

**Employability Skills Module:
Professional Career Development**

Module code: BMSW4012

Lecturer: Muhammad Cassamo

Student: Islam Uddin

Part 1: Individual Reflection

Certificate of Higher Education

Starting university for the first time has been an exciting yet demanding experience. Unlike many peers who may have pursued academic pathways before this, my background lies in running my own business. This entrepreneurial journey equipped me with skills like independence, problem-solving, and effective time management. However, the shift into academic life has presented unique challenges that required significant adaptation. In this reflective piece, I draw on a range of self-development models including the Johari Window, SMART goal-setting, RIASEC career theory, SWOT analysis, and the Honey and Mumford learning styles to analyse my personal growth. These frameworks have provided structure and clarity in identifying my strengths, preferences, and areas needing improvement (Holland, 1997; Honey and Mumford, 1986; Luft and Ingham, 1955; Locke and Latham, 2002; Panagiotou, 2003). They have also guided my learning journey and informed my future development as I move forward in both education and career planning.

SWOT analysis is a widely recognised technique that evaluates Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to support strategic personal development (Panagiotou, 2003; MindTools, 2023). When applying this to my experience, I was able to draw on various attributes developed through my business background. Skills such as effective communication, perseverance under pressure, and client relationship management have proven beneficial in academic group tasks and time-sensitive coursework. These are clear strengths that can be carried into a professional context. On the other hand, I've identified one of my major weaknesses as difficulty in clearly expressing myself verbally in formal settings. While business interactions were often informal and direct, academic environments demand a more structured and articulate style of communication. As such, I am actively working on enhancing my public speaking and academic writing by using university resources and engaging in feedback-driven improvement. The SWOT framework helped me evaluate my capabilities with clarity and highlighted key development priorities.

Additionally, beginning higher education has opened new doors for personal growth. The academic structure and access to support systems like study skills workshops, academic databases, and peer collaboration have allowed me to sharpen my research, technological, and formal writing abilities. These are highly transferable skills and essential in the modern job market. Constructive feedback from tutors has been especially helpful in identifying specific weaknesses I may not have noticed, contributing to a clearer self-development path.

The RIASEC model created by John Holland is another tool I used to assess career alignment based on personality types. It segments people into six categories: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Holland, 1997). I find myself closely aligned with the Enterprising and Conventional traits. The Enterprising type thrives in leadership and decision-making roles, often demonstrating ambition and the ability to motivate others, skills I regularly applied in managing my business. I frequently had to solve problems, negotiate deals, and take

calculated risks. These characteristics continue to serve me well in academia, where I often take initiative in group projects and conduct independent research to improve group outcomes. Understanding my alignment with these traits has reaffirmed my career direction and helped me appreciate why I found entrepreneurial work fulfilling. It has also clarified how further education will support the development of communication and strategic thinking skills to complement my existing strengths.

Reflective exercises have also brought my limitations into focus. To address these effectively, I've adopted the SMART goal framework, which structures objectives to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (Locke and Latham, 2002; University of Leicester, 2022). One of my goals is to improve formal vocabulary and clarity in communication. I aim to read one high-level book monthly to naturally improve my written and verbal language skills. This is realistic with my current workload and library access. In addition, I have set targets to attend communication workshops and consistently participate in seminars and discussions, aiming for noticeable improvement in writing and presenting by the end of the year. Setting these structured goals helps track my development and gives purpose to each learning activity. SMART targets also serve as a constant reminder to stay focused and maintain steady progress.

Another helpful tool has been the Johari Window, a model used to improve self-awareness by analysing what is known and unknown to oneself and others (Luft and Ingham, 1955; SkillsYouNeed, 2023). The model includes four quadrants: Open, Blind, Hidden, and Unknown. Applying this concept, I have expanded my Open area by actively asking for feedback from peers and lecturers. This has brought hidden habits—like overusing filler words in presentations or misjudging tone in emails—to my attention. Meanwhile, I've reduced my Hidden area by becoming more open about the areas I want to improve, allowing me to confront and work on insecurities such as nervousness when speaking in front of a group. This model has shown me how mutual feedback and personal openness lead to more effective communication and collaboration.

