ADAPTING

The ability to adapt to changing circumstances, take on board new ideas and react positively to change is a key workplace skill. Employers actively look for people who can demonstrate that they can rise to challenges and have an open-minded approach to improving their own performance.

Some people thrive on change and are at their best dealing with the unexpected. However, not everyone is naturally adaptable, and some people enjoy working from a “to do” list and feel less comfortable when unexpected situations arise. It is possible to learn to become more adaptable and flexible through experience and demonstrate your willingness to adapt to new situations.

How can I develop adaptability skills on my course?

- Make sure that you try and work with a variety of students when working on group projects or in groupwork activities and learn to adapt to different ways of working.
- Keep an open mind in seminar discussions or when writing essays. You should be learning to integrate new information and draw conclusions from it, whilst switching from the detail to the big picture.
- Volunteer to be an Academic Rep for your Department or School and practice your skills by working with different groups of people to persuade and make positive changes.
- Be prepared to listen to feedback from your academic tutors and look for ways to make positive changes to improve your work.

How can I develop adaptability skills outside of my course?

- Join a student society and positively engage with students from different backgrounds and cultures than your own.
- Seek out a specific society to help you learn a new skill or to build your knowledge. This could be to help you with your academic study or career plans, for example, The Investment Society, Coding or The Law Society or you may want to pick up a new skill for fun, such as salsa dancing, cheerleading or humans versus zombies.
- Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and learn to adapt and deal with new situations.
- Part time work can be a good way to demonstrate you can adapt to the demands of a job and balance this with studying.
How do people use this skill in the workplace?

Royal Holloway graduates have used adaptability skills as:

- A Civil Service Fast Stream graduate trainee adapting to different rotations during the training, from travelling around the country to attend meetings by yourself to flying out to Brussels to discuss policy with European colleagues.
- A Management Consultant adapting their style of working to suit the needs of the business and staying ahead of the current industry trends.
- A Lawyer adapting your expertise and practice when working with wide range of clients.
- IT programmers looking for new ways of using technology and being prepared to learn new skills in a sector that is constantly evolving and developing.
- As a graduate Police Officer dealing with unpredictable situations where you need to adapt quickly and remain calm.

How will employers assess my adaptability skills?

If you are applying for a role and the job descriptions states they are looking for someone with a positive “can do” attitude or someone who can respond positively to change and the challenges it brings or perhaps demonstrates a flexible and dynamic approach, then they are looking for adaptability skills so make sure you can demonstrate this on your CV. You may also be asked specific questions on an application form or in an interview which are designed to assess your adaptability or flexibility skills. Examples of questions that could be asked include:

- Tell me about a time when you had to change your plans due to unforeseen circumstances, how did you deal with this?
- What challenges did you face when adapting to remote learning?
- Tell me about a time outside of your studies that you taught yourself something new to be better at something.

If you’d like to get some help with structuring your answers for application forms or interviews using the STAR technique, visit the CVs and interviews section of the Careers Moodle site.

ShortListMe, Graduates First and eCareersGrad are available on the Moodle page to help you practice interview skills, case studies and psychometric tests.

For more ideas on how you can ‘sell’ your skills on your CV then please watch our VIDEO CV workshop series, Part 3: Selling your ‘Skills’ on your CV (panopto.com)

If you are applying for a graduate scheme or Year in Industry and are invited to an assessment centre, it’s very likely that you’ll be assessed on your adaptability skills usually through a group exercise. Assessors will want to see how you can adapt to different situations, they may add in a new idea or change something during the group exercise, they could be looking at how open you are to other people’s points of view. Keep an eye out for
the Assessment Centre workshops that run during the Autumn and Spring terms. These will be available to book via The Careers Portal.

You can make an appointment to speak with one of our Careers Consultants via the Careers Portal, where we can give feedback on your CV or application or help you to prepare for interviews and assessments, as well as help you think about your career options.