Delivering the award winning Student Employability Strategy

This report summarises the progress made in 2018/19 against the Key Objectives of the Student Employability Strategy.
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.

To help students engage early and navigate their way through the available opportunities, we have developed a journey map 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.

In support of the aim to engage students much earlier in their time at York, we have initially focused on the undergraduate journey, with a postgraduate taught version in development. The journey map is currently generic across academic departments, but as we introduce an online system to support students to record and monitor their progress through York Futures, the ability to tailor calls-to-action and push notifications will become available. A concept summary to secure the IT resource needed to support a technology change was presented at the University’s Enterprise Systems Strategy Group in 2018, and the work has been scheduled into IT Service’s 2020 delivery roadmap. In the meantime, market research, discussions and demonstrations with leading system providers continues.

Roll out of the journey map, ‘Your Career Journey’, to current students is underway. Hard copy leaflets are being disseminated via academic departments and Careers and Placements activities. Electronic, year-specific and accessible versions can be accessed at york.ac.uk/york-futures.

OUR PROVISION WILL BE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL STUDENTS

It is an Interim Measure on the strategy to achieve an ‘Increase in the number of students with protected characteristics that are accessing activities that will develop their employability’.

A Careers Officer with a particular remit for Widening Participation (WP) was recruited in November 2018. This post works with the Strategic Project Managers and the Data Analyst in Careers and Placements to monitor and review the engagement of students with protected characteristics, with the employability offer, supporting the delivery of reasonable adjustments to make activities more accessible, as well as advising on promotional messaging.

PARTNERSHIP WITH WICKLAND WESTCOTT

To continue to support students with protected characteristics into highly skilled graduate outcomes, this year we have partnered with a team of specialist recruiters and career coaches, called Wickland Westcott, to offer a package of support for our WP graduates.

70 graduates benefited from:

• Tailored support from a dedicated team to move them towards a fulfilling job
• 1-1 careers coaching - at least a 30 minute session over the phone
• Access to an online portal which includes information on job searches, CV preparation, interview skills and industry insights
• Regular webinars on a range of job sectors.

LGBT+ STUDY

This year, the University of York has joined with Clifford Chance, Deutsche Bank and National Student Pride to commission a study to look at the wellbeing of young LGBT+ people.

The ‘Out and Proud’ report was published in October 2019 and a set of recommendations have been provided to universities and employers on how to ensure environments are equal, safe and inclusive to LGBT+ people.

A number of recommendations given to universities relate specifically to the Careers Services, so we will be working to ensure our practice and our environment supports diversity and inclusivity.

Access the full report at https://trendence.co.uk/downloads/out-and-proud.
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’.

Since investing in the set up and roll out of the York Strengths Programme in 2017 the University has been able to gather data on two years of implementation, together with the evidence of an initial pilot. A number of positive outcomes have been identified which we are keen to build upon.

The York Strengths Programme offers all UG and PGT students a unique development programme to identify their most positive employability characteristics, or ‘strengths’, so that they have a better understanding of themselves, their areas for development and what employers are looking for in a graduate employee. As strengths-based graduate recruitment becomes increasingly common, our programme prepares students for the reality of the graduate labour market; 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.

The York Strengths Development Days are the cornerstone content of the York Strengths Programme, and it is our aspiration that all students will participate. In both 2017/18 and 2018/19, around 20% of the target cohort (in UG1) attended a Development Day. It is our intention to increase this significantly over the next two to three years.

We are confident that the Development Day is a high quality experience, and it is well received by students. Our data and evidence base will be built upon as more cohorts move through the programme.

Based on immediate student feedback in summer 2019, students scored ‘overall, I consider my experience today to have been’ 4.01/5. Students were also asked to rate their ‘careers confidence’. This moved from 2.90/5 at the start of the day, to 3.81 at the end, a 31.4% increase.

In response to the careers readiness questions in the most recent Enrollment questionnaire (2018/19) those students who had participated in the pilot of York Strengths in their first year and were now entering their final year of study reported that 78% of Development Day attendees had acquired work experience in the last 12 months, 18pp higher than non-participants. This group also reported being 8.8% more likely to have secured a graduate job or further study.

A number of changes have been made for 2019/20, including making more Development Days available in the Spring Term. Work is now underway, with the support of academic departments and student influencers on campus, to drive up engagement with the programme.

The York Award (539 students), York Award Gold (206 students) and Postgraduate York Award Gold (27 students) ran in 2018-19. Over the 2019/20 academic year we will be reviewing all elements of the York Award, to ensure the University has a reflective award that integrates effectively with the rest of the York Strengths Programme, and supports the journey map.

