Generic Skills

10. I have good oral communication skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I am good at making presentations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I am confident about my written communication skills for various audiences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I work well in a team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Neither agree or disagree	5 Slightly agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree
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14. I work well independently	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I am good at solving problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I have good planning and organisation skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I manage my time effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I am always open to new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I am prepared to accept responsibility for my decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I have a good understanding of how businesses operate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I am a confident user of information & communication technologies (ICT)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I am satisfied with my level of numeracy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I am good at coming up with new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I am able to adapt easily to new situations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. I can pay attention to detail when necessary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Emotional Intelligence

26. I am good at working out what other people are feeling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I am good at knowing how I am feeling at a given time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I am able to manage my emotions effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

My Score

Career Development Learning	Experience Work / Life	Degree Subject Knowledge	Generic Skills	Emotional Intelligence
<input type="text"/> Range: 5-35	<input type="text"/> Range: 2-14	<input type="text"/> Range: 2-14	<input type="text"/> Range: 16-112	<input type="text"/> Range: 9-21

© Lorraine Dacre Pool & Peter Sewell 2015

Now take a look at the way you have scored the questionnaire. For the items you have scored with a 6 or a 7, would you be able to demonstrate your abilities in these areas and give some good examples of these? Choose one of these highly rated areas and write how you would explain this to a potential employer.

Now take a look at the items you have scored with a 1, 2, 3 or 4. What action could you take to help you increase these scores to a 6 or 7? Choose one of these items and write your action plan for this below.

Origami Frogs

Please make an origami frog with the paper provided

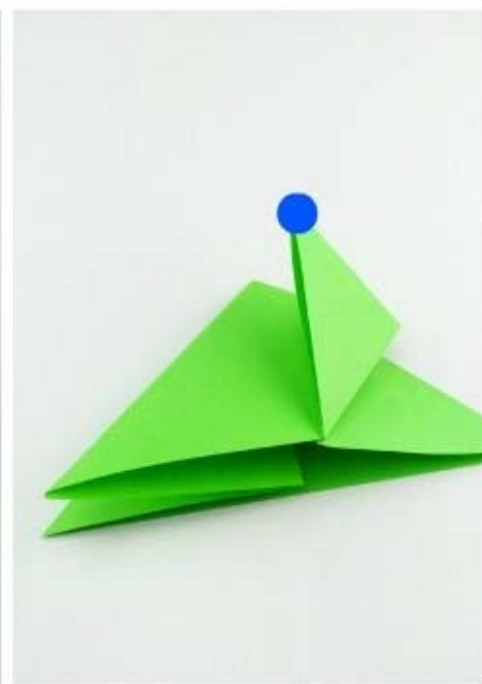
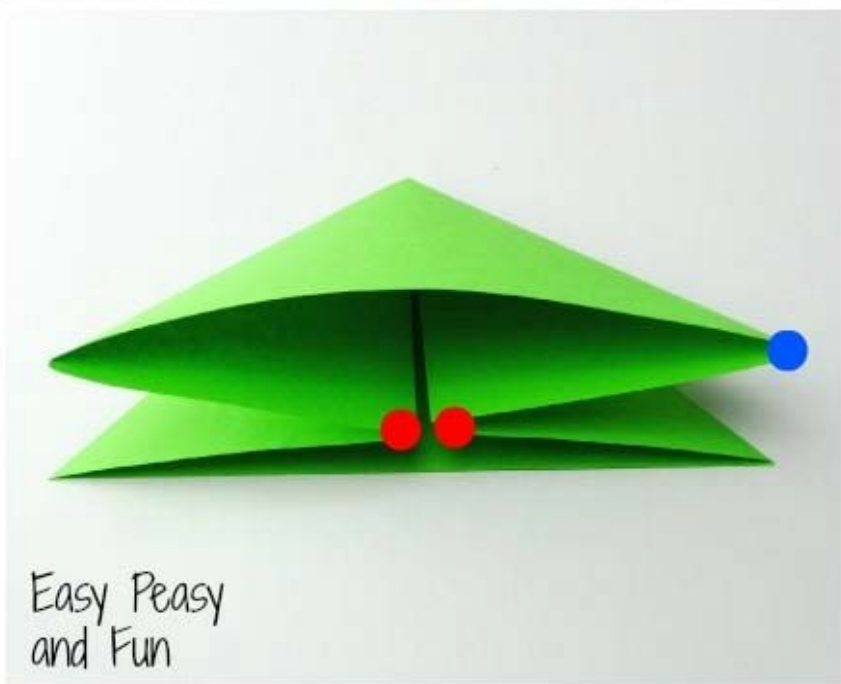
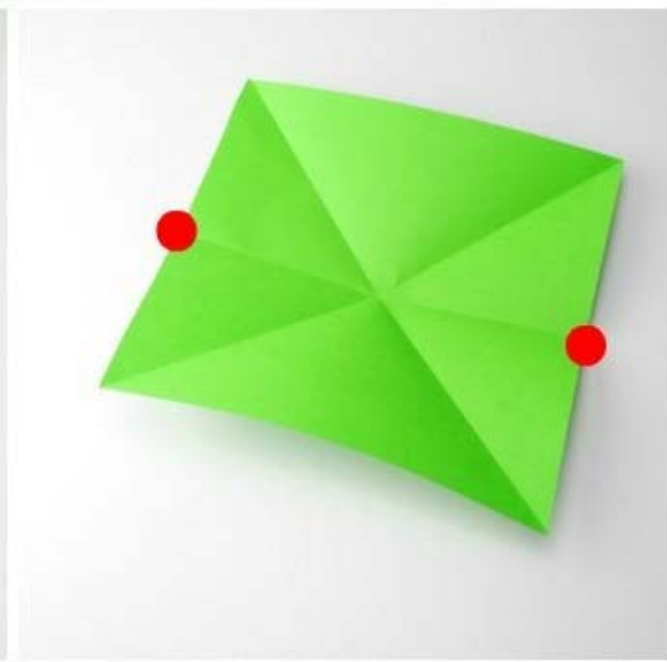
It must look like a frog and be able to jump

