CareerProfessor Pilot Project
@ Nova Scotia Community College

14 April 2021

CiCan Pilot Project
International Employability Skills
CareerProfessor @ NSCC

CareerProfessor.works™

close
the
GAP

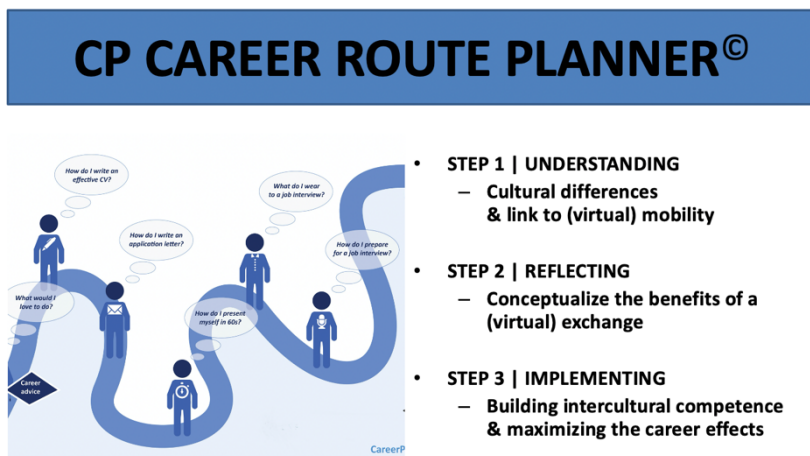## The Pilot: Employability skills & (virtual) mobility

According to research, international mobility experiences seem to build the employability skills that are deemed vital for success in the workplace. In this light, higher education institutions need to become more intentional and explicit about how they are addressing such skills as a student outcome – for all students, not just those who are privileged to study abroad[1,2].

The ROI of employability is often debated at higher education conferences across the globe. Fostering employability can prove beneficial for institutions as it turns graduates into brand ambassador alumni, happy to recommend their study experience at their higher education institution. But most importantly, employability skills help students to maximize their talents and prepare them for the world that awaits them upon graduation, provided they can 'translate' their experience into skills employers recognize[3].

With this pilot project, we have focussed on both inbound and outbound student mobility to help students, especially those for whom international experiences may be less accessible, to develop valuable intercultural competencies that support their employability skills.

The global COVID-19 situation made most mobility virtual, but this helped us to adjust programming to a COVID-19 environment whilst the program and its outputs serve as a stepping-stone for the full implementation of the program when full international mobility becomes an option again.

We have designed a program, that was kicked-off with a 'pre-departure' webinar (on 29 January 2021) and we finished with a 'post-mobility' webinar (5 March 2021). During the (virtual) mobility period students have had access to the CareerProfessor.works tool, both the app and the other modules. Next, we have provided the *CP career exercise trajectory*, based on the **CP Career Route Planner** with exercises that could be integrated into existing curricula programs. The exercises followed the track of Understanding, Reflecting, and Implementing the value of an (virtual) international experience.

CP CAREER ROUTE PLANNER©

- STEP 1 | UNDERSTANDING
  – Cultural differences & link to (virtual) mobility

- STEP 2 | REFLECTING
  – Conceptualize the benefits of a (virtual) exchange

- STEP 3 | IMPLEMENTING
  – Building intercultural competence & maximizing the career effects

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After both webinars, the exercises and the availability of the app, which supports intercultural and employability skills, we have invited the students to an especially created evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the app in preparing students for international learning.

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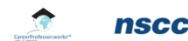
[1] Cultural Understanding as a Key Skill for Employability, Nannette Ripmeester & Darla Deardorff, INTERNATIONALIZATION AND EMPLOYABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION, Routlegde, Chapter 17, August 2019.
[2] When Being Booksmart is not enough - Skills Graduates Need to Succeed in the Future Workplace, Nannette Ripmeester, Internationalisation of Higher Education Handbook E 1.10, June 2018.
[3] Global Employability: Common Challenges in Preparing Students for a Global World of Work, Sevi Christoforou & Nannette Ripmeester, CAREER INTEGRATION, CAPA, Volume 3, March 2020.

