
Student Employability is everyone's responsibility

The combination of significantly-increased tuition fees and a tough job market means that student employability has never been higher on the agenda. The days when the subject was seen mainly as the responsibility of the University Careers Service have long gone. There is now a wide variety of staff responsible, from senior management to armies of central and local support staff and academics.

Employability is (or should be) high on institutional risk registers, but what are the specific measures that Universities need to take, what are the pitfalls and how do they ensure that activities are effective and efficiently delivered?

Key Interventions

'Employability' encompasses a wide variety of activities designed to improve students' future prospects in the job market and in the wider world beyond University. It includes:

- Assisting students in developing the competencies sought by employers such as team-working, problem-solving and communication skills
- Incorporating employability-related content in curriculum modules
- Co-ordinating placements, volunteering and internships for students
- Organising special events such as external speakers, employer forums, alumni visits and careers fairs
- Setting up employer panels to feed into academic programmes, mentoring and professional awards schemes

Some Key Questions

Some of the questions you should consider in assessing the effectiveness of your University employability processes include:

- Is the Careers function genuinely offering what students, academics and employers need or is there too much focus on providing a 'traditional' service (for example generic CV advice) which students could readily access from other sources?
- Do all academics buy into the employability agenda within both their teaching and pastoral roles, and do they receive adequate training and support to undertake the role?

- Is it clear where students need to go for help with external opportunities such as volunteering or placements or are different parts of the University duplicating the same activities?
- How is feedback collected on the various services and how do you know what measures are the most effective in improving graduate employability?
- Where are the poorer performing areas in terms of employability and how can these be addressed?

Destination of Leavers Data (DLHE)

The '*Destination of Leavers from HE*' (DLHE) survey is the most important employability dataset. It is an exercise conducted by Universities on behalf of the HE Statistics Agency (HESA) which collects information from graduates about their current activity six months following graduation. The information is publicly available to prospective students and their parents and is a key component of University League Tables. The government's 'UNISTATS' website allows easy comparison of different courses across different institutions.

There may be a number of factors affecting DLHE performance (for example the profile of the student intake) and it is only a partial measure of effectiveness. Nevertheless, it is important for all Universities to have an effective process to manage DLHE, to understand where improvements are required and to gauge the success of key interventions.

Summary – Best Practice

The 'best in class' universities will have a clear employability strategy and appropriate ownership of the subject across all levels of the institution. They will have a range of attractive measures in place which are proven to be of real benefit, are widely available and well-publicised to the student body. There will also be an effective management process which analyses performance and takes action as required.

Of course there will be variations in levels of engagement and motivation. However institutions need to ensure students are empowered by offering the very best support and advice to enable them to make the transition from the academic environment to the world outside.

Uniac – Assurance for Universities

We have undertaken audits of employability at a number of our member institutions and assessed the extent to which activities are offering real value and benefit to the student experience.

For further information on this or any other aspect of Uniac's internal audit and assurance service please do get in touch.



Ian Musgrave

Assistant Director

t: 0161 247 4697

e: imusgrave@uniac.co.uk

www.uni.ac.co.uk

Follow us on Twitter... [@uniac_audit](https://twitter.com/uniac_audit)