



ScreenSkills

WRYSE project:

guidelines for UK

educators and screen

industry employers

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1. Introduction to WRYSE project

1.1 Background

The WRYSE (work-ready skills and experiences) project originated in 2021 through discussions at industry and academia roundtables convened by ScreenSkills as part of its ScreenSkills Select endorsement programme. It was also based on the findings from several ScreenSkills research publications during 2021-22, and the BFI Skills Review in 2021-22, and its experience running the ScreenSkills Select accreditation scheme since 2019.

The roundtables took place at seven industry hubs round the UK – Greater Manchester, Bristol, Cardiff, Yorkshire, West Midlands, Belfast and Scotland – and brought together local industry and educators to discuss evolving skills trends, gaps and shortages, and how stakeholders could collaborate to address these issues.

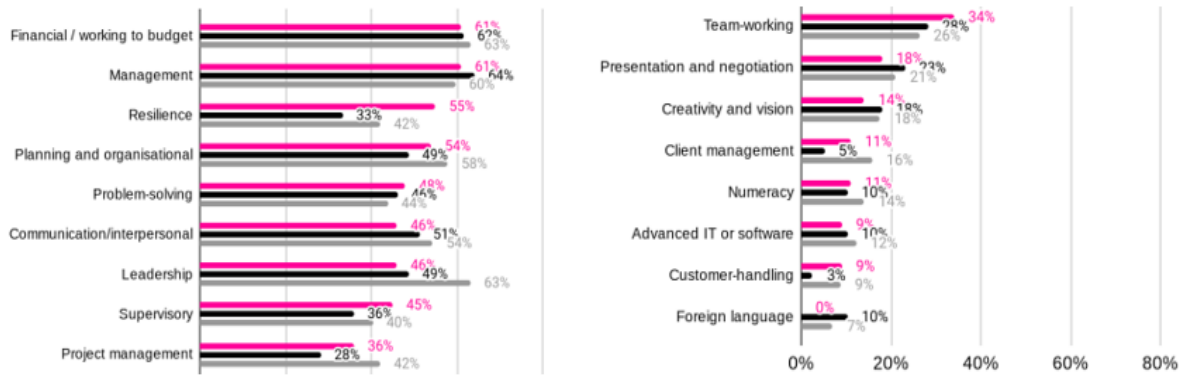
One of the most recurrent issues raised by attendees of the roundtables was the demand for stronger work-ready skills and experience among young people leaving education, whether college or university. In particular, attendees highlighted the benefit of *transferable* skills that could be used across all parts of the screen industries – but which they felt were undervalued by students and course leaders compared with creative, film-making skills and experiences, which (while attractive to university applicants and important to industry) are arguably less critical than these other competencies. The roundtables recognised that these work-ready skills were not properly defined and understood, and deprioritised – not least by often being referred to as “soft” skills. They felt that greater clarity and consistency in these important skill areas, and better integration into education and training, could provide significant support for young people entering the screen industries, and increased recognition from industry.

The BFI Skills Review (June 2022) echoed the importance of transferable skills in its findings, emphasising that “the production sector needs to ... articulate the transferable skills desired by employers ... given the competitive nature of the wider UK employment industry.”

These discussions were explored in greater depth in the more detailed findings from several ScreenSkills research publications in 2021-22:

- ScreenSkills Assessment 2021 (June 2021)
- Unscripted TV production in the UK: 2021 skills review (February 2022)
- Scripted production: assessment of skills shortages and gaps in the UK nations and regions (September 2022)

These reports consistently highlight the severity of skills issues in the UK and how these have substantially worsened in 2020-21, to a point where shortages are regarded as a serious or very serious problem by 86% of the HETV industry. The following skills are listed as particularly lacking among HETV crew being hired (with the pink/black/grey bars showing data for 2021, 2020 and 2019 respectively):



The wider ScreenSkills 2021 assessment unpacked these further for junior-level workforce:

Figure 15 Which of the following skills would you like to see improved in the junior-level workforce/crew you work with? (employers and hirers)



ScreenSkills has for the last 20 years worked closely with university and college leaders to endorse vocational and degree courses that are particularly successful in developing work-ready skills and understanding among students. The ScreenSkills Select accreditation programme has since 2019 increased this level of scrutiny, specifically requiring course leaders to account for how they develop competencies in skills gap areas highlighted by industry research. There were over 120 courses across film, TV, animation, VFX and games endorsed by March 2022 that had demonstrated this evidence.

