Curiosity

Children are born asking questions, but curiosity is a skill that people can find harder as they get older. Being curious means having a desire to know or learn about something, whether that’s the world and society around you or how things work or what motivates people. It might mean trying to get to the root cause of a problem to find solutions or asking questions that help you understand a situation from new perspectives.

Expressing curiosity may require courage to reveal a lack of knowledge and the persistence to question and learn until you fully understand. Curious people like to learn and explore, and are constantly asking ‘why’?

Being curious is a valuable skill in the workplace as it encourages innovation and improvements. Curious people are more likely to notice behaviour or information that is inconsistent or incorrect and recognise when this may be significant. They will make efforts to ask questions and find and filter information to resolve their uncertainty or lack of information. They are more likely to acknowledge where problems exist and be interested in identifying possible solutions. Allowing curiosity through research, observation, questioning, and reflection can be vital for creative problem solving.

How can I develop this skill on my course?

- When reviewing academic literature for an essay or assignment, try to build in some time for extended reading. This will help you develop more advanced knowledge of specific elements that interest you
- Take a curious approach to seminar preparation by reviewing any pre-reading and reflecting on how the topic ties in with your existing knowledge
- In group discussions and seminars, don’t be afraid to question your tutor and/or other students on their ideas to ensure you fully understand. Actively listen to people with different backgrounds, perspectives and viewpoints
- If you are struggling with a topic, take proactive steps to resolve the issue. You can approach academic staff and CeDAS for support
- Take the opportunity to attend optional events and listen to external speakers to learn more about your degree course and future career options
How can I develop this skill outside my course?

- Take a curious approach to student life by making sure you understand the full range of opportunities open to you, like student media, volunteering, Enactus and sports
- If you take a position of responsibility within a student club/society, ask students who held the role previously for insights, suggestions, and ideas to help you make a positive impact
- Extend your knowledge of the working world with a virtual internship or online short course
- If you have a part time job, try to learn more about the organisation’s operations and see if you can suggest any ways to help things run more efficiently and/or profitably
- Stay curious about the world around you by signing up to a daily news email or podcast

How do people use this skill in the workplace?

Royal Holloway graduates have used curiosity skills as:

- A Market Researcher devising questions to understand consumer motivations
- A Legal News Editor researching and writing industry news articles
- An Investments Analyst spotting trends in data to support investment decisions
- A Museum Curator researching for an exhibition and devising new ways to present a collection
- A Research Scientist questioning accepted methodologies and coming up with new approaches

How will employers assess my curiosity skills?

If a role you are applying for requires curiosity the job description might state they are looking for someone who is self-driven, an innovative or creative thinker, willing to challenge accepted norms, eager to learn or possessing strong research skills. Make sure you can demonstrate these skills on your CV.

You may be asked specific questions on an application form or in an interview which are designed to assess your skills in this area. Examples of questions that could be asked include:

- Tell me about a time you questioned accepted practices and suggested a new solution
- Have you ever proactively learned something new?
- Tell me about a time when you spotted an opportunity to suggest a change. How did you put this forward and what was the outcome?

If you’d like to get some help with structuring your answers for application forms or interviews, visit the CVs and interviews section of the Careers Moodle.
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 and are invited to an assessment centre, you may be assessed on your ability to question, research and think creatively. You might be given a business case study to analyse or a group activity to complete. Assessors will want to see a range of skills such as how you question others in the group to improve your understanding or how you deal with ambiguous or complex situations. If you’d like to practice a group activity 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.