

# Student Employability Strategy

2019-2024



Edge Hill  
University

---

# STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY 2019 -2024

## Vision

We believe that going to university should be personally transformative and that developing students' employability is an essential part of learning, should be accessible to all, help address social inequality, develop aspiration, self-esteem and skills for life.

## FOUR FOUNDATIONS:

Knowing  
employability  
skills

Knowing  
employers

Knowing your  
employability  
strengths and  
being able to  
practise

Knowing how  
to present as  
a compelling  
candidate

# STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY 2019 -2024

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES ↓	SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES ↓	CROSS CUTTING ↓	KPIs ↓
<b>PO 1</b> To engage all students in developing employability skills and professional attributes in each year of their student journey	<b>SO 1</b> Each subject area to develop a map of in-curricular employability activities for each year of study to meet students developing employability needs. Develop students' engagement in a broadening and innovative range of extracurricular employability opportunities. Develop students' engagement with online employability tools and effectively manage and support their use.	Develop academic colleagues' knowledge, skills and understanding of employability to engage and inspire students' development Ensure all students from all backgrounds have equality of opportunity in developing resilience, well-being and employability skills	All departments to achieve a minimum threshold of 60% of graduates progressing into graduate level employment or further study as per OfS expectations
<b>PO 2</b> Engage all students in identifying and exploring their personal employability characteristics and plan their development	<b>SO 2</b> Provide students with a supported, systematic, integrated approach to identifying their employability strengths and own development plans. Develop our approach to employers to ensure subjects are informed of their employability skills and standards needs Develop a new employability offer to our alumni focussed on recruitment and selection skills.		To achieve above the national average for graduate level employment through the Graduate Outcomes survey
<b>PO 3</b> Ensure all students have the opportunity to gain work related experiences to practice and develop a personal and professional skill set.	<b>SO 3</b> Increase the number of students pursuing an accredited placement period e.g. Sandwich; Study Abroad Provide work related learning opportunities in all subject areas for students to practise their skills and reflect on their development in-curriculum. Provide students with opportunities to develop business acumen enterprise and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.		To be in the top 20% of the sector in the Graduate Outcomes Survey for students in employment or further study 15 months after graduation

## Introduction

In 2013 Edge Hill was one of the first universities to establish a whole university approach to embedding employability and produce an institutional university employability strategy. It was described by the Office for Fair Access as 'best practice in the sector'.

Since its implementation our DLHE rates have consistently been in the top 25% of the sector and our graduate level employment rate has improved. We start from a position of strength, but rates are uneven across and within the Faculties and graduate level employment has assumed greater importance following the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

In 2017 the University attained TEF Gold. Employability outcomes are a critical metric in the framework and will assume greater importance in its next iteration. We are due to resubmit in Spring 2020 at subject as well as institutional level which will bring a new and challenging dimension. However, our statements and evidence in our TEF submission remain valid;

- *A strategic focus on the employability of students from all backgrounds, ensuring that students acquire knowledge, skills and understanding that are most highly valued by employers*
- *A partnership approach to curriculum design that includes academics, employers, practitioners and students*

DLHE as a metric is also ending to become the Graduate Outcomes Survey. This will survey graduates 15 months after graduation rather than the DLHE 6-month mark. There is more interest and focus on salary levels and we will need to extend recruitment and selection skills support to our alumni.

However, what matters most is that we help students prepare for the world they enter when they graduate. Workforce demand for graduates remains high and is likely to increase. A relatively unique feature of the UK labour market is that most graduate jobs are open to those from any degree discipline. In 2016 82% of graduate schemes advertised by members of the Institute of Student Employers were open to graduates from any discipline.

The skills and attributes that employers seek remain constant but there is greater expectation that graduates are ever more 'work ready' with the transferrable skills and attributes employers seek. Recruitment and selection processes have got tougher and more stringent with the introduction of on-line screening, psychometric testing, video interviewing and assessment centres being more commonly used. We have started to invest in systems and typically used industry software to help; more will be needed. It will be more important to engage students earlier in their studies as well as throughout to ensure they can compete effectively for graduate level jobs.

# STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY 2019 -2024

Students expect their university education and experiences to provide them with more than just the foundations for immediate employment or further study and research. We have a good track record and reputation for doing that, but student expectations have risen. Lifelong graduate employability today depends on mastering several inter-related skills and attributes in addition to academic skills and knowledge acquisition.

There is a need for us to embed employability further so that it becomes a key component of a student's Edge Hill university life. An academic degree alone is not enough.

## **Vision**

Our vision is that developing students' employability is an essential part of learning at university, should be accessible to all and address social inequality, develop aspiration, self-esteem and essential skills for life

## **Principles and Foundations**

There are four principles or 'pillars' to the employability strategy, ensuring students and graduates:

- 'Know' what employability skills and attributes are
- 'Know' employers and develop skills through work related learning
- 'Know' their personal strengths and potential against these skills and attributes
- 'Know' how to present as the most compelling candidate and perform in their chosen role.

## **Aim**

Our aim over the next five years is to provide an expanding portfolio of employability opportunities, develop students professional and social skills to enable them to compete successfully for fulfilling graduate employment or further study.

## **Strategy**

We believe that students' employability development is best achieved through the ethos of our whole university approach where academic, professional services, the Students Union and students themselves are engaged and work together.

The strategy will be driven and overseen by a cross university Employability Sub-Committee chaired by a Pro Vice-Chancellor with strategic overview of employability and careers. The impact of employability activities will be monitored and evaluated via the committee.

## Key Performance Indicators

We will seek to progress against three indicators and aim to;

- All departments to achieve a minimum threshold of 60% of graduates progressing into graduate level employment or further study as per OfS expectations
- Achieve above the national average for graduate level employment through the Graduate Outcomes survey
- Be in the top 20% of the sector in the Graduate Outcomes Survey for students in employment or further study 15 months after graduation

## Objectives

There are three strategic, primary objectives to focus on, each one underpinned by three supporting objectives.

