

Employability Learning: Measuring the Gain

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The Research Question

To what extent can employability related learning gain across disciplines be captured?

Employability

“The lifelong capability to make well informed realistic plans for the future and to be ready, willing and able to execute these in a changing world”

(Wright, Jones, Thambar, & Wilson 2018, adapted from Gilworth, 2017)

Employability related learning gain was explored in this context

Three Projects

- CAAS-UK: Led by the University of Nottingham, partnering with Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, York, Imperial College and Kings College London
- Learning from International Experience:
Led by the University of Birmingham partnering with Cambridge, Exeter, Southampton, Liverpool, University College London and King's College London
- R2 Strengths: Led by the University of Warwick partnering with Durham, Manchester, Newcastle, QMUL, Sheffield

CAAS - UK

Four Career Adapt-abilities

Concern - Developing a positive optimistic attitude to the future

Control - Exerting a degree of intrapersonal influence on situations

Curiosity - Broadening horizons by exploring social opportunities and possibilities

Confidence - Believing in oneself and in the ability to achieve a goal

(Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)

CAAS-International validated internationally, large body of literature: CAAS-UK

Built the first openly accessible online Career Adaptability survey using CAAS – UK, added question to understand engagement with careers activity

Mixed methodology, longitudinal study.

CAAS - UK

- Each institution: 1st yr cohort in a subject which, within the institution, reported a relatively low graduate employment score six months after graduation
- Questionnaire administered twice a year over 2 yrs
- Smaller no. of interviews in each institution at the end of each academic yr
- Engagement an issue: 430 participants round 1, 89 round 4
- Initial 430 participants 97% aged 18-21; 60% female; 75% white;
- Final 89 participants 18 months later, all aged 19 - 23 yrs; 70% female; 80% white.

Career Adaptability

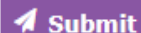
Thank you for completing the Career Adaptability survey

Career adaptability scores are a measure of how "ready, willing and able" you are to get a job in a rapidly changing career environment. The following advice is based on your overall career adaptability score as well as your score in each category. It will help you to focus on the areas where you can develop your ability to get the jobs you want.

Remember that your University careers service will provide you with expert, tailored advice and guidance to help you with your plans and you don't need to know what you want to do, or how to get there before you speak to them. Your careers service will also run careers fairs, workshops and other events that will help you to develop your skills and meet employers to find out more about possible careers, internships, placements and graduate jobs. It is never too early to get in touch.


Submit your email address below if you would like to receive a copy of your results via email.

Email:

 Submit

▼ Your overall career adaptability

Your overall career adaptability score of 65/120 is relatively low. Don't be disheartened by this because it means that by taking a few steps you can make progress! Remember that this is an overall score so in the detailed feedback that follows you may find that you are stronger in some areas than others. Some detailed advice follows, but it would be a good idea to start thinking about your future and to seek help sooner rather than later from your careers service, so that they can help you develop your career knowledge and capabilities.

