

STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY 2017–2022[†]



Our Mission ↓

To give our students opportunities to gain experience that will prepare them better for employment and further study. University Strategy 2014–2020, Sub Objective KO2.5

Key Objectives ↓

Supporting Objectives ↓

Target Outcome ↓

KO1

The University of York will communicate a distinct and consistent employability offer known as 'York Futures' to all its students, advocating engagement with a range of development activities

SO1

A clear journey map will be developed to help students navigate available opportunities and understand how engagement supports their personal and professional development

Students will be able to record and monitor their employability journey online

Our provision will be inclusive and accessible to all students

KO2

All undergraduate and postgraduate students will be able to explore and identify their most positive employability characteristics through participation in the 'York Strengths Programme'

SO2

The York Strengths Programme will blend three distinct elements: an online strengths evaluation, an interactive strengths assessment day and a reflective award

An approach to employer engagement will be developed to grow and nurture key relationships which reflect the priorities of the University's Industrial Relations Strategy

The distinct York Strengths Framework will inform a range of activities available to students and be reviewed for relevance on an annual basis

KO3

All undergraduate and postgraduate students will have the opportunity to gain experiences that will enable personal and professional development

SO3

All undergraduate students will have the opportunity to pursue an accredited placement year

Our volunteering offer will be broadened to include projects designed to improve the wellbeing and resilience of student volunteers

We will actively promote the value and breadth of opportunities to study, work and volunteer abroad and encourage all students to participate

A set of strategic targets and measures will be modelled and defined to support departmental performance across all key objectives

To be in the top 10 for employment outcomes across all league table metrics by **2022***

**2022 is the year we'll see the impact of this strategy on 17/18 undergraduate first years (2023 if they opt to take a placement year)*

Interim Measures ↓

Increase in the number of students reporting having graduate-level work or further study plans through the Student Services' graduation survey

Increase in confidence or career readiness amongst second years, as captured in the annual enrolment process

Increase in students reporting to have had work experience in the last 12 months, as captured in the annual enrolment process

Increase in the number of students with protected characteristics that are accessing activities that will develop their employability

[†]To be reviewed in line with the University Strategy in 2020

Working in Partnership ↓



Careers and Placements | Learning and Development | Students' Unions | Colleges | Academic Departments | Academic Support Office | Centre for Global Programmes | Research Excellence Training Team | Office of Philanthropic Partnerships and Alumni | Marketing



Student Employability Strategy 2017–2022

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The University of York has a long history of providing students with opportunities to develop their skills and gain recognition for their experiences. The York Award was a pioneering programme that enabled students to build their experiences through a wide array of volunteering, internship and other work experience and project based work, and provided students with an accreditation that helped graduates gain a foothold in the jobs market. The York Award has continued to be a model of good practice and schemes such as York Students in Schools and the Student Internship Bureau have provided thousands of students with the experience they need to secure employment.

Where York led, others have followed, increasing the necessity to remain ahead of the sector and be distinct in our approach. The Student Employability Strategy 2017-2022 sets out three key strategic priorities that will position York at the cutting edge of support for employability. Recognising that there are a number of external challenges, this strategy aims to be accessible and engaging to the full range of our stakeholders, it is ambitious and focuses on achieving scalability through new ways of working, and it is metric driven, ensuring not only that our students achieve their potential but that the University is recognised for their success.

2.0 OUR MISSION

To give our students opportunities to gain experience that will prepare them better for employment and further study (University Strategy 2014–2020, Sub Objective KO2.5)

The new Student Employability Strategy focuses on three key objectives. These will provide students with outstanding support and the development opportunities needed to prepare them for graduate success.

- 1. The University of York will communicate a distinct and consistent employability offer known as 'York Futures' to all its students, advocating engagement with a range of development activities**
- 2. All undergraduate and postgraduate students will be able to explore and identify their most positive employability characteristics through participation in the 'York Strengths Programme'**
- 3. All undergraduate and postgraduate students will have the opportunity to gain experiences that will enable personal and professional development**

3.0 CONTEXT

York offers a wealth of high-quality opportunities to enrich our students' learning and enable them to develop the personal strengths and experience sought by graduate recruiters. The key is to engage students with these activities early in their University life and equip them to better understand their drivers, explore career options and realise their full potential on graduation. We believe that the strategic objectives presented here will offer our students a progressive, engaging and ambitious development journey that will support their development and graduate success.

