STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY 2016 – 2020

» Explore, Decide, Achieve

YOUR FUTURE PLAN
INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the University of Gloucestershire, we provide our students with the opportunities and support they need to develop into highly employable graduates. We aim to empower them to become confident architects of their own future. Every student is encouraged to start developing their Future Plan from their very first term at university, so that by the time they graduate they are well-equipped to make a successful transition to the next stage of their career.

1.2 This strategy describes our ambitions in relation to the employability development of our students and the steps we will take to achieve them.

SECTOR CONTEXT

2.1 Employment and further study outcomes upon graduation are currently used as a measure of student success in national league tables and in Key Information Sets comparing the performance of universities. Emergent Government policy for higher education suggests that in the future, these outcomes will be used as one indicator of the ‘learning gain’ for a student from their course of study.

2.2 The University of Gloucestershire’s employability practice has been commended by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). However, employment outcomes for our students are still not as good as we would like them to be. Statistics drawn from the 2013-14 Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, show that our Employment Indicator is very good – 94.3% of our students had moved on to a positive destination in work or further study, six months after graduation. However, the percentage of our graduates from the class of 2013-14 who secured a professional or managerial job within six months of graduation (60.7%) was lower than that for the class of 2012-13 (62.4%) and benchmarked poorly against the sector achievement of 75.1%.

Table 1: DLHE data 2009-2014
2.3 To improve upon these outcomes, we need to develop ‘a defined, cohesive and more comprehensive approach to employability’ which will ensure that every student is given the support they need, to maximise their chances of securing a graduate-level opportunity which is right for them.

3 OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Employability development is an essential element of a student’s learning experience at the University of Gloucestershire, both within and outside their academic programme
- We provide individual tutorial support to encourage every student to work on their Future Plan from entry to graduation
- The development of our students’ employability is a University-wide responsibility, shared by academic staff, professional services staff, the Students’ Union and students themselves
- Academic and professional services staff work in partnership, to make best use of expertise and resources for the benefit of all our stakeholders
- We draw upon the experience and expertise of our alumni and employers to support and develop excellent employability practice
- This strategy is aligned with the University’s Strategic Plan and other University strategies related to the student experience

4 OUR APPROACH TO EMPLOYABILITY

4.1 We have developed an agreed framework for employability, ‘Your Future Plan’ (see Appendix 1), which encourages students to ‘Explore, Decide, Achieve’ in the three domains of work experience, skills development and career management. Academic teams, personal tutors and professional services staff use the Your Future Plan framework to shape their employability practice and to structure conversations with students about their Future Plan.

4.2 We have a University Employability Statement (see Appendix 2) which provides an employability map for prospective and current students, clarifying how all aspects of their university experience provide opportunities to develop the skills and attributes that employers value.

4.3 We believe that developing the employability of our students improves their life chances. The University aims to provide, ‘A breadth and richness of experience which prepares students for rewarding lives and successful careers’. (See also Appendix 3.)

4.4 In 2012, the University stated its commitment to the development of student employability in its Strategic Plan, Goal 2 of which is ‘To promote enterprise, employability and wider economic, social and cultural benefit for the community.’ Since then, the development of employability activities and services has accelerated, so that by July 2015, the Quality Assurance Agency
singed out employability provision as an example of good practice during our Higher Education Review, commenting upon:

‘The wide range of effective initiatives which integrate employability and sustainability into the curriculum’ and
‘DegreePlus, ...which provides students with a range of extracurricular opportunities and awards to support high participation in placements and internships’.

4.5 These initiatives provide a strong foundation for further development but some are still evolving (for example, Your Future Plan), so this strategy supports the consolidation of existing approaches to employability, as well as promoting new areas for development.