While these courses (and other examples that are not currently endorsed) help students consistently progress into screen-related roles, more widely industry continues to regard many courses as unable to develop work-ready competencies. This often creates a need for additional vocational training, postgraduate or “bootcamp” or “set ready” courses to fully prepare graduates for employment. This extra training can successfully fill these skills gaps, but is not widely available across the UK, and only at an additional cost for students, making it a much less inclusive option.

1.2 Origin and aim of WRYSE project

In discussion with our partners at Middlesex University in late 2021, we recognised that this body of evidence and experience represented an opportunity to increase the focus on these work-ready skills and experiences, and to provide greater clarity and support for both educators and industry in developing and articulating these more effectively. While stakeholders frequently mention work-ready or transferable skills, they very rarely refer to a consistent list of what these skills and experiences actually are, beyond one or two examples such as team-working or problem-solving. It is even rarer still to see reference to a more detailed list of what these competencies involve in terms of work-related tasks.

In April 2022, ScreenSkills (through its BFI Future Film Skills project) and Middlesex University came together to set up the “WRYSE” project to address these challenges and opportunities. The partnership convened a working group of 26 educators and industry professionals for the project, drawn from companies and institutions around the UK regions and nations. The industry professionals include representatives from games, HETV, unscripted TV, film and animation, from broadcasters to SME companies and freelancers.

The aim of the WRYSE project is for industry and education to work together to agree:

- what the specific work-ready skills and experiences are that industry want to see in young people leaving education
- and how these skills and experiences can best be developed and demonstrated through vocational and degree courses.

The project’s wider purpose is:

- to use these consistent definitions and best practice to provide guidelines, training and an industry-recognised benchmark, to train young people in the required competencies during their education
- to prepare students so they themselves are able to articulate, evidence and demonstrate these skills and experiences meaningfully to employers – and are better equipped to gain employment and succeed in their job
- in the long-term, for employers to recognise these guidelines, training and resources as a significant step in the improvement in these skills gaps among junior crew

1.3 Purpose of this guidelines document

This guidelines document is intended to serve the following purposes:

- to explain the background, origin and aims of the WRYSE project
- to accompany the 16 WRYSE competencies (detailed separately)
- to provide best practice guidelines, for academics and trainers, on ways the WRYSE competencies can be incorporated into vocational and degree course curriculums and evidenced to employers