Next 

▶ Your interest in the future

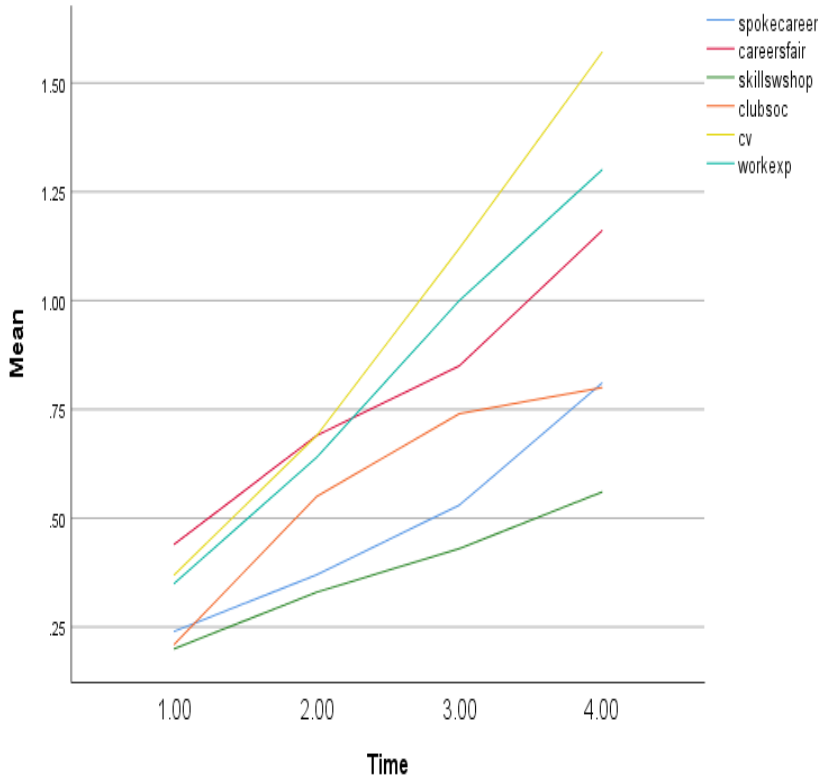
▶ Shaping yourself and your environment

▶ Thinking about your possibilities

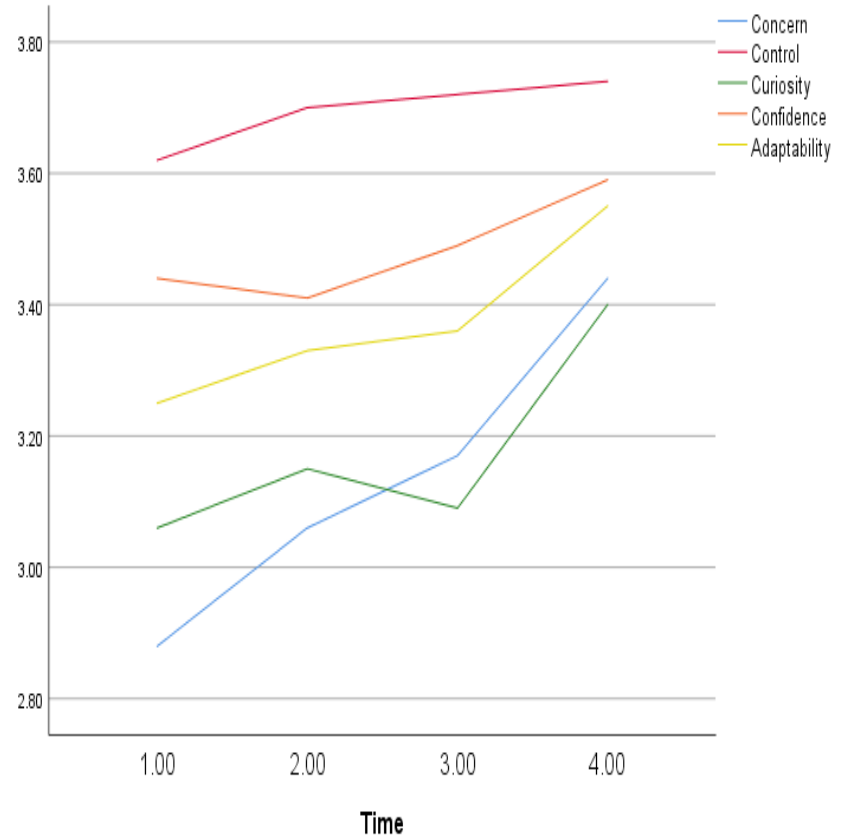
▶ Your confidence in developing your career

CAAS – UK Gains

Career related activity over time



Mean factors and adaptability over time



CAAS – UK Gains

Qualitative data

Gains identified as raising of awareness and prompting thought and action about career-related activity

Face to face and explicitly subject related guidance were seen as more beneficial

Factors which impacted on engagement with both the research and career-related behaviour included varying degrees of interest, incentive, awareness and experience as well as timing.

Feedback given by the online questionnaire was seen as helpful although some felt it could be repetitive and others called for more institutional specificity

Relatedness between academic teaching and careers was identified as an issue in terms of employability related learning

Best use of CAAS – UK?