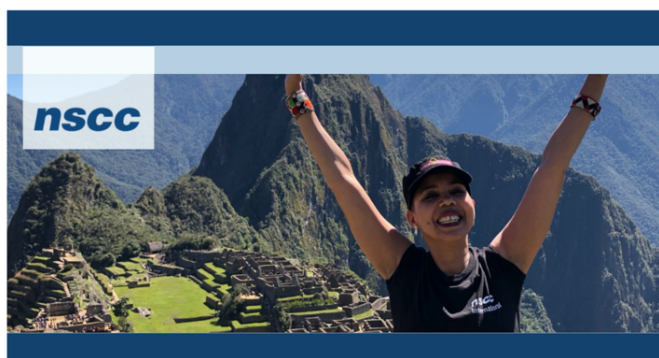## The App: CareerProfessor.works in a nutshell

CareerProfessor.works is a ready-to-use digital tool that provides intercultural training and global careers advice to all students (and alumni). It consists of an **app** and a **website**. The app helps students hone their intercultural knowledge by playing a game with more than a thousand multiple-choice questions on three compelling topics: **job hunting, doing business and social interactions**. It has 9 levels of gradually increasing difficulty, digital badges that measure intercultural competence, and last but not least provides students with rewards that they can collect on the website platform. The rewards are keys that let students 'unlock' the countries of their choice in order to find more practical labour market-related information. CareerProfessor.works currently has over 40 countries available.

CareerProfessor.works consists of four different modules to fully support students' employability:

- **Core Module**: app game & website with country profiles, leader board & digital badges.
- **Careers Module**: a tab with the most fundamental careers advice, available to students 24/7.
- **Community Module**: peer-to-peer networking, the 'Ask Me!' discussion platform & a real-time world map.
- **Coverage Module**: this reporting module provides monthly employability data at your fingertips.
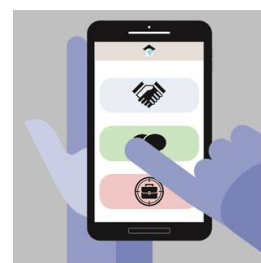
For the pilot project we created a special landing page for NSCC, unlocking for NSCC students the app, the website with the country profiles, the careers module and making the dashboard available for NSCC staff. The landing page can be found here: https://careerprofessor.works/hei/nscc

And don't forget to follow CareerProfessor on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for career tips & more information.

The Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and CareerProfessor.works joined forces to help you train your **employability skills** and grow your **cultural competence** in a fun and easy way, with scenarios around social interaction, doing business and job hunting, supported by a website that provides universal career advice and job hunting tips for over 40 countries. Let's get started!

University admin   Students/Alumni

The Pilot: Timeline & Activities

Activities	Nov/20	Dec/20	Jan/21	Feb/21	Mar/21
Activity #1: Conduct webinar to virtual project participants and students from target groups on how to use CareerProfessor.works app and the benefits of this technology			X		
Activity #2: Test the ability of the CareerProfessor.works app to better prepare students for international learning				X	
Activity #3: Develop and implement an evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the app in preparing students for international learning			X	X	X
Activity #4: Use the evaluation tool and app analytics to determine the effectiveness of the app					X
Activity #5: Develop an evaluation tool to measure the employability skills development and impact of virtual and in-person study abroad experiences		X	X	X	
Activity #6: Test the evaluation tool with students participating in virtual international learning programs in the winter semester of 2021					X
Activity #7: Conduct an evaluation of the tool to determine its effectiveness					X
Activity #8: Collect data from the evaluation of the tool and feedback from participants and produce a report					X

Going abroad for study and internship experiences is not easy for NSCC students, particularly for some groups that traditionally have less access to mobility programs. Whereas from the past experiences that NSCC does have, they know these experiences have strengthened students' global competence and supported their employability.

With this pilot project, we aim to facilitate both virtual and physical mobility by providing students upfront with the opportunity to develop global intercultural competencies. The silver lining of COVID-19 is that it allows us to test new tools and approaches, in order to build the foundation for the launch of the full program.
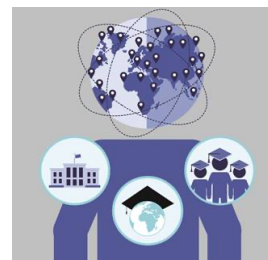
Steps in the program will be:

- Pre-mobility assessment questionnaire (based on work carried out in an Erasmus+ project[4])
- Pre-mobility webinar: Employability Lab - Preparing for a (Virtual) Exchange

[4] https://www.erasmusskills.eu/eskills/tools/self-assessment-questionnaires

The Skills: Employability Skills gained by (virtual) mobility

Going abroad for either study or an internship helps students to build certain skills. Research confirms that it are exactly the skills employers seems to value from an employability perspective[5,6].

