



UNIVERSITY
of York

Careers and
Placements

Have a career
that keeps evolving
as you do.

Ask us how

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Employability at the University of York

This report summarises the work of the
Careers and Placements team to support
student employability at York in 2022/23

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INTRODUCTION

Much has changed in the last couple of years and whilst the Covid-19 crisis is now largely behind us, the HE sector continues to face challenges: international recruitment, the cost-of-living crisis, student mental health, hybrid working and the challenges of how we engage with partners and stakeholders. Despite the challenges, the Careers and Placements team over the last year have remained driven by our purpose: to increase student aspiration by preparing and enabling students to achieve their personalised career goals.

During 2022/23 we have played a key part in the University's strategic ambition to be a University for Public Good, not least with our York Cares team facilitating 30 University staff teams to participate in the biggest Big Community Challenge to date, delivering volunteer force to the local community on a range of neighbourhood and sustainability initiatives. Our wide range of volunteering opportunities for students have also provided the city with thousands of hours of people resource across the education, heritage and sustainability sectors.

Our student employability work also underpins the key strategic aim to deliver an education that empowers; nurturing ambitions and preparing students for an ever-evolving world. Our graduates make significant contributions across sectors – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

The Careers and Placements team remains committed to ensuring we continue this legacy through building strong collaborative partnerships that deliver innovative employability initiatives and real-world experiences to York students and future students.

At the start of the year we took the opportunity to undertake a period of self-reflection. We engaged with the AGCAS Membership Quality Standard and completed a self-evaluation against the three themes as set out by the Standard: Service Leadership and Management, Stakeholder Insight and Collaboration and Professional Expertise. The work of the service was critically reviewed and we were delighted to hear our provision continues to meet the quality standards of our AGCAS membership, demonstrating our commitment to the levels of professionalism required by members.

“There is clear evidence of a strong culture of strategic and operational level planning and review being embedded within the Career and Placements team, and high standards of professional service delivery”.

Our work is guided by our four Service Objectives: To lead employability into the curriculum, to support students from underrepresented groups, to respond to growing international markets and to drive value from the programmes we offer. This report shows the volume of great work happening across the service and in support of our students' future prospects. A huge thanks to all the Careers and Placements team who have worked admirably over this year in support of our students; the content of this report is all down to you!

Enjoy.

Hannah Smith

Director of Student Careers and Systems

York listed as

6th

in the UK for 'University Support for Placements' in the RateMyPlacement Awards

★ RATEMYPLACEMENT

2023 - 2024

**Best 25
Universities for
Work Experience**

94%

of York graduates entered work or further study within 15 months of graduating

HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey 2020/21

Shared purpose

Careers and Placements is comprised of seven individual teams, who collectively offer extensive industrial insight and professional experience, placing the service at the cutting edge of Careers support. These teams focus on Careers Education, Advice and Guidance, Careers Information and Student Engagement, Employer Events and Engagement, Student Enterprise, Student Leadership & Development, Placements and Volunteering.

Ranked

30

out of

131

for Graduate Prospects

Times Good University Guide 2023



EMPLOYABILITY IN THE CURRICULUM

Through our influence, all programme designs will include professional and transferable skills development that will be visible in the programme learning outcomes and mapped throughout the degree in core modules.

Careers and Placements is committed to supporting academic departments to integrate employability into their curriculum to enhance and supplement the delivery of the core discipline. It is our aim that all undergraduate students experience some form of structured support to assist them in raising their self-awareness and career aspirations in their first year; gain a work-related learning experience in their second year and support with reflective practice in their final year. We work closely with the departmental Careers and Employability Coordinator (CEC) and senior academic staff to plan, implement and evaluate a programme of careers education that follows the suggestions of the 'Your Career Journey' map, whilst also being tailored to the unique needs of each departmental cohort.

A core part of this programme is supporting the early stages of every student's career journey, particularly through engagement with our award-winning programme, York Strengths. Participating in a York Strengths Development Session is an excellent way to start the process of gaining self-awareness in a careers context, identifying the types of roles and skills in which the student actively enjoys engaging. Twelve academic departments will have a York Strengths Development Session embedded within a first year module in 2023/24.

