Graduate Employability: What Do Universities Need to Offer?

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Chair, 1994 Group's Student Experience Policy Group

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What Universities Need to Offer

> What Graduates Need + What Employers Want = What Universities Need to Offer

> Graduate Employability in the Economic Downturn + Identifying A New Approach = Employable Graduates And That's What Universities Need to Offer

> How do HEIs Identify A New Approach?

> Delivering a Better Student Experience

> Can This Constitute A New Approach?

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What Universities Need to Offer

> Delivering Graduate Employability through a Better Student Experience

- Better Information for Prospective and Current Students
- Joined Up Professional Services and Departments, Better Facilities (or At Least Sweating the Assets)
- More 'Employability' in the Curriculum
- Moving Beyond the Curriculum
- Involving Employers and Other Stakeholders
- Involving Students

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The Context: HEIs

> Hard Times
  - Approaching £1 Billion Baseline Cuts
  - 4.6% Reduction in Public Funding Per Student
  - Job Losses and Restructuring

> Prioritising Resources
  - Delivering More for Less

> The Funding Review
  - Demonstrating Additionality
  - UUK document, Making It Count

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The Context: Students & Graduates

> Hard Times
- 'Double Whammy' Students
- Graduating With Significant Debt
- Graduate Vacancies dropped 18% in 2009 (29% in Oz)

> What Will Students Expect?
- Perceived Value to Them of Additional Fees
- Perceived Impact on Them of 'Cuts' (worsening SSRs)
- Satisfied or Less Than Satisfied?
- Unprecedented Demand (22% Rise in Applications)

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What Universities Need to Offer

> Delivering a Better Student Experience That Can Promote Employability

> How Does Increased Focus on Student Experience and Quality Interplay with Increased Marketisation of HE and Increased Consumerist Attitudes?

> A More Practical Question: How Do We Deliver a <u>Better</u> Student Experience, in the Face of Significant Real Terms Cuts?

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Better Information for Prospective and Current Students: Higher Ambitions

> Better Information for Students

(Spotlight on Employability: Statements §6 and §7)

> Standard Set of Transparent Information

- What Students Will Learn and Access to Facilities
- What Direct Contact With Academic Staff Will There Be
- Their Own Study Responsibilities
- Access to External Expertise incl. International Experience
- Job Prospects and Salary Information by Course

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Better Employability Information for Current & Prospective Students

> What Is the Right Kind of Information?
  - Lots of Data but Much of It Not Accessible (DLHE)
  - Or Not Well Used (e.g. Unistats)
  - The Wrong Kind (e.g. Not at Course Level)
  - Poorly Joined Up (Prospects/UCAS/Student Finance Direct)

> External Providers
  - Non-Profit Bestcourse4you.com

> IAG Must Be Provided (TQI/NSS Steering Group)

> HEIs Must Consider What They Publish

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HEI Structures: Joined Up Professional Services and Departments

> Extensive Investment in Buildings

> Professional Services Should Be Seamless

- o Vulnerability of Professional Services to Cuts?

- o Possibility of Sharing Services Across HEIs??

- o Integration of Careers and Student Services with Academic Departments

- o Physical Co-location or Management Structures

> Academic Departments and Careers Services Must Work Hand-in-Hand

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More Employability in the Curriculum

> Ways of Embedding Employability
>
> o Course Content, Assessment & Skills Awareness
>
> o Direct Employer Engagement (Teaching & Advisory Groups)
>
> o Placements & Internships

> Injecting Enterprise into Modules

> Initiatives (Employability, Sustainability, Intensive Language) Can Squeeze Out 'Knowledge'

> Exeter Approach is To 'Go With the Grain'

> Understand their Skills, Develop Professional Attitude

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More Employability in the Curriculum

> Work Experience, Placements and Internships
  - Year Out
  - One-Off during Term Time
  - Out of Term Time
  - Integrated into Modules (LSE Parliamentary Intern Scheme)

> Gives Access to Employment, Also Augments Final-Year Marks

> STEM (from Industry to Research Lab Placements)

> What about HASS Subjects?