Via the two self-evaluation exercises, at the beginning and at the end of the pilot project, we have asked students to reflect on the skills gained and whether the CareerProfessor App has helped them to build their skills. *Cultural Awareness* was the top skill, mentioned by most students as a skill developed by their (virtual) international mobility experience. However, it is interesting to note that students also indicate in the first self-evaluation survey, they are most uncertain about this area. In particularly about their cultural knowledge of their host country, with 9 out of 15 students saying they are 'somewhat aware of the customs, traditions, religion in the host country'. Apparently, this is an area for development for young people and exactly the learning which the CareerProfessor App tries to support.

TOP 5 SKILLS GAINED THROUGH MOBILITY

- Cultural Awareness
- Adaptability & Resilience
- Empathy & Cultural Understanding
- Creativity & Initiative
- Teamwork

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When we compare the 'before' and 'after' for the 3 questions around Cultural Awareness, we can see all students have progressed in this area. Although the strong sense of awareness with their own national cultural identity has lowered slightly. In line with the research of Davina Potts referenced in the Employability Lab webinar 2: "…internships help students to discover how much they don't know at that stage of their professional development."[7]

The picture around *Adaptability & Resilience* skills gained during their (virtual) international experience show that skills acquisition needs a deliberate structure with support for maximizing these skills for career success. Students have gained confidence to deal with unexpected events but feel less brave about their own ability to adapt to new environments. Probably in a similar manner as mentioned above regarding cultural awareness.

Students have absolutely gained *Empathy & Cultural Understanding* skills while being on a (virtual) international experience. The same applies to *Creativity & Initiative* according to the self-evaluation. When it comes to *Teamwork*, the students seem confident but 'humbled' after their (virtual) international experience. With only one person indicating he/she feels not confident in expressing their opinion in a group.

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[5] https://erasmusjobs.org/docs/Skills_needed_by_employers-ERASMUSJOBS.pdf
[6] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/top-10-work-skills-of-tomorrow-how-long-it-takes-to-learn-them/
[7] Career outcomes of learning abroad: national report, Davina Potts, IEAA Australia, 2020.

The Comments: NSCC Students & the CP App

When the NSCC students in the pilot project were asked whether they would recommend the CareerProfessor App to other students, they unanimously stated their agreement. Below are the comments the students provided.

"The gamification of learning about new cultures is ideal for today's, short attention span, increasingly multicultural world."

"I would definitely recommend the CareerProfessor app to students that are planning to work in a different country and for regular students as well. The CareerProfessor app is a great tool that helps students understand other countries' cultures and prepares them for their environment in a fun and interactive atmosphere and even gives some tips at the end of each level. And when unlocking a country, on the CareerProfessor website you can view all the information about that country like country facts, feedback teamwork, cultural tips and many others. I think that this is extremely helpful for students that are going to work in a different country. Also, I personally learned a lot of business, social and job hunting facts about different countries like Spain, France, Columbia, Nigeria, Indonesia and many others."

"It's amazing the number of differences in interactions in each culture that I hadn't even stopped to think about. The job-hunting tab was a treasure, it gave me an extra degree of confidence for preparing to get a job in my host country."

"When I was playing the CareerProfessor app I started thinking more about how people in different countries behave in different situations, what I should do/say and what to avoid. I also started thinking more about people's culture when interacting with them and taking into consideration any misunderstanding that may be caused. For example, I learned that in the Indonesian language "blue" is how some Indonesian address foreigners meanwhile in Russian when we call someone "blue" it means they are gay. This may be confusing between a Russian and Indonesian and can cause a conflict."

"I will recommend this app to a friend because this app gives a lot of information if you are planning to work internationally or apply for a job abroad. Learning from this app is very valuable in that aspect and I want my friends to be successful in their career and get all the knowledge and tips to improve themselves before stepping into the real world."

"I learned that many cultural norms differ across the globe and most importantly different culture communicates differently. As a result, in business meetings it is critical to know what people mean to understand and work as a team. Thus, knowing how they communicate helped me to understand them better and as a result work with them efficiently. (Our 'International Business' program has a lot of international students and this helped me a lot for leading group projects)."