During 2022/23, the amount of work-related learning in the curriculum increased significantly across all faculties. Two pilot 'Community Engaged Learning' projects were delivered, involving over 400 students, split into small teams of students undertaking output-focused projects for community partner organisations, with a strong focus on reflective learning. As a result of these pilots, a module in Public History is launching for 200 History students in Autumn 2023 and a York Interdisciplinary Module based on the Environmental Sustainability at York (ESAY) clinic will launch in Spring 2024. An additional module is currently being readied for piloting in Psychology.

'Employer Challenges' have also grown significantly across the University. These are opportunities for students to work on live briefs set by external employer clients with the opportunity for employer feedback and real-world learning. Examples of projects include, but are not limited to: an initiative in the social sciences called the 'Policy School' run with the Cabinet Office's



12 academic departments (c.2500 students) now have the York Strengths Development Session embedded in a module in 2023/24

Open Innovation Team (OIY); in the Arts and Humanities, a 'Production Challenge' developed with the School of ACT, Channel 4 and Screen Yorkshire to address skills shortages in film and TV production; in the Sciences, the 'Transform Challenge', which involved a challenge focused on the social problem of knife crime, delivered within the Psychology curriculum, in partnership with Transform Society.

Through the Careers and Placements Board of Studies the numbers engaged in the central Placement Year module increased in 2022/23 to 94 from 80 the previous year. For the second year in a row students from 17 of the University's academic departments were represented on the module that included placements with recording studios, investment banks and major manufacturers. Three students undertook the Year in Enterprise module with two securing jobs relating to their business concept and one launching a trading venture.

Students engaging in one of the Community Engaged Learning Projects, as part of their course, reported a **19%** increase in their career confidence as a result of participation

SUPPORTING STUDENTS FROM UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

We're proud of the tailored programmes of support that have been developed this year; building the confidence of students from under-represented groups in engaging with early careers provision.

Bespoke pilot programme for students from low income backgrounds

As part of a pilot to provide bespoke support for students from under-represented groups and their more nuanced needs and challenges related to progress we have piloted a programme called *On Track* to support first year undergraduate (UG1) students in receipt of a York Bursary. The *On Track* programme aims to support the following challenges, limitations and potential gaps for students from low income backgrounds in relation to progression:

- finances and time to enable professional development
- strong professional networks to guide and support
- familiarity with professional workplaces, language and communication
- awareness of university opportunities and how to make the most of them
- understanding the informal rules of the professional workplace and career progression
- confidence and self awareness.

The programme provided support to these students through offering six one-to-one coaching sessions with a qualified coach, confidence development workshops delivered by a confidence coach and a city and workplace exposure visit to the Open Innovation Team in the Civil Service based in London. 190 UG1 students in receipt of a York Bursary expressed an interest in the programme, 107 attended the programme briefing and 76 signed up for the programme. 50 students were accepted on to one-to-one coaching with 41 students completing coaching. We plan to continue this pilot in 2023/24 extending the programme to UG2 and registering a new UG1 cohort.

"Makes me realise how much you can get out of uni; I just thought I was here for my degree"

On Track participant.

York Futures Scholarships

York Futures Scholarships provide the opportunity for students from under-represented backgrounds to apply for a monetary award to support access to an activity or opportunity which develops their employability. There are four award levels – £250, £1,000, £3,000 and £6,000, and there are two application rounds a year. The scholarships are funded by both Access and Participation money and OPPA (Office of Philanthropic Partnerships and Alumni) funds. This academic year we distributed awards to a total of 217 students to enable a range of employability and international opportunities which strengthen the student experience and support student development.

Additional support for WP final year students and graduates

As part of our commitment to supporting students with more complex needs or who are at greater risk of graduating without having secured graduate work or further study, we have continued to offer one-to-one longer term careers support for Widening Participation (WP) final year undergraduate students and recent graduates through professional careers coaching. Over 2021/22 we have seen a shift in the demographic of coaching applicants, with more applicants citing disability or long-term health needs and/or multiple WP characteristics. Of the 41 coachees who completed a career coaching evaluation form in 2022/23, 100% said they would recommend the coaching to other final year students or recent graduates and 95% said they felt confident or very confident about their ability to secure a positive graduate outcome (e.g. further study or a graduate job) compared to under 18% who reported feeling confident or very confident in this at the start of their coaching.