2. The WRYSE competencies

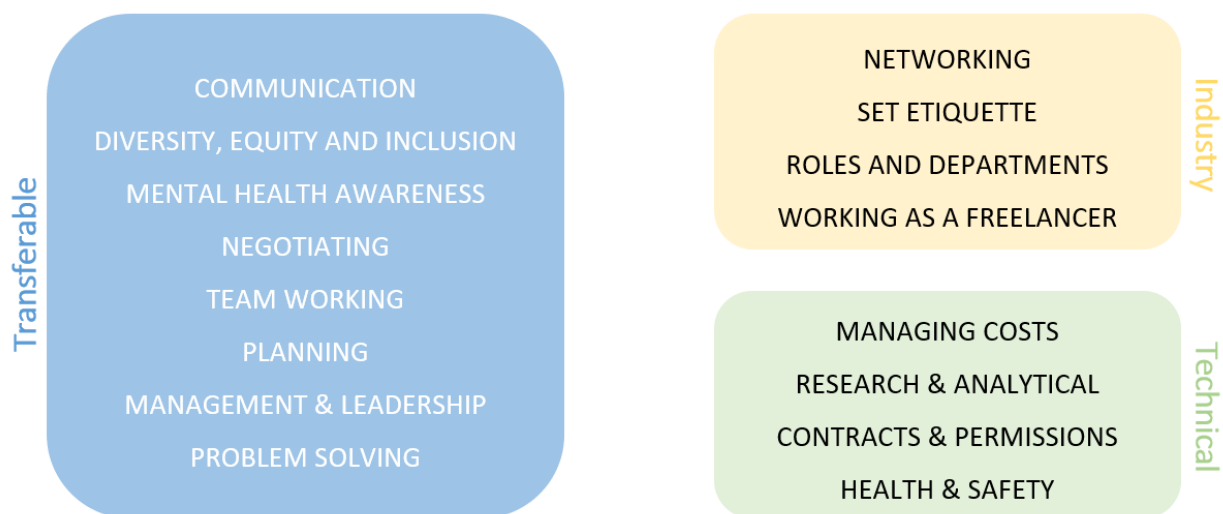
2.1 Introduction

As outlined above, the first aim of the WRYSE project was for educators and industry professionals to jointly agree what the specific work-ready skills and experiences are that industry want to see in young people leaving education.

In preliminary discussions with the project working group, there was common acknowledgement that, although employers frequently report that these competencies are “missing” among college and university graduates, some courses do already successfully develop these through their curriculums. The WRYSE project is looking to make that expertise more transparent, and to share and build on it so there is more consistent provision and recognition across the UK.

In its first meeting in May 2022, ScreenSkills presented to the working group a synthesis of the different types of work-ready competencies that have most frequently been cited by employers in recent research reports. These were discussed by the group, expanded in some areas, and consolidated in others where there appeared to be clear overlap. The competencies were allocated into three main groups (expanded below):

- (1) transferable, general skills;
- (2) industry awareness;
- (3) related technical skills.



2.2 Detailed competency information

Each of the 16 competencies in the above selection is outlined in a 2-page document, listing in detail:

- a two-line summary description of what the competency is
- the main work-related activities or tasks requiring this competency
- what new entrants need to be able to do (skills and behaviour) and to understand (knowledge) in order to complete these tasks

- which tasks are more advanced i.e. tasks where new entrants need in most cases to be *aware* of the activities, skills and knowledge, rather than able to carry out themselves – unless they are setting up their own production company
- any related competencies in the WRYSE list which might be considered in parallel, e.g. negotiating with communication.

The competency documents have been developed based on the National Occupational Standards for the creative industries, a set of much more detailed documentation that breaks down technical skills and knowledge required for each major occupation or department within the screen sector, so these can be taught and assessed as part of a qualification. In each case, the working group decided which of these activities were relevant for new entrants, rather than more experienced professionals, and then adapted the skills and knowledge statements so they were shorter and more appropriate for a combined educator and industry audience.

The competency lists are designed to be used primarily by educators and professional trainers, as a guide to working with their students – as it is critical that students are explicitly aware of the competencies, skills and knowledge that they are developing, so they can then articulate these clearly to future employers.

3. Incorporating the WRYSE competencies into vocational and degree courses

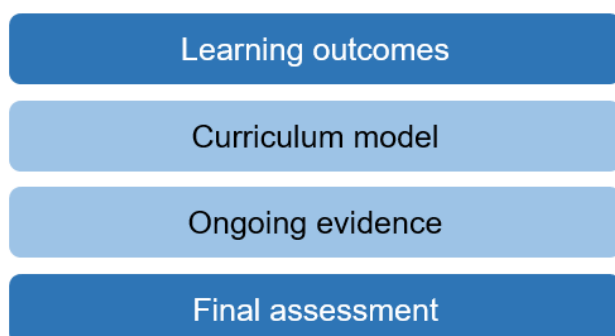
3.1 Why it is important to build the competencies into courses

A recurrent, key recommendation of the WRYSE working group since its first meeting has been that it is highly recommended for the competencies (as a group and individually) to be explicitly incorporated into vocational and degree courses. There are several reasons for this:

- there is often a history of assumption that these work-ready and transferable skills are developed automatically or “by osmosis” during a course e.g. defined by statements such as “students will definitely have developed good communication skills during their production project”. Even if this assumption were true, are students and academics overtly aware of these skills and are the skills comprehensively or consistently curated and nurtured enough to be effective? To benefit from the detailed information available in the WRYSE competencies, and to make a difference to the current situation, we think the time has come to identify where and how these skills and experiences are developed within a course as standard practice.
- for students to be aware of the relative importance and value of these competencies in terms of their immediate career prospects – especially compared with some of the more appealing technical or creative skills – they need to see them delivered explicitly as part of their curriculum.
- in addition, for students to develop these skills, behaviours and knowledge to a sufficiently good standard for future employers, they need to ideally be built into a course structure throughout a student’s academic journey, rather than left until a placement or their final year. Indeed, these can be developed steadily from Year 12 through to graduation, and can build on primary and secondary school transferable skill initiatives, such as Skills Builder, LifeSkills, or Pearson’s Future Ready Framework.
- the WRYSE competencies can be taught in each course by a range of multiple educator staff – from course leaders and lecturers, to technicians and employability support teams – and listing them explicitly will help give a consistent emphasis and structure to how they are delivered to students. This will also help reappraise established patterns of teaching where educators might be wedded to methods of delivery that do not traditionally include these competencies.
- it is important for employers and industry to build awareness of the WRYSE competencies, primarily as a framework and resource for educators to demonstrate that they develop valuable work-ready skills, but also as a framework employers can use internally to support work placements, recruitment activity and induction training for new entrants. Clear reference to the WRYSE competencies will help flag this new approach to industry, and gain trust and credibility in the initiative as a whole.

3.2 Long-term and more immediate changes

There are various levels at which the competency information provided by the WRYSE project can be built into a vocational or degree course, as illustrated below.



Some elements of course structure and design are easier and quicker to adapt and change than others – and it is often impossible to change some aspects (those in dark blue) until a course is newly validated or reapproved, which can be a matter of a five-year periodic review cycle.

This is more flexible in FE courses for 16-18 year-olds, that are built on qualifications such as Level 3 BTECs, T levels or UAL Diplomas, which themselves tend to evolve and change on a more regular basis. Schemes of work tend to be reviewed annually and portfolio-based assessments make it simpler to incorporate changes than is the case with exams.

The WRYSE working group therefore recommends and identifies ways that course leaders can build the competencies into course structures as quickly as possible, rather than waiting for a full course re-design. This not only means students can immediately start to increase their focus on developing these work-ready skills and experiences, but also allows educators to start to test different ways to deliver, evidence and assess these competencies – in a manner that suits their individual situation – ahead of a full revalidation process.

3.3 Reflecting WRYSE competencies in learning outcomes

The broadest level at which the WRYSE competencies can be incorporated into a course structure is within the learning outcomes for a particular module or for the overall programme. As mentioned above, learning outcomes for degree courses are likely to be set during (re)validation, and deliberately worded to be relatively generic and flexible enough to accommodate ongoing changes in curriculum and assessment models before the validation cycle is complete.

This means there might be limited opportunities to refer generally or specifically to the WRYSE competencies in learning outcomes. However, the working group recommends the following ways to reflect them:

- Specific modules on professional practice or employability can explicitly refer to developing work-ready skills and experiences, ideally name-checking the WRYSE project so this gains wider recognition and currency with all stakeholders.
- Where courses have modules focusing on specific work-ready skills and experience (e.g. health and safety), they can use the one-line summary descriptor for the relevant WRYSE competency within the learning outcome.

- If there is a more detailed module description underneath the learning outcome, then the WRYSE competencies can be referred to as an overall group, or with specific headings such as “transferable skills”, “industry awareness” and “technical skills”.
- Incorporating the WRYSE competencies into schemes of work for Level 3 courses shows that these transferable and work-ready skills are equally as important as the criteria set by the awarding organisation – not least because they are likely to be more directly influential in progression into work and possibly also higher education.