We know that increasingly, prospective students place employability provision high up the list of key considerations when choosing an institution. We are also at a point when competition for the brightest and most motivated students entering higher education is getting harder. There is increased volatility due to the change in demographics and a decline in 18 year olds up to 2020, the rise of Degree Apprenticeships, the challenges presented by Brexit and what is being dubbed as, 'the Fourth Industrial Revolution', with the accelerated impact of artificial intelligence, machine learning and robotics. The University must respond to these challenges by putting in place explicitly designed programmes that enable us to continue to attract the most ambitious students.

Recent policy developments, including changes to the way graduate outcomes data will be collected, the new analysis of longitudinal outcomes, and the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework, have thrown a spotlight on graduate employability as never before. It is now imperative that we consider how best to improve graduate prospects to support the University's ambition to improve league table performance.

The University continues to provide outstanding career development support for its students (University Strategy 2014-2020, Sub Objective KO3.2) through a range of activities delivered by experienced employability practitioners, including; appointments, fairs, departmental and employer linked events, international mobility, access to professional alumni networks, mentoring, workshops, vacancy listings, online resources, volunteering, enterprise and work related opportunities. Increasingly, academic departments have played a key role in driving the employability agenda. This strategy will seek to enhance this further by engaging with an increased range of external and internal partners and an alignment with the strategic priorities identified by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange.

All of our activities are designed with a set of underpinning principles that ensure we are working effectively with, and for, our key stakeholders.



4.0 UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

- All students are equally encouraged to develop their career interests, knowledge and experiences appropriate to graduate opportunities available globally
- Students can become leaders in whatever field they choose to pursue and are encouraged and offered a portfolio of opportunities to become equipped to do so
- Students are encouraged to approach their employability by developing as resilient, reflective learners who respond positively and creatively to the challenges set by the world
- We develop and deliver programmes that are informed by global employers' requirements
- We provide international mobility programmes that provide students with invaluable work and study experiences that support the development of a global mindset

5.0 STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY 2017-2022

Whilst the Careers and Placements team play a pivotal role in supporting the development and implementation of this strategy, developing the employability of our students is an institutional responsibility. The Employability Strategy Group will maintain an oversight of the strategy and the Employability Operations Group, supported by the three Strategic Project Managers (based in Careers and Placements) will provide ongoing guardianship of the key objectives. Both these groups make good use of excellent collaborative partnership working across the University and externally.

The Key Objectives within the strategy aim to differentiate the University of York from other institutions, whilst mirroring developments in recruitment and assessment. They aim to support other strategies within the University (Learning & Teaching Strategy 2015-2020) by providing opportunities for students to form global networks, develop their resilience and their self-awareness and to build their confidence to enable them to be successful in their chosen career or field of further study.

The provision and support for students in this strategy will be accessible to undergraduate and postgraduate students from home and abroad. There will be additional work carried out to review and benchmark our provision for postgraduate research students as the support required is much more bespoke and we need to ensure this student group can also access high quality employability support.

5.1 KEY OBJECTIVE 1

The University of York will communicate a distinct and consistent employability offer known as 'York Futures' to all its students, advocating engagement with a range of development activities

York's innovative approach to supporting students and departments has led to a wide range of employability initiatives which students can find difficult to navigate. This, coupled with changes to careers guidance provision in schools, means that many students are unsure about where to start with making the most of the range of rich opportunities available to them. Key Objective 1 will aim to 'package-up' the professional and personal development activities across the University and offer students an idealised pathway through their career planning. A system to support the student's progress along this route will be developed, enabling them to record and monitor their own growth and attainment. Similar systems at other institutions have been used to demonstrate student success and progression in gold level TEF submissions.

This clarity in the narrative will enable students to understand the requirements of their desired pathway and ensure that they are in a more competitive position for their next steps, be it work or further study.

