

Strategy



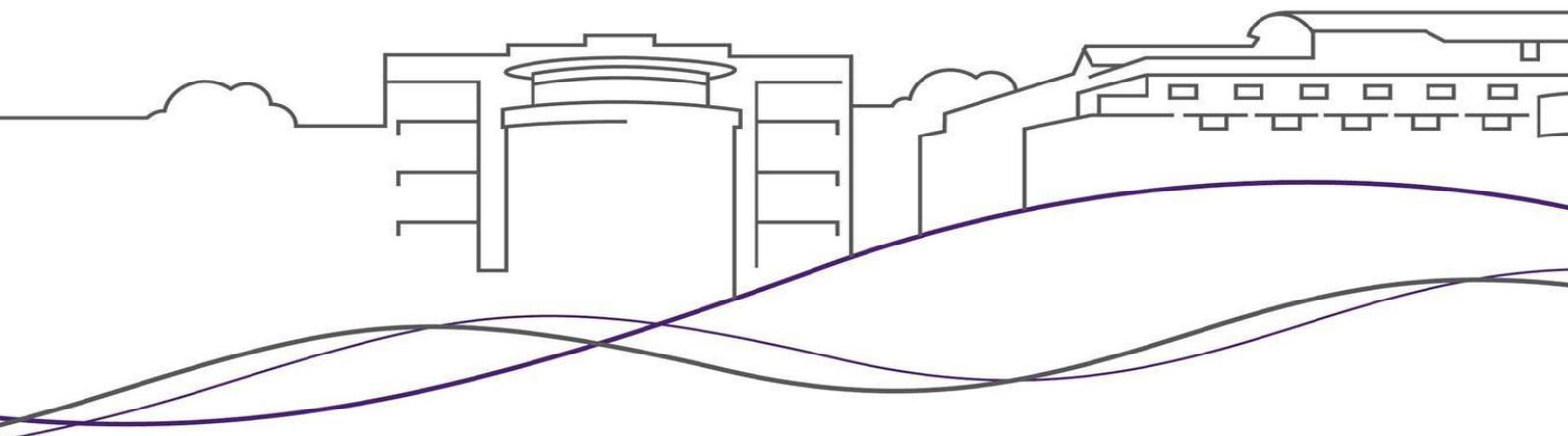
**UNIVERSITY
CENTRE**
SOUTH DEVON



HIGHER EDUCATION

STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY (HEFSPPD1)

2018-19



HE Strategy for Enhancing Student Employability

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aim

The strategy aims to:

Establish a clearly articulated and prominent framework which identifies career development and employability as intrinsic to the student experience at University Centre South Devon (UCSD).

Engage and support students with a diverse range of needs and ambitions in managing their employability development throughout the student journey and beyond.

Grow co- and extracurricular opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and develop relevant skills and experience; supporting them to become well-rounded graduates.

The strategy aligns with a number of areas in South Devon College's **Strategic Framework 2017-2020** and the **HE Strategy 2016-2021**:

- Developing student destinations and employer engagement data; working with alumni to increase aspirations and knowledge of progression and career pathways (Section 2.5, 4.11)
- Engaging with local groups and organisations to support and provide opportunities for the development of relevant skills (Section 4.2)
- Provision and promotion of further extra-curricular work opportunities and careers guidance (Section 4.9)
- Opportunities for collaboration with Plymouth University and other partners or organisations (HE Strategy, Section 4.7)

1.2 Context

UCSD students receive support with careers and employability. At programme level this support is typically embedded within modules and can include visiting guest speakers, course trips, live projects, placements and the opportunity to undertake additional qualifications. To facilitate this, programmes work with internal and external stakeholders including local employers and organisations, partners and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory bodies (PSRBs) where aligned to programmes.

Support with generic employability topics such as Curriculum Vitae (CV) development and interview skills features within some programmes' Professional Practice or Tutorial modules, such as Developing Research and Practice (DRP). At present however, the level of career development support and available

opportunities for students to develop their employability and engage regularly with employers is inconsistent across programmes.

Annual reviews of the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey¹ are conducted by UCSD and monitored in Programme Committee meetings. However, some programmes have identified a need for more detailed information on graduate destinations; in addition to supporting students to consider the scope of employment opportunities within their area(s) of study.

The Good Practice in Embedding Employability report was created as part of UCSD's Employability Enhancement Project and reviews good practice across our higher education programmes in more detail. The examples of good practice are mapped against the HEA's 'Embedding Employability framework' (2015) and provided the evidence base for the strategy.

Current extra-curricular careers and employability provision is focused through the promotion of part-time, voluntary and graduate vacancies in addition to careers related events, awards and scholarships. This is supported by growing relationships with external stakeholders such as University of Plymouth's Students Union (UPSU) and Careers and Employability Hub.

Support with employability topics such as CVs, interview skills and LinkedIn is in its initial stages with a number of workshops and 1-1 sessions being delivered. Students are able to access a wealth of careers and employability resources through the UCSD Careers & Employability Moodle page and University of Plymouth's Career Navigator.

1.3 The wider context

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) distinguishes embedding employability in higher education as:

providing the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, experiences, behaviours, attributes, achievements and attitudes to enable graduates to make successful transitions and contributions, benefitting them, the economy and their communities. (2015a, p.2)

The 'Embedding Employability framework' identifies three main features to successfully embedding employability: 'Inclusivity', 'Engagement' and 'Collaboration'; and recognises that the responsibility to do so is not specific to one group, but to all stakeholders who should play a part 'throughout the student lifecycle' (HEA 2015a, p. 2).