- Can capture employability related learning gain but qualitative data suggests other uses may be more beneficial
- Use to screen for ‘at risk’ students
- Use as an employability enhancement tool with previously identified ‘at risk’ cohorts
- before (and after) WIL/internship/mobility experience
- facilitated 1 to 1 or in small groups

International Experience

- Research & reports strongly suggest internationalisation enhances students' employability (*UUKI, 2017; Universities Australia, 2016*)
- Views and perceptions of undergraduates themselves tend to be less well known (*CIHE, 2011; Tymon, 2013*)
- How do students assess their own learning?
- Impact of international experience on students' employability
(*Wright, Jones & Welland, 2018*)

International Experience

- Qualitative methodology - Semi-structured interviews both pre and post experiences plus subjective quantitative ratings
- 3 groups of students:
 - Study abroad
 - Work abroad
 - On-campus experiences
- Questions to identify hopes, expectations and self-perceived employability learning gains
- 102 participants: 70% female, 30% male; 95% between 19 - 23 yrs of age; 82% white
- 51% final year, 36% second year and 13% first year of study.
- 66% Arts & Humanities, 24% Natural Sciences, 10% Social Sciences.

International Experiences

- **On campus experiences** - one to eight weeks with the majority lasting for one to two weeks.
 - a) Skills or employability based activities; mixed groups of students; problem solving; real world application
 - b) Language courses
- **Study abroad experiences** - all participants undertaking a year abroad at another Higher Education institution (just under half on Erasmus or Erasmus+ programmes)
- **Work abroad experiences** - a few weeks to an academic year in length. Voluntary & compulsory
- **Geographically mobile students** - Europe (44%), USA and Canada (26%), East Asia (11%), Australasia (7%), Africa (7%), South America (4%), one individual to the Middle East

On campus

Pre

•International Perspective

“..it’s really important to have an understanding how different sort of systems work but also how different people may be affected by different things”

•Barriers

Timing - *“Potentially when I graduate I’d consider doing a post grad in America”*

Risk - *“..don’t think it would be financially worthwhile... expensive and time consuming”*

“I wouldn’t want to be away from my family for that long”

“I was considering it for the second year, but I didn't feel quite comfortable or ready for that

Post

•Language Course

Awareness of culture and traditions - *“learnt a bit more about different people’s cultures, what it is like.. for them”*

Language acquisition -

“..learning a language, and I study the culture as well so it gives you a better appreciation of why the language is like it is”

•Skills Based

Appreciating differences - *“..working towards a common goal coming from these different perspectives..”*

“.. different countries have different types of ideas, different types of structures, and they will be able to help find different methods..”

Self-awareness - *“.., through understanding other cultures, other people, you understand their wavelength, but you also start to understand your own.”*

Study Abroad

Pre

•Academic Related Aims

"..seeing how another country does teaching, does education...study stuff I wouldn't study at home"

•Employability Related Aims

"I feel like I need something that would make me stand out."

..experience, make new contacts overseas, make new friends.."

"..being able to culturally and linguistically adapt to a new atmosphere"

•Personal Development Aims

"..grow up a bit.."

"..there's nothing scarier than throwing yourself in at the deep end and going to live in another country"

Post

•Academic Related Gains

".. the teaching style was very different"

".. liaising with two different universities, and modules,.. and housing.. So, yeah, I had to be definitely more organised."

•Employability Related Gains

"..on the whole it really enhances those key skills.. applying to any job it would help in an interview because.. you can talk about a lot of development experiences to back yourself up"

"..having a greater understanding of places and other cultures, besides our own. And, being able to appreciate that a lot more."

•Personal Development Gains

"I found that going all the way across the world...to succeed at living an entire new life by myself and building that foundation on my own, was exactly what I needed..."

Work Abroad

Pre

•Employability Related Aims

“on a CV, just saying that I’ve got time abroad, will.. show that like I’ve got independence, and can like cope in different settings and things”

“having to adapt.. to different systems”

“a little bit more adventurous.. going for a job that.. I might have before thought I wasn’t capable of”

•Personal Development Aims

“..it will be really good to push myself and kind of go out of my comfort zone a bit..”

