

LEVEL 5 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Programme:	BA Accounting HNC/HND/BA Business Management (HRM / Finance / Marketing / Digital Marketing)		
Module:	Changemakers: Building your Personal Brand for Sustainable Employment		
Module code:	BMBM5021	Contribution to Overall Module Assessment (%):	50%
Lecturer:	Robyn Griffiths	Internal Verifier:	Gwyneth Jones
Assignment Title:	Employability Skills and Semester Abroad Reflection	Word count (or equivalent):	2,000 words or equivalent
Submission deadline:	Friday 2 nd May 2025	Return date of provisional marks & written feedback:	Friday 6 th June 2025
Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

Module Learning Outcomes (from module syllabus)
- Evaluate personal employability skills and their congruence with the skills required for professional practice in a real or simulated environment. - Build a personal brand and promote a professional identity for a specific opportunity.

PART 1: Evaluation of Employability Skills

In today’s world, inside and beyond the four walls of educational systems, employers are looking for more than degrees and technical knowledge in their potential employees. They desire people who can communicate, adapt, problem solve, and work well with others, no matter what the industry (Dench, Perryman and Giles, 1998). These are called employability skills and are the building blocks of one becoming not just job-ready but successful long-term. Through my experience as an International Business student and one who has worked with the retail sector, I have begun to understand just how important these skills really are, not just in theory, but in practice.

The employability skills have enabled me to deal with real customer interactions, handle the pressure of peak hours, and add value to my team's success. With work experience from Cotton On, Marks & Spencer, and KOI Bubble Tea, I know the specs from the inside out. This essay will focus on two industries that I’m interested in, namely, Digital Marketing and Financial Services, and how my skills as of now can match the demands of these sectors.

I have a huge affinity for two industries in particular: Digital Marketing and Financial Services. One is different from the others by nature, but shares relevance to my International Business degree and global career paths.

Digital Marketing is one of the fastest-growing disciplines, where data, creativity, and technology combine (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Companies such as Google, Ogilvy, HubSpot, and local agencies like Kingdom Digital and Lion & Lion are always eager to find adaptable, creative individuals. Digital Marketing Executive, Social Media Manager, and SEO Specialist are common roles. To hire in this field, employers will seek people who are strong communicators, whether it’s in person, online, or both, tech-savvy individuals who are familiar with an SEO tool like Google Analytics or content tools, and able to think creatively to solve problems or engage audiences (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021).

However, the financial services industry is based on analysis, precision, and trust (Vanson, n.d.). Maybank, CIMB, HSBC & Standard Chartered are some of the key players having roles like Financial Analyst, Compliance Officer, Client Relationship Manager (South China Morning Post, 2025). Analysing skills, attention to detail, ethical judgement, and good interpersonal communication, particularly in customer-facing roles, are much valued by employers working in this sector (McDermott, 2012).

Reflecting on my own skill set, I can confidently say that my experience in retail has given me a strong foundation in key employability skills that apply across both industries. For instance,

Communication	I’ve learned to adjust my tone to explain promotions at Cotton On or to handle tough customer complaints at KOI, I’ve also learned to be an active listener and communicate clearly in high-pressure situations.
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Teamwork	In retail, you cannot be successful without collaboration. When working at a store during peak hours, I learned how to help teammates, step up when needed, and solve issues professionally.
Problem solving	At Marks & Spencer, I constantly had to come up with quick solutions to inventory problems or customer queries. It became second nature to think on my feet.
Adaptability	There were new systems, new policies, and new people for every retail job. Regardless of how quickly things changed, I learned quickly to adjust and keep positive.
Time management	Working part-time in a retail environment while studying at my university has shown me how to manage my time properly and remain organised.
Digital literacy	Without a background in formal marketing tools, I've adapted to new digital workflows, helped with in-store visual merchandising, and even worked with internal POS systems. This is what got me into digital marketing.

I can see how these skills match with what's needed in the digital marketing world. With regards to communication, adaptability, and teamwork skills that are required for this field (Digital Marketing Institute, 2023), I fit quite well into what marketing teams desire, especially in the roles that entail content creation, campaign management, or social media engagement etc which is crucial skills in any business (Gavin, 2019). The nature of this field also complements the several trends I have an interest in, customer behaviour and branding. With that in mind, I acknowledge that I have to continue growing my technical knowledge. Short courses and online certifications in these areas (Google Ads, Meta Business Suite, and basic SEO) are things I can improve on.

In financial services, I have attention to detail, professionalism, and customer service experience to offer. For example, operating at Marks & Spencer meant working with refunds or with high trust and discretion, which are not uncommon in the banking and finance industries. I also really enjoy data, and working with data and analysing trends, that's something I practised in university, just from doing business assignments. For that, I would need to take more practice with more advanced Excel functions and become more familiar with financial compliance and regulations to really feel prepared for roles in that field (www.careerprinciples.com, n.d.).

I have considered both industries, and I feel that Digital Marketing would be a better fit for me right now. It gives me the opportunity to work on my existing strengths, like communication, creativity, and adaptability, but also forces me to grow in new areas, such as digital tools and campaign strategy.

Additionally, given that today's marketing is so often across cultures, platforms, and markets, this links well with the global element of my degree, International Business (FutureLearn, 2025).

