



Overview of the Plymouth Compass

The Plymouth Compass is a framework of 'future-facing' attributes, designed to be used as a navigational tool to help students recognise and develop the attributes that characterise the University of Plymouth graduate. It helps students to understand the attributes and skills they need to develop in four key areas of their lives - academic, professional, civic, and personal – and highlights the need to think holistically about their self-development. Further information about the attributes is available on the website: www.plymouth.ac.uk/compass

In the last decade, many UK and international universities have developed frameworks of graduate attributes that describe the skills, personal attributes, and values that characterise the core achievement of their graduates during their entire university experience. The Plymouth graduate attribute framework has been developed through consultation with a working group of students, academic, and professional services staff, and a comprehensive review of the literature on graduate skills and attributes (including national reports, academic literature, sector guidance, and the University's Postgraduate Prospectus, 2015 and Skills Plus, 2003). Building on Plymouth's history of maritime exploration and its pioneering spirit, it has been named the 'Plymouth Compass'.

It is not intended as a statement of student entitlement or as a promise of academic delivery, but rather as a device that helps students find their own direction through navigating the four key areas of their academic, civic, professional, and personal lives. The framework presents a common language for those skills, competences, and attributes needed to shape our students' and society's future during their lifetimes, which can be communicated both within and beyond the university. Although presented as distinct themes and attributes, these descriptors are inter-linked. The framework draws inspiration from the University's core values, and is in alignment with the University's 2020 Strategy and Higher Education Academy frameworks (Internationalising HE, 2014; Employability, 2013), as well as broader societal trend reports.

The aim in time is for the Plymouth Compass to be embedded into programme delivery and extra-curricular activities, and also for use within the **personal tutoring system**. The benefits for your students are as follows:

- The framework will help your tutee to become aware of valuable attributes they could develop whilst at Plymouth, and to seek out opportunities in which they can develop their personal, academic, civic, and professional selves, within both the

formal and informal curriculum. It can provide a focus for your tutorials and trigger discussions about how your tutee might wish to develop whilst studying at Plymouth and what goals they wish to set.

- Working through the Compass Portfolio (in PebblePad 5) pages will help your tutee highlight areas in which they might need further support and so you will be able to signpost them to the appropriate student support services and opportunities (e.g. [Learning Development](#), [Plymouth Connect](#), [Careers and Employability](#), [Counselling](#), [Plymouth Extra](#), etc.)
- Adding evidence to the Compass Portfolio will mean your tutee builds a useful record of their activities whilst at university, which will be valuable when they come to applying for work at a later date.

Introducing the Plymouth Compass to your tutee: key points to cover

- It will be helpful to share with your tutee how using the Compass Portfolio might specifically benefit them - feel free to share/amend the following:

'The aim of the Plymouth Compass is to help you identify and seek out opportunities for your personal, academic, civic, and professional development, within both your formal and informal curriculum. It will help you to think through how you might wish to develop whilst you are studying at Plymouth. You may feel that you need some extra support in developing some of the attributes and the Compass Portfolio (alongside your tutor) will point you towards resources and services you can access whilst you are here. Plymouth Compass is about developing your whole person, not just your academic side; it may also help you in the future to articulate what you have learnt at university to future employers.'

- The Compass Portfolio will be available to each student in your tutor group and to you as their tutor. Pebblepad is straightforward to use and students in the pilot reported that they found it easy to navigate. However, technical help is available if needed.
- One of the early meetings with your tutee is an excellent opportunity to introduce the Compass; while you may not wish to spend too much time looking at a screen with your tutee, having the *Overview* page open while you introduce the Compass and cover the following points may be helpful:
 - The Compass Portfolio is your tutee's personal resource, in which they can record their progress and development in each of the four areas. The emphasis is on them to take responsibility for their own Portfolio. It will stay with them throughout their time at Plymouth and will be available as a resource after they graduate.

- Point out that they can access Plymouth Compass at anytime, anywhere, and not just in tutorials. They can add evidence (called 'assets' via PebblePocket smartphone app) in the form of videos, pdfs, and images.
- Reassure your tutee that there are no right and wrong answers to any of the questions. It is a journey of discovery and can support them for the length of their programme and beyond.
- They are unlikely and certainly not expected to be an expert in any of the themes. They will have strengths and weaknesses across all the attributes, and some will be easier to develop than others (e.g. communication).
- A valuable consequence of engaging with Plymouth Compass is that thinking about these areas of their lives will probably make them more employable too. In fact, any records they keep could help them in the future to develop case studies and examples for job applications and interviews.
- It will be good for your tutee to see their progression over time so please encourage them to include the date when they enter anything in the Portfolio.

Using the Compass Portfolio throughout the year

Feel free to use the Portfolio with your tutee in whichever way you choose. Over the course of the academic year, encourage your tutee to work through all four themes of the Compass if they can. You may wish to try the following:

- Ask your tutee to read the introduction to the Compass Portfolio before a tutorial and discuss and critique the general idea of an attribute framework with them.
- Ask them what each of the four themes means to them - what experience do they have, how confident do they feel, and what they might want to improve in each theme?
- Each theme has a page for Plymouth Extra and Plymouth Connect. Encourage your tutee to reflect on what they are doing outside of the formal curriculum and to include these in the Plymouth Extra pages. This will allow tutees to return to this during their time at Plymouth and to note and record any changes.
- It is likely that your tutee will feel more affinity with one theme than the others – you can start with this one and move on to others later. You may ask your tutee to pick one area to focus on for the next meeting.
- Use their responses in each theme as starting points for conversations in your tutorials about their self-evaluation, needs, and aspirations.
- Where they feel they need further support to develop an attribute, encourage them to make use of the resources included in the Portfolio and to signpost them to the University services that they can access if necessary.

- Assist them to reflect on the attributes they are developing, both within their taught academic work, if appropriate (group work, or analytical skills, or sustainability, for example), and within their extra-curricular activities. They can return to these repeatedly during their years at university and build up a cumulative record of how they develop and change.
- Encourage them to include written evidence - we're hoping that they will find their examples and 'case studies' of what they have learnt in their activities (formal and informal) really useful when they come to complete application forms or CVs, and to attend interviews. They may wish to write these in the STAR format (Situation, Task, Action, Result) see <https://www.theguardian.com/careers/careers-blog/star-technique-competency-based-interview>)

If you would like to consider how you can integrate the Plymouth Compass into your programme or module, please feel free to contact Dr. Paul Warwick (Educational Developer) on 84924 or paul.warwick@plymouth.ac.uk or drop by Room 111, 3 Endsleigh Place.