“I’d like to help people so... it’ll give me an insight to what life is like for people on the other side”

“I’ll be able to understand how different countries function and not just the good side of countries..”

Post

•Differentiated Gains

“..development in work and development outside of work has been two quite different things”

•Employability Related Gains

“..just knowing that I have got that ability to be versatile, that has really sort of opened the doors to careers I hadn’t even thought of”

“.. confidence in my chosen career and my ability to do it”

•Personal Development Gains

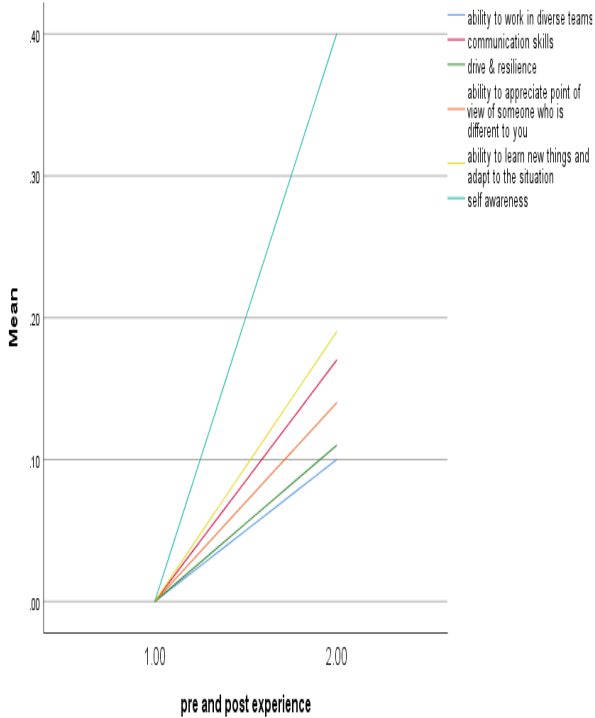
“because everything became real, I felt I grew up a lot”

“it is absolutely invaluable because it changes your entire outlook and not only skills”

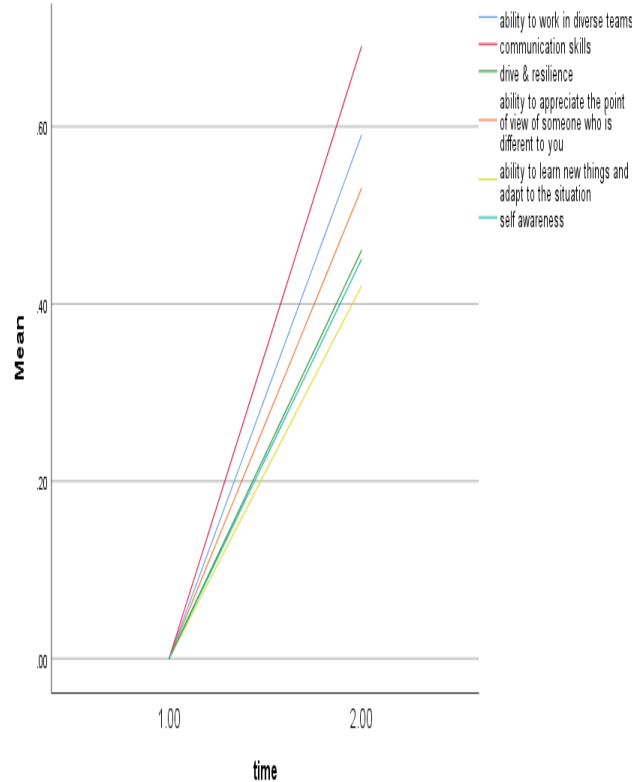
“..it was honestly the best thing I’ve ever done...”

