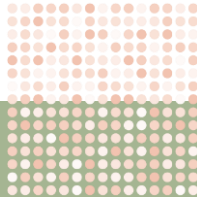# Learning Support

Networking skills

Networking is about building genuine, mutually beneficial relationships with people who can support your academic, personal, or professional growth.

In hospitality and service industries — where careers are built on people, partnerships, and reputation — strong networking skills can create meaningful opportunities.

What is networking?

Networking means connecting with people in a way that is:

• Authentic

• Respectful

• Professional

• Mutually beneficial

It's not about collecting business cards; it's about building real relationships that help you learn, grow, and open doors.

Why networking matters?

- Helps you discover internships, jobs, and mentors
- Builds confidence and communication skills
- Expands your understanding of the industry
- Gives you access to advice, information, and opportunities
- Strengthens your long-term career prospects

Step-by-step: how to build networking skills

1 Start with your existing network

You already know people who can support you:

- Classmates
- Lecturers
- Alumni
- Internship supervisors
- Student clubs and associations

Networking often starts close to home.

2 Introduce yourself confidently

Prepare a short "elevator introduction":

- Who you are
- Your programme or interests
- What you are working on or looking for

Example:

"Hello, I'm Maria. I'm studying Hospitality Management and really interested in sustainability in boutique hotels. I'd love to learn more about your work in this area."

3 Ask good questions

People enjoy talking about their experience.

Try questions like:
- *"What do you enjoy most about your role?"*
- *"How did you get started in this field?"*
- *"What skills are most important in your organisation?"*
- *"Do you have any advice for students entering the industry?"*

Questions build connection — talking only about yourself does not.

4 Listen actively

Networking works when you show interest.

- Maintain eye contact
- Nod or acknowledge responses
- Avoid interrupting
- Summarise or respond thoughtfully

Active listening builds trust.

5 Follow up professionally

After meeting someone:

- Send a short thank-you message
- Connect on LinkedIn
- Mention something specific you discussed
- Keep in touch occasionally (updates, congratulations, questions)

Small follow-ups turn one conversation into a long-term connection.

6 Use online platforms wisely

LinkedIn is one of your strongest networking tools.

Tips:

- Use a professional photo
- Write a short, clear bio
- Share projects or achievements
- Engage with posts from classmates, lecturers, and industry professionals
- Personalise all connection requests

Remember: quality > quantity.

7 Attend events and say yes to opportunities

- Career fairs
- Guest lectures
- Conferences
- Association meetings
- Workshops
- Alumni events

Even small events can lead to valuable connections.

Example: Intercultural communication in group work

Situation:

You're working on a group project with students from several countries. Some members speak directly; others stay quiet unless invited.

What can you do?

• Ask each member for their input

• Agree on communication norms (e.g., weekly check-ins, deadlines)

• Encourage quieter members by giving space to speak

• Avoid interpreting silence as lack of interest — it may be cultural respect or reflection

• Summarise decisions clearly to ensure shared understanding

Result: better teamwork, less frustration, stronger final presentation.

Tips & Tricks

<u>Avoid stereotypes</u>: focus on individuals, not assumptions

<u>Ask, don't assume:</u> simply clarifying questions prevent conflict

<u>Practice empathy</u>: imagine how the message feels to the other person

<u>Slow down</u>: speed often causes misunderstanding

<u>Learn cultural basics</u> of your team or workplace (holidays, norms, communication preferences)

<u>Use inclusive language</u>: avoid idioms, sarcasm, or cultural references that may confuse others

More information here:

Sample intercultural communication reflection template

Situation	What happened?	Cultural differences	Learning	Future adaptation
Group meeting	*Some spoke a lot; others stayed quiet*	Direct vs indirect communication	Silence can mean respect or thinking, not disengagement	Invite quieter members to speak, allow pauses
Email about tasks	*Message sounded "too direct" to one member*	Different expectations for tone and politeness	Tone can be interpreted differently across cultures	Add greetings and polite phrases, check tone
Giving feedback	*Direct comments discouraged a teammate*	Direct vs indirect feedback styles	Some prefer gently or positive-first feedback	Use "positive → improvement → positive" structure
Meeting timing	*One member arrived late and thought it was okay*	Strict vs flexible views on punctuality	People manage time differently	Agree on shared timing rules as a group
Internship guest interaction	*Guest avoided eye contact, I thought they were unhappy*	Different meanings of eye contact	Non-verbal cues vary culturally	Avoid quick assumptions, focus on overall context
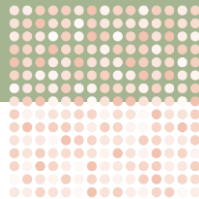
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