Skills for the future – watch party

**Session objectives**

* Understand what skills are in demand by employers now and in the future
* Take a closer look at enterprising skills and commercial awareness
* Map your postdoc experience to in-demand skills
* Learn how to articulate your skills and market yourself

**Sessions this links to/is preparation for**

This session links well to a number of other sessions. It relates to all the sessions on skills: communication (storytelling and communicating your research), leadership, creativity (Idea generation) and commercial awareness. The other sessions it relates to include ‘Building your skills inventory’, ‘Thinking like an entrepreneur’, ‘Personal branding and positioning using LinkedIn’ and an ‘Introduction to networking’. It is also good preparation for the sessions on CVs (‘Understanding CVs’ and ‘How to write the perfect CV’) and ‘Getting noticed by recruiters’. It is good preparation for the session on ‘Mock interviews: preparing for a non-academic interview’.

**Session format/s (inc. virtual/face-to-face/live or on-demand)**

Virtual live watch party, using the Skills for the future on-demand videos.

**Maximum number of participants for this session (also ideal participant/facilitator ratio)**

30 would work well, as you want a small enough number to put into breakout rooms for discussion and/ or whole group discussion.

One facilitator per 30 would be fine.

**Is this session scalable? If, so how many participants could it be opened up to?**

Yes, you could easily run this watch party with 100+ participants.

Suggest having at least two facilitators if the number gets much beyond 30 participants to assist with assigning breakout rooms and chairing the group discussion (able to monitor chat questions and see who’s got their hand raised to speak etc.).

**Session running time**

1 hour 30 mins to allow for playing of five videos (50 mins) and discussion/task time totalling 30 mins. Few mins extra for arrival, extra discussion etc.

Breaks down as;

* Brief introduction (2 mins),
* Video 1. Soft skills and in-demand skills (10 mins),
* Discussion on soft vs hard skills + in-demand skills (5 mins)
* Video 2. Growing demand for enterprising skills (13 mins),
* Discussion: Enterprising skills (5 mins)
* Video 3. Mapping your postdoc experience to in-demand skills (10 mins),
* Task: map your own postdoc experience to skills shown in table (5 mins)
* Video 4: Demonstrating commercial awareness (5 mins)
* Discussion: commercial awareness as a postdoc (5 mins),
* Video 5: Articulating your skills and marketing yourself (15 mins)
* Discussion: marketing yourself (5 mins).
* Summary and end slide (1 min)

**Session overview**

Session starts by introducing the session as a watch party where several videos will be viewed and discussed. Outcomes of the session are shared and then straight to first video on skills, where speaker (Lib Golding) is introduced. As a group (or in breakout rooms), participants are then asked for their thoughts on hard and soft skills and some of the highlighted in-demand skills. The rest of the session follows the same format with discussions following playing of the videos. One task is given after the video on mapping your postdoc experience to in-demand skills – they are asked to try mapping their own. The session ends with a summary of the learning points.

**Additional session tools/resources/links**

PDF of additional questions asked by audience in the original recorded session with Lib Golding. Slides for running watch party.

Consider updating references to Future of jobs report and key skills over time. The current references are for 2022-2023.

**Detailed session running plan**

See Appendix for full script

If you’re sharing the videos via Zoom it’s worth ensuring you are somewhere with good internet connection and bandwidth. When you share your screen select ‘Optimise for video clip’ (‘share sound’ should be automatically ticked when you select ‘optimised for video clip’). If participants see a grey box/grey boxes obscuring part of the video this is probably your meeting controls, click ‘More…’ and select ‘Hide floating meeting controls’.