International Experiences

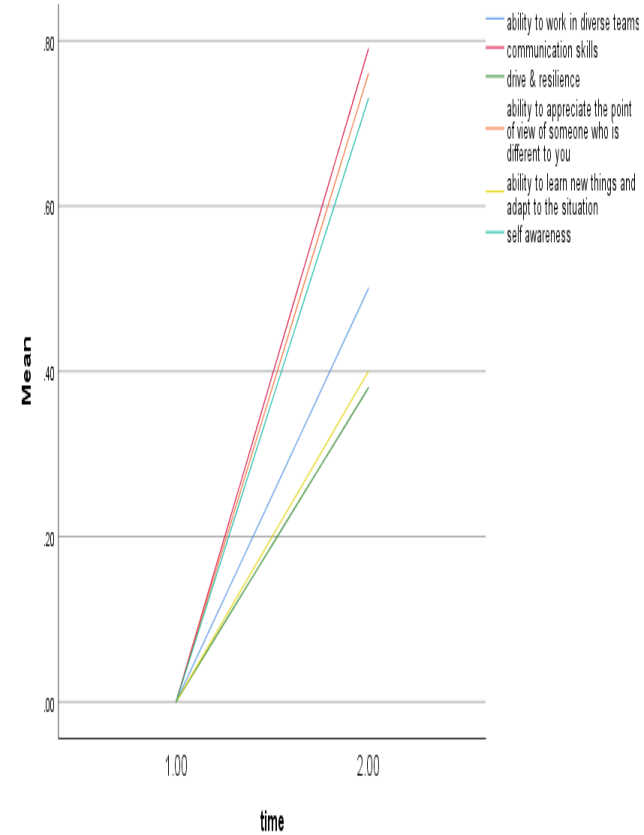
On Campus



Study Abroad



Work Abroad



International Experience Learning Gain

- Students gain from traditional mobility experiences and on campus experiences
- Gains reported by students tended to mirror those found in the literature
- Gain is increased by implementing a ‘wraparound’ protocol, the simplest version of which was enacted by the study
- Greater subjective gain is experienced by those who undertake traditional mobility experiences
- For risk averse students an international experience at home can act as a first step towards mobility
- For some students, geographical mobility is not an option due to social capital and contextual issues
- On campus experiences specifically designed to increase internationalization in students tend to result in a significant subjective increase in self-awareness

R2 Strengths

- Commercial online self –report questionnaire based in positive psychology (*Centre for Applied Psychology*)
- Strengths based graduate recruitment is increasing as is careers service use of the tool as an employability enhancement intervention
- Sorts responses into 4 headings:
 - Realised Strengths
 - Unrealised Strengths
 - Weaknesses
 - Learned behaviours
- Awareness of these encourages focussed development

R2 Strengths

- Participants all in final year from humanities, social science and natural sciences
- 3 groups:
 - All complete 'Before' Self-report Likert scale questionnaire asking about perception of self-awareness, confidence and preparedness for graduate recruitment process in terms of strengths
 - Groups 1 & 2 complete R2 Strengths questionnaire
 - Group 1 receive report + feedback from trained R2 practitioner
 - Group 2 receive report only
 - Group 3 = control group – no R2 strengths
 - All complete 'After' Likert scale questionnaire
- 36 qualitative interviews
- 4 Careers Advisors at each institution undertook R2 Strengths practitioner training

R2 Strengths Gains

- Significant increases were not found in the questionnaire responses. e.g. there was a decrease in student's agreement to the statement 'I am aware of my strengths' in all groups
- Qualitative interviews showed clear evidence of learning and development
- Engagement somewhat of an issue: 576 participants initially, 400 completed the repeat questionnaire
- Disciplinary differences – fewer humanities students tended to have clear career plans
- Females were less confident about interviews but tended to feel better prepared
- Those with moderate or lower self-confidence tended to report the most benefit

Outcomes

- In all three projects it was noted that learning tended to be non-linear, thus making measurement complex.
- Both quantitative and qualitative learning was reported
- All methodologies found evidence of metacognitive development but not necessarily quantitative in nature
- Variation within institutions greater than variation between institutions
- Measurement and interventions may therefore be more useful if individually tailored to the need of the HEI.

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