¹ Now required by the Office for Students (OfS). Until March 2018 this was required by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

In identifying some of the key aims and objectives of the strategy, consideration was also given to the QAA's Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement (FDCS). The QAA establishes 'Design', 'Employer involvement', 'Accessibility', 'Progression', 'Flexibility', 'Partnership' and 'Monitoring and review' (2015 pp. 4-7) as five distinctive features of foundation degrees.

Foundation degrees should involve, as set out by the Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement (2015):

close collaboration between employers and higher education providers [...] and are intended to equip learners with the skills and knowledge relevant to employment, so satisfying the needs of employees and employers. (QAA 2015, 2).

They should also be responsive 'to the needs of learners from a variety of backgrounds, and to the progressive and changing demands of employment' (QAA 2015, p. 6).

Where extra-curricular careers and employability support is delivered and developed, these characteristics should be integrated to ensure that students have opportunities for employer engagement, progression, review and enhancement of their employability, in additional and alternative contexts to their programme.

Such opportunities will also support the transferable skills and experience which students are expected to have developed at each level, as set out by the FHEQ qualification descriptors:

Level 4 and Level 5: students will have developed 'the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making' (QAA 2008, p. 17).

Level 6: students will have developed the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature (QAA 2008, p. 19).

2. Objectives

2.1 To establish employability as central to the student experience at UCSD.

Embed careers and employability information and guidance from the first point

of contact, throughout the student timeline, introducing and referring students to the Graduate Attributes as articulated through The University of Plymouth Plymouth Compass.

- 2.2 To develop a more coherent and coordinated approach to the planning and monitoring of careers and employability at institution level, in line with the QAA's FDCS and FHEQ qualification descriptors. Provide regular opportunities for review in order to identify and target improvements, responding to student and stakeholder feedback. Ensure that there is a shared and consistent understanding of careers and employability definitions and goals which are embedded within the curriculum and beyond and supported by academic staff.
- 2.3 To engage students, with the support of academic staff, in managing their employability so that they are able to identify and articulate their skills and capabilities. Equip students with the tools to reflect on their experiences and provide opportunities to celebrate students who are actively engaged in developing their employability.
- 2.4 Work to develop a more coordinated and accessible alumni community to inspire current students and provide informed advice and guidance, raising the profile of UCSD and its programmes.
- 2.5 To develop an integrated approach to supporting students with the Graduate Outcomes survey prior to graduation, and to make more systematic use of student outcomes at both institution and programme level.
- 2.6 To improve the quantity and range of extra-curricular, professional development and graduate opportunities through contact and collaboration with stakeholders including local employers and organisations, University of Plymouth and South Devon College's Job Shop. Support students to successfully apply for such opportunities.
- 2.7 To monitor the success of interventions undertaken to enhance students' employability.

3. Implementation

- 3.1. Students will self-evaluate their employability and provide information on their career ambitions from the induction process, at regular intervals. This will be made available to appropriate academic and support staff in order to facilitate provision of relevant careers and employability support, events and opportunities.

- 3.2. Work will be undertaken to 'map' the student employability journey at UCSD. This will be aligned to the FHEQ qualification descriptors and a framework of Graduate Attributes as articulated through The Plymouth Compass. These attributes will be embedded across the provision of careers and employability support.
- 3.3. The Plymouth Award will be relaunched to students and work undertaken throughout the academic year to maintain student awareness and increase engagement.
- 3.4. Graduate case studies and student testimonials will be developed and utilised to promote a range of career pathways, enhancing the desirability of programmes and endorsing the benefits of extra-curricular activity.
- 3.5. Skills development workshops and careers and employability events will be available for students to attend at relevant times of the year. These will be used to raise awareness of key careers and employability topics, boosting students' confidence in these areas and meeting the expectations of the FHEQ and FDCS. This will be supplemented by up to date resources.
- 3.6. New partnerships with key stakeholders will be developed and existing ones maintained to allow relevant and up to date information and advice on careers and employability, including extra-curricular employability and enterprise opportunities, progression routes and the graduate labour market.
- 3.7. A centralised reporting of employer engagement activity within and external to the curriculum will be established and monitored to increase access to employer engagement opportunities for all programmes of study, where relevant and possible.
- 3.8. Document cross-institution meanings of careers and employability terms such as 'work-based learning' to ensure consistency of understandings and expectations amongst students, staff and stakeholders.
- 3.9. The Higher Education Employability and Enterprise Co-ordinator will be involved in the review of work-based learning as part of the Annual Monitoring Process and will attend stage 2 approvals in an advisory capacity.

4. Evaluation

UCSD will measure the success of the strategy and its implementation through the monitoring of:

- Student views including course reps, Student Consultative Forums, Student Satisfaction Surveys, programme meetings, evaluation forms following workshops and events.
- An increase in the number and range of opportunities available to students.
- Student participation in careers and employability themed events, workshops, awards and engagement with promotions and resources including via Moodle and social media.
- Employer feedback through methods such as Employer Focus Groups, Sector Focus Groups and Industry Liaison Panels.
- Tutor engagement with initiatives and feedback on the level of active understanding among students of the skills they are developing.
- Survey interventions throughout students' programmes to measure and map their perceptions of and confidence in their employability.

5. Future work

- A review of the Higher Education Strategy for Enhancing Employability will be undertaken in one year (May 2019).
- Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for employability enhancement will be established for 2018/19 implementation.

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