Please work individually

How confident are you in this task?



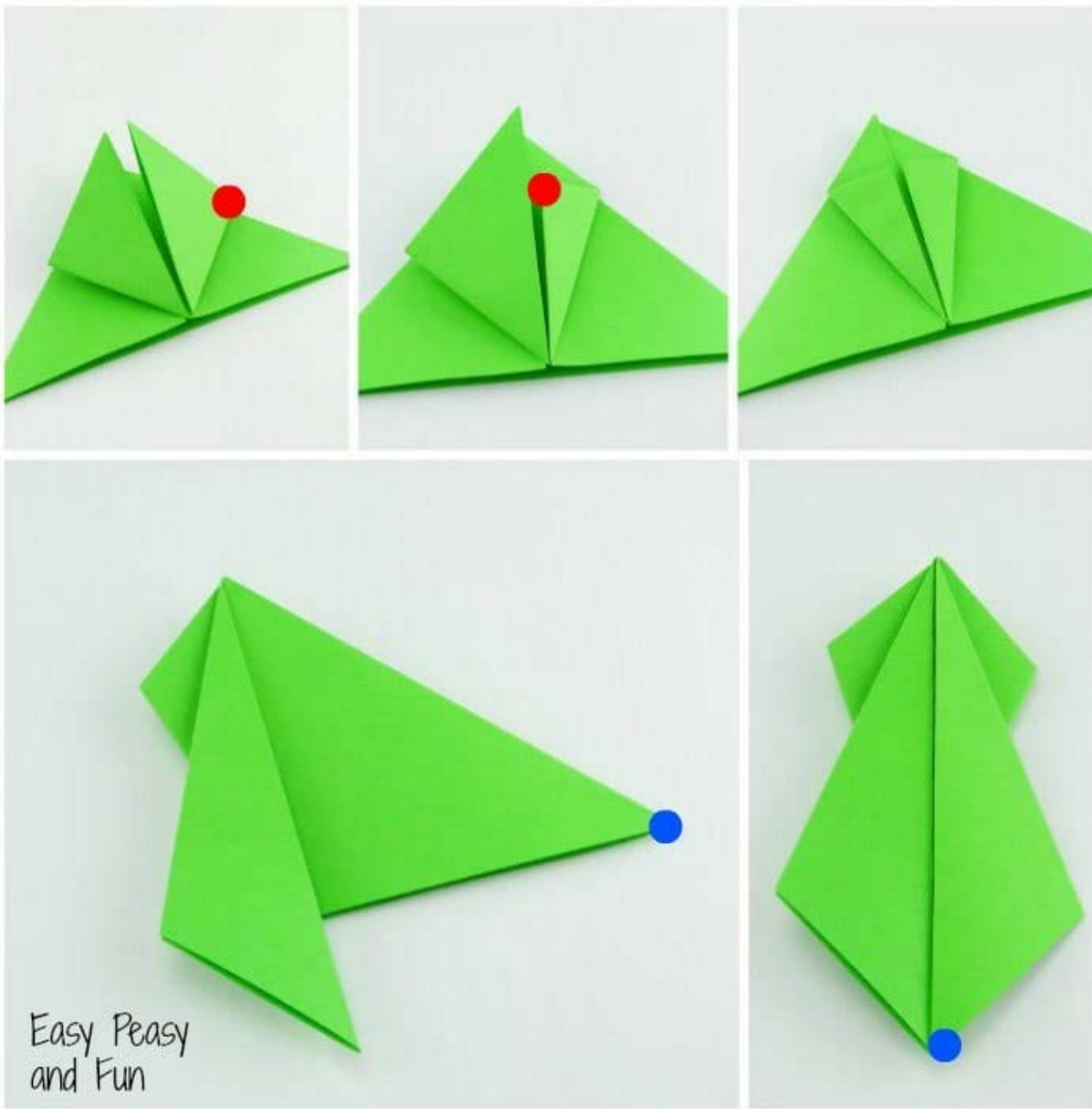
Picture source: Frog watch USA rpzoo.com



Start by folding the paper diagonally (both diagonals). Unfold and fold to half. Unfold.

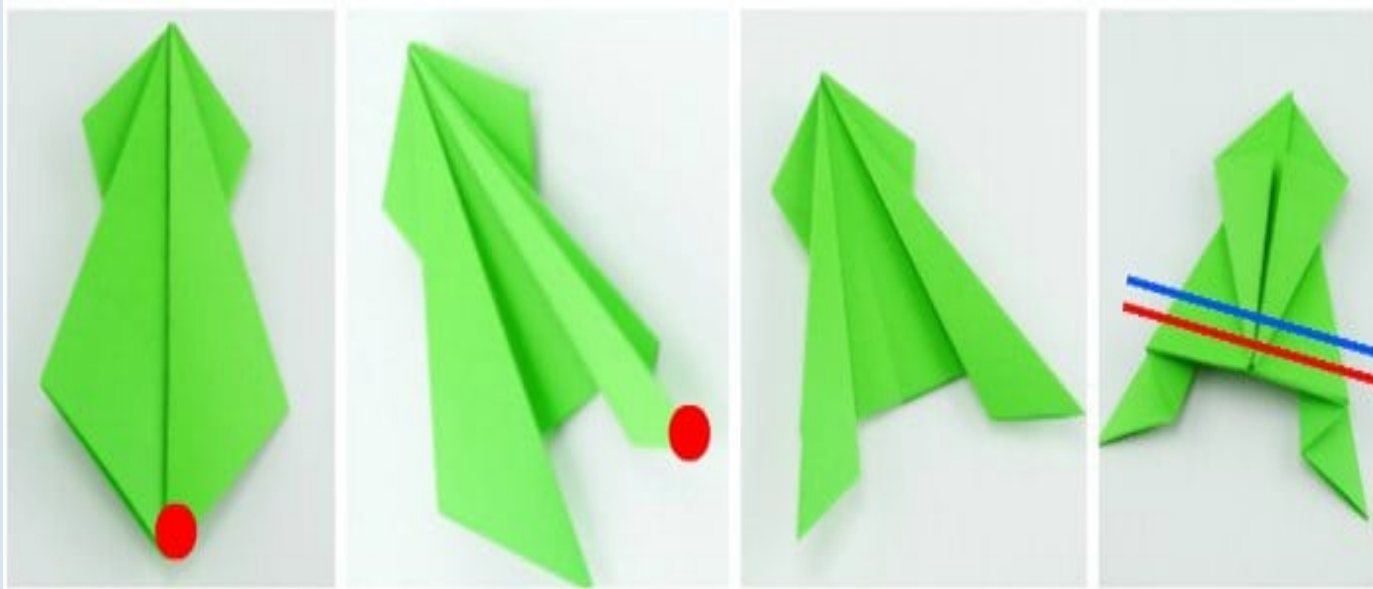
Next is a somewhat tricky part for soon to be origami masters – you have to fold the parts that are marked with red dots on the picture above towards the centre – getting them in the position showed in the photo above (you'll get a triangle shape).

