

# What is the networked approach to graduate employability?



The networked approach to graduate employability is concerned with the **social and relational dimensions of learning, work and career**. In the 21st century, many of these dimensions involve interactions and activities in digital spaces as well as face-to-face.

## How is the networked approach different?

To date, universities' engagement with graduate employability has been focussed on developing the individual skills and capabilities to find and acquire suitable work, perform well and add value in that work, and to build a lifelong career. The networked approach is complementary to this, and foregrounds the central roles of partnerships, groups, communities, and networks to employability, and developing the capabilities to make the most of these. With a strong basis in theories of social constructivism and connectivism, the networked approach embraces the fact that through social activities such as mentoring, collaborative problem-solving, crowdsourcing and networked learning, we can be much smarter and achieve much more than as individuals 'going it alone'.

## Why is the networked approach important?

The ability to make, grow and strengthen professional connections, and interact and work with them effectively and strategically has long been recognised as essential to lifelong employability. Professional networks have a vital role to play in various aspects of career development, innovation and problem-solving processes, and socially-based learning (see Bridgstock, 2016). With the advent of digitally mediated communication and the widespread use of social media, network effects on employability are both intensified and amplified.

Increasingly, universities are also seeking to build their own connectedness, and to enrich learning and teaching by collaborating and partnering with stakeholders from industry and community and their own alumni and students. In so doing, they strengthen their programs' authenticity and relevance. They can start to foster dynamic lifelong learning communities and broader networks, where the learning relationship can continue beyond the conclusion of a degree program (see Bridgstock, 2017). They can also broaden these relationships to have benefits into other areas of university activity, such as research and knowledge transfer.

## What is connectedness learning?

Connectedness learning is learning for, and through, social relationships and wider networks. The networked approach to graduate employability is particularly concerned with how connectedness learning can be applied for various professional and career development purposes and contexts.

The **Graduate Employability 2.0 connectedness learning model** summarises the:

- individual capabilities
- learning and teaching approaches and principles
- broader institutional enabling strategies

that support students, teachers, programs and educational institutions to cultivate and promote a networked approach to lifelong graduate employability.

Bridgstock, R. (2016). Paper for discussion: Graduate employability 2.0: Social networks for professional learning, career development and innovation in the digital age. Digital Media Research Centre, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. Retrieved from <http://graduateemployability.ning.com/about>; Bridgstock, R. (2017). The university and the knowledge network: A new educational model for 21st century learning and employability. In M. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Graduate Employability in Context: Research, Theory and Debate*. London: Palgrave-MacMillan; Palincsar, A. S. (1998). Social constructivist perspectives on teaching and Learning. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 45, 345–375. Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 2(1) [http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Jan\\_05/article01.htm](http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Jan_05/article01.htm)