Strategic enhancement programmes

Embedding Employability into the Curriculum: An Evaluation of Practice in 3 Departments at Edge Hill University

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June 2015

Version 1.0
# HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability

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Executive Summary

This project was conducted by a working group at Edge Hill University as part of the HEA’s Strategic Enhancement Programme (SEP) – Embedding Employability into the Curriculum 2014-15. The University’s strategic plan (Appendix 1) identifies a focused approach to employability as a key element of the strategy to enhance student experience. The project presented an excellent opportunity to audit and evaluate existing good practice from the viewpoint of students, alumni, departments and the HEA guidance ‘Defining and Developing Your Approach to Employability - A Framework for Higher Education Institutions’ (2013).

This report provides details of the findings of the first stage of the project (the audit and evaluation). The findings and recommendations will be discussed at the Faculty Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee to identify any actions for the Faculty. A further report which presents the findings of research to explore the perceptions of academic staff in the same departments (funded by the HEA) is in preparation. We intend to use both studies to provide a more complete picture of practice in these departments at Edge Hill, which will be published in the next academic year.

Three departments (the Department of Sport and Physical Activity, Computing and Geosciences) in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences were selected for the research. Blended research methods were used: student feedback was obtained via student-led focus groups and questionnaires (n=426) with students at levels 4-6 in each department during semester 1. A small-scale alumni survey was completed with three alumni from each department (n=9). Departmental Employability Strategies were examined, and discussions held with each department’s (DEL) Employability Lead. Employability practice was then evaluated using the HEA Framework as a self-evaluation and review tool.

The research found that students and staff are engaged in employability within the three departments. Staff are successful in making the components of employability visible, and students are learning about (Figure 1) and developing employability skills not just through what is taught, but also by the pedagogies used.

Figure 1: How Students Learn About Employability Skills

Students clearly identify a preferred ‘timeline’ for employability provision and suggest changes in practice that would improve the experience for them. In particular they considered the first semester
at university as being too early. Students’ identification of sources within the University but external to their own department provides evidence of Edge Hill’s university-wide commitment to employability.

Results clearly demonstrate that these departments strategically and systematically plan a valuable mix of employability activities at each level; external organisations, especially employers, and Careers Centre staff play a key role in this. Details of activities in each department are provided in this report. Students have good awareness of employability skills, abilities and attitudes, though they were not clear about the difference between skills, abilities and attitudes. Activities that students valued highly are shown in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Employability Activities That Students Found Particularly Useful](image)

The project found that according to students, alumni, departments and the audit of employability provision within the three departments using the HEA Framework, there is a great deal of good practice. Perhaps, the most significant finding is that whilst careers practitioners and academics may feel that students need to engage fully with employability activities throughout level 4 - 6, students clearly do not share this view and consider the first year important for ‘settling in’ rather than focussing beyond graduation. It is therefore unsurprising that suggestions for improvements from students typically referred to the scheduling of employability activities.

Whilst this may go some way towards explaining why staff feel that students are reluctant to engage in employability, it highlights a significant issue as employers move increasingly towards requiring students to gain strategic work experience (Redmond 2015), offering work experience placements specifically for first-year students. Indeed, both students and departments identify a need for further support in taking up work experience and placements/sandwich years.

There is also scope for the further use of measures to assess the impact of employability activity; increased use of alumni and a need to engage the very small number of staff who do not yet consider employability as part of their ‘core business’ were among the strategies suggested for doing this.

The following recommendations have been identified based on existing good practice and gaps that were discovered by the research.
Recommendations arising from analysis of student perspectives

1. Students are primarily gaining knowledge of employability skills via university, although extra-curricular activities are also identified. To develop employability skills, students place the emphasis wholeheartedly on university activities. **Recommendation** – while continuing good practice of providing a mix of these activities, it is important to focus on developing awareness of the value of part-time and voluntary work together with other activities such as attending conferences, Careers Fairs etc.

2. Students placed significant value on practical work, PDP and LinkedIn awareness. Whilst PDP is oft maligned, students want and need the topics covered by it. This was evidenced particularly strongly by students who perceived a lack of PDP education. **Recommendation** - continue good practice in the delivery of practical work, LinkedIn, and also identifiable PDP sessions at all levels of study.

3. There is a gap between students’ value of short placements and their attitudes to sandwich placements. **Recommendation** - further work needs to be done in educating and preparing students for reintegration to academic life after a sandwich year placement.

4. Students want employability activities to run throughout their degree programme. However, they do not want equal amounts at each level. There is a preference for activities at level 4 to focus on ‘settling into university’, and it is very clear that students prefer concentrated employability provision at level 5. At level 6, students prefer the focus to be on practical employability support. **Recommendation** – consider delaying employability content until semester 2 of level 4, and focus on activities to engage them in wider aspects of university study. Concentrate employability delivery at level 5, delivering job search/application/recruitment support throughout level 6.

5. Students have good awareness of employability skills, abilities and attitudes. However, students were not clear about the differences, particularly in relation to attitudes. Skills can be defined as something that can be learned, whilst abilities are defined as something that is an innate strength, and attitudes as a way of thinking or feeling about something. During recruitment, applicants are commonly asked to give an example of a skill they have developed during their degree. In these circumstances it is unacceptable for a student to talk about motivation, confidence or self-belief. **Recommendation** - educate students about the difference between skills, abilities and attitudes to increase students’ prospects of securing graduate employment.

Recommendations arising from audit, evaluation and analysis of departmental Employability activities and perspectives

1. The Edge Hill University Employability Strategy is helpful in shaping employability activities, content and delivery. **Recommendation** - departments should use the University Employability Strategy when devising their departmental employability strategy.

2. Employers and careers staff play a crucial part in employability - “Industry has much more credibility presenting to students” (DEL, Computing). **Recommendation** - departmental Employability Strategies should incorporate external input and Careers Centre led activities as part of the curriculum.
3. “The key issue is ensuring that employability skills are embedded throughout all the Department’s degrees and ensuring students have a range of opportunities for delivering key graduate skills” (DEL, Geosciences). **Recommendation** - employability skills should be embedded throughout the curriculum in academic modules, and additionally bespoke employability modules should be provided. Validation panels have a role in auditing this recommendation.

4. The departments ensure that employability skills are part of module design e.g. by using curriculum benchmark statements and looking at employer requirements. **Recommendation** - employability skills should be included in the design/revalidation of modules and programmes, the delivery of employability skills should be mapped and measured.

5. Departments ensure professional accreditation is built in wherever possible “What has worked particularly well is ensuring that students are clear on how the qualifications and the additional accreditation they get fed into module content and assessment.” (DEL, Sport/PE). **Recommendation** - professional accreditation should be provided where appropriate.

6. Degree programme design, revalidation and ‘currency’ are informed via collaboration with employers and professional bodies to establish employer requirements and inform curriculum design. **Recommendation** – collaboration should take place with employers and professional bodies to establish employer requirements and inform curriculum design.

7. Each department provides and promotes opportunities for students to pursue placements and work experience, however, student take up is low. **Recommendation** – additional methods need to be found to remove barriers and increase student take up of work experience/placements.

8. Academics find that students’ attitudes vary: “Once students arrive at university their priorities seem to change. They want to experience uni life and not experience work life too early.” (DEL, Computing). Getting students to engage, reflect and recognise their skill development can be problematic. **Recommendation** – different methods need to be used to increase student engagement in employability and encourage them to record and reflect on skill development. We consider that further research would be beneficial to explore the reasons in more detail and identify effective practice.
Introduction

Rationale

Edge Hill University places significant emphasis on employability and is committed to implementing initiatives that have a good evidence base to ensure maximum benefit and impact. This project was conducted as part of the HEA’s Strategic Enhancement Programme (SEP) – Embedding Employability into the Curriculum 2014-15.

Edge Hill University’s strategic plan identifies a focused approach to employability as a key element of the strategy to enhance student experience. This institutional approach was selected by OFFA in the report: ‘Access Agreements for 2015-16: Key Statistics and Analysis’ (July 2014) as one of only three case studies illustrating how a university can improve student success through an employability strategy. Edge Hill produced a University Employability Strategy in October 2013 (Appendix 1) which seeks to embed employability into the university curriculum and develop a whole-institution approach. As part of the strategy, all university departments have developed their own employability plans to help students develop their employability in terms of knowledge, skills, behaviours, attributes and attitudes.

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) is large and diverse, encompassing eleven departments, recruiting over 2500 undergraduates annually. An employability audit had been conducted in 2013, which showed a considerable diversity of approaches and examples of good practice, some of which were transferable and others that were subject specific. However, it was evident that the Faculty had not yet been able to disseminate and embed this good practice in a consistent and systemic way.

The HEA SEP programme presented an excellent opportunity to align University strategy with current practice by auditing, evaluating, sharing, embedding and disseminating good practice. In particular the University was keen to gain an understanding of the ‘student voice’ i.e. students’ perspectives on their experience of employability. Three departments: Computing, Geosciences and the Department of Sport and Physical Activity were identified as examples of good practice and it was decided to focus on them for the project.

The project was planned in three phases.

Phase 1. Identification of Existing Good Practice.

a. Students’ experience and views of existing practice.

b. An audit of departments in the Faculty, with identification and evaluation of existing practice.


Phase 2. Review and Alignment of Faculty and Departmental Employability Strategies.

It was planned that the results of Phase 1 would be used to:

a. Explore how good practice can be adapted to different degree programmes.

b. Share findings within Faculty with departments to gain commitment to any strategy revisions, and collaboration/ support required.

Phase 3. Publication and Dissemination through:

a. Web resources
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b. The University Learning and Teaching Conference
c. The Centre for Learning & Teaching Conference and HEA event(s).

This report provides details of Phase 1 of the project. The next section explains the methodology used. Subsequent sections analyse the results from each sub-study within the research. Results are presented by department. Finally, the research instruments are provided in the appendices.
Methodology

A working group was set up (Appendix 2) and Ethics Committee approval for the research was obtained from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (Faculty of Arts and Sciences) in Oct 2014, prior to the start of the project. The research was divided into three sections.

Section 1. Examination of Students’ Experience and Views of Existing Practice.

To gather the views of students across each cohort, it was decided that two methods of data collection would be used with students at levels 4-6. A questionnaire (Appendix 3) would be used to obtain feedback from the student population in each department. However, to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind students’ thinking, student-led focus groups would form the primary method of data gathering.

a) Questionnaires

The three initial questions required students to indicate their level of knowledge on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘not very knowledgeable’ to ‘very knowledgeable’, in three areas of employability knowledge. The subsequent questions used a 4-point Likert scale to indicate students’ level of confidence (ranging from ‘not very confident’ to ‘very confident’) in providing evidence of six generic employability skills. The second section of the questionnaire had five questions which required free text answers so as to provide more detailed reflection of students’ independent thinking. A ‘thematic analysis’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was then conducted on the data, based on repetition of phrases, ideas and words that were identified from the responses. As the material was written responses to specific questions, the wider context of the word, phrase or idea became readily apparent. For each of the qualitative questions the student responses were reviewed to identify thematic categories, using both ‘inductive’ and ‘a priori’ reasoning. Only those themes that appeared frequently were used, non-frequent themes were grouped under the ‘other’ category. Once themes were identified, student responses were reviewed and grouped into the relevant categories. The number of responses against each category were then counted to gain a relative weighting of one theme against another.

b) Student Focus Groups

The decision to use students to facilitate focus groups was informed by work done by Dunne and Randstra (2011) which illustrates the efficacy of student-led action research. As Edge Hill believes it is important to create a community of practice, it was decided to involve students as partners by recruiting and training (paid) Student Research Assistants (SRAs) to facilitate and transcribe the focus groups.

The research was conducted from November to December 2014. A student questionnaire was designed and piloted, and focus group discussion topics were then determined. Discussion topics and numbers of participants in each focus group can be found in Appendix 4.

Six SRAs, (five level 6 students and one level 5 student) with an equal gender split, were recruited and trained in the facilitation and transcription of focus group discussions. SRAs were paid at the standard casual rate for twenty hours work. The SRAs distributed student questionnaires to students during lecture slots in each of the departments. Between five and eight volunteers for focus group participation were recruited from each lecture and to assist in motivating participation, each discussion was held directly after the lecture. Participants were also offered a university catering voucher worth £5.00.
At the start of each focus group, student consent to participate was obtained, and working in gender balanced pairs, SRAs facilitated one focus group at each level of study for students in each department. Eight focus groups were held between November and December 2014. A final group was completed in January 2015. SRAs transcribed key points from each focus group and submitted these to the working group in mid-January 2015. A thematic analysis was conducted on the data to allow the generation of rich, complex and detailed description.

c) Alumni.

