WEEKLY REFLECTIVE DIARY

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

GEORGE WILKINSON

00677611

Table of Contents

16/09/24 - Overview and Basic Skills

The lecture focused on the importance of soft skills in career development, exploring communication, problem-solving, and time management with the goal of equipping us with knowledge to enhance our employability and prepare for professional environments.

The most relevant aspect of the lecture to me was the emphasis on soft skills like interpersonal communication and adaptability, along with my ability to reflect on performance. For example, I struggle with time management and self-organisation during note-taking and assignments. While I feel I excel in problem-solving, I need to work on my communication, priorities, and self-reflection. I plan to implement notetaking and organisation tools, such as Obsidian and a calendar, to improve my time management. Additionally, I will inherently be practising reflective writing to gain a better understanding of my progress as I learn.

23/09/24 - CVs and Placements

The lecture focused on creating effective CVs, writing covering letters, and preparing for interviews with the goal of helping us present ourselves professionally, increasing our chances of placements.

The CV section stood out to me the most; how CVs are not lists of qualifications, but a tool to give good impressions, helping employers see how my skills meet their needs. One area I need to work on is emphasising achievements, not just duties. For example, knowing certain languages and having relevant experience - these are selling points, however, incorporating metrics alongside actions will make my CV more impactful. Additionally, I liked the emphasis on proofreading and clarity; I regularly overlook key requirements in briefs and skip important points. Implementing checklists for proofreading and checking grammar with tools will help improve the professionalism of my CV.

30/09/24 - Skills Audit

The lecture focused on understanding the importance of both soft and hard skills for computer science students, with the goal of identifying current skills, recognising gaps, and outlining actions to enhance employability.

From this, I recognise my communication and interpersonal skills lack development, requiring me to rely on my problem solving, given my computer science background. For this reason, I am actively seeking out employment that will fall outside of my comfort zone to bridge this skill gap. This will force me to be more adaptable and versatile, developing skills I lack. Additionally, I plan to utilise the STAR technique to convey my skills more effectively in both technical and non-technical situations by reflecting on past experiences, such as assignment feedback - Hack Camp will be perfect for this. I also understand my existing skills, such as problem-solving and technical analysis, can always improve, so I have just subscribed to TryHackMe to address skill gaps in my learning.

7/10/24 - Personal Branding

The lecture focused on personal branding and its importance professionally, along with creating a personal brand to improve self-awareness, name strengths and values, and learning how to effectively present myself.

What I found most interesting is how this involves presenting myself how others see me, not how I see myself, to stand out and create a lasting impression. One area I need to work on is consistency of applying my values to my professional brand, I value integrity and authenticity, but values are useless if I am inconsistent. The idea of archetypes was also interesting, I identify with multiple but see myself as a reluctant leader, never enjoying it but being the person in the room to take charge due to not liking chaos. I plan to develop a personal brand that is authentic yet impactful using platforms like LinkedIn to connect with peers and employers.

14/10/24 - CV's, Placements & Applications

The lecture provided understanding of the recruitment process for placements, how to apply effectively and where to find opportunities, with the goal of finding proper roles, and developing a successful application.

What stood out to me was the competitiveness of placements - to start early, using multiple platforms to secure a useful opportunity. I also realised that my current CV should be more targeted, specifying technical skills, metrics, and achievements dependent on roles, to ensure my CV aligns with job descriptions and specifications. I will register on platforms like Gradcracker and Handshake, to access relevant opportunities and reduce the time spent on less suitable roles. Additionally, psychometric tests and interview preparation tools are something I need to prioritise since I often neglect practice for self-assessment; working on this

improves my self-awareness and shows initiative. I plan to start by finding roles that align with my interests and skills and tailor my CV accordingly.

21/10/24 - Peak Performance

The lecture focused on achieving 'peak performance' and setting goals, emphasising mindset and self-awareness in personal development, identifying limiting beliefs, setting achievable targets, and overcoming challenges.

The idea of possibility thinking interested me, since I realised that my mindset often limits my potential, believing that I am not good enough to achieve. By recognising that I can improve and assessing my ability, I can consider the opportunities that may present themselves. I aim to apply for soft skill-focused jobs before the end of the month to develop my weaker skills to become more confident in myself. Additionally, acknowledging opportunities is essential, by applying the 4As (Acknowledge, Analyse, Assimilate, Apply), I can turn these opportunities into actionable steps. This lecture has shown me I should adopt a more positive and proactive mindset by using possibility thinking to stop negative beliefs, set clear goals, and stay consistent, this mindset shift will aid my professional development as I pursue both my education and career.

28/10/24 - Psychometric Testing

The lecture focused on psychometric tests, their types, purposes, and preparation, to understand how they are used in recruitment and the common types.