Next fold the corner of the triangle (marked with a blue spot) towards the top of the triangle. Do the same with the other corner.



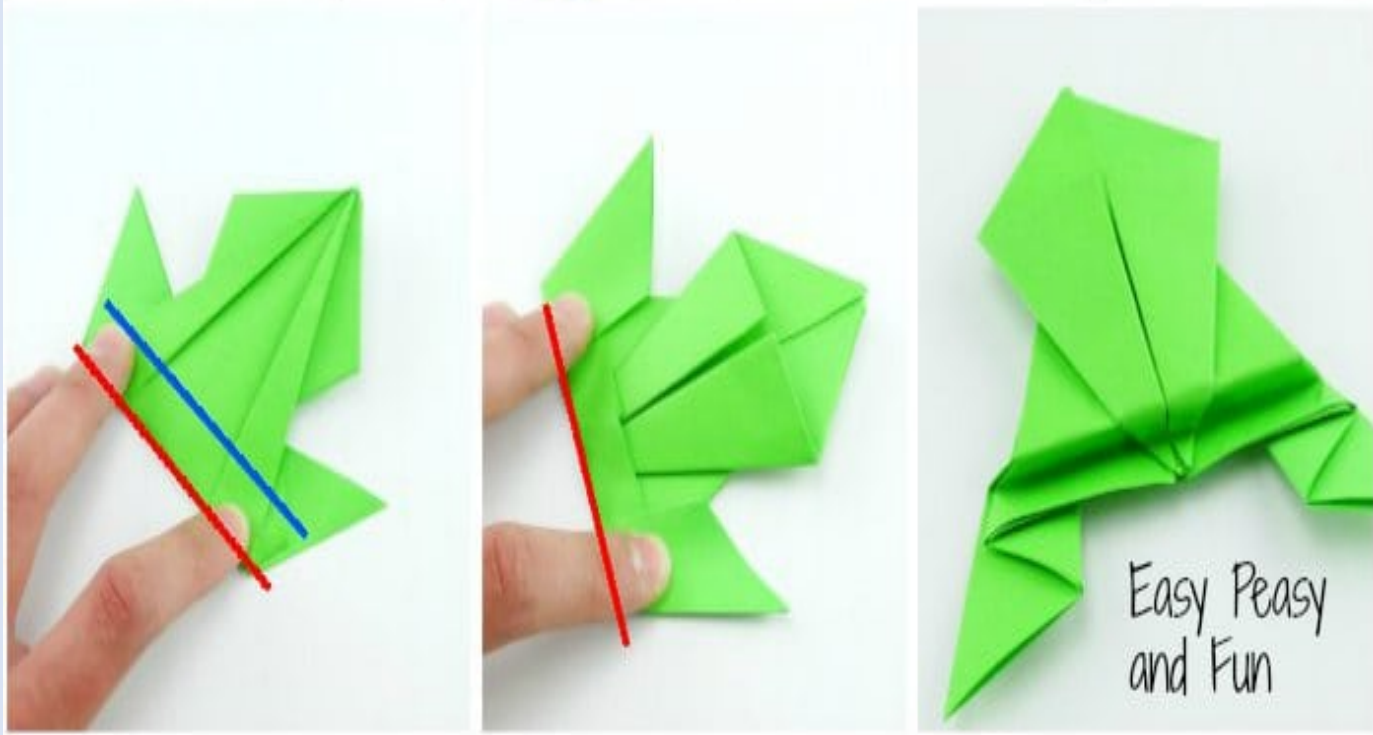
You should now have the shape displayed on the first picture left. Fold the right corner of the newly shaped square (marked with the red dot) towards the centre of the square. Do the same with the other corner.