3.4 Examples of curriculum models incorporating WRYSE competencies

There are several ways that the WRYSE working group has identified to build these competencies into the central teaching curriculum of a vocational or degree course. These varied approaches, though not exhaustive, have different advantages and disadvantages, and it is possible even to combine several of these together. There are, however, some recurrent themes for all approaches:

- lecturers and trainers can start to teach and develop the WRYSE skills, knowledge and experience from the very first term, highlighting these as some of the key outcomes of the course overall in terms of future employability. The WRYSE working group emphasise that students need to understand, as soon as possible, that creativity and technical flair alone will not secure them a job at entry level in what is a competitive market.
- courses can heavily incentivise the development and demonstration of WRYSE competencies within their credit structure, and use the guidelines to help students complete relevant sections of the course by evidencing specific training on the work-ready skills and experiences listed here. Many students who are attracted to academia by the prospect of learning about theory, creativity and/or specific technical skills – may not be as interested in, motivated by or aware of the importance of developing broader transferable skills and industry awareness. The WRYSE competencies could, therefore, be incorporated clearly into course information and university recruitment processes, so students are fully aware of this part of the curriculum before they begin their academic career.

3.4.1 *Weaving WRYSE competencies into every module*

The different work-ready skills and experiences can be incorporated into each module or unit of a vocational or degree course, so students encounter the competencies regularly throughout their studies. This has the advantage of continually reinforcing the importance of these skills, as well as building experience, resilience and confidence in particular areas over time e.g. networking, problem-solving and leadership skills. Students can then use the opportunity to demonstrate and build these competencies further during placements or their student productions. However, there is also a risk with this approach of diluting the emphasis or focus on the work-ready skills, so that they are relegated to a “nice-to-have” element of the module that does not get enough teaching time. In addition, some lecturers might treat this as a mapping exercise where they assume the competencies are developed in the background, without prioritising them as an explicit part of the curriculum. Course leaders would therefore need to take a strong lead with this approach to ensure the relevant skills play a prominent part in each module to make this a success.

3.4.2 Focusing on WRYSE competencies in a dedicated professional practice module

This approach gives work-ready skills and experiences the spotlight during a dedicated module within a programme. This approach highlights the importance of the WRYSE competencies by giving them dedicated teaching time and related assessment, thus ensuring they are not overshadowed by other, more “fun” parts of the curriculum. However, many courses only feature this type of dedicated module in the final year of study (Level 6 for a degree course), as preparation for entering the world of work during a placement and on graduation. The working group unanimously feel that this is too late – professional practice, and the related WRYSE competencies, should be taught from the first year onwards. Otherwise, the risk remains that work-ready skills and industry knowledge seem less important than other areas of learning and thus less ‘valued’. A better alternative is to have a recurrent professional practice module in each year of study, ideally one that can be taught in parallel with other units of the course to ensure regular, gradual development of relevant skills and knowledge.

3.4.3 Live industry project briefs

Courses can include regular industry briefs within the curriculum as a powerful tool to develop and assess WRYSE competencies. Some vocational courses such as T-levels will incorporate these practical assignments as a core part of their delivery. Key to their impact and effectiveness is the close involvement of industry to co-design and create authentic tasks that mirror workplace practice, and also to observe, assess and endorse students’ performance to help them build evidence of their work-ready skills. Project briefs can be particularly effective in developing the more intangible WRYSE competencies, such as communication, team working and problem solving. Course/module leaders should therefore consistently work with their industry partners to co-create briefs that prioritise exposing students to appropriate situations that help build and demonstrate these competencies. Most of the technical and creative parts of a brief can be replicated in a classroom setting, but transferable skills can benefit most from genuinely collaborative engagement with industry professionals.

