

Embedding the HWU Graduate Attributes



**Learning and Teaching Matters:
Quick Guides for Staff No.2**

What are Graduate Attributes?

Graduate Attributes are the **skills, qualities and academic abilities** which students will develop during their time at university.

Attributes are developed primarily as part of a programme of study, but also through the student's wider experience at university.



Heriot-Watt Graduate Attributes

As part of Heriot-Watt University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, a series of **Four Heriot-Watt Graduate Attributes** is being introduced for students on all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes:

- **Specialist**
- **Global**
- **Creative**
- **Professional**

An over-arching strapline summarises the four attributes and emphasises the distinctive quality of the HWU graduate:

The Heriot-Watt Graduate
Professionally Educated, Globally Employable

Why focus on Graduate Attributes?

Graduate Attributes are important for a variety of reasons:

- Employers significantly value HWU graduates for their professional relevance and their industry-fit experiences. The Graduate Attributes reinforce these qualities.
- Students and recent graduates can, however, find it difficult to articulate, beyond their subject knowledge, the skills and qualities they have developed at university and to demonstrate the impact and relevance of their broader experiences.
- An increasingly competitive global job market means that HWU graduates need to be able to differentiate themselves whether or not they choose a career related to their programme of study.
- The Four HWU Graduate Attributes, with the encompassing **Professionally Educated, Globally Employable** strapline, are designed to help students to convey their skills and qualities effectively to employers.
- But equally importantly, they can be used by students to shape their learning and wider experiences during their time at Heriot-Watt and to make connections between those experiences in a coherent way.



As well as **professionally-relevant programmes**, Heriot-Watt University also provides students with a **global perspective and experience** through:

- a diverse international community
- international programmes
- opportunities to transfer between campuses (UK, Dubai, Malaysia) and obtain a truly global education

The HW Graduate Attributes Visual



What do I need to know?

The Collective Attributes

The attributes aim to ensure that the Heriot-Watt University graduate is readily identifiable and is distinct from the graduates of other HEIs.

The **four attributes must be regarded as a collective**; it is the particular combination of these four qualities which defines the HWU graduate.

Making Your Own Attributes Visual

You and your colleagues can adapt the white text bullet points on the HW Graduate Attributes Visual:

- to suit your own subject area
- to align the skills and qualities more closely to your discipline
- to make the skills and qualities more accessible to students

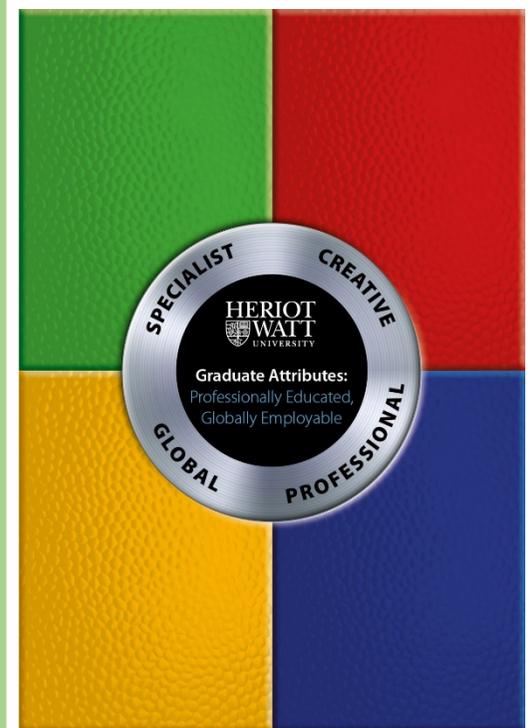
For an editable Word version, email: m.king@hw.ac.uk

The Attributes Visual

The white text bullet points explain on the HW visual the particular qualities and skills which the HWU graduate will be able to demonstrate.

These are intentionally aspirational, reflecting the characteristics which HWU graduates will acquire while at the University, and also develop further during their professional life.

They are designed to encompass both subject-based and wider experiences.



Some Tips

Some Tips for Highlighting and Embedding Graduate Attributes:

- Review curricula to identify where and how the attributes are being developed:
 - Are there gaps?
 - Are there any areas where a re-badging would be sufficient?
 - What learning, teaching and assessment methods need to be revised or introduced?
- Engage with students in highlighting and embedding the attributes: they will have some useful ideas on how their programme can help them develop their attributes.
- Use a variety of techniques for teaching, learning and assessment: variation exposes students to different ways of learning and provides more opportunities to develop a richer range of skills and qualities.
- Specify in the Course Descriptor (incl. on VISION as a tab) which attributes are being developed (*not every course needs to incorporate all four attributes*).
- Outline in the Programme Description how the programme as a whole will enable students to develop the four attributes (eg via a mapping).



SEE THE
WORLD,
THEN
CHANGE IT



Helping Students

Students will need to be made aware regularly through their programme of the ways in which the learning, teaching and assessment activities are helping them to develop the four HWU Graduate Attributes.

In time, the University will provide an online tool for students to record and reflect on progress; the Careers Service will advise on career planning. At the programme level, students can be helped to see the links between their learning experiences and the attributes in various ways:

Induction

Provide an overview of the Graduate Attributes, eg the University visual for all new students (including non-campus students), and at the start of each year of study.

Information

Highlight references to the attributes in programme and course information (incl. on VISION), and emphasise to students where and how they will develop the attributes.

Learning, Teaching + Assessment

Discuss with students how the various course tasks link to the attributes.

Do this regularly and students will start to see the value and relevance of different learning activities.

Student Views

Ask for student feedback on how effectively their programme is enabling them to develop the attributes, eg:

- Course Feedback Survey
- focus groups
- class reps on student-staff liaison committees;
- VISION discussions

What else?

There are many other ways in which you can take forward the Graduate Attributes:

- A consistent, School-wide approach to Graduate Attributes will facilitate both implementation across programmes and engagement of students. You could get involved with your School in developing a plans for:
 - identifying the Graduate Attributes within the curriculum
 - communicating the attributes to students
- Use the editable HWU Graduate Attributes visual to collaborate with colleagues across campuses in specifying how students will develop the four attributes in your subject area.
- Mentor-mentee meetings could provide a useful forum for discussing with students:
 - their progress towards the attributes
 - attributes requiring more development
 - the contribution of their broader, non-academic experiences
 - the importance of reflection in furthering developing attributes
 - how to make the most of their time at Heriot-Watt



E: quality@hw.ac.uk

<http://www1.hw.ac.uk/committees/lb/lb-policies.htm>