I found the different types of tests (numerical and verbal) to be quite relevant; since the tests are often used in placement applications, I should aim to improve my performance in them to prepare properly. By practising with Graduates First, I will familiarise myself with test formats, reducing my anxiety and improving my performance under pressure. Additionally, the advice to guide practice to specific roles was valuable - numerical tests require critical thinking and accuracy, which are common skills for opportunities in computer science. Although psychometric tests can be high-pressure, I have found I can be quite introspective, and by acknowledging my strengths and weaknesses well, I can address skill gaps and seek feedback. I plan to create a schedule, focus on weak points, and use available resources to build confidence and prepare for these assessments.

4/11/24 - Self Management Skills

The lecture focused on the importance of self-management skills in both education and professional situations. It covered skills such as planning, organisation, communication, flexibility, initiative, and resilience, to understand how these skills can contribute to growth.

The part I found the most applicable was self-management not just being about achievement, but about how I approach my actions and learn from success and failures, due to my recent employment as a Sales Technician at a phone network provider and acting on improving my soft skills in a professional environment. I realised while I am actively working on communication and organisation, skills like adaptability and resilience be improved. For example, when I have been challenged while training at work, I struggle to adapt and lose motivation. Overall, this lecture has given me a better understanding of self-management and steps to seek growth. By focusing on these areas, I aim to become more confident, efficient, and effective in both my education and professional pursuits.

11/11/24 - Working in Industry

During this lecture, Warren focused on the importance of LinkedIn to network and improve professional presentation, and the use of social media. He displayed his journey in various jobs to starting a tech career later in life, stressing the value of connections and consistency on LinkedIn.

The part about LinkedIn's role in networking stood out to me since I've used it for connections, but not as effectively as suggested; active engagement (commenting on posts, sharing achievements, etc.) can attract recruiters. While I update my profile and make connections, I have never posted or interacted in this way. The focus on social media on my professional image had not occurred to me, since I use no public-facing platforms; long-term, this could be harmful to my goal of presenting myself as a professional, lacking work-related posts. I will work on LinkedIn engagement, and ensure my posts add value to my image.

18/11/24 - Professional Presence - LinkedIn

The lecture highlighted the importance of leveraging LinkedIn for career development, networking, and building a professional brand. Most important was the need for a proactive approach to presence online, given the increasing reliance on social media for recruitment.

The section on crafting an effective LinkedIn profile was useful, explaining the significance of a professional photo, a compelling headline, and a summary that highlights skills and aspirations. Additionally, engaging consistently on LinkedIn to attract recruiters mentioned again was relevant, considering the impact of my online presence on my professional image. The advice to avoid personal content on a professional platform is reaffirmed as it aligns with my want to preserve my online privacy while presenting as a professional. I plan to join interesting communities on LinkedIn and engage with posts to increase my online presence.

25/11/24 - International Opportunities

The lecture covered international study exchanges, placements, and research opportunities at partner universities in Australia, USA, Vietnam, and others, along with funding options and application processes.

The most interesting part was the thought of gaining new experiences from diverse cultures and new perspectives, enhancing my interpersonal skills, and making me a more adaptable professional. The opportunity to learn from leading universities also aligns with my career goals, providing valuable professional networking. While I have strong problem-solving abilities, time management is an area that needs improvement. Staying organised during international placements, especially with differing time zones and cultural norms, could be challenging. I would plan to use strategies I have been working on - such as planning and prioritising tasks - to manage my responsibilities more effectively. Overall, I feel this would be a valuable addition to my CV and could open doors for future career prospects in cybersecurity, where global connections are increasingly important.

13/01/25 - Emotional Intelligence

The lecture discussed Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and its 4 components: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management, highlighting the importance of understanding both my own emotions and others.

The lecture explained how critical EQ is in every aspect of life, which I see particularly with customer interaction. The discussion of EQ's 4 components revealed weak points in my emotional intelligence, namely Self-Awareness, as I often act impulsively under pressure without considering my emotions' impact. I will aim to think and reflect before responding when stressed, working towards improving my interactions both in my current role and in my future career. I relate to the methods of managing emotions since they are all taught in my current role, along with understanding others' emotions through body language and tone. While I am feeling more confident in my communication skills, I will aim to develop further by being more understanding and adaptive.

20/01/25 - Art of Freelancing

The lecture explored freelancing, covering topics such as finding a USP, understanding customer needs, marketing strategies, pricing models, and legal considerations.

Many points discussed are very relevant to my current role, which has 3, 3-hour "Connecting with Customers" workshops to understand customers, set expectations, and build trusting long-term customer relationships. The legal and financial problems of freelancing were a bit overwhelming to me, such as tax obligations and contract management. These would be areas where I would need to improve, given I consider solo freelance work; I would plan to implement time management techniques to manage tasks efficiently, which would be essential as I take on more responsibilities and see opportunities. Overall, this lecture has taught me about the benefits and given me the confidence to pursue freelance work.