"I am a culture enthusiastic person, I knew some of the teachings and information before using CareerProfessor. But what I love about the app is that - information is organized in such a way that if you are looking for guidance before starting your career or putting yourself out in Industry this is one of the best apps I have come across. I especially love how there are levels like game which really kept me going on and on to learn more in a very fun way. The concept is designed well in my point of view."

"The gamification component is amazing and has relevant information regarding experiencing different cultures when going on an exchange so the students can have a better picture of what there is to come when they are abroad. Valuable tips are giving in all sections, social, job hunting and, career advice, cv writing, etc. Good job CareerProfessor.works! ☺"

The Tech: NSCC Dashboard & Coverage Module

CareerProfessor uses a client dashboard allowing NSCC staff to (re-)invite and/or message students. Different staff can be assigned different roles, allowing them different functionalities and actions within the CP platform.

The students using the CP App provide input upon which monthly reports are being generated, helping an institution to better understand their student population (see figure 1 and 2 below covering gender and nationalities) and their employability metrics (see figure 8 below covering happiness with study choice).
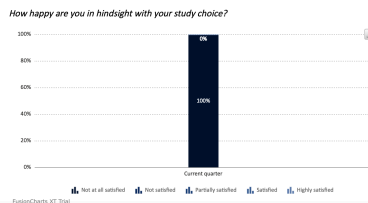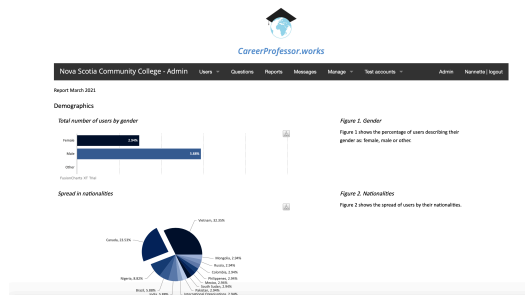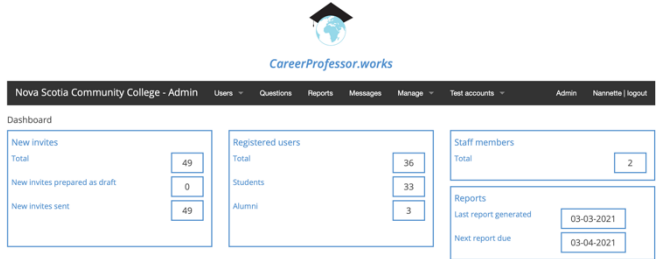
The technical rollout of the CP App requires little involvement from NSCC staff. Once the landing page and client dashboard is set up, the invitation process using Mandrill is easy and user-friendly. The screenshots below show the account overview (with 90.8% - 100% deliverability) and a high open (75%) and click (50%) rate after just one invitation and no reminders.
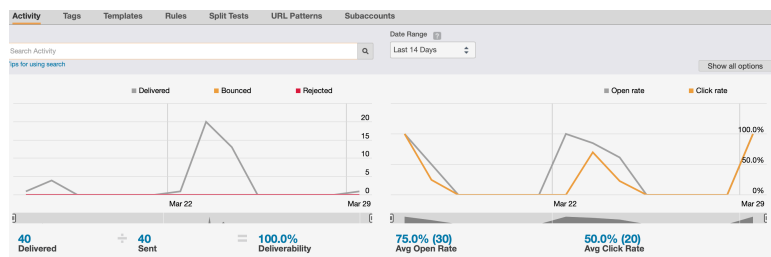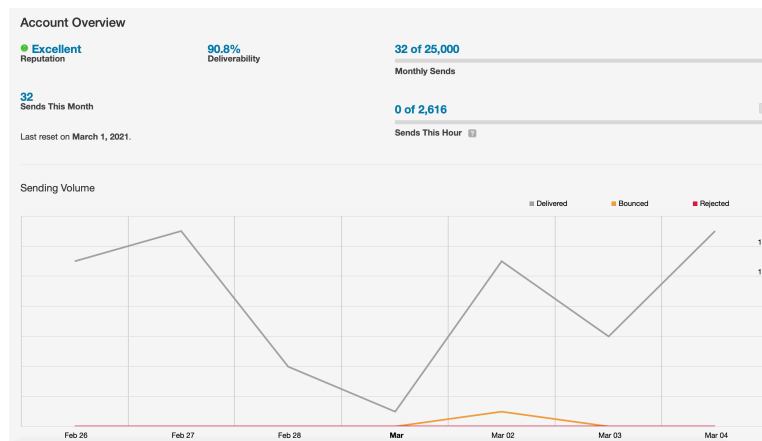
The Results: MOBILITY IMPACT SURVEY