More Employability in the Curriculum

> Enhancing Postgraduate Employability

- More Industry-sponsored Masters (e.g. MSc in Automotive Systems Engineering at Loughborough (with Ford); MEng Embedded Systems at York (with Crossrail))

- 1994 Group Innovative Practice Report

> Value in Enhancing Postgraduate Employability?

> Need to Replenish the Research Base <u>and</u> Modern Fast-Growing Industries such as Digital Technologies and Clean Tech Require People with High Level Skills

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Moving 'Beyond the Curriculum':
1994 Group Policy Report 2009

> 'Co-Curricular' Activity and Awards

> Snapshot of Activity Within 1994 Group

> Majority Had Award Schemes

> Relates to HEAR

> Assess Challenges to Effective Delivery

> Recommendations to HEIs, Government and Business

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Recommendations (1)

> Aim of Awards

- To enhance Both Employability and the Student Experience

> Participation & Scalability

- HEIs should investigate using different levels of award:
- 'Standard' level – to maximise participation
- 'Higher' level – to differentiate the highly dedicated (e.g. Exeter Leaders Award)

> Elements Should be Open to All, Even Those Not Completing an Award

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Recommendations (2)

> Partnership Working

  o HEIs Should Work Closely with Student Unions to Develop, Advertise and Deliver Programmes

  o HEIs Should Seek Employer Involvement throughout the process:

    > Early development stages
    > Endorsement and profile-raising
    > Delivery of programmes
    > Assessment

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Recommendations (3)

> Resourcing

- HEIs should seek to employ dedicated staff to manage and co-ordinate an award
- Funding challenge
- Government should create incentives for employers to engage in awards (e.g. Match funds to employer contributions – whether cash or in kind)
- Employer Recognition of Award
- Must Be Evaluated For Impact

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Key Challenges to Effective Delivery

> Time Constraints

  o Busy Student Timetables /Part-Time Work

  o But Continuity is Important (Long Gaps Demotivate)

> Resourcing

  o Development /Delivery /Assessment are Time Consuming and Resource Intensive

> Scalability

  o With Larger Cohorts the Challenges are Magnified

  o If Many Students Receive Award Does Value/Impact Reduce?

Involving Employers and Other Stakeholders

> In Curricula
  - Course Design and Delivery (Advisory Boards, Teaching)
  - In Sourcing Placements and Internships

> In Co-Curricula
  - Government should create incentives for employers to engage in awards (e.g. Match funds to employer contributions – whether cash or in kind)

  - In recognising 'additionality' of Awards

> Alumni

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Recognising What Employers Want

> Going From Supply Push (from HEIs) to Demand Pull (from Employers)

> HEIs Understanding What Skills they wish to See (for Up-skilling in their Workforce and for New Graduates)

> Meeting Long-Term Skill Requirements

> A Role for Employers in Course Design & Development

> Better Information (About Course Pricing and Co-Funding)

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Involving Students: Student Engagement

> Feedback From Students
  - o NSS Extra Questions
  - o Use of Single Question/Qualitative Data
  - o NUS/HSBC Survey 2008, 2009

> Student Engagement
  - o Exeter 'Students as Change Agents' Model
  - o Genuine Partnership
  - o 4 Projects on Employability This Year

> Partnership with Students' Unions

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What do universities need to offer? Conclusions

> A Student Experience

- o That has Graduate Employability at its Heart
- o That Creates Opportunities to Enhance Employability Both Within and Beyond the Curriculum
- o That Considers Professional and Academic Support Holistically
- o That Actively Engages Employers, Students, Student Unions and Other Stakeholders
- o That is Supplemented by Published Information that is Up to Date, Consistent and Reliable

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1994 Group policy reports available online

www.1994group.co.uk

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