Paid part-time work

Careers and Placements worked with YUSU to investigate how students become aware of part-time local vacancies to gain work alongside study. This work included an intern-led survey of the recruitment practices of businesses within the City which discovered the openness of independent traders to advertise part-time work through Handshake rather than larger organisations with York branches. The York Internships scheme expanded the number of opportunities available both on and off campus. In 2022/23 143 paid internships were advertised, up from 124 the previous year.

Careers and Placements worked with the Student Hub during the National Student Money Week (NSMW) to raise awareness of help on offer. This included highlighting part-time work advertised on Handshake and encouraging students to use the Careers Drop-in sessions to discuss how to find part-time work.

We created an AV slide showing the support offered by Careers and Placements and a short Meet the Team video, which were used by the Student Hub and the student Cost of Living Advisers in their promotion. We also wrote and posted a blog about part-time work that coincided with the NSMW.

In addition, Careers and Placements staff attended a student-led drop-in event, which enabled peer-to-peer information and support with additional advice provided by a member of Careers staff.

As part of the University response to the cost of living crisis this year, we have advertised

1,640

part-time jobs into Handshake and introduced a new

WORK WARDROBE

offering free professional work-wear to students in need, thanks to donations from York Cares

RESPONDING TO GROWING INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Our research has developed a deeper understanding of the diverse mix, composition and expectations of growing student markets

This year we have taken great strides in our work to develop an excellent employability offer that contributes to an outstanding international student experience, and is recognised globally for its quality.

Working with departments to understand our students' aspirations

A collaborative approach to better understanding the career needs of our international students has led to a socio-economic analysis of the largest sending countries; interrogation of UK international student policies and Home Office data; and the collection of local data gathered by diverse departments. As part of our collaboration with other University departments, we presented our Careers offer directly to 73 Indian agents on behalf of the International Recruitment Team, and founded an International Student Focus Group with Careers, OPPA, International Student Support, IRT and MRAO.

Developing our offer

We are now in the process of augmenting our exceptional central careers offer to better serve our international students, particularly those who wish to remain in the UK. For 2023/24 we have a catalogue

of new events and resources including 'Introduction to UK Careers service for International Students', 'What UK employers expect and how Careers and Placements can help' and a new partnership with Student Circus; a jobsite featuring UK roles with employers who offer skilled worker visa sponsorship. All this activity (and more) will be supported by a new team of International Employability Ambassadors, who will assist in gathering feedback to continuously improve our offer.

Working with employers

Mindful of the growing number of international students who wish to remain in the UK post-graduation, we are working to increase graduate opportunities for international students in our local area. We are working with employers who attend our fairs and events to ensure they understand the unique strengths of our international student cohort and are prepared to answer international students' queries. We are also working with the local council to promote both the Graduate Visa and Skilled Worker visas, and have conducted sector-first research into the attitudes and understanding of our local business owners towards hiring international students, which has uncovered positive results.



STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP



York Strengths

The York Strengths programme continues to provide a sector-leading opportunity for York students to understand the skills that will drive their success in the graduate world of work. Students are supported to build their self-awareness and confidence in what they have to offer, and be equipped to manage their own professional development and make the most of their time at university.

774 first year undergraduate (UG1) students attended the Development Sessions in the last academic year, with a planned expansion to c.2500 in 2023/24 through embedding in academic programmes. York Strengths Online is available to all students of the University, with Development Workshops for postgraduate students.

York Award celebrates its 25th year

The last academic year marked 25 years of the York Award. The celebrations were led by a placement year student and included an art competition (with the winner designing an anniversary banner), a treasure hunt (showcasing how campus has changed over the last 25 years) and a celebration event for past and present Chancellor Leadership Prize winners, and those who completed York Award and York Leaders this year. Video interviews were also collected from both staff and applicants who have worked on the award over its history, revealing the impact the award has had on them. This year 138 undergraduate and 22 postgraduate students achieved the York Award.

**YORK
AWARD**
25TH ANNIVERSARY
1998-2023



Self Improver >

"I found this session incredibly helpful as a PhD student. It helped me to realise my strengths and the ways that I can improve. I believe the information I learned today will be useful as I plan the next steps in my research project and look for job opportunities."

