Developing a portfolio tool for employability skills

Employability skills
PortFolio
Developing the tool

What is ES

ES Refer to a flexible set of general skills and competencies which, next to specific, degree related qualifications, play a significant part in contributing to an individual's effective and successful participation in the workplace. Alternatives: Soft skills, Transferable Skills, future-oriented skills.

The latter in company research reports such as by McKinsey or Deloitte, but for student usage the term can be a little **ambiguous**, since the term refers both to typical skills that prepare for the student's future (e.g., career orientation, goal-setting) and skills that are deemed to be in demand in the future (e.g., design thinking).

Employability skills it is then

Why? A) students are uncertain/unaware and B) as a uni we have a responsibility here

NL compared to the UK

How do you develop employability skills?

IBCoM students can actively develop and train such skills in the course of their degree in some specific curricular courses as well as non-mandatory or extra-curricular activities.

What are those skills?

Based on academic studies. European networks, Dublin Descriptors, Consultancy company reports such as Deloitte, McKinsey, the EUR 2024 strategy and our own IBCoM programme and its ILOs:

Slide 1 Seven overall Competences

> Solving complex problems, including Design Thinking
> People skills
> Communication
> Initiative and enterprise
> Planning and organising
> Self-regulation
> Profession-specific competences

The overall competences are subdivided into subsets of skills (e.g. for Self-Regulation, these are, Learning goals; Confidence and Stability; Dealing with Feedback and Setbacks; and Planning and Organising); each further accompanied by a set of concrete defining skills (e.g. for Dealing with Feedback and Setbacks, these are, the ability to readjust after setback; accepting failure and taking steps for improvement or another approach; and eliciting feedback from peers and superiors). This makes it easier to identify competences in a course.

All reports and studies point out that even overall competencies or skills are not self-enclosed and that that some overlap is inevitable and natural. Specific skills may surface in different subsets; and what might be a subsidiary skill in one case might also be an overall competence in its own right.

For example, general people skills require adaptability and empathy, but also good listening and other communicative skills. Solving complex problems in the design thinking approach requires skills such as cognitive abilities and creativity, but is inconceivable without teamwork (a people skill). The adaptability required for teamwork is also a sign of creativity and of self-regulation, and so on. In other words, developing one particular skill will contribute to improving many more.

What role for the portfolio? Example
Most skills and competences are not mentioned in Dublin Descriptors or even ILO's. For example, a course like Academic Skills (CM1003) teaches students how to look for valid academic sources, how to set up a paper, include proper APA referencing, and how to present findings orally and in writing. The learning goals (mentioned in the official Course Description) are defined accordingly. But students also learn to plan and organize their work and on the way they learn to speak and write more clearly. These are crucial skills for the foundational seven competences they develop studying IBCoM.

Or take a course like Digital Media Content, CM2011, term 2
The course offers students a taste of Real World digital content production. RL stakeholders present cases students work on in a team. At the end of the course they have, as a team, produced a prototype (as part of the 'book' in the assignment description) and an accompanying pitch for the stakeholder concerned. This is the main assignment, which offers students the opportunity to explore bridging theory and practice in a context of design thinking (Prototypes form a typical part of the design thinking approach).

The Portfolio Employability Skills enables students to document and showcase these skills. Ideally, the Portfolio includes some future-oriented reflection tools.

Question 4) There are definite possibilities to extend the use of this at EUR level. First of all, once this is set up, it could be extended to M&C MA and MSc programmes. ESL is developing a similar portfolio and some form of collaboration in developing and implementing this certainly is a possibility. In fact, one of the criteria for the fellowship was its potential for beyond-the-department application. At present, with the help of learning innovators and Risbo, I am in the phase of investigating, the commercial educational software that could support an employability skills portfolio for IBCoM.