A small-scale survey was competed with alumni who had graduated in 2014. Three alumni per department were interviewed by telephone using a shortened version of the student questionnaire (Appendix 6), allowing completion of the knowledge and skills questions from. Participants were asked to specify their knowledge/confidence in these areas at the point of graduation, and to complete the five questions requiring ‘open’ answers. This would provide some indication of alumni views of employability provision.

Section 2. Audit of Departments to Identify and Evaluate Existing Practice.

To audit and evaluate existing practice in departments, a meeting was held with the person responsible for employability in each department – the Departmental Employability Lead (DEL). The areas for discussion can be found in Appendix 5. Each discussion was recorded, written up and then analysed. The Departmental Employability Strategy (Appendices 7-9) for each department was also examined. These were then analysed to produce a list of common features.

Section 3. Audit of Existing Practice using HEA’s ‘Defining and Developing Your Approach to Employability- A Framework for Employability’.

The University’s employability audit in FAS during 2013 indicated that the three departments were comprehensively covering all points at Stage 1 of the Framework. As a consequence, this project focussed on Stage 2 and 3.

The following sections present the results and their analysis.
SECTION 1. STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYABILITY

A. Summary and Analysis of Focus Group Findings

1. What Is Students’ Knowledge Of Employability Skills, Abilities and Attitudes?

Students in all nine focus groups identified a range of skills, abilities and attitudes, (Table 1). The number of skills, abilities and attitudes varied from six to fourteen per group, with second year students identifying the largest number.

Table 1 Summary of Employability Skills, Abilities and Attitudes Identified by Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Abilities/attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adaptability</td>
<td>confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>charisma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flexibility</td>
<td>commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiative</td>
<td>enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT skills</td>
<td>dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literacy</td>
<td>disciplined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisation</td>
<td>hardworking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negotiation</td>
<td>honesty/integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>numeracy</td>
<td>motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem solving</td>
<td>open minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project management</td>
<td>professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teamwork</td>
<td>positivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>team management</td>
<td>reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>technical skills</td>
<td>resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time management</td>
<td>target driven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that students in all of the focus groups were not clear about the difference between skills (i.e. something that can be learned), abilities (i.e. something that is an innate strength) and attitudes (i.e. a way of thinking or feeling about something). Consequently, all focus groups identified confidence, motivation and enthusiasm as skills.

2. How Do Students Gain Employability Knowledge?

Students were asked to discuss how they were gaining knowledge of employability skills. The resulting discussions indicated that students’ knowledge of skills came from a number of sources, both directly as a result of university-focussed activities, and via external activities. It is interesting to note that five of the eight activities identified were university employability activities (Figure 3Figure 1). This shows clearly that students recognise university as the main source of their knowledge of employability skills.
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Student views on university activities are as follows.

d) Careers Modules

‘The Geo Careers module, which we have every Monday afternoon for 3 hours. We have to do a mock interview as one of our assignments, and also mock CVs, mock covering letters and job applications.’

‘I do the Team Project module so you learn skills from there. How to work in a team and I’m a leader so I’m having to learn how to manage and stuff like that’

‘The Work Related Learning Module gave me an opportunity to work in a real company and this was really useful’.

e) Practical Work

‘You get feedback on practical assessments, where you need to improve, like being more confident or trying something a different way’.

‘Going on fieldwork, they told us to get on with it and work as a team’.

f) Academic Work

‘The most influential module is Digital World, which is the business aspect of our degree, which includes presentation and group work’.

‘Geo.com is where we use computers and Excel when you want to improve your maths and everything.’
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g) Work Experience/Placements

‘The Barclays Challenge and TalkTalk Hackathon [computing related] helped to build management skills, teamwork and leadership. The Barclays Challenge related to my course. We had to make a presentation to the university and if you won, have the opportunity to present to the BBC.’

‘I chose Edge Hill because of the Web Factory opportunity cos no other unis offered it, it is unique to here. This was really important for me cos it means I leave university with work experience as well as a degree and I think that’s particularly rare for students. That experience is priceless.’

‘Placements give you confidence in what you’re doing and knowing what you’re doing... and what actually happens in school’.

Some students were unsure about work experience.

‘I worked on a task in College for a charity, where we had to create a complete website and logo for them, which we did, but it was just really communicating with them and not even face to face, so I don’t think it counts’.

‘We have been offered a chance to volunteer at the park but I didn’t take it up. It’s not what I’m going into. I’d like to get experience through a mix of field trips and projects.’

h) PDP

‘In particular PDP was beneficial in lectures and seminars. It was useful for practice as they involved team building and independent study’.

‘We did CV writing in PDP which boosted employability, as well as tasks about how to sell yourself better, tasks which help you improve your academic writing styles, and doing a mock interview’.

First year Sports students were unhappy as they hadn’t yet received any PDP.

‘My friends at Leeds Uni, they get a weekly lesson on academic writing and how to reference and CV writing and all that. We haven’t even been shown how to use blackboard [VLE].I think we should get an extra lesson every week, like on a Monday when we have hardly any lectures and we could learn about CVs and academic essays and where the library is and that’.

First year Geosciences students felt first year was too soon for employability.

‘The lecturers have talked about employability, but haven’t gone into depth, I think in second year I’d like this, first year is about settling in.’

‘I think you would forget it if you learnt it now, I think you should do it in third year, there’s no point now.’

Second year students additionally identified external activities as a way of learning skills.

i) Part-time Work

‘You get a lot from work, you learn to deal with different people, how they react and how to come across.’
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‘Most jobs I’ve had in the past, literally communication was always key. If you weren’t communicating, everything would fail straight away. And also being willing to jump from one place to another, doing somebody else’s job even if it is not in your job description but you know how to do it.’

‘We get skills via our work for the Web Factory [a Social Enterprise project run by the Computing department] which gives us employability skills and experience of the working world.’

j) Applying for Jobs and Placements

‘When you are applying for jobs, it asks you if you have the listed skills and you either have to say yes or no, or rate yourself on the skills listed between 1 and 5’.

k) Online Information

‘There’s also research tips online for like, what most people are looking for, how to be confident in an interview, how to approach them, be work smart, be work dressed, be work clean’.

3. How do Students Develop Employability Skills?

In common with the ways in which students learn about employability skills, when it comes to developing skills, students identified seven sources within university provision. These comprised all the sources mentioned in relation to skill knowledge, and two additional sources: employers and the Careers Centre. Interestingly, just one external activity: online information, was identified and part-time work was not mentioned by any of the students

Figure 4: How Students Develop Employability Skills
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a) Careers Modules

‘GeoCareers, where we’ve learned about stuff like the STAR framework [a structured way of answering interview/application questions] and how not to just give one word answers and to give more detail.’

‘For Work Related Learning you have to get yourself a voluntary placement, so wherever you’re working you are in a work environment and you have to follow that company’s protocol and stuff like that.’

b) Academic Work

‘Well they [lecturers] go on about it pretty much all the time working by yourself, organisation skills, time management skills, so you’re developing them anyway if that makes sense. But like they always go ‘it’s your degree, your …what you wanna get’.

‘The Dissertation Conference gives you experience in developing communication skills through fifteen minutes presentations, which improves your confidence levels.’

‘Most of my coursework is actually group work, so it is a whole thing to do well for your degree, you actually need to be able to work efficiently in a team and get everybody working and making sure everybody is pulling their weight otherwise you’re not gonna get as good a mark’.

‘There are course specific elements such as field work, where we have to get into groups, work stuff out then do a presentation. We develop different skills that could be included with jobs later on down the line. Having not done those before, I find those beneficial, it’s good preparation for interviews’.

‘There is a big focus on time management in User Experience. We’ve got weekly tasks that need to be done every week which is marked so you can’t just not do it, and it says in the assignment descriptions that time management is really important’.

c) Practical Work

‘Field work gives you help, because it gives you something tangible, you can see how things are happening and see how theories apply. Even when we do simple things like geo skills, compass skills, things like that, it helps because it helps you to get out and do it.’

d) PDP

‘PDP is good, developing a graduate CV is useful’.

‘In Year 1 we did PDP, which was focussed on CVs, and factors like “what makes a good teacher” and the elements surrounding that and Child Protection. It was really useful’.
e) **Work Experience/Placements**

‘Being in school, I got that if the teacher running the session isn’t very confident and doesn’t have knowledge behind what they’re teaching, you don’t develop as much as you could’.

‘Actually teaching a class of children’.

‘The Web Factory. I’ve worked for them since first year, so when I leave I’ll actually have 3 years’ experience of being a web developer.’

f) **Employers**

‘The course brings in external employers, such as Barclays and The Hut Group, to engage students with things like web seminars and competitions, like the Barclays Technology Challenge, as well as lectures and mock assessment days which have been really useful in preparing for a job.’

g) **Careers Centre**

‘It’s also the Careers department, like coming in and telling us how to write CVs and job applications, and also, lecturers and word of mouth by networking with employers.’

Students also mentioned services they valued but had been unaware were organised via Careers, e.g. information about the Prospects website [careers information] job vacancy emails and Graduate Fairs.

‘The Graduate Fair was really useful because we could talk and network with potential employers’.

h) **Online**

‘It’s a combination of self-search, like looking at what employers are asking for in their jobs, social media, like if you go on Twitter you’ll generally see a lot of tweets where various people are talking about employment, and most people in an organisation are using Twitter to communicate so it’s much easier to get in touch with them that way.’

‘For computing your portfolio is more important to employers than a CV. I got in touch with The Hut Group via Twitter and got a job offer after showing them my portfolio. I’ve got an account on Behance [an online platform which showcases creative work] and I’ve been to loads of web conferences and meet-ups, so that helps me see what employers are looking for’.

The value that students place on being able to develop employability skills can be evidenced by the view of second year Geoscience students.

‘We haven’t received much in the way of employability. It has been mentioned. I think we get a module next year devoted to careers but I personally think it’s too late because we have to apply now for any graduate schemes for when we leave, so really we should have the work given to us from first year.’

‘We’re missing out cos we’re not developing our skills as fast as other courses.’
HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability

‘Also there’s a lot of different avenues to go into from our course so we need information earlier, like at the end of first year when the workload is less busy but it will still be beneficial’.

4. Which Employability Activities Had Students Found Particularly Useful?

Across all year groups students consistently valued three activities: practical work; PDP and learning how to set up and use LinkedIn.

Figure 5: Employability Activities That Students Found Particularly Useful

a) Practical Work

‘The assessment day we had was really useful because it showed me what I’d have to do if I ever get called to one, and in the WRL, psychometric tests as well’.

‘The field trips helped and having to do recent projects in a group, because when you’re working with more than one person, you’re forced to do leadership roles and team work, and time management. Forcing us into the situation has worked and encouraged us to develop our skills’.

‘Our course is primarily focused on teaching so you get loads of practical experience which is better than other universities and it really directs you down the route of being a PE teacher, as opposed to just learning about the history of sport, the sociology of sport. And we get to do dance modules as part of it rather than as an additional unit, so this gives us an edge in getting a job.’

b) PDP

‘We had 12 sessions, where one was CV development which helped us a lot, with understanding what employers needed, and we had maths tests to prepare for the teaching skills tests, and help on writing personal statements.’

‘In terms of recruitment or selection, it’s been really good. There are opportunities for this all the time, such as CV checking, whether it’s by the department or Careers
and I think giving us the opportunity to speak to employers via workshops or Careers Fairs, that’s really good too’

c) LinkedIn
‘PDP was useful as it provided the opportunity to learn about LinkedIn and creating the perfect profile. We had to look at five businesses you aspire to work with and follow them on LinkedIn and also fill in every available field’. LinkedIn helps students get themselves out there, the more details you can put on LinkedIn, the more employable you become. It’s a great way to have all your skills on one platform’.

‘We created a LinkedIn profile, which we’ve all done and I found it quite useful to be honest. There’s always notifications and I found work from it, because there are direct employees so you can relate to them. Also it endorses skills that other people say you have and you didn’t realise until they did it.’