5 AMBITIONS

This Student Employability and Employment Strategy will promote the following positive outcomes:

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Students are supported to:
- clarify their career goals and what they need to do to achieve them
- acquire the quality work experience, skills, attributes and self-belief they will need to be shortlisted for graduate jobs in their chosen field
- develop the career management skills they will need to identify, compete for and secure a graduate opportunity which is right for them

GRADUATE ACHIEVEMENT

Graduates:
- record a breadth of achievement in their CV and in their Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)
- leave feeling confident, resilient and well-prepared to apply for their first graduate position and to manage their career thereafter
- are willing to encourage current students to raise their aspirations, through participation in an alumni network and mentoring scheme

UNIVERSITY SUCCESS

The University:
- improves its position in employability league tables, particularly on the measure of graduates moving into professional and managerial jobs
- secures excellent feedback from students in the National Student Survey (NSS), Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey and the International Student Barometer (ISB) survey, regarding support for personal development, employability and career preparation
- enables more of its graduates to secure graduate-level positions in the county, contributing to the growth and vibrancy of the local economy
STAFF COMMITMENT
Senior managers:
- endorse and promote the development of employability as a key University activity
- require and foster the development of active internal partnerships to make best use of resources
- provide additional resources to enable the embedding and growth of outstanding employability provision

Academic and professional services staff:
- develop strategies to maximise student engagement with activities which will promote their employability
- embed employability and career management learning into academic programmes to engage and support all students, ensuring that the acquisition of employability skills is an explicit element of the course of study
- develop a collaborative approach to employability development, so that students receive consistent messages from academic and professional services staff and resources are used to best effect

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT
Employers:
- find it easy to engage with the University to recruit our students as interns, placement students and fully-fledged graduates
- include the University of Gloucestershire in their list of target institutions for graduate and placement recruitment
- support the development of our students’ employability through: input into the development, delivery and evaluation of the curriculum; sharing their expertise with students and staff as critical friends; contributing as mentors, guest speakers and exhibitors at events

6 MAKING IT HAPPEN – KEY THEMES AND ACTIONS
6.1 To achieve our ambitions, we need to address the key issues of how to:
• **Engage all our stakeholders** – to share the vision and work in partnership to make it a reality
• **Improve the quality of employability practice in all academic Schools** – so that no student is disadvantaged
• **Build closer relationships between stakeholders** – to enable active collaborative practice to develop
• **Resource existing and new initiatives** – to ensure outstanding employability provision for our students

6.2 This strategy sets out the ways in which we will do this. It supports the evolution and development of existing practice and the introduction of new initiatives which will enhance our support for students. Implementation of the strategy will take our employability provision from good to outstanding over the next five years.
6.3 ‘Your Future Plan’ was introduced to students in Level 4 during 2015-16. This initiative ensures that every student receives individual tutorial support to build their Future Plan from the start of their university career. This is a ground-breaking and exceptional offer in higher education. It encourages every student to be pro-active in seeking out the activities, experiences and support which will equip them to become the confident, employable graduates we want them to be. By offering individual support to students at each level of their course, we will keep them on track, raise aspirations and identify those likely to need additional support to achieve their goals.

6.4 To improve employability practice in all academic Schools, we will put in place a process of audit and evaluation of current activities to gauge their effectiveness and reach, using the Higher Education Academy’s Employability Framework as a point of reference (see Appendix 4).

DEVELOPING NEW PRACTICE

6.5 This strategy introduces new working practices which will capitalise upon previous investment, use existing resources to best effect and target new resources where they will make the most impact.

• By 2020, every undergraduate course will include a compulsory work placement to ensure that all students gain vital work experience. The quality of these placements will be monitored by the Future Plan team in partnership with academic schools.

• The University’s Postgraduate Strategy acknowledges that ‘[postgraduate] courses with a demonstrable employability focus...recruit better, especially courses with external endorsements and accreditations and involving work experience and strong links with employers’ so the inclusion of work-based or work-related learning in postgraduate programmes will be a focus for development. The Your Future Plan initiative will be extended to postgraduate students.

• Academic Schools and the Future Plan team will produce an annual Employability Action Plan, to show how they will contribute to the achievement of the ambitions set out in this strategy. This will underpin a cycle of review and evaluation which will help us to improve employability practice year-on-year.

• We will ensure that every academic School has its own specialist Careers and Employability Consultant, managed centrally by the Future Plan team but working within academic teams. This will support the implementation of Your Future Plan, the development of best employability practice and the preparation of students for their transition into work or further study. Generic Future Plan Employability Advisers will offer advice and guidance to all students and coaching and mentoring for students who need additional support.

