



Certificate of Higher Education Employability Skills

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Part 1: Individual Reflection

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In today's fast-paced world, professional development is essential for staying current in various industrial and social fields. This development encompasses not only communication and career advancement but also aligning individuals' abilities with employer expectations and enhancing leadership and adaptability skills (Kolb, 1984). The dynamic nature of modern industry demands that professionals continuously update their knowledge and skills to remain competitive and effective in their roles.

Continuous development and understanding of the work environment are crucial for achieving success. Engaging in ongoing education and training ensures that individuals can meet the evolving demands of their professions and contribute meaningfully to their organisations (Schön, 1983).

Participating in this programme, which includes lectures, training, and practical assessments, has significantly contributed to my career progress. The comprehensive nature of the programme has provided me with valuable insights and practical skills that are directly applicable to my professional responsibilities, thereby enhancing my overall effectiveness and career path.

The course highlighted the importance of different mindsets, specifically flexible and growth mindsets. It became evident that individuals' thinking, and expression vary widely. Mindsets can evolve in a purposeful manner. Dweck (2006) found that people often misestimate their abilities due to a fixed mindset, whereas those with a growth mindset demonstrate remarkable accuracy. Overcoming challenges, such as language barriers and educational levels, has been a testament to my intellectual and mental growth.

Two key mindsets are growth and fixed mindsets. Individuals with a fixed mindset believe that intelligence is an unchangeable trait, whereas those with a growth mindset view it as a quality that can be developed through effort and practice (Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck, 2007; Yeager and Dweck, 2012). This understanding has been pivotal in my professional journey, particularly in overcoming initial limitations and embracing continuous learning.

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is beneficial for exploring various aspects of business and improving decision-making regarding strategies and business plans. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors, while opportunities and threats are external. As a caseworker, I have utilised SWOT analysis to enhance my life planning. My multilingual abilities (Arabic and Tigrinya) have been a significant strength, enabling me to assist clients who lack English proficiency and opening numerous job opportunities for me.

On the contrary, my initial inability to communicate directly with people was a weakness that hindered my progress. To address this, I increased my volunteer hours and participated in numerous team-based and direct communication training sessions. Identifying activities I naturally enjoy has helped me recognise my strengths and skills.

The saying, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”, suitably describes the process of setting and achieving life goals (Laozi, as cited in Keyes, 2007). This organised approach to goal setting can be likened to as a user manual for a new device, providing step-by-step guidance. The SMART goal method, which stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound, is instrumental in setting clear and targeted goals. To set a specific goal, it must be within a specific scope, such as defining the goals to be achieved. It must be time-bound, whether it is a long or short period of time. It must be a realistic goal that can be achieved with the available capabilities. It must be set with a deadline for its achievement.

In 2021, I started working as a volunteer at the Welsh Refugee Council, Swansea office. My abilities were limited, and my language skills were weak, but I had confidence in my capacity to learn and develop instantly. My first goal was to improve my language skills by communicating directly with those around me. To achieve this, I joined many training courses that refined my personality and boosted my confidence. My goal was to transition from a volunteer performing simple tasks to a reliable individual in critical matters. I continued to work diligently and seize every

opportunity for development. By setting specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound goals, I was able to track my progress and stay motivated

(Doran, 1981). In 2023, I signed my first employment contract with Migrant Help, and today I am an e-Visa Caseworker with the Home office under the Welsh Refugee Council.

The Johari Window is a visual tool that facilitates understanding of oneself and others, thereby enhancing relationships (Olivier and Duncan, 2019). It can be used to explore how self-awareness, feedback, and communication shape professional development. During my work as a Caseworker, both my colleagues and I were aware of my strong commitment to improving my skills and providing effective support to clients. This openness facilitated teamwork and helped me gain trust from both clients and colleagues. Feedback from managers and colleagues has been instrumental in improving areas such as communication and handling emotionally challenging situations.