Honey and Mumford's learning styles helped me understand my learning preferences, dividing learners into Activists, Reflectors, Theorists, and Pragmatists (Honey and Mumford, 1986; Education Corner, 2024). I identify primarily as a Pragmatist—someone who learns best through hands-on experience and practical application. This aligns with my business background, where I often learned through trial and error. In university, I apply this by using new skills in real tasks, such as practising presentation techniques in workshops or applying academic theories in coursework. Knowing this helps me seek out experiences that offer active engagement and real-world relevance, which in turn improves both learning and retention. It also reinforces my confidence in work-based learning environments where practical problem-solving is key.

To convert these reflections into long-term growth, I've created an action plan focused on steady and practical development. This includes enrolling in online communication courses to improve my speaking skills, regularly reviewing feedback from tutors to gain new insights, and setting new SMART goals each month to ensure progress in areas like teamwork and report writing. I'll also continue to prioritise practical learning activities, such as debates and workshops, that match my preferred learning style. Using the reflective tools introduced in this course regularly will help me identify emerging skill gaps and tailor my development to new professional and academic challenges. This ensures that I stay adaptable, goal-driven, and continually improving.

Reflecting more broadly on my time at university so far, I can confidently say it has been a transformative period that has stretched me both academically and personally. Coming from a background outside of traditional education, I initially felt apprehensive about returning to study. However, university life has offered a structured environment in which I've been able to challenge myself, explore new ideas, and build confidence in areas where I previously lacked experience. The transition from running a business to becoming a student again was not without difficulties, especially in adapting to academic language, formal assessments, and collaborative learning settings. Yet, these challenges have ultimately contributed to significant growth. I've learned to manage my time effectively, meet deadlines under pressure, and embrace feedback as a tool for self-improvement rather than criticism. One of the most rewarding aspects has been the opportunity to engage with students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, which has broadened my thinking and improved my communication skills.

University has also encouraged me to become more self-reflective. Through modules like Professional Career Development, I've begun to regularly assess my strengths, weaknesses, and learning progress. I now view learning as an ongoing, adaptive process rather than a fixed goal. In addition, the academic support services have played a crucial role in helping me build my research and writing skills, which I initially found daunting. As a result, I feel more equipped to approach both academic tasks and future professional opportunities with clarity and purpose. Looking ahead, I am motivated to continue building on this progress, knowing that I am laying the foundation for a sustainable and fulfilling career. My time at university has not only helped me gain knowledge but also develop resilience, adaptability, and a clearer sense of direction.

In conclusion, the models and frameworks explored throughout this course—SWOT analysis, the RIASEC model, SMART goal setting, the Johari Window, and Honey and Mumford's learning styles—have each played a valuable role in understanding myself and directing my growth. They've allowed me to identify transferable skills from my business background, gain insight into areas that need development, and

create an intentional plan to build employability. My journey so far has strengthened skills in communication, time management, and adaptability. By consistently reflecting and adapting using these tools, I am confident that I am building a resilient foundation for long-term success in both academic and professional environments.

Bibliography

Holland, J.L., 1997. *Making Vocational Choices: A Theory of Careers*. 3rd ed. Psychological Assessment Resources.

Honey, P. and Mumford, A., 1986. *The Manual of Learning Styles*. 3rd ed. Peter Honey Publications.

Luft, J. and Ingham, H., 1955. The Johari Window: a graphic model of interpersonal awareness.

Locke, E.A. and Latham, G.P., 2002. Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist*, 57(9), pp.705-717.

Panagiotou, G., 2003. SWOT analysis: A tool for making better business decisions. *Management Decision*, 41(2), pp.96-103.

MindTools, 2023. *SWOT Analysis: Discover New Opportunities, Manage and Eliminate Threats*. Available at: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm [Accessed 13 June 2025].

The Balance Careers, 2024. *RIASEC Career Test: How It Works and Why It's Important*. Available at: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/ria-sec-career-test-4145419> [Accessed 13 June 2025].

University of Leicester, 2022. *Setting SMART Goals for Success*. Available at: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/study/smart-goals> [Accessed 13 June 2025].

SkillsYouNeed, 2023. *Johari Window: How it Helps Build Self-Awareness*. Available at: <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/johari-window.html> [Accessed 13 June 2025].

Education Corner, 2024. *Honey and Mumford Learning Styles*. Available at: <https://www.educationcorner.com/honey-and-mumford-learning-styles.html> [Accessed 13 June 2025].