• There will be a higher expectation, with corresponding improved support, that students will participate in quality co-curricular and extra-curricular activity, to broaden their experience during their time at University, and will record achievement in section 6.1 of their Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). We will offer an enhanced Award programme, encompassing a wider range of activities for students which may be verified for inclusion in their HEAR. We will ensure that
self-reflection is a key element of verification and improve accessibility through a digital process.

- Employer Engagement Groups will bring together colleagues from Schools, the Future Plan team and the Growth Hub to align their work with employers, clarify responsibilities, share expertise and streamline systems. This will enable us to develop excellent customer service for employers.
- Drawing upon the experience and talent of our alumni, we will create an alumni network to support current students as they investigate careers and occupations and plan for their future. We will offer additional mentoring and coaching to those students who may require it, to give them the confidence they need to launch themselves successfully into the next stage of their careers.

**KEY THEMES AND ACTIONS**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Engagement</th>
<th>• Extend Your Future Plan to all students from Level 4 to postgraduate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implement ‘Your Future Plan’ for all students</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Engagement</th>
<th>• Review and evaluate employability practice in Schools to produce an annual Employability Action Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review, evaluate and develop employability practice</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer Engagement</th>
<th>• Create Employer Engagement Groups to build and manage employer relationships effectively</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build strong external links and networks for the benefit of students</td>
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<tr>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>• Create Employer Engagement Groups, to improve internal liaison between Schools, the Future Plan team, the Growth Hub and the SU and make best use of expertise and resources</th>
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<tr>
<td>Foster collaborative working for the benefit of all stakeholders</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enhancement</th>
<th>• Offer mentoring and coaching to students needing additional support to make a successful transition into the graduate labour market</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide enhanced support where students require it</td>
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<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>• Provide the resources for:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide the necessary resources to support the growth of best practice in employability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personal Tutors to support Your Future Plan at all Levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Future Plan team to support academic Schools effectively</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Enhancement activities</td>
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MEASURABLE OUTCOMES AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

There are a number of identifiable performance indicators that can be measured across the life of this strategy. These include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Performance Indicator</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>Target 2018</th>
<th>Target 2020</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DLHE Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Percentage of graduates achieving a positive destination in employment or further study</td>
<td>94.3%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Percentage of graduates employed within Professional/Managerial level job roles</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Academic Schools and Course Areas to have defined Employability Action Plans</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools Quality and Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSS Results - Percentage of students agreeing that...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 University has improved their ‘Personal Development’</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 As a result of my course my career prospects have improved</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 I received sufficient support and advice from my institution about the organisation of my placements</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 My placements were valuable in helping my learning</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 My placements have helped me to develop my skills in relation to my course</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Key Performance Indicator**

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<tr>
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<th>Target 2018</th>
<th>Target 2020</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 My placements have helped me to develop my general life skills</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Future Plan – percentage of students completing Your Future Plan questionnaire</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>90% of Level 4 and 5 students</td>
<td>95% of all UG students</td>
<td>Student Services Academic Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Percentage of students recording achievement in section 6.1 of their Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Academic Schools Academic Development Unit Student Services Students’ Union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other KPIs**

**EVALUATION AND GOVERNANCE**

**8.1** For this Student Employability and Employment Strategy to be successful there is a clear need for the key objectives and actions to be driven formally throughout the institution, with a formal review of the progress made on a regular basis. An appropriate University Committee will receive and monitor Schools’ Employability Action Plans and Destinations data, to promote University-wide development of best employability practice.

**8.2** It is further expected that the Student Employability and Employment Strategy will be reflected within the Faculty and Professional Support Department Business Planning processes, in order that all appropriate areas within the institution develop a robust approach to supporting student employability and are accountable for their part in its delivery.

**8.3** To ensure effective implementation of the strategy through appropriate cultural change, it will be important that it is reflected in other institution-wide strategies when they are introduced and/or reviewed.
REFERENCES

1. Higher Education Academy (HEA) Employability Framework 2013

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Your Future Plan Framework
www.glos.ac.uk/yfpframework

Appendix 2: University Employability Statement
www.glos.ac.uk/employabilitystatement

Appendix 3: University Employability Overview
www.glos.ac.uk/employabilityoverview

Appendix 4: Higher Education Academy Employability Framework 2015