

# CAREERS AND PLACEMENTS



UNIVERSITY  
*of York*

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



## Delivering the Student Employability Strategy

This report summarises the progress made against the Key Objectives of the **Student Employability Strategy** in 2021/22, the final year of the 2017-2022 strategy.

# Student Journey



## York Futures

'York Futures' as a title is interchangeable with 'Employability at York', and is an umbrella term for all the exciting opportunities and resources that students can take advantage of to support their personal and professional development. The Careers and Placements team have been working with Marketing to position York

Futures as a unique selling point for the University, and developing a distinctive employability campaign brand which uses 3D text on impactful imagery.

To help students engage early and navigate their way through the available opportunities, we have developed a high-concept infographic / journey map, **Your Career Journey**, that presents activities, events and calls-to-actions by year of study, accounting for the deadlines and timescales of employers, further study requirements and highly competitive application processes, as well as immovable 'sign up' points for University managed schemes such as the York Strengths Programme, Study Abroad, Placement Year and York Award. It also points to a set of suggested learning outcomes for each year.

We have also developed tailored versions of the journey for **postgraduate taught** and **postgraduate research** students. These have been very well received by the postgraduate community, including distance learners.

## Potential of the journey

The first iteration of this journey was rolled out initially to UG1 students at the start of the 2019/20 academic year. Hard copy leaflets were disseminated via academic departments and Careers and Placements activities. Electronic, year-specific and accessible versions



can be accessed at [york.ac.uk/york-futures](http://york.ac.uk/york-futures). The Careers and Placements team delivered sessions in departments that introduced first years to the journey as a starting point for accessing careers provision and opportunities.

Overwhelmingly the response from students, academic staff and other stakeholders has been positive. The journey map provides an attractive and intuitive way to communicate a large amount of information. There has been interest from colleagues to incorporate the journey into central student recruitment and orientation activities, as well as requests from academic departments for tailored departmental versions in the longer term. The Office for Philanthropic Partnerships (OPPA) would like to see the journey continue beyond graduation. There are many possibilities for further enhancements and outlets to consider for future iterations.

## Handshake Journeys

Students and graduates have been able to access Handshake since August 2020 to build their profile, connect with employers and search for opportunities. This system is the University's key careers platform and also enables students to manage their Careers conversations, events and one-to-one appointments.

In 2021, in response to York's desire to provide students with the ability to monitor their careers journey online, Handshake introduced additional functionality called 'Handshake Journeys' which supports guiding students through a set of call-to-actions and milestones, similar to the tick list that accompanies each stage of **Your Career Journey**. We are now working on a prototype digital journey for testing with students in 2022/23.

## University of York for Life

Over the last year, Careers and Placements has been working closely with the Office for Philanthropic Partnerships (OPPA) on a vision to extend the career journey beyond graduation. As part of the University of York for Life initiative we aim to reimagine careers and personal development opportunities for alumni to ensure York graduates continue to receive a range of opportunities and support relevant to each stage of their working lives. This initiative aims to be an ambitious, unique and whole-University approach to working with, supporting and leveraging our global community of 150,000 alumni.



# 94%

**of our graduates in work or further study 15 months after completing their course**

Source: 2019/20 HESA Graduate Outcomes survey

# Student Development

## York Strengths

**Y**ork Strengths gives all York students the opportunity to discover what they are good at and love to do, build their self awareness and confidence, and use this knowledge to plan their time at York. The programme prepares students for the reality of the graduate labour market, and their future success; empowering them to take action to build personally relevant skills and experience and the confidence to pursue a career that they'll enjoy and do well in.

Prior to the pandemic, the programme was focused around a single face to face 'Development Day'. During 2020, we developed an online short course, York Strengths Online, to support continued programme

delivery. Following the popularity of this course and the positive feedback, we have continued to make this available to all students of the University, including distance learners, and embedded it as part of the blended learning offer for UG1, giving a continuously available and richer experience for participants.

**York Strengths Online** provides a set of online resources which support the face to face York Strengths Development Day sessions, and provides an alternative method of access to the learning where this is needed and the ability to revisit the content for students in later year groups. The online course introduces the York Strengths methodology, and includes self assessment exercises to enable mapping and description of your personal strengths, and information and advice (with accompanying tools) on how to use this knowledge to support your further development, career choice and applications.