3.4.4 Using micro-certifications to develop WRYSE learning and evidence

An interesting new model that was much discussed by the WRYSE working group is to build particular work-ready competencies through extra/co-curricular short vocational and/or online courses. Students can then be incentivised to build a collection of industry-endorsed digital ‘badges’ or micro-certificates as part of a “skills passport”, which can both contribute to passing their course, as well as to developing a portfolio that will more likely be recognised by future employers. Transferable, work-ready skills can be demonstrated through industry-approved training courses (usually e-learning) provided or certified by ScreenSkills or other skills bodies. These benefit from being trusted by industry and will serve to demonstrate that a student has the motivation and initiative to train themselves using an industry-approved course, and could provide an immediate shortcut when applying to work on production – rather than completing this training as part of an employers’ onboarding process.

Incorporating these micro-certifications into a course curriculum can also provide a teaching solution for lecturers who do not have the up-to-date industry knowledge and/or capacity to deliver these skills themselves. Using e-learning modules also provides the flexibility of independent study. However, it will always be much more effective to combine the content of these modules with the other parts of the vocational or degree course, so these skills and knowledge can be regularly applied and reinforced – rather than viewed as a separate piece of learning that is unrelated to the rest of their studies. It is recommended that these micro-certifications should count towards a student’s grades for a programme/module, so students understand the value of the activities and are appropriately incentivised.

3.4.5 Additional bootcamp and workshop training

Another way for courses to train in specific WRYSE competencies is to “import” additional teaching support from recognised industry trainers, speakers and/or masterclasses. These can benefit from in-depth, up-to-date expertise around particular technical competencies or areas of experience, such as working as a freelancer, health and safety/risk assessments, or mental health training. They can also combine several competencies together in live projects, working together with local or national employers.

Alternatively, visiting industry professionals can run workshops or masterclasses that contextualise and develop work-ready skills around real-life workplace experiences. These have the advantage of providing an alternative, potentially more credible “voice” to students, which might well encourage better attendance and commitment. However, as with other approaches above, these sessions can be incentivised with course credits to ensure all students attend rather than only the more motivated learners, and those who might already also enjoy advantages in terms of experience and networks from their background. Course leaders can also work closely with external trainers or visiting speakers to focus the content of their teaching on relevant WRYSE competencies, so students can emerge from these workshops or bootcamps with specific outcomes that tie in with the rest of their course. In addition, course leaders could use these opportunities to incorporate observations, testimonies and endorsements from employers or trainers that can be used as part of students’ final portfolios – and as evidence of their development of work-ready skills and experiences.

3.4.6 Making the most of industry placements

As with other parts of the curriculum which involve engagement with industry, course leaders can fully exploit work placements as opportunities to develop specific WRYSE competencies. Employers are keen to ensure they gain as much return as possible on their own investment in the time and cost involved in work placements, and so will welcome (within reason) a structured approach from course leaders in terms of identifying the skills and experiences that students are looking to develop during their time working in industry. Some employers will be able to include specific talks and masterclasses from employees to develop more technical WRYSE competencies (e.g. managing costs, contracts and permissions). Employers can also sometimes offer guidance through mentors and line managers during the placement, to help students discuss and reflect on more intangible skills such as communication, negotiation and team working. Lecturers and students should seize the opportunity to record the development of these competencies using student-led reflective journals, e-portfolios and employer feedback and testimonies. Articulating these “real-world” examples of using work-ready skills in practice will better equip students in demonstrating these competencies to employers in future interviews and other engagement.

4. Evidencing the WRYSE competencies

4.1 What do we mean by evidence?

As a reminder, the fundamental purpose of the WRYSE project is to address the skills gaps among entry-level roles, by training young people to identify, reflect and value “missing” competencies and then equipping them to demonstrate these skills and experiences meaningfully to employers.