* Introduction to session as a watch party where several videos will be watched and discussed.
* Outcomes of the session are shared and then straight to first video on skills, where speaker (Lib Golding) is introduced.
* As a group (or in breakout rooms), participants are then asked to give their thoughts on hard and soft skills – which do they value more and why transferable skills are important. Second part of discussion asks for their thoughts on the in-demand skills for now and in the future highlighting some of the skills covered by Prosper and active learning as related to Prosper (i.e. they are engaging by being in the session and using the portal). Ask about how postdoctoral research relates to some of these.
* Play video on the growing demand for enterprising skills and get audience to reflect on how postdocs display some of these skills and how they could do more.
* Play video on mapping postdoc experience to in-demand skills and get participants to do task on their own to see how their own personal postdoc experience can be mapped to some of the in-demand skills.
* Play commercial awareness video and then open discussion about how postdocs can demonstrate it and how to articulate it when applying for jobs.
* Play final video on articulating skills and marketing yourself. Ask audience how they feel about this, as well as reaching out to others for support/advice/information.
* End with summary of the session.

**What does running the session ‘live’ add?**

Accountability and protected time to engage with the resources. This includes time for discussion and engaging with a useful task to start mapping their experience to in-demand skills that they continue in their own time. Discussion with fellow postdocs about skills encourages peer-to-peer learning.

**Example copy to use to advertise the session on Eventbrite**

Event title (max. 75 characters) – Skills for the future watch party

Details>Description>

Summary (max 140 characters) - Watch parties are an opportunity to engage with content and discuss with each other.

Description -

By the end of this interactive session you will;

* Understand what skills are in demand by employers now and in the future
* Take a closer look at enterprising skills and commercial awareness
* Map your postdoc experience to in-demand skills
* Learn how to articulate your skills and market yourself

Format:

* ~ 2 mins Introduction
* ~ 50 mins watching five videos on skills
* ~ Discussion groups and a task interspersed amongst videos
* ~ Opportunity to share your thoughts throughout

**Frequently asked questions/pain points for this session**

A few questions were asked in original session and can be seen in the accompanying PDF on Skills for the future Qs.

**Time and resource input level**

1. **Basic/Minimum/Lightest** – Signpost postdocs to the videos on the portal.
2. **Intermediate** – (all of basic plus some of the following…) Hold a watch-party. Get postdocs who’ve engaged with the resource/s to discuss and share their findings.
3. **Premium/Most intensive** (all of basic and intermediate plus any of the following…) Tailor the resource to your institution – link it in to any local sessions on skills development that postdocs can access at your institution. Commission an internal/external supplier to deliver a tailored session. Run a follow-up session to see if and how participants have developed the skills discussed. Encourage them to share what they’ve done specifically so that it provides inspiration for others who may have got a bit stuck.

**Appendix – full script for running skills for the future watch party**

Slide 1+2: Welcome to this watch party on Skills for the future. Please have your mics off and you can have your cameras off when the videos are playing. There are several opportunities for discussion when obviously I’d encourage you to switch your mics and cameras back on. Watch parties are a way of engaging with the content on the Prosper portal by making specific time to watch the videos alongside your peers.

Slide 3: In today’s session, we will look at what skills are in high demand from employers right now and which ones are expected to be most important in future. We’ll take a close look at two types of skills or competencies. These are opportunity spotting or enterprising skills and commercial awareness. We will look at how you can map your own postdoc experience to some of the in-demand skills. Finally, we will look at ways that you can articulate your skills and market yourself.

Slide 4: So let’s begin with the first video. This is Lib Golding who you will hear from in all the videos. Lib is an Enterprise Educator in Careers and Employability at the University of Liverpool. In this first video, Lib introduces herself and the purpose of the videos and then goes straight into looking at skills. The skills in-demand now and in the future are highlighted. Lib takes us through ways to identify our own skills and address any gaps. She emphasises the fluidity of skills between academia and organisations beyond academia. She challenges the notion of transferable skills being ‘soft’ and technical skills being ‘hard’ (and often seen as more valuable). Finally, the changing nature of in-demand skills and skills demands for the future are discussed.

Slide 5: I hope you enjoyed the first video. So now let’s take a few moments to reflect on what was discussed <<can do as a whole group or in breakout rooms – 2 2-3 mins>>

Let’s ask ourselves some questions. First of all, how do you view hard and soft skills. Do you rate technical skills higher than transferable skills and why?