Mobility Impact

Studying abroad is so much more than just a 'fun experience'. The overall journey will have an impact not only on your personal but also your professional life, as it will equip you with the necessary skills to succeed in a modern society and will enhance your future career prospects. Through your (virtual) international study experience you will:

- Become aware different cultures do things differently
- Learn to work in a multi-cultural team
- Understand the impact of cultural diversity
- Learn other languages
- Become more flexible
- Look for creative and out-of-the-box solutions

Exercise: Please reflect on the 3 questions below, then write down your answers.

Question 1: What skills do you believe you have developed during your (virtual) international experience that will be useful for your future career? Please provide concrete examples if possible.
Answer 1:

I.   *Cultural Awareness* was mentioned by most students (4x).
II.   Followed by Adaptability, Resilience and Time Management (3x each).
III.   Next Flexibility, Creativity, Communication and Empathy were mentioned (2x each).
IV.   The least mentioned skills were Strategic Thinking, Self-confidence, Patience, Technical skills, Assertiveness, Problem-solving, Teamwork, Leadership and English (1x each).

* Cultural Awareness: "The App helped me to understand other customs in order to learn to respect them. Understand that in Nigeria, if an older person invites you to lunch, they are the one who pays the bill; otherwise, I can make a person feel bad; or talking about personal matters in a French work environment is definitely frowned upon."

* Cultural Awareness: "I've learned that you can't take anything about other cultures for granted and being aware of knowing or not knowing these subtle differences can make or break relationships with people from other cultures. It is better to ask yourself if there is a reason why a person overreacts to something not important from my point of view or why the person does not react at all to something that does matter to me."

* Cultural Awareness: "next time I'll have to make a presentation in front of people from other countries, I'll know I will study first the other culture, but also know they will probably make an effort to understand me; and both things will make me feel more comfortable in that kind of situations."

* Communication: "The App allowed me to identify communication strategies and tactics that allow the communication process to flow more smoothly and avoid mistakes and/or misunderstandings that can easily ruin a negotiation process."

"During this pilot project, I developed resume and interview skills, what to avoid on a resume/interview and what to include. For example, I learned a maturity skill in providing reflections for provocative and surprising questions during an interview. Also, if you do not have any questions at the end of the interview it is better to say, 'this was a great interview, and you answered all my questions'. For resume, I learned that you must avoid grammatical errors because recruiters often will not continue reading the resume if you have grammatical errors. Also, I learned that you should not post anything disturbing on social media because recruiters may visit your social media accounts. Instead, make sure that your social media represents a good image of you."

Question 2: Has the CareerProfessor app helped you to think more about and/or prepared you better for the cultural differences in working with people from other cultures?
Answer 2:

○ *To a great extent, say 9 out of 15 students (60%)*

○ To some extent, say 6 out of 15 students (40%)

○ Not at all, say 0 students

Question 3: Would you recommend using the CareerProfessor app in preparing students for a mobility experience?
Answer 3:

○ *Yes, say 14 out of 15 students (93,3%)*

○ Maybe, say 1 out of 15 students (6,7%)

○ No, say 0 students

Annex 1: CareerProfessor **Career Route Planner**

Career Route Planner©

By CareerProfessor.works

Career Route Planner exercises created for NSCC International by CareerProfessor.works

Webinar
5 March 2021: **Employability Lab Webinar: Maximizing your Virtual Exchange Impact**

Self-evaluation of the 5 Key Mobility Skills

One of the most important parts about studying abroad is the skills you gain. They will be of value in both your professional and personal life.

Your experience abroad will help you gain and strengthen these five key mobility skills. On top of that, these skills are sought after by (prospective) employers, making you a valuable job candidate.

5 SKILLS GAINED THROUGH MOBILITY

- CULTURAL AWARENESS
- ADAPTABILITY & RESILIENCE
- EMPATHY & TOLERANCE
- CREATIVITY & INITIATIVE
- TEAMWORK

Instructions self-evaluation questionnaire: Please read the below statements carefully and on a scale of 1-5 (with 1=Strongly Disagree, 3=Somewhat Agree and 5=Strongly Agree.), rate with a number that you feel best reflects your knowledge, skills and attitudes. Answer as honest as possible, it is called 'self-evaluation' for a reason. Remember, there are no correct or incorrect answers, or trick questions.