A strength is something you:
- are energised by (engagement)
- are good at (capability)
- use regularly (use)

“The feedback I received from the professionals was invaluable in order to understand how I could better myself. All around, I would highly recommend participating, to any student aspiring to develop their employability skills.”
NIKOS, YORK STRENGTHS DEVELOPMENT DAY ATTENDEE

“Whilst reflecting in my application, I actually paused for a second and thought to myself, wow I did develop as an individual significantly in just a year, but I had not realised that up until I wrote about it in the York Award application.”
LAYAN OKKEH, YORK AWARD APPLICANT

“The feedback I received from the professionals was invaluable in order to understand how I could better myself. All around, I would highly recommend participating, to any student aspiring to develop their employability skills.”
NIKOS, YORK STRENGTHS DEVELOPMENT DAY ATTENDEE

“The feedback I received from the professionals was invaluable in order to understand how I could better myself. All around, I would highly recommend participating, to any student aspiring to develop their employability skills.”
NIKOS, YORK STRENGTHS DEVELOPMENT DAY ATTENDEE

“After writing out my application for the York Award, I realised how much I was involved with University life in my first year at York. This really boosted my confidence and I was really happy with the impact I had.”
RAFEE, YORK AWARD APPLICANT

“A REFLECTIVE AWARD

The York Award (539 students), York Award Gold (206 students) and Postgraduate York Award Gold (27 students) ran in 2018-19. Over the 2019/20 academic year we will be reviewing all elements of the York Award, to ensure the University has a reflective award that integrates effectively with the rest of the York Strengths Programme, and supports the journey map.”
KEY OBJECTIVE 3

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

PLACEMENT LEARNING

After its approval by UTC in May 2017 the Careers and Placements led ‘with placement year’ module was made available to all eligible students in their second year. In 2018/19, a total of 21 students went out on placement; which was in line with the number anticipated from a cohort of students for whom this option was not available when they applied to York. For 2019/20 the total number of students confirmed to go out on placement is currently 41, a figure which is again in line with projections made in 2017. This means that students from 20 of York’s academic departments, including those offering existing ‘year in industry’ options will now be found on long term work placements in 2019/20.

YEAR IN ENTERPRISE

In March 2019 UTC approved the establishment of a ‘Year in Enterprise’ which acts as a placement year for those students seeking to set up their own business. This module is designed to be taken after the conclusion of normal degree studies, usually as a fourth year, to prevent those who succeed in building viable businesses having to abandon it to return to their studies. Two students have confirmed that they will be taking this option in 2019/20.

“I started working on my student storage business, Kitkeeper, two years ago. With the help of the Student Enterprise Team, I have been able to grow it into a well known brand across Yorkshire.”

MICHAEL MCCREADIE, YORK MANAGEMENT SCHOOL. WINNER: YORK BUSINESS CHALLENGE: STARTUP

“Networking events are allowing me to build a larger range of contacts which will be beneficial after leaving university.”

MATILDA LINDER, DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, FILM, TELEVISION & INTERACTIVE MEDIA. PLACEMENT YEAR AT DISNEY

“Year in Enterprise has developed me personally and professionally. My work ethic has been changed for the better.”

SOPHIE PEARSON, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT & GEOGRAPHY. PROJECT MANAGEMENT & PROCUREMENT INTERN AT NETWORK RAIL

YORK FUTURES SCHOLARSHIPS

Careers and Placements have worked closely with OPPA to review the mechanism for the disbursement of York Futures Scholarships to support the take up of work experience opportunities by students from WP backgrounds. The new system, which will be implemented in 2019/20, has a tiered system of awards which now range from £250 for those with relatively undeveloped career plans wishing to visit employers through to £6,000 to support unpaid or low paid placement years, either in the UK or internationally. The new system will also provide additional support to all applicants with WP characteristics. This will include access to employer visits, specialist advice and guidance and campus work opportunities.

“Networking events are allowing me to build a larger range of contacts which will be beneficial after leaving university.”

MATILDA LINDER, DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, FILM, TELEVISION & INTERACTIVE MEDIA. PLACEMENT YEAR AT DISNEY

“Networking events are allowing me to build a larger range of contacts which will be beneficial after leaving university.”

MATILDA LINDER, DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, FILM, TELEVISION & INTERACTIVE MEDIA. PLACEMENT YEAR AT DISNEY

“I started working on my student storage business, Kitkeeper, two years ago. With the help of the Student Enterprise Team, I have been able to grow it into a well known brand across Yorkshire.”

MICHAEL MCCREADIE, YORK MANAGEMENT SCHOOL. WINNER: YORK BUSINESS CHALLENGE: STARTUP

“Networking events are allowing me to build a larger range of contacts which will be beneficial after leaving university.”

MATILDA LINDER, DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE, FILM, TELEVISION & INTERACTIVE MEDIA. PLACEMENT YEAR AT DISNEY

2018/19

KEY FIGURES

21 students undertaking a central Placement Year

128 interns placed by the Student Internship Bureau

569 engagements with enterprise

15 businesses on our summer accelerator

2,276 volunteering opportunities

150 community partners

10,066 event attendees

829 attended a York Strengths Development Day

3,086 one-to-one interactions

491,081 unique Careers Gateway views