One of the hidden aspects of my experience as a caseworker was my struggle with the emotional weight of certain cases. I often felt overwhelmed but did not always share this with my colleagues, as I wanted to maintain a sense of control and professionalism in front of clients. Through difficult cases, I have come to realise that I am more resilient than initially thought. Although I am still uncovering new aspects of myself in this work, these experiences are helping grow both personally and professionally.

Reflecting on my learning experience through the lens of Honey and Mumford's learning styles, I identify most with the Pragmatist and Reflector styles.

As a **Pragmatist**, I appreciate practical applications of concepts and enjoy experimenting with new ideas to see if they work in real-life scenarios (Honey and Mumford, 1986). This aligns with my approach to professional development, where I actively seek out training and practical experiences to enhance my skills. For example, my use of SWOT analysis to identify and control my strengths, such as my multilingual abilities, demonstrates a pragmatic approach to problem-solving and

career advancement. By focusing on practical applications, I have been able to effectively address real-world challenges and improve my professional capabilities. This hands-on approach has allowed me to gain valuable insights and develop strategies that are directly applicable to my work environment.

Additionally, engaging in practical exercises and simulations during training sessions has provided me with the opportunity to test and refine my skills in a controlled setting, further enhancing my confidence and competence.

As a **Reflector**, I value observing and reflecting on experience before drawing conclusions (Honey and Mumford, 1986). This has been evident in my use of tools like the Johari Window and SWOT analysis, where I take time to analyse feedback and identify areas for improvement.

This reflective practice had been crucial in my journey from a volunteer to a caseworker, allowing me to continuously adapt and grow. For instance, reflecting on my initial communication weaknesses and taking deliberate steps to improve through volunteer work and training sessions showcases my reflective learning style. By carefully considering the feedback from colleagues and supervisors, I have been able to identify specific areas where I needed to improve and develop targeted strategies to address these weaknesses. This process of reflection and self-assessment has not only helped me to enhance my communication skills but also to build stronger relationships with clients and colleagues. Furthermore, by regularly reviewing my progress and setting new goals, I have been able to maintain a continuous cycle of improvement and personal growth. This reflective approach has been instrumental in helping me to navigate the challenges of my role and to achieve a higher level of professional competence.

One of the most important lectures that I admire in these models is Personal brand. It is the image that I create and present to the world around me based on my personality, values, skills and experience(Avery & Greenwald,2023). These brands highlight the distinction between me and others and shed light on my unique qualities(Montanez,2023). One of the most important of these brands is defining my goal, which is to be an active member of society, contributing to providing assistance to immigrants through my work. Also, highlighting my dialogue skills and my ability to speak two languages. Communicating with clients and interacting with them through my actions

and words. Having all of these personal brands can enhance my professional opportunities, build my confidence and make me stand out from others(Avery & Greenwald,2023).

It is also important to go over the concept of ikigai, which is a Japanese concept that means a"reason for being", and it sheds light on four things (Mitsuhashi,2018). What I love to do is help others and advocate for justice. What I am good at is the ability to communicate with others and understand legal processes. What the world needs in terms of support for marginalized communities such as asylum seekers and refugees. Finally, my financial ability, which I will use for organizations that help and support people(Gaines,2024).

In conclusion, professional development is an ongoing process that requires self-awareness, practical application, and continuous learning. By leveraging different mindsets, utilising tools like SWOT analysis, and SMART goals, I have effectively navigated my career path. The integration of Honey and Mumford's learning styles has further enriched my experience, enabling me to approach challenges with a balanced and adaptive mindset.

The pragmatic approach has allowed me to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations, enhancing my problem-solving skills and professional competence.

Reflective practice has been crucial in identifying areas for improvement and developing targeted strategies, fostering continuous growth. This balanced approach supports both immediate application and long-term development, positioning me well for future challenges. As I continue to uncover new aspects of myself, I remain committed to my professional growth and development, ensuring that I stay adaptable and resilient in an ever-changing professional condition.

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