Cultural Awareness

I have a clear sense of my own cultural identity.	
I am aware of how my culture influences my perception of what is "normal" in behaviours, communication styles or values.	
I am aware of the customs, traditions, religion in the host country.	

Adaptability & Resilience

I understand that open-mindedness regarding new challenges is important.	
I am able to adapt to new environments.	
I feel confident enough to deal with unexpected events.	

Empathy & Tolerance

Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine why they reacted in a certain manner.	
I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view.	
I enjoy making other people feel good about themselves or the situation.	

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Creativity & Initiative

I know how to develop an idea and put it into practice.	
I can express myself in an original and authentic manner.	
I am able to think outside of the box to bring new ideas to solve problems or seek solutions to a particular situation.	

Teamwork

I am able to work collaboratively in a variety of teams.	
I am able to interact with people who hold different interests, values, or perspectives.	
I feel confident in expressing my honest opinion in a group.	

Mobility Impact
Studying abroad is so much more than just a 'fun experience'. The overall journey will have an impact not only on your personal but also your professional life, as it will equip you with the necessary skills to succeed in a modern society and will enhance your future career prospects. Through your (virtual) international study experience you will:

- Become aware different cultures do things differently
- Learn to work in a multi-cultural team
- Understand the impact of cultural diversity
- Learn other languages
- Become more flexible
- Look for creative and out-of-the-box solutions

Exercise: Please reflect on the 3 questions below, then write down your answers.

1. What skills do you believe you have developed during your (virtual) international experience that will be useful for your future career? Please provide concrete examples if possible.

2. Has the CareerProfessor app helped you to think more about and/or prepared you better for the cultural differences in working with people from other cultures?

○ To a great extent, because … (please elaborate)

○ To some extent, because … (please elaborate)

○ Not at all, because … (please elaborate)

3. Would you recommend using the CareerProfessor app in preparing students for a mobility experience?

○ Yes, because …(please elaborate)

○ No, because …(please elaborate)

○ Maybe, (please elaborate)

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Annex 2: CareerProfessor **Skills Toolkit**

CareerProfessor Skills Toolkit

The CareerProfessor Skills Toolkit is created for NSCC International by CareerProfessor.works
"A mobility exchange is a lecture in life - You have to make it work!"

UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

What are the skills you gain when going on a (virtual) exchange? The list below provides the main skills you gain and helps you to understand their importance once you start (looking for a) job.[1]

Adaptability
The ability to adapt to changes has never been more important than it is now. Employers are looking for people who are not afraid of ambiguity and acknowledge that change is part of our lives. Adaptable people are often aware of their strengths and shortcomings, and this self-awareness helps them evaluate a new situation and adjust accordingly. They are open to challenges, willing to get out of their comfort zone and curious to learn new things.

Communication Skills
Everyone possesses some sort of communication skills. However, the ability to convey the right message to the right person, clearly and convincingly, to listen carefully, and to have a coherent argumentation is what employers' value in applicants. Regardless of the field of expertise, the ability to get on well with other people is a must. Regardless of your job and sector, it is very likely that you will have to communicate with people to reach goals and find solutions.

Creativity
Having creative skills means being able to think outside the box, bringing different perspectives to the table, sharing original ideas, and finding smart solutions to problems. Creative people are usually open-minded, willing to take risks, and are not afraid to express their ideas. Employers are looking for people who can propose new approaches and can introduce new, successful ways to deal with work demands and challenges.

Cultural Awareness
Cultural differences in the workplace and when job hunting is not 'just' about people being from different places. Cultural awareness refers to all attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and values that are different from our own. The ability to work efficiently and avoid clashes with people from a different cultural background will be highly valued in the current global business environment.

Teamwork Skills
Employer's value teamwork and will look for previous examples of teamwork in the application of a prospective employee. It is important to demonstrate that you have the ability and experience of working effectively with other people towards common targets and goals.

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRR-PAEf-dw

Proactivity
Being able to think critically and take initiative is highly valued in modern workplaces. Proactive people can estimate a situation, plan ahead, and lead towards the right solution. Confidence and a positive attitude are common characteristics of proactive people. Employers value employees that can set goals, take action to meet deadlines, and are able to identify possible problems and drawbacks.

