

University of York
Student Employability Strategy 2010 to 2015

The Vision

Our vision is that every York student has access to, engages with, and benefits from, the highest standard of support for their personal and career development.

We have four key aims:

- to ensure that every student has a high quality, fulfilling student experience and recognises how this enhances their employability
- to provide students with the best possible curricular and co-curricular support in developing their employability
- to ensure that the University of York is recognised nationally and internationally among potential students and recruiters of graduates as a seedbed for exceptional talent and skills, and a provider of excellent support for student employability and graduate outcomes
- to develop graduates who are characterised by their entrepreneurial talents, commitment to innovation and creativity, and their ability to realise their full potential as leaders and role models in organisations and society, and to compete at the highest level and collaborate with others.

Our understanding of Employability

Employability means the possession of the skills and experience necessary to secure fulfilling employment - as defined by the individual - and to manage life long career progression, enabling graduates to successfully navigate changes and challenges in their work and personal circumstances.

In order to be highly employable, students need to acquire certain essential transferable skills¹, particularly in relation to their personal, interpersonal and entrepreneurial abilities. These skills, along with disciplinary knowledge and other, relevant attributes and capabilities, can be obtained through academic study. They can also be supplemented and enhanced by co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. We expect that students will be stakeholders in their own learning, and that through engaging with the variety of opportunities on offer throughout their university experience they will develop the skills of most relevance and importance to them.

Underpinning this Strategy are seven key objectives, to ensure that:

1. all students have a personal employability plan by the end of their first year, and understand their role in developing and achieving it
2. all academic departments address the employability of their students, and, in collaboration with the Careers Service and the Academic Support Office, work to ensure that their graduates compete successfully among the best

¹ See appendix for a summary of the transferable skills that employers prioritise

3. all students have the opportunity to access high-quality, work related activities and experiences that develop their creativity and innovative thinking and an international outlook
4. the institution provides a wide range of mechanisms for recording and acknowledging these experiences
5. all student have access to high quality careers information advice and guidance; including information on employment-related opportunities and occupations that reflects their aspirations and needs
6. academic and support departments maximise, and develop further, relationships with employers, professional organisations and alumni - promoting the excellence of our graduates at every opportunity
7. the quality of graduate destinations is improved.

The strategy links with key themes of the University Plan (*Excellence, Internationalisation, Inclusivity, Sustainability*), Learning and Teaching Strategy (*theme 3e*), Employer Engagement Strategy (*primary objective 1*) and Research Strategy (*Section D*). In concert with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy it aims to ensure a consistent culture of quality.

In pursuit of the strategy we will identify - through analysis of our data and review of provision - cohorts of students and areas of provision in need of priority attention and development.

The Strategy is supported by a detailed schedule of improvement actions which pursue the strategic objectives.

Appendix 1

Employer Perceptions of Graduate Employability

NB. Most major graduate recruiters will take it as read that employable graduates will have demonstrated high level cognitive skills and acquired a thorough grasp of the knowledge relevant to the student's discipline.

Table 1: Most important skills and attributes for graduates and satisfaction levels, by survey

<i>Future Fit: preparing graduates for the world of work, 2009, UUK/CBI</i> n=581		<i>Graduate Employability – the views of employers, 2008, CIHE</i> n=500	<i>Recruiting Researchers: Survey of employer practice 2009, Vitae</i> n=104
Most important skills	satisfied / v. satisfied	Most important skills and capabilities (satisfaction levels not given)	The list is in ranked order (1 = high level of competence)
Application of IT	98%	Communication skills	1. data analysis
Application of numeracy	92%	Team-working skills	2. problem solving
Team working	90%	Integrity	3. drive and motivation
Problem solving	89%	Intellectual ability	4. project management
Communication & literacy	87%	Confidence	5. interpersonal skills,
Self-management	80%	Character and personality	6. leadership,
Business awareness	65%	Planning and organisation	7. commercial awareness
		Numeracy skills	
		Literacy skills	
		Analysis & decision making	

Notes:

1. The CBI/UUK skills list was not respondent-generated but defined in advance in consultation with members
2. The CIHE did not provide a list of satisfaction levels for the top-rated skills, instead listing the skills and qualities employers were most satisfied with, regardless of their importance ranking. The top five were: IT, post-graduate qualification, good degree classification, quality of university and intellectual ability.
3. Vitae gave employers a list of seven skills and asked 'How would you expect an employee with a doctoral qualification to perform in the following areas?'