Second year students additionally identified a range of other activities they had found useful.

d) Academic Work
‘The Digital Geography module has really helped my IT skills, and developing my use of the different software. I’ve increased my skills loads on Excel, which will be important for the future I think.’

e) Giving Presentations
‘The way they [lecturers] make you do presentations, especially near the start of the year. It’s really good because it helps you get rid of those nerves about standing in front a group of people and making a point. It’s obviously a very good transferable skill if you’re trying to go to a job interview or there might be multiple interviewers asking you questions. It helps with the confidence and not feeling quite as nervous which helps you come off a lot better. It’s very helpful in employability.’

f) Careers Fairs
‘The Careers Fairs as well. There’s a lot of different companies, it wasn’t all for one or two degrees, I think whatever degree you were doing there was probably somebody there that you could go and talk to about jobs and stuff. And there was people around as well, who were handing out sheets and highlighted all the companies that you would want to go and see being a computing student. But you have to research yourself, they give you the list and then you have to go through yourself, choose what kind of company you wanna go, and then take your CV and go to them.’

Employer Inputs
‘We had two graduates came in and you could ask questions about when they went through their graduate process and how they got into the company and there were a couple of companies come in that said what they expect on their CVs as well’.

g) University Arranged Work Experience
‘We do a session every Wednesday that helps the first years and teaches them how to code, that’s actually paid as well, so that’s helped us for developing our skills’.
5. How Do Students Feel About Placements?

Students clearly understand and value the role that placements play in relation to employability. It should be noted that by level 5, all Sports students had undertaken at least one placement. They had found the experience valuable and would like their course to include a compulsory placement where they would be assessed on their teaching ability:

‘This would really help with, like, being able to test your leadership skills and confidence, and all the skills we’ve been taught the past two years’.

By level 6, in addition to the Sports students, all Computing students had also completed placements/work experience.

Attitudes to sandwich placements were different.

Only level 5 Computing students were considering taking up a year-long placement. None of the students had undertaken a sandwich placement. Students’ reasons for this focussed around feeling that a year was too long to be out of university. Students felt they: didn’t want to interrupt their studies; were concerned about losing academic skills; might not want to return to studying or might not be able to re-adapt to university (Table 2).

There was a marked difference between Computing students and Geoscience students in terms of where responsibility lies in respect to securing placements.

Geosciences:

‘We’re pushed to do everything ourselves, and this is acceptable but we’re not really getting any guidance on where to pull information from, or what we should be doing. I think that lecturers would probably help us if we went to them directly and asked but sometimes it seems like they are too busy to help. If it was offered to us, using five minutes of lecture time once a week that would really be able to help.’

Computing:

‘We can do a sandwich year if we want to. Depending on you really isn’t it. Depending if the person wants to do it?’
Table 2: Student Views on Sandwich Placements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Study</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>All subjects</td>
<td>‘Sandwich placements are available but I haven’t looked at any yet’. ‘I’m not thinking of second year yet as I have a busy schedule.’ ‘I feel if I took a year out, I would lose a lot of skills’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Sport and Geosciences</td>
<td>‘I’d rather just get education done’. ‘I wouldn’t want to come back and study again after working for a year’. ‘I don’t wanna take a whole year out of education, I’d sooner it ran alongside your degree, like, run the placement alongside current studies, offering it as an additional module, giving students the chance to gain experience one day of the week.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>‘I’ve started applying for sandwich placements because I feel like it would help me for after my last year. I think it will give me the skills and the experience in industry as well, about what actually goes on in the work field. I feel like I get the skills that I need from here, but when you’re put into a working situation where you’re getting paid for what you’re doing, I think that’s a different situation to you having to learn theoretical stuff here and having to apply it for your last year. The placement helps you enforce on what you’ve already learned and makes you put into practice what you’ve got and prepares you for after you graduate, and you probably would get a chance to go back to the company if they liked you so it makes things easier.’ ‘I’m [going to be] doing a sandwich placement, and it’s for reasons like skills and employability but as well, you get the year’s salary so that will help with the debts you’ve already accrued and there’s all the statistics they [the department] throw at you, like 60% of graduates go back to a company they’ve already done a placement with and stuff like that’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>All subjects</td>
<td>‘Placements were pushed last year, but they were all 12 month internships. A year, in my opinion is too long, to be out there in the workplace and then try and get back into uni for just one year. You’d be used to doing reports for the company in one way and then you’d need to do them for uni and they’d be completely different, different standards, everything. I think it’d be a struggle to acclimatise again.’ ‘Our course provides us with realistic software and programmes that we’ll be using in industry, and a lot of the course is learning skills that will be deployed once you get into the workplace so I don’t think a year’s placement is necessary’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Students’ Views on the Timing and Content of Employability Delivery

Level 6 students were asked to reflect on the timings of employability delivery throughout their course, and students at all levels were asked to consider the optimal timing of activities (Error! Reference source not found.).

Table 3: Students’ Views by Subject on the Timing of Employability Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Study</th>
<th>Some Activities Delivered</th>
<th>Most Activities Delivered</th>
<th>When Do Students Want Employability?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Geosciences, Sports, Computing</td>
<td>Geosciences*</td>
<td>Geosciences, Sports, Computing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Geosciences, Sports, Computing</td>
<td>Sports, Computing</td>
<td>Geosciences, Sports, Computing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicated by level 5 and 6 students. Level 4 students opposed this view (section 2.1 v)

Sports

‘It was MORE last year [second year]. Like, first year wasn’t SO much, I think that’s mainly just to find your feet in uni, whereas THIS year, then it’s been more focussed about how to get jobs or different means of getting into teaching, like PGCE or School Direct.’

‘Yeah, I’d have said it was more second year. Like last year, we had a lecture where people came in and told us about different jobs, whereas this year all the PDP is set as little extra tasks that you have to do, rather than having a lecture on them, you don’t have that option anymore’.

‘And there was like an extra Employability Course [Edge Hill Employability Programme offered by the Careers Centre] that you could do, like essays and that. I didn’t actually pick up on it but I know some people did and they said it was really good. The message wasn’t reinforced for the masses, people weren’t engaged enough.’

Geosciences

‘Year one and two really gave you the chance to develop team working skills, while year three really pushed on becoming more communicative. Year three has definitely been the most beneficial, but I would have liked it to be spread across all three years, as opposed to having so much importance in the final year.’

‘We need GeoCareers earlier on. Like the Careers Fairs, we were told not to go and ask stupid questions, but we didn’t know what was a stupid question, so I didn’t go cos I didn’t want the stress of asking the wrong thing. If they [lecturers] had told us about it at the end of the first year, we could have went and had a look around, then attended in a professional manner at the end of year two.’
‘Geo Careers has made us more aware of skills we wouldn’t have thought about before, like negotiation skills and time management, and it’s showed us how to demonstrate skills to potential employers using the STAR framework. Year one and two just gave you the chance to practice your skills, although I don’t think we really saw that at the time.’

Computing

‘I’d say it’s been sufficient, you know, we’ve had stuff each year, but second year is probably where most of it is, like with the work related learning and all that.’

7. Do Students Feel They Need Additional Employability Support?

Students were asked to discuss whether there was anything their department does not do that they thought might help them in terms of employability. Thoughts were specific to the subject of study.

Geosciences Students

Table 4: Geosciences Students’ Desired Changes to Employability Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Desired Employability Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Additional speakers from a range of industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>GeoCareers or other careers focussed module, An employability focus to tutorials, Speakers from a range of industries during curricular time, Employer inputs during curricular time, An employability week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>Less content in, and less focus on GeoCareers, Re-time the level 5 employability week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Geosciences Students’ Comments

Level 4

‘It would be good to invite speakers in from industry to help with our career direction and build networks’.

Level 5

‘The Geo Careers module in third year should be offered in year 2 instead. I’d like the guidance earlier, rather than in year 3 because it’s too late to be applying for jobs at that time. In third year any work we do can be tailored to specific applications, whereas in second year we need the basic skills to apply.’

‘We have to start thinking about our dissertations now and what we want to do be doing, so this is another reason I’d like the Geo Careers module in second year. We’d like to know the avenue we want to go down, giving better focus for our dissertations and tailoring them towards our pathway. One hour a week would be enough to help give us a guided career path. I mean, we have been told about different career paths but not how you get into these careers.’
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‘I think I know what I want to do, but if I was in third year now, I would be sending off my PCGE application. By which point the Geo careers module will have been running for roughly a month, which I don’t think is long enough. A month isn’t long enough to be making decisions; it might not necessarily be what you want to do.’

‘It should be moved forward because it doesn’t only deal with career choices, it has mock interviews, mock tests and whatever, so it would be something I am interested in doing this year. You don’t want to spend that much time in third year thinking about that because you’re going to want to be more focused on your work, with a solid idea on what you want to do with good grounding in your application process.’

Other suggestions included:

a) A Different Focus to Tutorials

‘Make the tutor time that we get given more worthwhile, get better direction with careers. It would be good for it to be explained to us about any funding we can get because cost is a big thing that hinders a chance for work experience.’

b) Speakers

‘It would be helpful to have people coming in from different industries starting from first year. A time slot every week where anybody from any year could go along to and listen to guest speakers, or past students, or even general people who have been through the application process for getting jobs.’

c) Employer Input

‘It would be good to get potential employers to come in and explain what it is they look for in a candidate, it would be good first hand to know from them what makes someone employable. Everyone tells you to get experience, but if everyone has it then you’re no better off. We want to know what will set us apart from everyone else in the room.’

d) An Employability Week

‘A week after the exam period in January, it would be good to forget about lectures but make it compulsory for students to come in for the full 5 days and talk about specific skills and run through mock interviews and assessments etc. doing that alongside of Geo careers. It will give second years peace of mind. It’d be good to get employers and guest speakers to come in during the week and do different sessions.’

Level 6

‘We should have had this module [GeoCareers] last year. At the minute, all the deadlines for graduate jobs seem to be now and we don’t have time to be applying for jobs and completing assignments. Also, we don’t need some of the stuff, like the class we did on entrepreneurship, it wasn’t helpful to us.’

‘I’m going into teaching, so the information should have been given to us WAY before. I didn’t find out any of the information I have through the module, I went to Careers myself and found out what I needed. We had lectures on everything that
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would get you into jobs such as Masters, LinkedIn profiles, but nothing about teaching.

‘We do three hours of this module every week, and what we have been taught is good, but it does not need to last for the full seven weeks. The course can be too intense if you already know what you want to do when you leave university.’

‘The Geo Careers week was provided at the end of May in second year. It was at the end of the May, it was a week’s break, and then it was the Geo Careers. The timing of it was not practical because people just wanted to be finished for the summer. If they [lecturers] would have stressed the importance of it, and how much it would’ve helped you over the summer, more people would have turned up. It would have, MADE us get voluntary work experience throughout the summer, but we just didn’t realise how important it was.’

Sports Students

Table 5: Sports Students’ Desired Changes to Employability Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Desired Employability Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Level 4     | Increased coaching course availability and funding  
               Opportunity to teach children as part of their course |
| Level 5     | Increased coaching course availability and funding  
               Opportunity to teach children as part of their course  
               Help with interview process/practice |
| Level 6     | Increased coaching course availability and funding  
               Opportunity to teach children as part of their course  
               Increased support with PGCE applications |

Sports Students’ Comments

Throughout levels 4-6 students identified:

a) Coaching courses

‘More coaching courses could be offered, like they do at other Unis. Some coaching courses are really expensive and, ones that you wouldn’t be allowed to teach in a school if you didn’t have them. Like, trampolining is nearly £400, but, if you want to do it, there’s not anything in place, as of yet, where you can do it through here [Edge Hill], you have to go out and fund/find it yourself.’

b) Opportunities to teach children

‘A block of placement would be better. Actually teaching a class of children rather than mock teaching our peers. And being assessed on teaching in a real situation’.

Level 5 students additionally wanted help with interviews:

‘Perhaps we could get more help with interviews, like we did all about applying for jobs in PDP last year, but we could get more on actually having an interview and what to do in it.

Level 6 students additionally wanted more help with PGCE applications
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‘With the PGCE we had to hand in a personal statement but we were told to just get on with it. People came in to talk to us about it but it was just a presentation, if it were a workshop it would’ve worked better. Like, in college we were given deadlines [to submit UCAS statements by] and that would help a lot in university’.

Computing Students

Table 6: Computing Students’ Desired Changes to Employability Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Desired Employability Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Re-time employer challenges to later in the academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Increased support with recruitment and selection processes for placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On-going weekly/monthly sessions to assist students in finding and applying for placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>Increased support in finding placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support with portfolio building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Earlier identification of different job roles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Computing Students’ Comments

Level 4

‘The TalkTalk Hackathon was too early in the year, I don’t think any of us took part in it. I couldn’t even find the place where the lecture was held!’