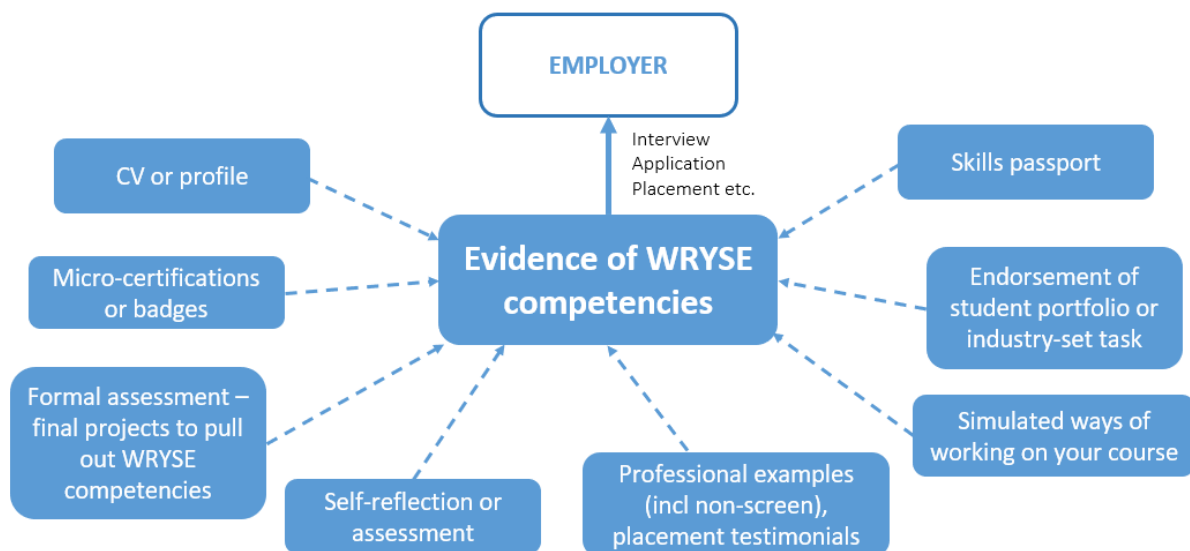
To demonstrate these WRYSE competencies, college and university graduates need to have sufficient, appropriate evidence of their knowledge, skills, behaviours and experience to convince an employer. This might be needed in a variety of encounters with industry:

- an interview for a particular role or placement
- an application e-mail or letter to an employer, whether specific or speculative
- sending out a CV
- a networking event or informal chat
- during a placement or work experience opportunity
- graduate showcase event attended by industry
- pitching a project to an employer.

Although it is highly recommended for the WRYSE competencies to be explicitly incorporated into a course structure and delivery, the evidence of this learning does not have to come from formal assessment – it simply needs to be convincing to the employer, which is not always the same thing.

4.2 What different types of evidence can demonstrate WRYSE competencies?

The WRYSE working group identified a range of evidence ‘types’ that could be used to demonstrate different work-ready skills and experiences. These are summarised in the diagram below.



4.2.1 CV or profile

A student’s CV or online profile will not be able to provide in-depth evidence of a competency, but using appropriate language or referring to industry-recognised certifications can immediately

give a good impression to a prospective employer. As screen employers will be looking for evidence of work-ready skills and experience, it is much better for students to highlight these competencies gained rather than the output or assessments from their university or college course: for example, picking out the particular skills demonstrated within a particular role on a student film production, rather than the sole fact that it has been submitted for an award. It can be helpful to involve an industry professional such as a talent manager to help students review and improve their CVs to make them as impactful as possible.

4.2.2 Micro-certifications or badges

Some WRYSE competencies can be learnt and evidenced through micro-certifications, in other words short, extra/co-curricular short courses, with appropriate certificates, that are recognised and accepted by industry. For technical skills such as software, these can be provided by IT vendor certificates from companies such as Avid, Microsoft and Adobe. Similarly, transferable, work-ready skills can be demonstrated through industry-approved training courses (usually e-learning) provided or certified by ScreenSkills or other skills bodies.