27/01/25 - Professionalism and Confidence

The lecture focused on professionalism and confidence in work environments, explaining how to overcome challenges in a professional setting.

The most valuable part to me was consistency, which has become a prominent value of mine with health, using apps like MacroFactor to build discipline in my personal life. The discussion on punctuality also stood out to me, highlighting reliability and consistency to build trust with employers. To elevate this, I have and will continue to use digital calendars and reminders to help me better manage my tasks and deadlines. I feel confident in my ability to handle criticism and objections; however, I will improve this by using active listening and tailoring my responses.

03/02/25 - Assessment Insights

The lecture on assessment insights showed the importance of interpersonal and communication skills in our submissions but also explained that the same soft are important for success in the workplace.

Emphasis was placed on these skills not being able to be solely assessed through right or wrong answers but requiring evaluating how well an individual can express their thoughts and ideas effectively. The information on the next assignment was relevant, stressing that it is not just about correctness but also about the quality of expression. The use of AI tools was mentioned; while AI tools can help find grammatical errors and inconsistencies, it was made clear that AI should not generate content for students. Instead, it serves as a tool to enhance the overall quality of submissions. Common pitfalls were not following the brief, and a lack of structured writing; self-reflection was encouraged, and careful review of submissions to meet brief requirements. I will focus on clear communication and self-reflection in preparation for the next assessment.

10/02/25 - Placement Insights and Career Journey

The presentation discussed Safaa's experience during her placement year at Dematic, a company specialising in supply-chain automation and software solutions, highlighting the software, project insights, and customer relations in the company. She also emphasised the benefits of a placement year, gaining real-world experience, learning agile skills, and developing time management under pressure.

Safaa's experiences provided insight into the real-world application of software development and, more importantly, project management. Upon reflection, over HackCamp, I feel like project management could be a strong career choice due to my tendency to take charge as a scrum master. The highlight for me was the mention of working with strict deadlines in a fast-paced environment, which is my biggest weakness. Safaa's post-graduation journey, from securing a development job to becoming a project manager, showed me the long-term benefits of gaining practical industry experience. Overall, Safaa's journey further reinforced the potential of a placement year for personal and professional growth.

17/02/25 - Fear and Loathing in the Tech Community

My personal favourite so far, I found Chris' presentation into his experience very authentic, offering insights into navigating the tech industry and discussing challenges like managing estimates and dealing with changing requirements, emphasising collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptability.

Chris' journey through different companies highlighted the importance of flexibility and adaptability, and the balance between long-term work and taking new job offers. Standing out across every lecture so far, I enjoyed the discussion on AI tools and the concept of programming purely being problem-solving, with a focus on the proper use of AI tools to enhance productivity, rather than to replace programming. Chris' advice on work-life balance was particularly helpful - I am building my confidence in soft-skilled work, but my goal is to integrate my technical knowledge into my professional life, knowing that adaptability from my problem-solving skills will come naturally. Overall, Chris' presentation was an engaging and reaffirming reminder of the importance of continually improving myself.

24/02/25 - Effective Networking

This lecture returned to the focus of networking and provided tips for professional and personal growth, aiming to make us reflect on the skills to build mutually beneficial relationships (whether in person or through online platforms), understanding networking beyond formal interactions, the benefits of sharing resources, and the value of connections in career development.

The most useful aspect was learning how to start conversations and build relationships, which I have gained a lot of experience with during my time in sales. These skills have and will help me establish trust and create opportunities for upselling or referrals. Additionally, the emphasis on online networking is relevant as more interactions are shifting to digital platforms. Reflecting on my current situation, I feel my problem-solving is refined, and my communication skills improving every day, but could work on expanding my network beyond friends and family. I plan to reinforce consistent weak points like time management and self-reflection and aim to improve my networking efforts through LinkedIn.

03/03/25 - 11P's (But not really!) to Success in Industry

The lecture focused on the concept of the 3 P's, Passion, People and Patience, aiming to help us understand how these factors contribute to professional growth and advancement in careers.

The best takeaway for me was how passion drives achievement; the importance of people in building relationships and teams; and the necessity of patience in relationships. These core concepts resonated particularly with my role in sales, where enthusiasm, interpersonal skills, and resilience are implied for consistency.

I aim to improve my ability to be more patient with myself and others, since I find that my lack of patience can lead to stress. This will allow me to better my critical-thinking and relationship-building by fostering a better mindset and understanding towards others.

Reflecting on my current work, I find that while can be adaptable, I could expand my collaboration skills; the discussion highlighted the need for passion to stay motivated, and I find the motivation of others drives me. I will aim to build a better level of trust with colleagues and peers, to improve my teamwork.

Note on (AI) tools

I have used grammar tools built into Word and Grammarly to improve my conciseness and convey my points more efficiently to fit into the required word-count, along with the Transcript feature embedded into the Teams recordings to revisit old lectures I missed to save time watching the entire recording.