Problem Solving Skills
Problem-solving skills are important in any position and any industry. Employers are looking for people with analytical and creative minds with the ability to handle challenging or unexpected situations in the workplace. A person with problem-solving skills is characterized by their motivation and persistence, and their capability to analyse a situation, calmly develop a solution and implement a strategy.

Professional orientation
Being professionally oriented and having the ability to identify opportunities and risks in one's field of expertise is highly valued by employers. It is equally important to be willing to accept feedback from others to improve your work and your professional skills. Being on top of things within the field of expertise shows commitment to growth and maturity.

Source: CareerProfessor.works – the employability app for internationally minded students.

CareerProfessor.works™

GAINING & TRANSLATING SKILLS

Understanding that employers look for a particular skill and being able to showcase a prospective employer you have acquired that skill during a mobility exchange is key to job hunting success.

Adaptability
What are recruiters looking for? The ability to: • Respond positively & quickly to changing circumstances • Deal effectively with changing priorities & unpredictable conditions • Adapt easily to changing situations & environments How to showcase this in your application? Via: • Side & part-time jobs • Extra-curricular activities • International experience How to showcase this in a job interview? Through: • Your willingness to learn new things & take up new tasks • A positive, 'can-do' attitude • Making it clear you considering various scenarios

Communication Skills
What are recruiters looking for? The ability to: • Convey a message clearly • Motivate & tailor your communication style to various audiences • Presentation skills How to showcase this in your application? Via: • Readability of your application documents • Presentations you've delivered • Blogs, articles, publications you've written How to showcase this in a job interview? Through: • Listening carefully • Showing empathy & being polite • Coherent argumentation & a convincing presentation

Creativity
What are recruiters looking for? The ability to: • Think creatively using both hard & soft skills • Think outside the box • Take a proactive approach How to showcase this in your application? Via: • International experience(s) & travel • Extracurricular activities & community involvement • Team projects, competitions, event organisation, hobbies How to showcase this in a job interview? Through: • An unexpected approach towards complex issues • Providing innovative answers • Showing commitment & enthusiasm & willingness to learn

Cultural Awareness
What are recruiters looking for? The ability to: • Understand cultural differences • Learn from others • Act with tolerance towards others How to showcase this in your application? Via: • Global Experience (it can be study, work, volunteer or internship experience) • Projects with international teams • Travelling as a hobby or language skills How to showcase this in a job interview? Through: • Curiosity for new ideas • Describing projects in international teams • Pointing out interesting areas (of learning) when working in a diverse team

Teamwork Skills
What are recruiters looking for? The ability to: • Collaborate with others • Learn from others • Try to see things from the other person's perspective How to showcase this in your application? Via: • Team (sports) & project experiences • Voluntary work, community involvement or side jobs • A healthy mix of "I" & "we" statements How to showcase this in a job interview? Through: • Self-confidence without arrogance • Understanding of your own working style • Talking about your role within a team effort

Proactivity
What are recruiters looking for? The ability to: • See (growth) opportunities • Move ahead • Couple curiosity to leadership potential How to showcase this in your application? Via: • Side & part-time jobs • Extra-curricular activities • Project management tasks How to showcase this in a job interview? Through: • Your willingness to learn new things & take up new tasks • Self-reflection on past experience • Demonstrating open-mindedness

Problem Solving Skills
What are recruiters looking for? The ability to: • Take initiative & know when to ask for help • Develop a strategy to resolve a problem • Demonstrate calmness in front of problems How to showcase this in your application? Via: • International experience(s) • Event organisation • Research & team projects How to showcase this in a job interview? Through: • Discussing relevant stories about your ability to resolve issues • Demonstrating logical thinking • Your reaction when challenged

Professional orientation
What are recruiters looking for? The ability to: • To take ownership • Recognise when to work independently & when the help of colleagues is required • Motivate & inspire others How to showcase this in your application? Via: • Extracurricular activities • Ease with which you integrate in new destination • Choice of study subjects or thesis How to showcase this in a job interview? Through: • Analysis of & solutions to problems • Ability to set-up new social circle • Showcasing your awareness of a situation & motivation to make 'it' work

Source: CareerProfessor.works – the employability app for internationally minded students.

CareerProfessor Skills Toolkit