5.1.1 SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES

- A clear journey map will be developed to help students navigate available opportunities and understand how engagement supports their personal and professional development
- Students will be able to record and monitor their employability journey online
- Our provision will be inclusive and accessible to all students



5.2 KEY OBJECTIVE 2

All undergraduate and postgraduate students will be able to explore and identify their most positive employability characteristics through participation in the 'York Strengths Programme'

To take full advantage of the opportunities presented on the York Futures journey map offered in Key Objective 1, students will need to develop a strong sense of self-awareness; an ability to understand their personal strengths, working preferences and values. The York Strengths Programme (known in its 2017 pilot-phase as the York Futures Development Days) will assist this process by providing first year students with a programme of three interlinked components that will help them identify where their most positive employability characteristics lie and then support them in reflecting on their experiences to articulate them in terms accessible and appealing to employers. This process will happen in sufficient time to allow students to plan and adapt the remainder of their time at University to better suit their career search preferences in terms of seeking out suitable options and acquiring relevant experience.

This will result in an increase in students participating in internships, volunteering and work placements, which we will support them to source.

5.2.1 SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES

- **The York Strengths Programme will blend three distinct elements: an online strengths evaluation, an interactive strengths assessment day and a reflective award**
- **An approach to employer engagement will be developed to grow and nurture key relationships which reflect the priorities of the University's Industrial Relations Strategy**
- **The distinct York Strengths Framework will inform a range of activities available to students and be reviewed for relevance on an annual basis**

5.3 KEY OBJECTIVE 3

All undergraduate and postgraduate students will have the opportunity to gain experiences that will enable personal and professional development

It is well documented that employers prefer students who are able to draw on experiences from a range of settings, including work experience, volunteering and international work and study, to demonstrate that they have developed both personally and professionally. There is also considerable evidence, observed both in York and nationally, that a placement year significantly enhances the chances of a student acquiring a graduate-level role on leaving their studies. Ongoing work in support of Key Objective 3, which links to a number of strands of the Sub Objective KO2.5 in the University Strategy 2014-2020, will consider how to both increase the range of opportunities available to students, but also ensure they are accessible and supportive of the University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2020.

An increase in the number of students undertaking work related opportunities will have a positive impact on the number of students able to secure graduate level work.

5.3.1 SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES

- **All undergraduate students will have the opportunity to pursue an accredited placement year**
- **Our volunteering offer will be broadened to include projects designed to improve the wellbeing and resilience of student volunteers**
- **We will actively promote the value and breadth of opportunities to study, work and volunteer abroad and encourage all students to participate**



6.0 OUTCOMES

We want all our students to be successful regardless of the career choices they make. To reflect this ambition the target outcome for this strategy is for the University of York to be in the top 10 for employment outcomes across all league table metrics by 2022.

This target will encompass metrics used by The Times Higher, Guardian and the Good University Guide league tables. A set of strategic targets and measures will be modelled and defined to support departmental performance across all key objectives and supporting objectives and outcomes will be monitored on an annual basis to ensure that we are set to achieve this ambitious target. We will also monitor the graduate outcomes of student groups that do not directly feature in league table publications, such as, international students, to ensure they are benefitting from this new provision.

In order to support the main target outcome, the newly appointed Faculty Employability Managers, supported by Careers Consultants, will work closely with academic departments, the Business Intelligence Unit and the Marketing team to benchmark department employment outcomes. This will enable the creation of departmental plans that align to the Employability Strategy key objectives, with a view to improving overall employment outcomes for the University.

Some existing measures will be used to track progress towards this target outcome, and provide interventions to ensure students are progressing towards a positive destination, including professional one-to-one support. However, as part of this strategy, additional data and robust tracking mechanisms will be developed to enable better support for individuals, (particularly those who are harder to reach) and will allow us to monitor their journey towards graduate success.

6.1 INTERIM MEASURES

- Increase in the number of students reporting having graduate-level work or further study plans through the Student Services' graduation survey
- Increase in confidence or career readiness amongst second years, as captured in the annual enrolment process
- Increase in students reporting to have had work experience in the last 12 months, as captured in the annual enrolment process
- Increase in the number of students with protected characteristics that are accessing activities that will develop their employability.