‘The Barclays challenge was too early too, I wasn’t ready to take part in it. I didn’t think I’d have anything to contribute at that stage.’

Level 5

a) Increased Support for Recruitment and Selection

‘I’ve applied for placements, and didn’t know we had to go through online tests and stuff and I was like woah where’s this coming from? and when I tried it for the first time it wasn’t too bad but I feel like we should have been warned before, ...because I thought okay I’m just gonna hand in my CV and they’re going to ask me for an interview. I was anticipating an interview but then I had to go through so many stages before you actually get your placement, so if they refuse you you’re like I can’t do nothing about that because you know the online tests have shown this and that’.

‘In terms of CV writing and that, they cover all of that [in lectures]. But in terms of interview processes and tests we have to do online then I would say it’s not covered enough, cos I think unless you choose the work related learning then there’s not much guidance. In WRL we’re alright, we’ve got the opportunity to do mock assessment centres and application forms and we’ll have feedback on that but if you don’t do work related learning there’s no opportunity for those.’

‘Giving the people who are doing work related learning a possibility to have practice interviews with employers just to see what they think and see what they would be looking for in their interviews’.

b) On-going Support for Students Seeking Placements
‘If they could do a separate weekly or once a month thing for people who wanna do placements. Like if you’ve chosen placement for your course, then you should be given a monthly thing that would educate you about what you have to go through before you get a placement. They could do a meet up for everyone looking for placements, like: you should be looking at these companies, and here are companies that previous students had placements with.’

Level 6

a) More Support in Finding Placements

‘It would be good to have more on placements, instead of just ‘here’s a placement, apply for it’, you could have workshops or lectures on where placements are and on how to apply’.

b) Support with Portfolio Building

‘I think we could do more on portfolios, like how to build a good one cos that’s the way that we’re gonna get jobs, by sending our portfolio to employers. Like I don’t think mine’s very good, so they could maybe build in a portfolio check, like as part of preparing you for placement applications’.

c) Earlier Identification of Career Options

‘The Hut Group are coming in today to talk about all the different jobs that are available, like even now in third year I’m not really aware of all the different jobs that are out there and despite me looking, there might be different things that I haven’t thought about. It would have been good to have this in first year so that you get chance to look into them further.’

8. How Prepared Do Students Feel?

Level 6 students were asked how they felt in relation to their current career planning.

Responses varied according to their subject of study. Whilst Sports/PE students were actively pursuing plans, Computing students felt confident and well prepared by contrast Geosciences students felt unready to enter graduate employment.

Sports

‘After university I’m going to take a year, out, like get more experience, with coaching and a bit of money behind me’.

‘I might look into PGCE, or dance, I want to become a pro dancer, but I’ll see what happens.’

‘Taking a year out to find a bit of experience, develop my skills and then look for a job from there.’

‘I want to do primary teaching but I don’t feel like, ready, so I wanna get a job as a TA [teaching assistant] and work for a couple of years and then do a PGCE when I’m a bit more ready.’

‘I have some PGCE interviews coming up soon, I wanna do primary PGCE so that’s where I’m headed’.
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‘I wanna do Schools Direct - primary teaching, but if all else fails I’ll get a job as a TA and get some experience’.

‘I did apply for PGCE but I’ve had a change of heart and I’m just looking at working, I want to start earning to be honest, I’m tired of being a student, I wanna become a ‘proper person’ so I’m looking at graduate [management] schemes, or working off-shore’.

It’s interesting to note that whilst all of the students had substantial experience including: on-going work experience in a school; working in a nursery; sports coaching with primary children; teaching fitness classes to adults, and kids summer sports camps, students felt they aren’t ready to teach a class.

‘Like if I got put in front of a class of 30 now, I wouldn’t feel confident to deliver that class in the most effective way.’

‘We do LOADS of teaching, but it’s only with peers, it’s not a realistic setting, teaching is a TOTALLY different scenario, and you wanna feel that you’re doing the best job.’

Geosciences

‘I don’t think we’ve had enough info about like, the avenues you can take, and how to get into these things, like what exactly we should do’.

‘I don’t think it’s the right level of information that we should know, considering we’ll be leaving university soon’.

Computing

‘I feel well prepared for interviews and applications and assessment centres and all that, just from all the stuff we’ve had like the employability day, and employers coming in and how to do CVs and all that. I definitely feel prepared’

‘It’s been pretty good, I probably need a better portfolio but yeah, I’d say we’ve covered pretty much everything’.

‘I feel pretty confident really that I know what I need to do and I’ve had relevant work experience so, yeah, hopefully it should all work out’.
HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability

SECTION 1. B. Questionnaire Survey of Students

The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3. The breakdown of questionnaires per department or programme can be seen below.

Table 7: Number of Completed Questionnaires Received from Departments or Degree Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department/Programme</th>
<th>No. of questionnaires completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geosciences</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport and Physical Activity</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Student Questionnaire Results - Section 1

Knowledge Questions

- In relation to graduate CVs, Sports and Computing students felt reasonably knowledgeable, whilst Geosciences students felt slightly knowledgeable.
- Students from all departments felt reasonably knowledgeable about completing job application forms effectively.
- The area that students felt least knowledgeable about was graduate interviews, where students from all subjects felt slightly knowledgeable.

Skills Questions

- Teamwork: Sports and Geosciences students felt very confident, whilst Computing students felt reasonably confident.
- Communication: Sports students felt very confident, whilst Geosciences and Computing students were reasonably confident.
- Students from all departments felt reasonably confident about 4 areas:
  - leadership
  - decision making
  - problem solving
  - numeracy
Questionnaire, Section 2 Results

Table 8: Question 1. What is your biggest area of concern regarding getting a graduate job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Approximate % weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of experience and/or confidence</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition and or differentiating yourself and number of jobs available</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to make an effective application, CV and, or interview</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying graduate or relevant job opportunities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of appropriate skills, knowledge and level of degree</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility of opportunities, re-location and, or commuting</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stated the question was ‘Not applicable’</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that students’ concerns fell into three main areas: lack of experience or confidence, competition for jobs and application/interview skills.

Table 9: Question 2. In what ways have you been given an opportunity by your degree and department to develop skills and qualities employers are looking for in graduates?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Approximate % weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing skills through curriculum and academic studies including field and lab work</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work related learning module and, or PDP and, or specific employability activities</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment activities, fairs, projects and competitions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience and placements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stated the question was ‘Not Applicable’</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students predominantly feel that they develop employability skills and qualities via: academic work; specific employability activities and to a lesser extent, via projects, work experience and placements. This result echoes the findings of the student focus groups.
Table 10: Question 3. In what ways do you feel your Department/degree is helping you to develop the skills necessary to be successful in the recruitment and selection process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Approximate % weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work related learning module and, or PDP</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific activities for application and interview preparation (Assistance with CV, application and interviews)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing skills through academic studies</td>
<td>20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little or no help</td>
<td>8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stated the question was ‘Not Applicable’</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Large numbers of level 4 and 5 Geosciences students reported little or no help. This was not reflected by level 6 who highlighted the GeoCareers module.*

Learning about recruitment and selection is felt to take place via PDP and/or work related learning; specific activities around these processes and (particularly by level 6 Geosciences students) via academic work. It is interesting to note that Geosciences students feel they have little or no help with recruitment/selection until the GeoCareers module at level 6. These findings again correlate strongly with the results of the student focus groups.

Table 11: Question 4. Please tell us about anything your Department/degree is doing that is particularly helpful to your employability?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Approximate % weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course content/subject matter including project and, or group/team work</td>
<td>33 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work related learning module and, or PDP</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience/placements/company connections and contacts</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application and interview preparation (Assistance with CV, application and interviews)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/Careers Fairs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing that is helpful to employability</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stated the question was ‘Not Applicable’</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Geosciences students highlighted Geo Careers module*

In terms of activities that students feel are particularly useful, it is interesting to note that many students identified course content (including project and team work); PDP and work related learning and (in smaller numbers) work experience/placements. These results are very much in line with the findings of the students’ focus groups, and, in particular, the value placed on practical work is clearly echoed.
Table 12: Question 5. Is there anything your Department/degree does not include that you would like them to do in order to help your employability?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Approximate % weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Careers/employability support and advice</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview related and/or specifically mock interviews</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing else required</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More placement and work experience opportunities or assistance</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for teacher training/PGCE</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional professional/technical qualifications including coaching badges</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stated the question was ‘Not Applicable’</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings from this question are interesting since, unlike all the previous questions, the majority of students felt the question was ‘not applicable’. In previous questions, the number of students giving this answer was small, giving a weighting of between 1% and 12%. This makes the weighting at of 35% for question 5, significantly higher. This could be interpreted in a range of ways, perhaps, e.g. as an indication that students were unable to identify other activities that may help them, or that they felt their department was already providing a useful range of activities. It can be argued that the indicated requirement for careers/employability support and advice may reflect a desire for increased support from Careers Centre staff, and/or one-to-one support.
Questions (Appendix 6) focussed on how knowledgeable alumni had felt in terms of graduate selection and recruitment at the point of graduation, and on their confidence in six skills: team work; communication; leadership; decision making; problem solving and numeracy. Alumni were also asked three open questions in relation to employability activities throughout their degree.

Figure 6: Results of Alumni Questionnaire - Knowledge Questions
The majority of alumni were confident in their knowledge of graduate recruitment/selection processes and also confident of their ability in five of the six skills with the exception of numeracy. These findings would suggest that they had benefitted from employability provision during their degree. The small sample size does not allow direct comparison with results from the student questionnaire. However, it is interesting to note that both students and alumni felt least knowledgeable about graduate interviews and were most confident about their ability to provide evidence of team work.

Results from the three open questions indicated that (in common with students), alumni placed the emphasis on university activities in order to develop their employability skills. PDP, practical sessions, placements, employer input academic modules were identified as being particularly helpful, echoing the views of students. Alumni had been most concerned about finding a job in the local area and competing successfully against other graduates.
SECTION 2. AUDIT OF DEPARTMENTS TO IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE EXISTING PRACTICE

Section 2 A. Departmental Employability Strategies

Analysis indicated that the strategies (Appendices 7-9) have the following common features:

1. They involve external input including:
   - guest speakers from industry e.g. the Hut Group, Barclays.
   - industry run challenges e.g. a problem set by Natural England and a TalkTalk Hackathon
   - live industry briefs
   - employer led workshops e.g. Barclays IT delivered a series of workshops throughout 2013-14, Sport England delivered sessions on recruitment practice
   - projects with employers e.g. Everton in the Community’s Youth Mental Health Project

   Careers Centre activities as part of the curriculum including:
   - workshops e.g. on LinkedIn, job search, job applications
   - careers interviews for students e.g. at level 4 and 6 in Geosciences
   - bespoke Careers Fairs for departments
   - employability days

2. They embed employability skills throughout the curriculum in academic modules as well as bespoke employability modules (e.g. Geo-Careers and Computing Work Related Learning Module). Each department maps the skills at each level to pinpoint where they are delivered.

3. They provide professional accreditation where appropriate e.g. via British Computing Society; Geological Society and coaching awards via National Governing Bodies for each sport.

4. They specify collaboration with employers and professional bodies to inform curriculum design and to establish employer requirements. A range of methods are used including:
   - Employer Advisory Panels - meet twice a year to provide industry updates and inform practice
   - Discussion and input from employers via lectures e.g. National College for Teaching and Learning
   - Networking at Careers Fairs both on campus and externally e.g. annual Geological Society Careers Fair
   - Liaising with local and national employer contacts identified by Careers Centre

5. The strategies promote the value of placements and work experience and support students in finding them e.g. Computing WRL module and Sports placements in schools.

6. The strategies use PDP as a way of encouraging students to record and reflect on skill development, and often as a vehicle for employability delivery (e.g. Geosciences and Sports)
Section 2 B. Summary of Meetings with Departmental Employability Leads

1. **How useful is the Edge Hill University Employability Strategy?**

Departmental Employability Leads (DELS) felt that the Employability Strategy was useful. Reasons for this included:

The Strategy is useful in helping departments to check for and address any gaps in their provision. *(Geosciences)*.

It is useful in designing curricula, external engagement and extra curricula activities. It should inform and shape the way approaches to employability work across the portfolio of programmes and feed into decisions about which stakeholders to engage with and why. *(Sport)*.