However, short courses like these are designed to provide a basic or foundation level of competency: ideally they should be further developed and evidenced through other routes. [ScreenSkills' e-learning modules](#) train and certify in the following WRYSE competencies:

- Diversity, equity and inclusion (including Tackling harassment and bullying, and Addressing unconscious bias)
- Mental health awareness
- Set etiquette
- Networking
- Working as a freelancer
- Understanding of job roles and departments

Meanwhile ScreenSkills certifies third-party health and safety courses from external training providers through its [production safety passport scheme](#).

4.2.3 Formal assessment and projects

A formal assessment around the WRYSE competencies has the benefit of obliging a student to write about professional practice and work-ready skills, and demonstrate how they have developed these competencies themselves. In this way, assessment (especially portfolio-based) can act as effective practice for a graduate in compiling and articulating their own professional evidence, before they meet an employer in an interview situation. In addition, tutors can observe and interact with students during production projects and help highlight examples of where they have seen students demonstrating the competencies. This might well include other types of evidence listed here, such as reflective reports, industry certifications, risk assessments, employer observations and endorsements, and so on.

4.2.4 Self-reflection

Writing self-reflective journals or reports about how they have developed WRYSE competencies (particularly the more intangible ones) is again effective practice for students in describing and articulating their transferable skills and experiences, before doing this in an industry encounter. By requiring this on a regular basis, course leaders can continually emphasise the importance of these competencies to students, as well as get them increasingly familiar and confident when talking about this part of their learning.

4.2.5 Professional examples from work placements or employment

Employers are particularly likely to be convinced of a graduate's skills by evidence of competencies gained during a work placement (including work shadowing) or a previous job.

These could be gathered retrospectively based on the situations that arose during a placement, but can also be structured more deliberately so students, lecturers and their employers can plan appropriate activities ahead of time, in order to provide opportunities to gather required evidence. This also allows the employer to observe how the student performs in a professional context, so that subsequently they can complete a testimony or survey to validate this competency.

Incorporating testimonies and employer feedback into a work placement is one further way to encourage and incentivise students to make the utmost out of work experience and regard this not as just an opportunity to “test drive” a job role, but to use it to demonstrate to an employer (whether during the placement or in a future engagement) just how professionally they can behave and perform.

Students should be encouraged to gather authentic examples of competencies from placements and not to assume that employers are looking for examples of when everything went perfectly – in fact, reflecting on when a task did not go well, when they could have done something differently, or when they struggled to complete an activity successfully, can demonstrate a student’s competencies, self-awareness and attitude to learn much more effectively.

In addition, students and course leaders should be ready to identify other relevant professional examples from their non-screen employment, which might demonstrate strong transferable, work-ready skills (for example, managing costs while working behind a bar or at a community event).

4.2.6 Simulated ways of working on your course

While students are completing particular programmes or modules (especially their production modules) and as they work in teams that organise and manage themselves, gathering evidence of appropriate WRYSE competencies in the process would be a valuable evidence-based exercise. Although these are simulated examples, the more realistic they are, the more familiar and convincing they will be to a prospective employer as evidence.

4.2.7 Endorsement of student portfolio, industry tasks or live briefs

Courses should include as many different industry-designed tasks or live briefs as possible, and not only use these as authentic teaching tools to gain experience of working with a client, but also as a way to involve employers in observing and endorsing a student’s demonstration of particular WRYSE competencies (such as through pitching a project to an employer). This approach can also work with masterclasses, if they are followed by a practical example of task, where the employer can observe, feedback on and endorse a student’s performance.

4.2.8 Skills passport

Some courses provide students with a personal record or personal development planning module (PDP) to track their work-ready competencies and progress as they develop these through their vocational or degree courses. The BA Film programme at Middlesex University, to be rolled out in 2023/24, is one good example of this approach. This again emphasises the importance of the WRYSE skills and experiences, as well as empowering the students to gather and demonstrate this learning in a variety of different ways and providing a simple visual record of their achievements to use as the basis of future engagement with employers. This also has the potential to interface with digital badges and certificates provided by skills bodies like ScreenSkills and integrate with similar initiatives such as the production safety passport.