I would also like to know your thoughts on the statement here. That if you are not sure what you want to do in future, being aware of and focussing your effort on transferable skills allows you to do something proactive, develop them over time and be prepared for a broad spectrum of roles. Have you ever thought about this before and do you agree?

Slide 6: Now let me get your thoughts (2-3 mins) on these in-demand skills for now and in the future. I’ve highlighted the ones in red as leadership, influence, persuasion, negotiation and creativity because we have other relevant resources on these on the portal. I’ve also highlighted active learning and learning strategies. Employers value this because it shows that you want to improve in your role and you’ve demonstrated it before. By attending today’s session you are demonstrating this.

So what do you think of each of these skills? Do any stand out for you that you already use as a postdoc. Are there others than you think you can work on?

Slide 7: So let’s move to the next video on the growing demand for enterprising skills. Lib presents the case that employers are looking for the types of skills that can be grouped under enterprising. These are being proactive, showing cognitive flexibility, resilience, adaptability, creativity and commitment to upskilling. Watch the video and think about when and if you have demonstrated such skills.

Slide 8: so let’s get your thoughts <<5 mins as whole group or in breakout rooms>> on these enterprising skills. Employers want people who can opportunity spot and take advantage of those opportunities to make an impact. They want people with ideas and initiative. They want people who will not only contribute to the success, but the GROWTH of the organisation.

What are your thoughts on this generally? Do you think you have some enterprising skills and anyone want to share some examples from postdoc researchers generally or very specifically for themselves and their research?

Slide 9: In the next video, Lib highlights several of the in-demand skills and looks at how postdocs can map their own experiences to them. Take a look

Slide 10: So let’s break out for an individual task. Here’s a still from the video. In the first column, you can see some of the skills with some evidence and examples. I want you to take 5 mins to look at the skills, take a few and map some of your own experiences to them. You can continue this exercise afterwards in your own time. This helps to build your own skills inventory, which you can find more guidance on in the Prosper portal.

<take any comments/questions after the task>

Slide 11: Moving on to the video on demonstrating commercial awareness. Here, Lib looks at this key competency and how it comes up at several points in the application process. How you can demonstrate commercial awareness by doing research into an organisation and using resources available to you.

Slide 12: In this discussion <<5 mins as whole group or in breakout rooms>>, I want to get your thoughts on commercial awareness. I want you to look at it from two perspectives. One, as covered in the video – how you can demonstrate it when applying for jobs. But the second is how you might already have been demonstrating it as a postdoc. Think about the following: collaborations, working with industrial partners, marketing yourself and your work in grants/conferences, competitor analysis (what other research groups are doing) and intellectual property.

Any thoughts? Have you considered commercial awareness in this way before? Any personal examples of where you have demonstrated commercial awareness?

Slide 13: In the next and final video, Lib talks about articulating your skills and marketing yourself to employers. These days application processes can be quite drawn out with several stages. You need to be able to leverage your skills and tailor applications/interviews to the individual job. The video discusses responses in applications and interviews using the structured STAR method as well as selecting your best examples and working on developing skills that you are less strong at. The video ends with how to create your personal brand.

Slide 14: So let’s get your final thoughts on the video <<5 mins as whole group or in breakout rooms>> about marketing yourself and creating your personal brand.

How comfortable are you with marketing yourself? Do you think you have to do this as a postdoc and can you give examples? How do you feel about selling your skills to others? What about reaching out to others and networking to market your skills that may lead to job opportunities? Do you have any concerns or fears around this?

Slide 15: I’ll end with a little summary of what we have covered today. We discussed how focussing in on in-demand transferable skills whilst you are doing your research allows you to be flexible and prepared for multiple career pathways. We focussed in on the importance of active learning/professional development, enterprising skills and commercial awareness. Finally, we looked at how you can articulate your skills and why this will help you as you progress with your career or change direction.

Slide 16+17: Thank you for attending todays session. Does anyone have any final questions before we wrap up?