The strategy gives reassurance that all departments are on board with employability and reinforces what each one does to develop employability. *(Computing)*.

2. **What further Faculty or institutional support is needed?**

Each department felt they received very good support by working in partnership with Careers Centre. Sports felt the Careers Centre’s Edge Hill Works team who handle external relations had been particularly useful. Computing also identified departmental resources including a Knowledge Exchange & Enterprise Manager and a Commercial Development Co-ordinator (Industrial Placements & Employability). None of the departments felt they required any other support.

3. **In relation to employability at course and Department level there has been much talk about ‘embedding ‘Employability’ in the curriculum – what does that mean in the context of your Department and how do you see it progressing?**

*Geosciences*: The key issue is ensuring that employability skills are embedded throughout all the Department’s degrees and ensuring students have a range of opportunities for delivering key graduate skills. In terms of how all this may progress, we are re-validating next year and our Employer Advisory Panel (EAP) will be important in identifying the skills required in the work place. This will allow us to embed skills into the new curriculum and ensure the curriculum is ‘current’.

*Sport*: This is something that the Senior Management Team, and the Programme Leaders Team consider. During the revalidation of their programmes they took a level by level, and module by module approach to looking at employability. They have tried to weave it into each of the modules where they can focus and emphasise things like PDP. Also, the design of modules involves external stakeholders, whether that is in proving externally accredited qualifications, or in the design of modules via discussion with employers.

*Computing*: A lot of the employability content stuff that people are now talking about has been inbuilt for many years, e.g. basic presentation skills and getting students to communicate. But some of the better employability areas we are looking at are more about what is relevant to industry now! For Computing this changes on a daily basis never mind a yearly basis. Knowing what is going on today allows us to change our employability tack with students on a day to day basis. Getting employers in is what we do a great deal of and that is very key.

4. **What has worked and what hasn’t? Have you been able to measure or evaluate how effectively your Department has addressed employability?**

*Geosciences*: We strive to reflect what is in the ‘curriculum benchmark statements’ e.g. IT skills, group work, field work and communication skills. PDP works well in the first year because it is driven by an assignment. The Careers Centre is very helpful in the first year working with PDP, and also we have inputs highlighting voluntary opportunities e.g. with the Parks and Countryside Ranger Service of West Lancs District Council.
Getting employers in to talk to students has been a success. For example: a town planner from Shropshire County Council who got students to work on a real life scenario; Guardline (who are involved in geo-exploration) and Fairbanks Environmental who spoke about relevant roles and the skills/attitudes required.

The effectiveness is really assessed/evaluated through: the Geo-careers module e.g. via an assessed mock job application and interview; the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) data and National Student Satisfaction Survey, particularly the personal development section.

The Geo-careers module is a great success but maybe this third year module should be done a little earlier. Student feedback is that they wished they had completed the module in the second year. We also want to build in a more structured approach to PDP at levels 5 and 6.

**Sport:** What has worked particularly well is ensuring that students are clear on how the qualifications and the additional accreditation they get feed into module content and assessment. They can then see a real life application and relevance of those. For e.g. students did mental health first aid training and have a real-life application of it via the work they do with Everton in the Community's Youth Mental Health Project.

What doesn’t work so well is getting students to understand the connections between the experiences they have via placements and voluntary work, to academic work. We also need to help students see how it prepares them going forward.

**Computing:** Our employability activities work well and the department builds on it year on year. However, there is still some work to undertake making sure the same advice is given in each module to the same group of students. Occasionally, there may be a difference between what some individual staff say and how students have interpreted what has been said by different members of staff. We start from a skills base rather than a knowledge base when designing programmes, using industry standards and job descriptions to inform this.

There isn’t necessarily a measure on how our employability activities have been, but we do consider DLHE data, as this is the ultimate output measure.

5. **How have staff responded to addressing employability?**

**Geosciences:** We haven’t had a problem as this is expected of them as a Department and also the benchmark statements are something staff recognise. Geography benchmark statements emphasise employability albeit indirectly e.g. being able to write in a variety of different format styles.

Employability is part and parcel of a geosciences degree across the country because of the Learning and Teaching Support Network standards for Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies (GEES). We also conduct employability audits as a staff team in preparation for programme validation and this came from GEES.

**Sport:** Staff response has generally been very positive. However, there are small pockets of resistance as some staff would regard employability as not necessarily their core business. Those staff would assert that responsibility rests on students’ shoulders. There is a need to engage in activities that help students achieve, much more than just simply teaching modules. That is where a bit of tension exists – some colleagues say, where is employability in my job description? But it is only a few staff and attitudes are changing.

**Computing:** The Head of Department took the lead in creating a matrix to go through to identify employability skills. All staff are required to do it for their modules. There isn’t a problem in engaging staff – skills from the matrix are matched against module exercises not learning outcomes.
6. Are there any obstacles to successfully addressing employability in the curriculum? If so how has your Department addressed them?

Geosciences: There aren’t really any obstacles but PDP can present challenges. We give students a file to record their skill development, the challenge is always getting students to recognise it. Our PDP involves: students recording skills, reflecting on their feedback and then action planning for improvement. Reflecting on feedback can be a challenge for many students, many are just interested in their mark.

It might be helpful to get an employer in earlier on (e.g. level 4) to encourage students to record/reflect on their skill development. When an employer or one of the Careers Advisers say something about employability, students are much more likely to listen – they have more credibility than staff.

Sport: Facilitating student engagement in placement and opportunities in voluntary work can be problematic due to difficulties with finances or location and transport. The University is working on a way to address this. Another difficulty can be communicating clearly with some prospective employers about what the students can offer. Externally, many people just see sports students as people in tracksuits with bats, balls and cones. There is a place for that, but our students offer skills that are much more diverse and lend themselves to a wide range of careers.

Computing: Student attitude is a big obstacle to overcome. Students don’t generally care about employability until semester two of the final year. It is difficult to understand why there is a disconnect between students who before they come to University state that the aim of University is to gain employment or better employment opportunities, and the attitude they exhibit in the first and second year. Prospective students are always keen to know about employment rates and placements etc. and the kind of jobs students get, but once they arrive at University their priorities seem to change. They want to experience Uni life and not experience work life too early. There is a huge change in students who do an internship - they come back as different people, so maybe we need to encourage more students to take up this option.

7. How has your Department gone about identifying the knowledge, experiences, skills, competencies, attitudes, attributes and behaviours that you want your graduates to be able to demonstrate? How do you demonstrate or evaluate that students are able to meet these?

Geosciences: We use on-line resources e.g. surveys by the AGR to identify the top 10 employability skills, and we use benchmark statements. We are also looking at accreditation by professional bodies e.g. the Geological Society at our next validation. Of course employers make an input too via EAPs, guest lectures and real-world projects.

Computing: We bring in employers to emphasise/highlight these. When employers engage with students they are able to articulate these and it’s more relevant. It makes more impact when they hear this from someone in industry not from their lecturer who they see all the time for academic content. Industry has much more credibility presenting these to students.

Sport: We use external providers e.g. schools and professional bodies such as Sport England and the National College for Teaching and Learning. Students also have to use a job description to benchmark themselves to a job they would like to do. They then have to map the experience/skills they already have and what they need to develop. Without question when students hear the message from employers it has more impact, so we try to populate as many modules as possible with employers and stakeholders because students see staff every day and hear their voice all the time.
8. **What expectations do students have in respect of employability and have you undertaken any work to identify their expectations / how has your Department responded to these expectations?**

**Geosciences:** Response is very mixed. “For many students even when discussed within Geo-Careers, employability is not their priority. Many students only start to ‘panic’ about jobs towards the end of their third year. For example, logic would dictate that students would be queuing up to undertake sandwich placements but that isn’t the case. Even when students are contacted at graduation and advised about careers support many students don’t bother to respond to the support available. Although many students evaluate the module positively some students aren’t even that keen on the Geo-Careers module - they say they have come to University to study Geography or Geology. It is as though some students don’t want to have to think about jobs, at least not whilst they’re still at University.”

**Sport:** Many students think they are either going to teach or work in elite sport. The majority don’t go on to do either of those two and it is about managing expectations right at the beginning by emphasising the diversity of the sector. Students typically want to taste things in Level 4 and the beginnings of Level 5 but become much more specific at Level 6.

**Computing:** Student expectations range from the delusional – those that just expect to get a job because they have completed a course of study but you also get those between leaving the end of second year and the summer period before commencement of third year who come back as different people and all of a sudden are on board and understand what they need to do to succeed: attendance goes up, submissions are made, they liaise more with staff and their focus totally changes.

9. **Do students respond to activities and initiatives you put in place to support employability?**

**Geosciences:** Some do but others don’t. We’ve found that site visits for Geology students in the third year does tend to switch students on. Meeting actual practicing Geologists seems to make an impact on many students. They can then see that they can actually be a Geologist. With Geography it is a bit more problematical - there aren’t practicing Geographers in quite the same way. Maybe more engagement with the applied side of Geography would help and perhaps utilising alumni.

**Sport:** The picture is mixed. The ones who need it most engage the least:

- There are very keen students who undertake more of everything.
- Then there is a hard core in the middle that will dip their toes in, and some who with more encouragement and incentives would get more involved with it.
- Then you have those at the bottom who whatever the Department does, do not always engage in anything that is provided. They are less keen to pursue creative placements, they are conservative, and will typically try to focus on things that are safe options.

**Computing:** Guest speaker lectures have a 50:50 attendance. Students tend to make a judgement call based on an individual speaker’s name and the name of a company or even the title of a talk on whether or not to attend or whether they see it as relevant. Rightly or wrongly, mostly wrongly, they don’t attend based on their personal subjectivity.

Course/cohort talks are more successful than Departmental talks and industry briefs work really well – as they are specific to particular courses so students engage. Even the weakest of the weak students switch on. That’s not necessarily because of the people they’re bringing in but because students see it as relevant.

The TalkTalk Hackathon challenge was a big success but staff had to initially drag students into it! Once they were involved they loved it and went on to encourage friends to participate in the Barclays/BBC Technology challenge. Again the students had a very positive experience.

There is low rate of take up for sandwich year placements. Students ask about them and seem keen but then don’t bother. Maybe the problem is that when the time comes and the student has to do
something and put some effort in, they are too busy with their coursework to consider it. However, switched on students with good time management skills really benefit from participating and move forward massively.

10. **What extra activities do you offer?**

**Geosciences:** we take students from each level to the annual Geological Society Careers Fair at Nottingham. The presentations at the event are great for identifying skills and networking. We also offer students chance to undertake live industry briefs e.g. with Sefton Council, and with Natural England. Last year we introduced mini careers interviews (by Careers Advisers) with all level 4 students and also for level 6 students, and additionally summer graduate follow up to help find jobs.

**Sport:** we offer coaching awards, placements such as one where students take over and run a primary school for a week of Healthy Living, and projects e.g. Everton in the Community.

**Computing:** we offer a series of lectures and workshops by speakers from industry e.g. The Hut Group, FSM and Barclays and build in live employer projects as assessment pieces. We also operate the ‘Web Factory’ a social enterprise project which delivers web based and other technology and digital media projects for local businesses. It provides our students with an opportunity to develop their technical and employability skills through working on live commercial projects. Additionally we run an annual Employability Day for 2nd and 3rd year students, and 2 annual Computing Graduate Recruitment Fairs.
Good Practice Points and Recommendations

1. Departments value and use the Edge Hill University Employability Strategy. For example, “It is useful in designing curricula, external engagement and extra curricula activities. It should inform and shape the way approaches to employability work across the portfolio of programmes and feed into decisions about which stakeholders to engage with and why”. (DEL, Sport)

Recommendation – departments should use the Edge Hill University Employability Strategy when devising their departmental employability strategy.

2. External input e.g. employers and careers staff is crucial: “Bringing employers into modules has clear and direct employment benefits for students. Industry has much more credibility presenting these to students.” (DEL, Computing).

Recommendation - departmental Employability Strategies should incorporate the following features:

3. External input e.g. guest speakers from industry; industry run challenges and/or live industry briefs; employer led workshops and projects with employers. Current examples include speakers from the Hut Group and Barclays (Computing), a real life problem set by Natural England (Geosciences) and Everton in the Community’s Youth Mental Health Project (with Sport and Physical Activity).

4. Careers Centre led activities as part of the curriculum. Current examples include: workshops on LinkedIn, job search and CV/job applications; bespoke Careers Fairs for departments, and employability days/events.