As for my personal brand, I am always people-oriented, flexible, and open to learning. These are traits which have held up against retail and ones I am eager to bring along with me into my professional journey. I can shape my real-world experience, my strong work ethic, and my passion for connecting with people to have a meaningful and impactful way to shape what employers in the digital space will value, I do believe. After continuing to invest in ensuring I develop, I am confident that I will be able to move into this industry and create a fulfilling career in an industry that never stops changing, with all the skills I have.

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PART 2: Reflective essay on skill development

Being an International Business student, I've not only grown academically, but also professionally and personally. My university and a semester abroad at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) in Swansea have developed me into who I am becoming at this stage. Though I've learned many important lessons working part-time in retail, I discovered the most about the international business landscape and its requirements for success through academic pursuits and international exposure (FgcU.edu, 2017).

Learning the reality that today's business world is so interrelated and complicated has been one of the most important parts of studying International Business (Smet, Gagnon and Mygatt, 2021). I've learned more than just textbook knowledge through modules like global marketing, intercultural management, and fundamentals of finance, which are crucial knowledge to know before entering the field (Reynolds, 2016). Thus, I have developed a keen sense for the role that cultural, economic, and political forces play in decision-making within global companies. I've learned to think strategically, not only about how businesses are run but about why they succeed or fail in various markets through these insights.

Additionally, the course has helped me learn to think critically, analyse trends and to solve problems from different angles. If I were studying case studies dealing with multinational corporations, working in group projects that were supposed to simulate international expansion plans, I was often, if not always, encouraged to think beyond the realm of local borders. The assignment with the most impact was when I had to work on a market entry strategy for a brand entering the Southeast Asian region. This forced me to take into account everything from consumer behaviour and the legal barriers of the city to supply chain logistics and local partnerships. It was a difficult job, but it taught me just how much I love working on and solving global business challenges, and that I have a skill for helping to bridge cultural insight and strategic thinking.

My semester abroad at UWTSD in Swansea brought those lessons to life. I lived in a new country, studied in a new country, and that forced me to adapt on an academic and social level. The classrooms were distinctly different, discussion-based, critical thinking-focused, and full of international perspectives. Working with peers from different cultures, I learned plenty of transferable skills that future employers will appreciate. I learned the best ways to navigate group projects and the positive ways this helped build my communication, leadership and negotiation skills in a way no classroom ever taught me that would help with my employability (Giolando, 2022). Along with that, I grew to become more independent, more resourceful, and more confident in my capability to control the unfamiliar qualities that are as important in a professional setting as in a personal setting (Gavin, 2019).

One of the things that studying abroad made me more aware of was the different cultures and lifestyle routines. I got to see how to tackle challenges from different angles and took in greater insights into how diversity in teams works. In today's global job market, where many companies hire people from different countries and different time zones, these are key employability skills (Hamilton, 2023). And my experience in Swansea helped build my emotional intelligence, my patience, and flexibility, when in a team where not everybody had the same expectations or communication style. From an early age, these

soft skills have already helped me collaborate with others better in group assignments and to present my ideas to others.

While my degree and study abroad have been hugely beneficial, the reflective process also made me realise that there are a few places I still have to grow. I noticed that I have a technology and digital skills gap. While I'm comfortable doing research, writing reports and talking publicly, there are many functions in the world of international business, such as digital marketing, logistics or analytics, where you need greater digital proficiency (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021). Now I'm working on strengthening this part of my skill set by taking short courses in data analytics, Excel, project management tools and so on.

I am also getting better at being able to use theory in a real-world setting. I have built a strong academic foundation, but there are still so many benefits I can learn through internships and practical business projects (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). And so I've begun applying to international companies for internships where I could learn from professionals and put what I have learned from class into practice. It is these experiences that will help me learn and grow and give me a better understanding of in-demand career paths that I might take down the line, international marketing, global operations, or cross-cultural consulting (Reyell, 2024).

I cannot ignore the contribution of my retail jobs, as I mentioned, but I touched on it briefly. While working at Cotton On, KOI Bubble Tea, and Marks & Spencer, I gained the basic principles of customer service, teamwork, and time management. These were my first experiences working in fast environments, solving problems as you go. Although the work itself was not necessarily relevant to international business, the interpersonal and organisational skills that I gained have definitely transferred over to both the academic and professional development. No matter the job, they prepared me to be my work ethic, my professionalism, and my people skills are just as important as academic knowledge.

I look forward to creating a career that reflects the international education I acquired as well as my own personal strengths. A job with a global business environment where I never stop learning and contributing across cultures is the kind of work I see myself doing, perhaps in marketing, as a consultant, or in project coordination. Right now, I am updating my CV and LinkedIn profile to showcase the academic knowledge and global outlook I have gained, and making an effort to connect with people in international careers, through networking events and online, which would be viewed positively by employers (O'Dea, 2017).

In conclusion, studying International Business and studying abroad was more than a degree, and it has been a journey of growth. Ultimately, it's sharpened my critical thinking, broadened my cultural understanding, and built the foundation of a career that excites and challenges me. Looking back on all this has brought me some insight into just how far I have made it, but also a reminder that professional development is an ever-evolving process. I am equipped with a mindset of lifelong learning and a growing toolkit of skills, a fit with clear goals, and I'm willing to keep moving forward and make the best of the opportunities out there.

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