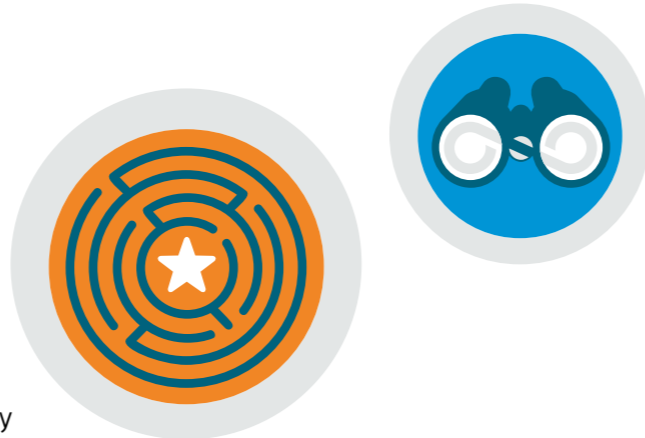
The 2021-22 academic year saw the return of the face to face **York Strengths Development Days**

for first year undergraduates, and PGT students. These sessions provide a half day of assessed activities which echo the format of graduate assessment centres and include participative observed exercises in a small group. Students have the opportunity to explore their strengths in a supportive environment, and get personal feedback from a trained Observer. York Strengths Online supports this event as a blended learning offer.

In 2021/22, 1378 UG1 students engaged with York Strengths Online and 729 attended a York Strengths Development Day session. An additional 533 non-UG1 students engaged with York Strengths Online (of which 245 were PG).

Student feedback for these events is excellent

We are starting to see evidence of the impact of engagement with the programme, with a doubling of engagement in key employability related activities and a 10 percentage point



90%

Participants rating the YSDD sessions overall 4 or 5 out of 5

90%

Participants who would recommend the YSDD to others

increase in work experience from those UG1 students who have taken part in a Development Day.

Academic departments have been increasingly engaged in delivery, with the majority of departments now making a formal link to the York Strengths Discovery Programme and embedding this in their curriculum offer for first year undergraduates as part of the curriculum change programme.

As a key feature of Your Career Journey, York Strengths provides the University with a strong story which demonstrates how students are supported from the first day of study to navigate the wide range of available opportunities offered across University life to enhance their personal and professional development.

## York Leaders

The York Leaders programme supports a group of around 90 undergraduate students in their middle years of study to advance their understanding of what it means to be a leader while exploring and developing their own leadership skills, helping them make a greater contribution in any context.

29%

Increase in careers confidence as a result of attending

30%

Increase in students reporting work experience after YSDD

After a review of the programme in 2022, in consultation with stakeholders, the selection criteria have been shifted. These now focus on leadership potential and aim to widen accessibility to those who may not have had the opportunity to participate significantly in leadership activities to date, or who may not see themselves as a leader (yet!).

We're now looking for students who see the value of effective leadership and can show us their enthusiasm and potential to become leaders who bring about positive social change.

## York Award

York Award is a formal award of the University which integrates with York Strengths. It can be worked towards through a student's time at University, and completed towards the end of their programme of study. York Award recognises (and hopefully encourages) participation in the most important elements



## Additional support for WP final year students and graduates

As part of C&Ps 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 WP students through professional careers coaching. In addition we have increased this offer by recruiting a third careers coach to allow both final year and graduates to access this offer. Between September 2021 and September 2022 we have provided intensive 1-1 coaching support to 106 final year students and recent graduates. We have received extremely positive feedback from coaching participants. See our [written and video case studies](#) to get a feel for the difference our career coaching has made.

of Your Career Journey. It enables students to pull together and reflect on their experiences within and outside the curriculum, and supports applicants in articulating the positive characteristics they have to offer in a way that appeals to employers and future study providers.

In 2021/22, 102 UG finalists, 22 UG penultimate year students and 24 PGT students were successful in achieving the York Award. We aim to grow these numbers over time.



# Student Opportunities

## Placement Learning

The numbers of students expressing interest in, and subsequently securing placements, continued to grow throughout this year. On the 'with placement' module, open to students of all academic disciplines, 79 secured placements for 2022/23. This is up (64%) from 48 students out on placement in 2021/22.