5. Each department embeds employability skills in academic modules and also provides bespoke employability modules (e.g. the Geo-Careers and the Work Related Learning Module in Computing). “The key issue is ensuring that employability skills are embedded throughout all the Department’s degrees and ensuring students have a range of opportunities for delivering key graduate skills” (DEL, Geosciences).

Recommendation - employability skills should be embedded throughout the curriculum in academic modules, and additionally bespoke employability modules should be provided.

6. The departments ensure that employability skills are part of module design e.g. by using curriculum benchmark statements and looking at employer requirements. This allows the mapping of skills at each level of study. A good example of this is the Computing Department who use a matrix of skills which are mapped by module leaders and measured against module exercises as well as learning outcomes.

Recommendation - employability skills should be included in the design/revalidation of modules and programmes, allowing the delivery of employability skills to be mapped and measured.

7. Departments ensure professional accreditation is built in wherever possible e.g. via the British Computing Society; Geological Society or Sport National Governing Bodies. “What has worked particularly well is to ensure that students are clear on how the qualifications and the additional accreditation they get feed into module content and assessment.” (DEL, Sport).

Recommendation - professional accreditation should be provided where appropriate.

8. Departments collaborate with employers and professional bodies to establish employer requirements and inform curriculum design. This is facilitated in a range of ways including: Employer Advisory Panels; discussion and input from employers via lectures; networking at Careers Fairs both on campus and externally (e.g. the annual Geological Society Careers Fair) and via liaison with local and national employer contacts identified by the Careers Centre’s ‘Edge Hill Works’ team.
Recommendation – collaboration should take place with employers and professional bodies to establish employer requirements and inform curriculum design.

9. Each department provides and promotes opportunities for students to pursue placements and work experience e.g. via Computing’s WRL module and PE/School Sports’ assistance with placements in schools. However, student take up is low.

Recommendation – additional methods need to be found to increase student take up of work experience/placements.

10. Academics find that students’ attitudes vary: “once students arrive at university their priorities seem to change. They want to experience uni life and not experience work life too early.” (DEL, Computing). Getting students to engage, reflect and recognise their skill development can also be problematic.

Recommendation – different methods need to be used to increase student engagement in employability and encourage them to record and reflect on skill development.
SECTION 3. EVALUATING EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY’S EMPLOYABILITY PRACTICE USING THE HEA FRAMEWORK FOR EMPLOYABILITY

The evidence gained via the University Employability Strategy; students, departmental employability leads; and departmental employability strategies indicates comprehensive coverage of all points at Stage 1 of the Framework for Employability. This project therefore focussed on Stage 2 and 3.


1. Mapping/Review

It can be seen that the three departments embed employability within the curriculum, covering areas such as: subject specific skills and knowledge; generic skills; personal development; work experience and work-related learning (WRL). Currently employability provision runs from Level 4 – 6. Students have indicated that they would prefer delaying employability delivery until semester 2 of level 4, and that such activities should focus on helping them engage them in wider aspects of university study. Students feel employability delivery should be concentrated at level 5, whilst at level 6 practical job search/application/recruitment support should be offered.

Good practice is shared via Faculty’s annual Learning and Teaching Day and the Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT) annual professional development workshop series.


Departments map against: employer and industry standards; professional bodies; Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statements and organisations such as the Association of Graduate Recruiters. Students are required (e.g. via module handbooks) to reflect on feedback, record skills and plan action to develop their skills. Employability is included in module learning outcomes and is therefore evaluated via module evaluation. Departments audit their programmes to identify where employability skills are delivered.

3. Students’ Understanding of How Their Employability is Being Enhanced.

Students are very clear about how they learn and develop employability skills. In terms of skill development, the onus is placed almost entirely on university-provided activities. Students fully recognise and articulate the role of subject focussed modules, PDP and careers focussed modules/options (e.g. Work Related Learning and sandwich year placements) in developing their employability. There is a need for more work to be done on helping students to recognise the role of paid/voluntary work in developing employability skills. Via PDP, students are expected to reflect on and take ownership of their personal development throughout each level of study. The success of employability in general terms can be measured by the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey six months after graduation. Additionally, a more long-term view of success is illustrated by alumni case studies, however, it may be useful to build in other measures at each study level.

4. Identifying Gaps in Provision

Each department has a Departmental Employability Strategy which is written in collaboration with the Careers Centre and is mapped against the University Employability Strategy. This allows departments to check for and address any gaps in their provision. The University Employability Strategy can shape departmental employability provision and also ensures that all departments are engaged with employability. Departments work in collaboration with Careers Advisers to: develop and deliver activities within (and outside) the curriculum from level 4 onwards; broker relationships with employers and the voluntary sector, and to organise bespoke events such as departmental careers fairs.
Stage 2. Mapping Against Key Issues to Consider

1. Language.
There is a shared understanding of the terminology of employability by staff and students, however, there is scope for greater clarity on the difference between skills, abilities and attitudes.

2. Ownership
Each department has strong staff engagement and recognition that employability is a university-wide responsibility. There are however, two or three staff who feel that employability is not necessarily their ‘core businesses’.

3. Sharing Good Practice and Collaboration
The Faculty’s annual Learning and Teaching Day, and the CLT’s professional development workshop series provide vehicles for the sharing of good practice. For example, at the 2014 Learning and Teaching Day, four out of ten workshops focussed on employability and included topics such as ‘Engaging Employers in Undergraduate Employability’ and ‘The Applied Health and Social Care Professional Career Development Module’.

To facilitate collaboration with external bodies, the Faculty employs a Commercial Development Co-ordinator (Industrial Placements & Employability). Departmental staff maintain contacts with professional bodies e.g. British Computing Society, and the Geological Society and the Computing Department employs a Knowledge Exchange & Enterprise Manager. The Careers Centre’s ‘Edge Hill Works’ team liaises with employers, professional organisations, third sector employers and voluntary organisations. Their activities include: sourcing and filling part-time, voluntary and graduate jobs; organising general and departmental graduate recruitment fairs; providing contacts for guest speakers and Employer Advisory Panels; and providing information and guidance on job choice, job search, recruitment and selection for students.

Framework for Employability, Stage 3.

Stage 3: Action - Translating Stage 2 into Activities, Actions and Outputs

1. Identifying Gaps in Provision
This stage requires that any gaps identified at stage 2 be addressed.

a. It may be useful to build in measures to assess the impact of employability activity at each study level in addition to existing ones. There are a number of ways in which this could be achieved and departments are likely to vary in their choice of method. Methods could include: skills audits; questionnaires/surveys e.g. those using the CareerEDGE model (Dacre-Pool and Sewell 2007); focus groups; written reflections; and longitudinal measures of ‘distance travelled’ throughout the undergraduate journey.

   Decisions about which methods to use and the timing of measurement, would need to be made by Heads of Department in collaboration with Employability Leads.

b. There is a need to engage the small number of staff who do not yet consider employability as part of their core business. In the long term this could be addressed at strategic level by writing employability responsibilities into job descriptions. Short-term measures could include collaboration between the departmental Employability Lead and Careers Centre staff to support these staff. The HOD could also devise a matrix (along the lines of that used by Computing) and work with staff to pinpoint where employability skills are/could be taught in each staff member’s modules.
2. **Sharing and Accessing Best Practice**

The findings of this project will happen internally via the Faculty Learning and Teaching Day in July 2015. Following this, the report will be taken forward at University level by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) who has institutional responsibility for employability and by the Dean of Faculty. The Centre for Learning & Teaching’s professional development workshop series provides another method of dissemination for staff. The Careers Centre will next year (2015-16) collaborate with the Students Union to disseminate good practice to students. Careers Centre staff, departmental staff and staff from CLT will continue to attend and contribute to regional and national employability conferences e.g. HEA events, and (where appropriate) publications. Students already act as peer mentors in Computing and Sports and this can be promoted more widely.

3. **Support for Employability**

Effective working relationships exist with internal departments such as the Careers Centre and CLT, and of staff such as the Faculty Commercial Development Co-ordinator (Industrial Placements & Employability). Departments also make effective use of external providers e.g. Barclays, Natural England and Sport England, and of voluntary, charity and third sector organisations e.g. Everton in the Community. The Computing Department’s Web Factory delivers web based, technology and digital media projects for the local business community, allowing students to develop technical and employability skills. All departments make use of live industry briefs, case studies and real world problems for student projects and benchmark against industry/professional body standards.

**Stage 3: Mapping Against Key Issues to Consider**

1. **Research and Scholarship**

As a consequence of undertaking the HEA SEP – Embedding Employability into the Curriculum project, a bid was successfully submitted for the HEA’s funded Strategic Enhancement Programme (SEP 2). Beginning in February 2015, the SEP 2 research is concurrent, complementing and extending the original project by researching into staff attitudes and the extent of alignment between modules/courses and employability outcomes. It therefore closes the loop between espoused strategy, staff beliefs and impact on students. Whilst the original SEP project evaluates the impact of the institutional and departmental-wide employability strategies on students, the SEP 2 project is focussing on generating evaluative research and evidence of the outcomes and impact of embedding employability into the curriculum for staff. It is expected that initial indications of SEP 2 will be given at the 2015 Faculty Learning and Teaching Day. The full report and findings will be shared during the academic year 2015-16 within the Faculty, departments & Careers Centre to gain commitment to any strategy revisions, collaboration/support required. Nationally, the research findings will be disseminated via CLT through the Centre for Learning & Teaching Conference and HEA event(s).

2. **Engaging With and Involving Employers to Support Employability**

Employers, professional bodies and charity/third sector/voluntary organisations are embedded in the curriculum at each level. The importance of this is evidenced by a departmental Employability Lead:

“*Bringing employers into modules has clear and direct employment benefits for students. When employers engage with students they are able to articulate knowledge, experiences, skills, attitudes etc. to students and it is more relevant. It makes more impact when they hear this from someone in industry.*”

The widespread use of live industry briefs, case studies and real world problems in addition to work experience placements and WRL, strengthens employability provision and enhances skill development.
HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability

An area that can be further developed is the use of alumni. Departments and the Careers Centre often have links with recent graduates and these are increasingly easy to maintain using social media such as LinkedIn. Alumni have a very powerful role to play in engaging students and can be well placed to give advice and set real world projects/problems for students. Similarly, there is an institutional objective to increase the use of students returning from sandwich years in boosting future take up of this option. Case studies of alumni and successful sandwich year students are already used by departments and the Careers Centre. Employability Leads could work with the Careers Centre and University alumni staff to identify appropriate activities and contacts.
OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Using student-led focus groups was an effective way of gaining student-to-student detail rich data. Obtaining a mix quantitative data and un-prompted qualitative data via student questionnaires added reliability to the research. The project found that according to students, alumni, departments and the audit of employability provision within the three departments using the HEA Framework, there is a great deal of good practice. Perhaps, the most significant finding is that whilst careers practitioners and academics may feel that students need to engage fully with employability activities throughout level 4 - 6, students clearly do not share this view. This may go some way towards explaining why staff feel that students are reluctant to engage in employability, and is a subject that would undoubtedly be worthy of more detailed research. Moreover, as employers move increasingly towards requiring students to gain strategic work experience (Redmond 2015), offering work experience placements specifically for first-year students, perhaps it is imperative that student-led research should focus on this area.
References


The University will provide a focussed approach to student employability and entrepreneurship aiming to secure student employment rates in the top quartile within the sector. We will enhance the employability of our students by enabling them to develop transferable skills and designing programmes which directly address employer’s needs.

The graduate workforce has a powerful potential to act as a positive transformative change agent for the economy, for communities and for society as a whole. The University recognises employability as an essential component of the student experience and our goal is to ensure that all our graduates are well prepared for and supported to succeed in a competitive global labour market.

The Employability Strategy encompasses a number of different strands which work together to provide the best opportunities for students to be involved in and understand the world of work so that they can achieve their potential in their chosen career. This incorporates the four main areas of curriculum design, employer engagement, extra-curricular activity, and the provision of dedicated, high quality, careers advice and guidance.

**Curriculum Design**

The University is committed to working with employers to ensure that programme design is geared to enhancing employment prospects. This is examined at course validation and monitored through in-year departmental meetings as part of the planning process. There are a variety of ways in which this will be addressed such as:

- the involvement of employers in the design, delivery validation and review of programmes;
- the opportunity to access and accredit key transferable skills within programmes;
- embedded work/sandwich placement opportunities.
- the emphasis on Personal Development Planning (PDP) which is incorporated into all programmes.

