

# FAQs for completing the Employability skills survey

---

*Please read the information sheet and complete the consent form before progressing with the survey. When completing the survey please relate your answers to only one degree. This should be your single honours economics degree if you have one, or your joint economics degree with the most economics content. The joint degree must be at least 50% economics. All answers should relate to the degree in 2018/19.*

When we piloted the survey, it was suggested that we provided some clarity upfront about how to interpret questions. Our FAQs are here but if you are unsure how to answer any question please get in touch with Cloda Jenkins, Project Manager ([cloda.jenkins@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:cloda.jenkins@ucl.ac.uk)).

1. *Our students take a mix of economics and non-economics modules. How should I account for skill-development in non-economics modules?*

You should be answering questions based on one degree that is either a single honours economics degree or your degree with the most economics content. Please only consider modules delivered by the economics department when answering questions. This can include skills or careers modules delivered by the economics department as well as economics modules. We know students develop skills in non-economics modules, but we are not capturing that here. You can mention wider opportunities for skill development in your answer to Q4 and in various places that ask for 'any other comments'.

2. *How do I ensure that I am capturing the whole programme experience?*

In the survey we are trying to capture the experience of an average student across the whole programme. Say a student has to take 12 modules during their degree. Think about the mix of the compulsory modules and the most popular optional modules when answering the questions. If students have the opportunity to develop a particular skill in all of them, you are doing a lot. If you cover all the skills in one module only, you are not doing a lot because it only applies to a small proportion of the whole degree. You can emphasise the value of that one module in any of the boxes that ask you to 'explain your answer' to a question and of course we would love to get a case study on that module. If you are unsure when answering a question put yourself in the shoes of that 'average student' and think about what their experience would be.

3. *What do you mean by an 'opportunity to develop skills'?*

The survey is about the extent to which students are given the opportunity to develop the various skills that you are asked about. We mean that students are actively encouraged to

develop the skills by being given activities to undertake themselves (e.g. homework assignments, assessed projects, classroom discussions). Students being told that skills are important or watching someone else show them how a skill is used does not count. For example, imagine a lecturer shows students data they use in their work and where they got it from. This is not considered ‘an opportunity to develop a skill’. However, if the lecturer gives the students a list of data sources and asks them to find a data series and download it themselves, that is ‘an opportunity to develop a skill’. When thinking about what you do in your modules, think about what students actively do.

*4. What if we give lots of opportunities but they are not well guided or structured?*

Consider everything that lecturers encourage students to do. It doesn’t have to be a particularly large activity or indeed to be something that involves a lot of guidance and structure. It doesn’t necessarily have to be done well so long as the opportunity is there. An optional task at the end of a homework assignment can count as ‘an opportunity’. If you want to explain that many of the opportunities are independent work for the students, you can do this in the free text boxes throughout the survey. Similarly, if you want to highlight a module where the activities are carefully planned and students get a lot of guidance you can do this in free text boxes and submit more detail as a case study.

*5. What should we say if we do a little but it is spread across lots of modules or we do a lot but within one or two modules?*

You have to think about how much you do across the whole programme so go back to the experience of the average student across all modules. When answering questions about the proportion of opportunities that are assessed or whether the skill development happens in optional or compulsory modules, think about everything that you do. You can say you develop a skill in both optional and compulsory modules, even if it is only one optional module and one compulsory module.

*6. How should I interpret the skill categories in the questions?*

Most of the survey focuses on skills that have been identified as very important by employers of economics graduates in the Economics Network’s *Employers’ Surveys*. We provide an interpretation of each of the five main skills below, along with some examples of what type of student activities might be relevant. We look forward to getting more examples.

Skill/capability	Interpretation	Examples of activities
Communication	Students are asked to present their ideas to a mix of audiences in writing and/or in oral presentations. When answering the questions, you are able to distinguish opportunities for academic and non-academic audience communication and for written and oral communication.	Academic essays, blogs for a non-academic audience, report for a policy-maker, write Economist-style articles, present technical material to classmates orally, deliver a presentation to a non-academic audience.
Application to real world	Students are able to take concepts, models and theories that they are learning and use them to answer policy or business questions relating to the real world. This is more than lecturers mentioning connections to the real world or students making a brief connection, for example in an essay, between what they learn and relevant real-world situations. It is about them attempting to make use of economics ideas and tools to tackle real world questions.	Discussion in class on how principal-agent models can be used to design wage contracts; essay on how trade theory can be used to evaluate the impact of Brexit; problem set question on how to use statistical theory to calculate the distribution of sales for a company over a five-year period; group project critically analysing a real-world policy or commercial decision.
Data analysis	This is about students actively working with data themselves; rather than hearing about how economists use and analyse data. All steps of data analysis can be considered including finding data, downloading data, analysing it and making inferences. They may also undertake data analysis using statistical or econometric packages. If you want, you can specify in the 'free text' comments box after each question if the activities are more geared towards basic data skills or econometrics analysis.	Students are asked to find data on a particular topic and produce a table or chart; students are given data and asked to compute summary statistics; students are asked to run an econometric analysis using a model and data provided; as part of their own research projects students find, interpret and analyse data and use it to evaluate empirical relationships.
Collaboration	Students are asked to work with others on a piece of work. This could be their classmates, students in other years or students in other programmes (inter-disciplinary). The group work would be required by the lecturer.	Peer discussions in classes; problem sets submitted in groups; group research projects.

## 7. Should I be giving my personal perspective?

Inevitably as one person filling in a survey on behalf of your Department/Programme you will be giving your own perspective on the question. We would strongly encourage you to discuss the questions with key colleagues to sense-check your ideas so that you can answer with a shared perspective in mind. It might also, from time to time, be helpful to consider what the average view across lecturers is. Where you think that your answers may be biased in one

direction or another because of your own experiences/perspectives, please make that clear in your answer to Q20. For example, you could simply let us know that you did not have time to consult with colleagues and have answered based on your own experiences as someone who actively incorporates skills-based learning into modules.

*8. How long will the survey take me?*

This is not a short survey. We recommend that you go through all the questions one time and leave any that you think you need to discuss further with colleagues or where you need to look up some information. This will be a time commitment in itself. You can save your answers and come back to them later to complete the survey after checking the outstanding details. We appreciate the effort that you put into the exercise and hope that you find it useful in your own role and recognise the wider value for our project. In the event that you find it too time-consuming to complete all questions please get in touch ([cloda.jenkins@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:cloda.jenkins@ucl.ac.uk)).