Achieving the objectives will require activities to be delivered. These will be detailed in annual faculty and careers service employability implementation plans. Implementation will take place via cross-university collaborative working, including the Careers Service, the Faculties, Students Union, the new Student Experience Team, and external partnerships.

### **Primary Objective 1: Engage all students in developing employability skills and professional attributes in each year of their student journey**

Supporting Objectives:

- Each subject area will develop a clear map of in-curricular employability activities for each year of study to meet students developing employability needs.
- Develop students' engagement with a broadening and innovative range of extracurricular employability opportunities.
- Develop students engagement with online employability tools and effectively manage and support their use

# STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY 2019 -2024

## **Primary Objective 2: Engage all students in identifying and exploring their personal employability characteristics and plan their development**

### Supporting Objectives:

- Provide students with a supported, systematic, integrated approach to identifying their employability strengths and own development plans.
- Develop our approach to employers to ensure subjects are informed of their employability skills and standards needs
- Develop a new employability offer to our alumni focussed on recruitment and selection skills.

## **Primary Objective 3: Ensure all students have the opportunity to gain work related experiences to practise and develop a personal and professional skill set**

### Supporting Objectives:

- Increase the number of students pursuing an accredited placement period e.g. Sandwich; Study Abroad
- Provide work related learning opportunities in all subject areas for students to practise their skills and reflect on their development in-curriculum.
- Provide students with opportunities to develop business acumen, enterprise and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.

## **Cross Cutting Themes**

There are two themes that cut across the plan that we aim to develop further.

### **1. Ensure all students from all backgrounds have equality of opportunity in developing resilience, well-being and employability skills**

We have a proud history of providing access to students from non-traditional university entrant backgrounds, ensuring they progress, achieve and find employment. In the University's Access Plan, we refer to developing employability opportunities for all and have created a Student Opportunity Fund to enable students to develop through a range of extra-curricular opportunities individually or in groups. We must also consider the needs of

different types of students at department level when as the Faculties increase the in-curricular work-related opportunities for students. These could include costs to students, development of social capital skills and resilience.

## **2. Develop academic colleagues' knowledge, skills and understanding of employability to engage and inspire students' development**

In developing the strategy, a common theme has been a desire from academic colleagues to better understand employability skills and attributes and how they can be developed. We need to ensure that this is addressed for those who lead on employability within departments, Personal Tutors and more widely for academic colleagues.

### **Careers Service**

To support the delivery of a developing and enhanced employability strategy – the university has invested in supporting the expansion of careers services to students.

Specialist employer liaison staff have been appointed and further investments made in careers technologies, prioritising software which enables students to articulate skills and develop careers action plans (SaPRA), practice and improve recruitment & selection skills via a range of psychometric tests (Graduates First) and by practicing video interviews (Interview Stream). We will continue to develop a digital approach through better integration and usability for students. The aim is to increase the scale of engagement, reflect employer online processes for selection, improve ease of use and accessibility for students.

Careers colleagues are also working in collaboration with Academic Registry staff to promote, implement, track and monitor the new Student Opportunity Fund enabling students to take advantage of career enhancing and life changing opportunities by removing financial barriers that can restrict equality of opportunity and social mobility.

In summer 2018 the Careers team moved into a new, state of the art building alongside Library and Student Services, further embedding careers and employability as a central feature of student life at Edge Hill. The new facility provides opportunity for easier access to services and provision of more group sessions, individual advice and seminar guided workshops.

### **The Faculties**

Students spend most of their time within the Faculties studying their chosen subject. The Faculties are key in delivering the employability strategy in collaboration primarily with the Careers Service. Each Faculty produces a Faculty Employability Implementation plan, which forms part of the wider Faculty Annual plan. These are agreed and monitored by the formal University processes. They form a key component of this University wide employability strategy and will be refreshed annually.

# STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY 2019 -2024

Each Faculty plan will need to focus on subject area data that feeds into the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics at subject level. Every academic department produces an employability plan, and this must now incorporate evidenced data, based on the TEF metrics, the current employability achievement rate and a plan to improve it.

FAS is the Faculty where most impact would be seen at the University level if graduate level employability rates improved. The introduction of the E3i framework, a more in-curricular employability focus with support from the Faculty team and the careers service provides the opportunity for significant impact. It will be essential that everyone works together recognising the diversity of departments and their different starting points.

FoHSC and FoE have predominantly embedded practice-based programmes which lead to high employability rates. However, growth in courses without professional qualifications will need different approaches and opportunities. The Faculty plans will reflect these.

## **The Students Union**

The student experience matters most and each student's personal journey must be valued equally. In that regard, Edge Hill Students' Union are an important stakeholder and have much to offer students in terms enhancing their university experience through recreational activities, representation campaigns and opportunities for participation, in addition to developing their employability through workshops and a range of society and officer roles.

## **....and finally;**

Our graduates will be most employable when they have the skills, knowledge and personal attributes which enable them to choose and secure the careers and jobs to which they aspire and can achieve success. This strategy recognises students' desire and need to develop those employability skills and attributes while studying at Edge Hill.

That success is a shared responsibility, demanding the committed engagement of students themselves, significant contributions from academic colleagues and a range of professional service units; particularly the Careers Service which has a clearly identified leadership and support role to play.

Ultimately this strategy aims to ensure Edge Hill students become sought after and highly employable throughout their careers.

## Endmatter

Title	Student Employability Strategy
Policy Owner	Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations)
Approved by	Learning & Teaching Committee
Date of Approval	April 2019
Date for Review	April 2024