**Employer Engagement**

Direct engagement with employers underpins many aspects of University business and is characterised by the development of mutually beneficial relationships which encompass Research and Enterprise, as exemplified through the Co-funded Employer Engagement project, and the provision of student learning opportunities through work placements, part-time jobs and volunteering.

Developing new links and co-ordinating all aspects of our employer engagement work is central to the effective delivery of the Employability Strategy.

**Extra-Curricular Activity**

Many students seek part-time employment to supplement their income whilst studying and an increasing number are involved in volunteering activity within their community. Both offer significant opportunities for skills acquisition to enhance employability. The University is committed to growing

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1 University Strategic Plan 2013 -2020
these opportunities for students and to working with organisations to maximise the potential for training and accreditation.

**Careers Centre**

A dedicated, pro-active careers service is fundamental to improving student employment prospects through the provision of one-to-one advice and guidance and employer introductions. The Centre is also instrumental in working with Faculties and Departments to embed employability skills in the curriculum and establish active and useful Employment Plans for areas of cognate provision.

**Vision**

Our vision is that all our students will have access to a wide range of work-related opportunities and the highest quality support to enable them to compete successfully in the global graduate employment market.

**Aims and Objectives**

Our aim over the next five years is to significantly enhance employment opportunities for our undergraduate and postgraduate students so that we can maintain and improve our position in the top quartile for employment rates in the sector with specific objectives to:

- provide a co-ordinated approach to graduate employability across the range of our activities;
- ensure Edge Hill’s programmes are shaped to promote graduate employability and are recognised by employers as reflecting their needs;
- provide students with an increased range of industry relevant opportunities for work experience placements which enhance their employability;
- provide the highest standard of professional support through an effective employability advisory service;
- provide students with access to a range of experiences that encourage personal growth in a broader context than academic study.
- ensure that students understand their own responsibilities in developing personal career plans and engaging with opportunities provided.

**Commitments**

In order to achieve these objectives, the University will:

- Clearly articulate the specific and interrelated roles of Faculties, Academic Departments, the Careers Centre and other central services in delivering the Employability Strategy;
- Increase the capacity for the University to develop and maintain new employer relationships and develop a University-wide database of employer contacts to ensure we maximise the benefits for both parties;
- Establish a University-wide group, chaired by a member of the Senior Management Team, with responsibility for the development, monitoring and oversight of the Employability Strategy reporting to the Learning and Teaching Committee;
- Maximise links with employers from local, regional and national businesses, the public and third sector building strong relationships with the Chambers of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnerships to enhance opportunities for students;
- Encourage collaborations between academic areas to identify increased opportunities for students to access placements through existing business partnerships;
HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability

- Work with the Students’ Union to promote volunteering and active citizenship as a valuable and integral part of the student experience which can be accredited;
- Support the HEAR development as a means of recognising extra-curricular activity and accredited qualifications gained alongside University programmes;
- Maintain an effective Alumni network that supports the development of links that can benefit the employability of current students;
- Highlight graduate employability through the incorporation of graduate success stories within the University’s Marketing Strategy;
- Recognise the role of the University in supplying part-time job and placement opportunities for students.

Faculties will:

- Proactively engage with employers in the continued development of dynamic and relevant curricula relevant to their needs and evolving trends in professional practice;
- Ensure key employability skills/attributes are embedded within the curriculum and that these are tested during programme approval;
- Incorporate opportunities for students to obtain relevant professional certification/accreditation alongside their degree wherever possible;
- Expand the opportunities for students to undertake high quality sandwich and short term work placements within their programmes;
- Identify an employability lead within each academic department/subject area to develop an employability plan working with a designated employability consultant (Careers Adviser);
- Ensure students are exposed to specific career development sessions within each year of their programme and are encouraged to develop personal career plans;
- Utilise PDP to support students in identifying the employment skills gained from their part-time work/volunteering experience;
- Assist all students in developing entrepreneurial skills and self-selecting graduates in planning and operationalising sustainable business ventures;
- Consider data from the first destination survey to identify areas for discussion and action-planning at Autumn Monitoring meetings;
- Work with the Alumni office to maintain, and benefit from, contact with graduates.

The Careers Centre will:

- Provide an accessible high quality one-to-one employment advisory service for students including support with CVs and job applications, assessment centres and interviews;
- Develop capacity to promote the EHU graduate externally and identify and maintain new graduate employer links;
- Organise Graduate Careers Fairs, specialist employer-led seminars and deliver career development sessions within Faculties and Departments;
- Identify a designated consultant to work with each academic department/area in developing departmental employability plans;
- Review, re-brand and professionalise the job-shop and volunteering functions maximising the opportunities for students to use these experiences to enhance their employability through appropriate advice and guidance;
- Develop a University award scheme to recognise volunteering activity;
- Develop high quality on-line and mobile services to provide 24/7 student and staff support;
HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability

- Maintain and promote an effective resource library on employment related opportunities and occupations that reflect student aspirations and needs along with a range of tailored guides and relevant case studies;
- Utilise the data from the first destination survey to draw up priority action plans.

Learning Services will:

- Liaise with academic departments on the integration of information and digital literacies in the curriculum;
- Provide additional support for students seeking to enhance their transferable skills;
- Deliver development activities on the use of technologies to enhance employment prospects;
- Deliver specialist support to enhance IT skills.

Performance Measures

The Employability Strategy Group will prepare an annual report for the Learning and Teaching Committee identifying progress in the delivery of the Strategy. In addition to the outcomes from the DLHE survey, the report will use data from Validation and Review processes, external examiner/consultant reports, student surveys and the Autumn Monitoring and Spring Planning processes.

The following KPIs will further inform the report, benchmarked where possible:

- Number of students undertaking volunteering opportunities;
- Number of students obtaining part-time jobs through the job-shop;
- Number of students undertaking integrated short work placements;
- Number of students undertaking sandwich placement/study abroad opportunities;
- Percentage of students in employment/undertaking higher study within six months of graduation;
- Percentage of students obtaining graduate level jobs within six months of graduation;
- Number of active employer links.

Faculties and Departments are responsible for monitoring performance through the Autumn Monitoring process.

Related Strategies

- Learning and Teaching Strategy
- Enterprise Strategy

This strategy has an associated Action Plan which is reviewed annually through the Learning and Teaching Committee.

Seth Crofts

Employability Working Group

October 2013
### Appendix 2 Membership of Working Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations)</td>
<td>Mark Allanson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mark.allanson@edgehill.ac.uk">mark.allanson@edgehill.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader in Educational Development at Centre for Learning &amp; Teaching</td>
<td>Dr Paul Greenbank</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Paul.Greenbank@edgehill.ac.uk">Paul.Greenbank@edgehill.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Careers Adviser</td>
<td>Sue Hepworth</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Sue.C.Taylor@edgehill.ac.uk">Sue.C.Taylor@edgehill.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Development Coordinator – (Industrial Placements and Employability)</td>
<td>Damien Halligan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Damien.Halligan@edgehill.ac.uk">Damien.Halligan@edgehill.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior L&amp;T Fellow, HoD Computing</td>
<td>Dr Chris Beaumont</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Chris.Beaumont@edgehill.ac.uk">Chris.Beaumont@edgehill.ac.uk</a></td>
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Appendix 3. Student Questionnaire

This questionnaire is the first stage of a study which aims to evaluate the extent to which you feel your time at Edge Hill will help your employability. By employability we mean your ability to: (a) obtain a ‘good’ job when you graduate; and (b) develop the type of skills and qualities employers are looking for in employees.

The answers you provide will be confidential and in the work that results from this research nobody will be able to identify you. At the end of this questionnaire you will be asked whether you want to participate in the next stage of this study which involves participating in a focus group.

Please answer the questions as accurately as you can. You are under no obligation to complete this questionnaire and if there are any questions you do not want to answer just leave them blank.

The information from this questionnaire will be used solely for the purpose of this research.

Name ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Gender (Please ring). Male Female

Date of birth ………………………………..

Degree programme ………………………………………………………………………

Do you currently live at home with your parents/guardians during term-time? (Please tick).

Yes □ No □

How knowledgeable do you feel about writing a graduate CV? Please ring.

| Not at all | slightly | reasonably | very |

How knowledgeable do you feel about completing application forms effectively? Please ring.

| Not at all | slightly | reasonably | very |

How knowledgeable do you feel about how to do well at graduate interviews? Please ring.

| Not at all | slightly | reasonably | very |

How confident are you that you can provide evidence of the following skills:

Team work (please ring)

| Not at all | Not particularly | Reasonably | Very |
**HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability**

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<th>Problem solving (please ring)</th>
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**What is your biggest area of concern regarding getting a graduate job?**

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**In what ways (if any) have you been given an opportunity by your degree and department to develop the skills and qualities employers are looking for in graduates? Please list as many as you can:**

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Please continue on the back of the page if necessary
HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability

In what ways (if any) do you feel your department/degree is helping you to develop the skills necessary to be successful in the recruitment and selection process (i.e. applications, interviews, tests, assessment centres, etc.)?

Please list as many ways as you can:

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Please tell us about anything your department or degree is doing that you feel is particularly helpful to your employability.

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Is there anything your department/degree currently does NOT do that you would like them to do in order to help your employability?

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Invitation to participate in a focus group

A focus group involves participating in a discussion about the type of issues raised in this questionnaire. The focus group will last no more than one hour and will be audio-recorded. It will be led by a student rather than a member of staff and will involve groups of 6-8 students from your own department and year of study. Please note individuals will not be identified when the results of the focus groups are written up.

Would you be willing to participate in a focus group?

(Please tick)

Yes □

No □

Thank-you for completing this questionnaire, your help is much appreciated.
Appendix 4 Student Focus Groups Discussion Topics

1. The extent of students’ knowledge of employability skills, abilities and attitudes.

2. How students gain knowledge of employability.

3. How students develop employability knowledge and skills.

4. Which activities students find particularly useful.

5. Students’ views on placements.

6. Students’ views on the timing and content of employability delivery.

7. What (if any) changes students would make to employability delivery.

8. Students’ level of career readiness.

Table 13: Numbers of Participants per Focus Group

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<tr>
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<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports/PE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total per year group</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
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</table>
Appendix 5 Departmental Employability Lead Meetings - Discussion Topics

1. How useful is the Edge Hill University Employability Strategy?
2. What further Faculty or institutional support is needed?
3. In relation to employability at course and Department level there has been much talk about ‘embedding ‘Employability’ in the curriculum – what does that mean in the context of your Department and how do you see it progressing?
4. What has worked and what hasn’t? Have you been able to measure or evaluate how effectively your Department has addressed employability?
5. How have staff responded to addressing employability?
6. Are there any obstacles to successfully addressing employability in the curriculum? If so how has your Department addressed them?
7. How has your Department gone about identifying the knowledge, experiences, skills, competencies, attitudes, attributes and behaviours that you want your graduates to be able to demonstrate? How do you demonstrate or evaluate that students are able to meet these?
8. What expectations do students have in respect of employability and have you undertaken any work to identify their expectations / how has your Department responded to these expectations?
9. Do students respond to activities and initiatives you put in place to support employability?
10. What extra activities do you offer?
Appendix 6 Alumni Questionnaire

Alumni Questionnaire: Employability

This survey part of a study which aims to evaluate the extent to which you feel your time at Edge Hill helped your employability. By employability we mean your ability to: (a) obtain a ‘good’ job after graduation; and (b) develop the type of skills and qualities employers are looking for in employees.

The answers you provide are confidential and in the work that results from this research nobody will be able to identify you.

Please answer the questions as fully as possible and I will record your answers as accurately as possible. If there are any questions you do not want to answer just let me know and I will move onto the next area.

The information from this survey will be used solely for the purpose of this research.

Name .................................................................................................................................

Gender Male       Female

Date of birth ............................................................................................

Degree programme and classification .................................................................

Date graduated ........................................................................................................

Did you live at home with your parents/guardians during term-time whilst studying? (Please tick).

Yes □  No □
When you graduated, how knowledgeable did you feel about writing a graduate CV?

Not at all  Slightly  Reasonably  Very

How knowledgeable did you feel about completing application forms effectively?

Not at all  Slightly  Reasonably  Very

How knowledgeable did you feel about how to do well at graduate interviews?

Not at all  Slightly  Reasonably  Very

How confident were you that you could provide evidence of the following skills:

Team work

Not at all  Not particularly  Reasonably  Very

Communication |
Leadership

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<th>Not particularly</th>
<th>Reasonably</th>
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Problem solving

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<th>Not particularly</th>
<th>Reasonably</th>
<th>Very</th>
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What was/is your biggest area of concern regarding getting a graduate job?