One of the initial motivations for introducing the 'with placement year' option was to open the opportunity of a work placement to all undergraduate students, regardless of their programme of study. At the introduction of the Placement year option in 2018/19 students from seven academic departments took up the option of a year in work as part of their studies. In 2021/22 students from 16 departments took up this opportunity, with significant growth in the departments of Economics and Psychology.

Across all three faculties the conversion rate of students formally expressing interest in a placement to those securing one is relatively consistent at around 20%. Now that a recognition of the benefits of placement have started to become embedded across all departments, Careers and Placements can start to focus on measures to increase this conversion rate.

The range of employers engaged through placements is extremely broad, from charities through to financial services. Students from Music and TFTI were able to secure placements with organisations such as Pinewood Studios, Sky and Walt Disney Corporation and in the social sciences employers included major corporates where the students worked in governmental affairs as well as smaller NGOs and think tanks. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a decline in the number of students going overseas to take up placements with the EU being the destination for only two students. The Irregular Placements Group was not required to meet to discuss any placement requests, which is an indicator of fewer students looking for opportunities overseas.



**Elliot Mann on internship with the University of York's Creative Media Labs**



## Internships

After a near total shift to online working in 2020/21, the intern programme for 2021/22 largely saw a return to in-person working, with some hybrid arrangements. The overall number of internships sourced through the Student Internship Bureau was 191 projects, which is up compared with 172 in 2020/21. There was a notable expansion in the number of on-campus internships to 133, compared to 85 in the previous year. A decline in the number of external projects was something of a concern and may be a result of the demands of meeting increased on-campus demand. On-campus internships incorporated the work experience strand for the Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education (YCEDE) project, which included funding for eight research based internships for students from BAME backgrounds to give a tangible sense of PhD studies.



**Katie Naughton on internship with Picture News, a small educational resource company**

## Volunteering

The lifting of pandemic restrictions allowed the return of in-person volunteering across all the Careers and Placements led programmes; including York Students in Schools, brokered opportunities and the OfS funded Community Engaged Learning Project. This project is working toward the development of credit bearing curriculum that incorporates elements of community engagement. Two pilot projects were delivered as part of this process; which puts students in a prime position to

realise the University's goals around being an institution for the public good. The first of these projects was delivered with the department of History and saw over 100 students working across a range of specially designed sub-projects which included working with York Archaeological Trust to curate new ways of displaying items, called the 'Museum of Me' and with the Guild of Merchant Taylors to provide learning for school age students into the economic legacy to guilds for the City of York. The second project was with the Environmental Sustainability Academy York (ESAY) to run a range of initiatives in support of local charities and small businesses seeking to become more sustainable involving just over 80 students from all academic disciplines.

## Enterprise

The work on Student Enterprise was enhanced this year by the opening of the Enterprise Works initiative, based at the Guildhall. The initiative will help to gather business and alumni support for student entrepreneurs to interact with and potentially develop mentor relationships with. The Santander funded Summer Accelerator Programme, which funds living expenses and coaching for 15 students to pursue their business ideas over the vacation period, received a record number of applications (37). One of these projects resulted in a student from Engineering being selected for the Innovate UK Young Innovator

**Students involved in the Museum of Me project with York Archaeological Trust**

programme, one of 100 chosen from 12,000 applicants. Jack Clarke's business idea helps to quickly and cheaply prototype arrangements of electrical components.

## Employers

The academic year 2021/22 was something of a transitional period for employers engaging with campus activities. During the pandemic all interactions were online and whilst students were also working remotely this arrangement was effective. However, with the return of students to campus the attendance at online employer events fell noticeably. Careers and Placements normally estimate that 50% of students signing up for an event will eventually attend it. In 2021/22 attendance fell to an average of 25% of those signing up. This trend was reported across the Russell Group Employer Engagement Heads. Toward the end of the academic year it was possible to re-engage employers with returning to on-campus events. These included a Summer Graduate Recruitment Fair which attracted nearly 50 employers and 600 students to the Exhibition building; record numbers for an event of this type in the Summer Term.





@UoYcareers

**Careers and Placements,  
Student and Academic Services,  
University of York, Heslington,  
York, YO10 5DD, UK**

**01904 322685  
york.ac.uk/careers**



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