Positive feedback from an attendee of the newly developed PGT and PGR versions of the York Strengths Development Sessions.

Early findings show that engaging in York Strengths in UG1 aligns with a ten fold increase in engagement with wider careers activities and a 30% greater likelihood of having work experience by final year.

York Leaders

The York Leaders programme enables students to explore and enhance their leadership skills. Through engaging in hands-on group projects, learning content, reflection and network building with alumni, participants gain a deeper understanding of collaborative leadership and are empowered to make a meaningful impact within both the University and the broader community, contributing actively to driving positive change and upholding the public good. This experience can shape their time at university, support their success on graduation and extend its influence into their future careers. The programme has now been running for seven years, offering 80-100 places each year. The York Leaders alumni network is growing, with many previous participants contributing back to the programme delivery and bridging the gap between emerging talent and seasoned professionals.

GOOD NEWS STORIES

Employability Advisory Group relaunch

We have placed a focus this last year on reimagining the way in which we engage and interact with employers. Our refreshed Employability Advisory Group (EAG) reflects our commitment to both our students and to the employers we work with.

This group includes representatives of graduate employers and students, sector experts, as well as University senior leaders, and enables discussion and thinking about the future world of work and how we best help students to develop and prepare to achieve their personalised career goals.

Big Community Challenge

For its 15th annual Big Community Challenge, York Cares hosted its most ambitious challenge to date in partnership with the University (as part of the 60th anniversary celebrations), City of York Council, St Nicks and York BID. Throughout June, we engaged 556 volunteers from 19 employers who gave 1,932 hours of time across 15 sites. 194 University staff from 27 teams across 20 departments were involved at 13 of the sites. Two of the sites were at the University – Kimberlow Hill and East Campus lake – where volunteers removed 4,670 tree spirals and planted 500 tansy plants and 500 reeds.

Green Impact

In its 10th year, the Green Careers Team once again achieved Platinum – the highest level in the University's Green Impact awards. The team continued to introduce and maintain a range of actions, processes and initiatives to improve the sustainability of Careers and Placements' activities.

The team of five staff members completed a number of actions outlined in the Green Impact workbook. The tasks ranged from identifying sustainability efficiencies in procedures; recycling opportunities; social and community involvement; and energy savings.

Get ahead: Get recognised.
Become a headhunter



"Our graduates come from various course backgrounds and they didn't plan for a career in recruitment. We don't filter applications based on these choices or results – we recruit, guide and train for..."

Graduate Outcomes

The Graduate Outcomes survey collects information about what former students are doing 15 months after graduation. Our commitment to engaging with students both during and after their time with us results in one of the best response rates of any university, with 62% of students completing the survey.

Since the global pandemic in 2020, York graduates' prospects have improved steadily year on year; 94% of graduates are in work or further study, with 60% in a 'graduate level' job. 79% of those in work are utilising what they learnt during their studies in their current job.

Studying at York stimulates a desire for additional learning, with a further 15% choosing to progress to further study – one of the highest rates in the country. The overwhelming majority (94%) of these individuals state that this further study fits with their future plans.

Careers and Placements contributes to these positive outcomes through our suite of activities which both equip students with important skills and experience, and help give them clear direction in defining and realising their future ambitions. We work to identify gaps in our Graduate Outcomes data and identify strategies for providing better support to those students most at risk of not achieving their desired outcomes. Our Graduate Outcomes Task Group also seeks to help coordinate work across the university.

Top 4 activities students engaged with in 2022/23

1.

13,086 vacancies posted on Handshake

2.

2,252 students attended one or more careers fairs

3.

774 students attended a York Strengths Development Session

4.

529 students volunteered through the York Students in Schools programme

Teaching Excellence Framework

Careers and Placements worked intensively with colleagues from the wider directorate to engage in detailed data analysis and to draft careers-related aspects of the 'student outcomes' section of the 2023 TEF submission. The submission was praised at UEB and Senate and the University was awarded an overall 'Gold'. The section focused on the University's approach to ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies was rated as 'outstanding'.



york.ac.uk/careers

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