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Please tell me about anything your department or degree did that you feel was particularly helpful to your employability.

Is there anything your department/degree did NOT do that you would have liked them to do in order to help your employability?

Thank participant for their time and explain again that all of their answers are confidential and that in the work that results from this research nobody will be able to identify them.
### AIMS
Proactively engage with employers in the continued development of dynamic and relevant curricula relevant to their needs and evolving trends in professional practice;

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
1. Establish EAP
2. Continue to consult with local SME’s with regards to skills and knowledge for courses/modules via the Employer Advisory Panel and other Employer contacts.
3. Continue to map course content against current job specifications and industry standards (e.g. BCS CITP, GCHQ security/ e-skills ITMB, PRINCE2, SFIA+).
4. Continue to use live employer projects within modules (where appropriate) as assessment pieces.

### STAFF RESPONSIBLE
1. HOD
2. Programme Leaders, Knowledge Exchange & Enterprise Manager
3. Programme Leaders, Module Leaders
4. Module Leaders

### TIMESCALE
1. Complete
2. Established and Ongoing (EAP meet twice a year)
3. Ongoing
4. Established and Ongoing

Ensure key employability skills/attributes are embedded within the curriculum and that these are tested during programme approval;

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
1. Identify where employability skills/attributes exist in modules
2. Embed new/missing employability skills in relevant modules
3. Continue to use live employer projects within modules (where appropriate) as assessment pieces.
4. Provide student checklist (Blackboard) showing where/how attributes are developed in each module

### STAFF RESPONSIBLE
Module leaders

### TIMESCALE
1. Ongoing
2. Ongoing
3. Established and Ongoing
4. Oct 2014

Incorporate opportunities for students to obtain relevant professional certification/accreditation alongside their degree wherever possible;

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
1. Gain BCS accreditation
2. Promote BCS student membership, & ISACA (for Postgrad)
3. CISCO CCNA
4. GCHQ
5. E-skills ITMB & Sw devt for Business
6. PRINCE2

### STAFF RESPONSIBLE
1. All Staff
2. All Staff
3. HoD/ PL
4. HoD/ PL
5. HoD/ PL
6. HoD/ PL

### TIMESCALE
1. Nov 2014
2. Planned CISCO course for Level 5 Jan 2015
3. Ongoing – 2015
4. 2015
5. 2015

Expand the opportunities for students to undertake high quality sandwich and short term work placements within their programmes;

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
1. Identify placements and publish to students.
2. Continue to employ and train students in the enterprise projects team (web factory)

### STAFF RESPONSIBLE
1. Commercial Development Coordinator
2. PLs

### TIMESCALE
1. Established
2. Ongoing (just run another recruitment phase)

Identify an employability lead within each academic department/subject area to develop an employability plan working with a designated employability consultant (Careers Adviser);

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
1. Director of Enterprise and employability role created
2. Devise departmental employability strategy and action plan
3. Continue regular liaison with departments careers advisor

### STAFF RESPONSIBLE
1. HoDs
2. Employability Lead/HoD
3. Employability Lead/HoD

### TIMESCALE
1. Completed
2. Employability strategy and plan in place and aligned tightly with university strategy.
## HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability

| Ensure students are exposed to specific career development sessions within each year of their programme and are encouraged to develop personal career plans; | 1. Identify relevant sessions  
2. Organise industry guest speakers  
3. Organise with Careers Dept a computing specific careers fair & Employability conference | 1. Programme leaders  
2. All staff  
3. Knowledge Exchange & Enterprise Manager | 1. Ongoing  
2. Held a number of guest lectures this last year (Hut group (3 talks), and Barclays (10 talks))  
3. Completed |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Utilise PDP to support students in identifying the employment skills gained from their part-time work/volunteering experience; | Align Personal Tutoring and PDP Systems:  
1. 1st year PDP sessions to id professional body  
2. 2nd year : CV development, team skills, communication, interview skills,  
3. 3rd year Professional issues module / CV. | Year Leaders/PL/Personal Tutors | Partially achieved, 2013  
Some further modification needed 2014-15 |
| Assist all students in developing entrepreneurial skills and self-selecting graduates in planning and operationalising sustainable business ventures; | 1. Provide taught input to prepare students:  
   a. Graduate Enterprise module Level 5 ,  
   b. Portfolio modules 1 & 2 (BSc WSD)  
2. Provide advice on individual basis | 1. PLs  
2. Enterprise co-ordinator | 1. Embedded  
| Explore the employer destination data available and identify the deterministic factors that affect first destination employment for discussion and action-planning at Autumn Monitoring meetings; | 1. Identify objectives of aim.  
2. Work with careers on project to contact graduates over summer to identify those without jobs and refer to careers. | 1. Mgt team with guidance from Faculty  
2. Dept administrator | Summer 2015 |
| Work with the Alumni office to maintain, and benefit from, contact with graduates. | 1. Clarify role of Alumni office and institutional database. | TBA | TBA |
## Appendix 8 Employment Strategy: Department of Geography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIMS</th>
<th>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>STAFF RESPONSIBLE</th>
<th>TIMESCALE</th>
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</table>
| Proactively engage with employers in the continued development of dynamic and relevant curricula relevant to their needs and evolving trends in professional practice; | • Hold at least two meetings annually of the Department’s Employer Advisory Panel  
• Review the skills content of the curricula annually with the Employer Advisory Panel to ensure that it is meeting the current and changing skills requirements of graduate employers  
• Active involvement of the Employer Advisory panel in preparation for Periodic Review and Validation | Members of the Employer Advisory Panel        | November and June each year  
June each year                                  |
| Ensure key employability skills/attributes are embedded within the curriculum and that these are tested during programme approval; | • Complete a skills audit of all programmes in preparation for programme validation and include in documentation  
• Update skills audit checklist in response to changing graduate employer skills requirements  
• Undertake periodic skills audits and make programme changes, where required, in response to the revised skills audit | All Department staff                                      | During preparation for validation of programmes  
June/July each year following EAP meeting          |
| Incorporate opportunities for students to obtain relevant professional certification/accreditation alongside their degree wherever possible; | • Seek professional accreditation of programmes wherever available e.g. Geological Society Accreditation of BSc (Hons) Geology with Physical Geography | HoD; Programme teams                                  | May 2017 (earliest opportunity)            |
| Expand the opportunities for students to undertake high quality sandwich and short term work placements within their programmes; | • Ensure the Industrial Placement sandwich year is available in all programmes and promoted to students  
• Continue to promote the optional Work-based Learning module to Level 5 students | HoD                                               | September                              |
| Identify an employability lead within each academic department/subject area to develop an employability plan working with a designated employability consultant (Careers Adviser); | • Identify a Department employability champion  
• Develop a Department Employability Plan in consultation with designated employability consultant | HoD                                               | Both completed                       |
**HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ensure students are exposed to specific career development sessions within each year of their programme and are encouraged to develop personal career plans;</th>
<th>Maintain/Enhance current activities:</th>
<th>HoD; Careers Centre Staff; Department Staff</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Session in early Semester 1 focusing on career management and planning; skills and PDP; Volunteering etc. jointly delivered with Careers Centre staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Individual career planning and management interviews for all students with Careers Centre Staff focusing on developing a personal career plan (March; New initiative in 2013/14)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Session in early Semester 1 with developing focus on career planning and management, and PDP delivered by Careers Centre staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Series of career planning and management workshop sessions for all students in the week following the Semester 2 assessment period, delivered by graduate recruiters, Careers Centre staff, Department staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Compulsory Geo-careers module co-delivered with employability consultant from the Careers Centre and involving significant input from graduate recruiters. Assessment involves mock job applications and interviews with panels comprising Department staff; Careers Centre staff, graduate recruiters, and HR staff (EHU) - November</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Specific feedback sessions from Careers Centre and Department staff - January</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Enhanced Career Support Service post- May (New pilot initiative)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Utilise PDP to support students in identifying the employment skills gained from their part-time work/volunteering experience;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• PDP introduced at the beginning of Level 4 and monitored through the Personal Tutor meetings</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| HoD; Employability Consultant (Careers Centre) | Department Administrator; HoD; Head of Careers Centre; Employability Consultant | June 2014 | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utilise PDP to support students in identifying the employment skills gained from their part-time work/volunteering experience;</th>
<th></th>
<th>All personal tutors</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme: Employability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• PDP proforma include reflection and recoding of skills developed and enhanced in modules; part-time work, volunteering etc.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• PDP indirectly assessed at Level 6 in Geo-careers module</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist all students in developing entrepreneurial skills and self-selecting graduates in planning and operationalising sustainable business ventures;</td>
<td>• Session on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills delivered in Geo-careers module</td>
<td>All Department staff</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Investigate further opportunities for entrepreneurship to be integrated into the curriculum including active use of GEES Enterprise, Skills and Entrepreneurship resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>August 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider data from the first destination survey to identify areas for discussion and action-planning at Autumn Monitoring meetings;</td>
<td>• Review ‘first destinations’/GEMS data in first Programme Board of the academic year and review/reflect on data in Autumn Monitoring Document</td>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with the Alumni office to maintain, and benefit from, contact with graduates.</td>
<td>• Work with Alumni Office to gain informal evidence of graduate destinations and career path of graduates</td>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Host a further Alumni Networking event in association with the Alumni Office</td>
<td></td>
<td>May 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 9 Employability Strategy: Department of Sport and Physical Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIMS</th>
<th>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>STAFF RESPONSIBLE</th>
<th>TIMESCALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactively engage with employers in the continued development of</td>
<td>Department Student Recruitment, Employability and Enterprise Group to invite industry representative to join committee</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Summer 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dynamic and relevant curricula relevant to their needs and evolving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>trends in professional practice;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure key employability skills/attributes are embedded within the</td>
<td>Programme documents to clearly map employability skills across modules and programme levels</td>
<td>HoD and Programme leaders</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curriculum and that these are tested during programme approval;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate opportunities for students to obtain relevant professional</td>
<td>Continue to provide NGB and professionally accredited/endorsed award courses across the SPA portfolio</td>
<td>HoD and Programme leaders</td>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>certification/accreditation alongside their degree wherever possible;</td>
<td>Seek professional accreditation for named degrees where applicable</td>
<td>HoD and Programme leaders</td>
<td>At point of programme validation/re-validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand the opportunities for students to undertake high quality</td>
<td>Validate programmes to incorporate sandwich year and work placement options</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sandwich and short term work placements within their programmes;</td>
<td>Establish formal partnership arrangements (MoU) with key groups which include student placement and sandwich year exchanges.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify an employability lead within each academic department/subject</td>
<td>Form Department Student Recruitment, Employability and Enterprise Group</td>
<td>Chair Professor Andy Smith</td>
<td>Autumn 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>area to develop an employability plan working with a designated</td>
<td></td>
<td>Programme Leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employability consultant (Careers Adviser);</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure students are exposed to specific career development sessions</td>
<td>Curriculum at all levels to evidence development of employability skills and provision of career development sessions</td>
<td>Programme Leader</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within each year of their programme</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Tutors</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and are encouraged to develop personal career plans;</td>
<td>Personal tutor to discuss career plans with tutees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilise PDP to support students in identifying the employment skills gained from their part-time work/volunteering experience;</td>
<td>PDP tasks to provide opportunities for students to reflect on current work/volunteering experiences</td>
<td>PDP module leaders/Programme leaders</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist all students in developing entrepreneurial skills and self-selecting graduates in planning and operationalising sustainable business ventures;</td>
<td>Programme documents to highlight where opportunities for developing commercial/innovative ideas are embedded in the curriculum (as appropriate). Department Student Recruitment, Employability and Enterprise Group to highlight opportunities to graduates though Department News Letter</td>
<td>HoD and Programme leaders Committee members</td>
<td>At point of programme validation/re-validation Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider data from the first destination survey to identify areas for discussion and action-planning at Autumn Monitoring meetings;</td>
<td>Programme teams to discuss data from the first destination survey at team meetings and identify specific programme related actions for inclusion in Autumn Planning document</td>
<td>Programme teams co-ordinated by Programme leader</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with the Alumni office to maintain, and benefit from, contact with graduates.</td>
<td>Department Student Recruitment, Employability and Enterprise Group to liaise with Alumni office</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Summer 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>