Flip the frog. We have a triangle again (sorry no picture of that one). Grab the corner of the triangle (marked with the blue dot) and fold it inwards as shown on the picture above. Do the same with the other corner.



Grab the spot that's marked with the red spot on the image left and fold it outwards. Do the same with the other side. Flip it over – it's slowly starting to look like a frog isn't it?

Last part is a bit tricky but if you want to make your frog jump it's a must. You'll have to fold the back of the frog twice on places indicated with the blue and red line.



Position the frog as it's shown on the 4th image (above) and fold it backwards along the red line (you can help yourself with the ruler or a credit card etc...). It will now look like the image number 4 (and 5 if you flip it). Now fold the frog along the blue line (fold it forwards).

All done!

HEA/Advance HE Framework for embedding employability in HE

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/>



Some examples of employability development activities

Authentic Assessment (embedded)

- ‘An assessment requiring students to use the same competencies, or combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they need to apply in the criterion situation in professional life.’ (Gulikers, Bastiaens & Kirschner, 2004, p69)
- Changing the assessment strategy from a standard essay/exam to an authentic assessment, can often be helpful for employability development
- Some examples of authentic assessments: reflections on the process, problem solving approaches, creating content for a webpage, evaluating a website/news article, simulations, role plays and case studies.

Employability/Career Planning Modules (embedded or extra curricular)

- These are taught in a number of universities, sometimes as optional modules that form part of a degree, sometimes as an additional module that forms part of an employability award.
- Often assessed through reflective portfolios or career research reports or reflective essays.

'Using Your Degree for Career Success'

- Employability module for Chemistry Degree students at Lancaster University, UK (Year 2, January term)
- Nine week course – embedded and compulsory, designed to be developmental and supportive
- Develops key knowledge, skills and behaviours (e.g. research, report writing, project management, problem solving, team working, communication, etc.) through module activities
- Uses the EDP as a key vehicle for reflecting on and developing awareness of employability development and any gaps to be addressed
- Students find the EDP very helpful in identifying the range of skills gained from the subject and work/life experience

UCLan's cJam events (extra-curricular)

- Run by the Faculty of Culture and the Creative Industries – a full day commitment required by students
- Founded by the Journalism team, but additional events for Performance, Media and Law in 2018.
- Main objective is to secure work placements for students that are in line with their career aspirations
- Approximately 30 senior industry guests invited to each event, each bringing an offer of at least one placement that can be won by students during the speed pitching session.
- Event includes networking breakfast/lunch, industry guest speakers, industry Q&A, competitive speed pitching session, awarding of placements.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBoqBL4V6IE>

UCLan's cJam events

- The four events last year included 332 students, 122 industry guests and 45 members of academic staff
- There were 320 placements awarded
- For 2019-20 additional events planned for Humanities, Languages & Global Studies, Built Environment

Comments from cJam attendees

- *'It was one of the best events I have attended at the university. It has allowed me to complete my university studies with placements and opportunities in place to act as a stepping stone into the world of work.'*(Student)
- *'I loved the enthusiasm of the students, and the gathering of so many creative people in one space together.'* (Employer)
- *'It does wonders for students' confidence to meet employers and pitch ideas to them. From a staff perspective, it's great to catch up with alumni and meet new industry contacts.'* (Academic Staff)

UCLan live student project (embedded)

- Year 1 Business and Management Students (65 in total) working with an external client (one of the local borough councils) as part of their degree studies
- Client provided 6 project options for regenerating a local market
- Students had the opportunity to work on a live project including problem diagnosis, problem-solving, analysis of findings from market research and presenting ideas for improvements
- Further developments with more employers involved this year – described by lecturer involved as ‘real projects with purpose!’

UCLan Publishing (embedded)

- UCLan Publishing – award winning student-led publishing house
- Students on undergraduate and postgraduate publishing courses work in a way that mirrors the publishing industry, commissioning, editing, publishing and promoting UCLan Publishing's portfolio. This means students come into contact with well-respected authors and industry professionals.
- They also have access to work placements with some of the top publishers



[UCLan Publishing The Independent](#)

Recently featured in the national press



Only student-led publishing house in the world named Best Newcomer at IPG Independent Publishing Awards



Employability awards (extra-curricular)

- One example - University of Birmingham Personal Skills Award (PSA)
- Supported by a range of employers
- Points gained through a range of online skills courses, taught modules + many voluntary activities (including over 240 on-campus extra-curricular activities)

Measuring impact of employability activities

- Difficult with any kind of ‘objective’ measurement
- Graduate Destinations statistics often used. Described as “crude” and “simplistic indicators” (Taylor & Hooley, 2014, p491). They are a measure of **employment** at a point in time
- ‘It may be tentatively concluded that as with many achievements valued by society graduate employability is something that resists reliable and valid measurement in this value added way and that attempting to measure it in this fashion is a somewhat pointless exercise’ (Yorke & Knight, 2006).

Employment is not employability

‘This is more than a slip of the tongue. It betrays a fundamental lack of appreciation of the task at hand. If employment figures are your benchmark, the actions you take do not necessarily enhance the students’ long-term value and resilience in the workplace, nor their ability to achieve their best-fit career – a career that reflects what they want to do and what they are best at, so that both the student and their employer are well rewarded by each other.’

(Rich, 2017)

More recent attempts in the UK at measuring a very similar concept, 'learning gain'

- Learning gain 'an attempt to measure the improvement in knowledge, skills, work-readiness and personal development made by students during their time spent in Higher Education' (HEFCE/OFS 2015-17)
- 'There is no one single magic bullet that can solve the learning gain issue ...' (Evans, Kandiko Howson & Forsyth, 2018)
- 'Learning gain has massive potential if we use it for the process, not the outcomes.' (Evans, 2019)

‘Brand Me’ Presentations (embedded employability development)

- Researchers from the UK (Portsmouth) and the Netherlands (Tilburg)
- Designed around CareerEDGE model
- Two-minute ‘elevator pitch’ – students identify their aspirations, strengths and values, and develop their ability to articulate these in a confident way. These are recorded and uploaded for students to review privately
- Activity repeated three times in a year – self-reflection encouraged
- Feedback from peers, lecturers in class and ‘mock employers’
- Evidence to demonstrate increased employability related self-confidence in this longitudinal mixed methods study
- See Tymon, A., Harrison, C., & Batistic, S. (2019)

Effective institutional employability strategies include

- Embedding employability in the curriculum
- Providing extra-curricular opportunities for students to enhance their employability
- Building links with employers and encouraging students to do the same
- Supporting students to increase their self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem and resilience through their studies
- Encouraging reflection and increasing students' capacity to articulate their learning to employers
- Encouraging student mobility and fostering a global perspective

(Artess et al, 2017)

Make every day count

Monday	0 – 12
Tuesday	13 – 24
Wednesday	25 – 36
Thursday	37 – 48
Friday	49 – 60
Saturday	61 – 72
Sunday	73 – 84
Bank Holiday	84 +

To conclude

- Employability is not quite as straightforward as some people may think it is, but nonetheless it is of real importance
- It may defy measurement in an objective way, but that doesn't make it any less important
- It is not detrimental to subject teaching, in fact, employability development is often about good teaching and learning (e.g. experiential, active, often collaborative, authentic assessment)

Tak, fordi du lyttede

For further information or to request the Employability
Development Profile please contact me at
ldacre-pool@uclan.ac.uk