



**Career Development and Employability Subcommittee  
Meeting 1 – Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September  
Unconfirmed minutes**

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Meeting 1 15/09/15</b>
Richard Verrall (Chair)	√
Chris Clements, Education and Student Strategy Coordinator	√
Gemma Kenyon, Interim Head of Careers	√
Ben Butler, Student Development Manager	√
David Street, Director, Development and Alumni Relations	A
Viola Polakowska, Head of Alumni Relations, Cass	A
Alex Elkins, Enterprise Education Manager	√
Sarah Juillet, Director of PG Careers and Professional Development, Cass	√
Rob Melville, Cass Representative	A
Ffyon Reilly, Law School Representative (Pupillage Advisory Service)	√
Sarah Gale, Law School Representative	A
Laurence Solkin, SASS Representative	A
Alison Coutts, SHS Representative	√ *
Cristina Gacek, SMCSE Representative	A
Yusuf Ahmad, Students' Union Representative	√*

√ Indicates attendance

A Indicates apologies

\* Indicates present for part of the meeting

Attending: David Bolton (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Issy Cooke (President, CULSU)

## **1. Welcome and Apologies**

Apologies were received and noted.

## **2. Terms of Reference and membership**

The terms of reference for the group were noted, and the context of the group formation as a result of the Education and Student Strategy and hub structure explained. The importance of this area of work in view of the overall university strategy, following on from a comparative reduction in historically strong graduate employment statistics was emphasised. The role of the group in maintaining oversight of this area and acting as a springboard for new initiatives and focus was emphasised.

## **3. Existing work and ongoing provision**

Members of the group were offered the opportunity to emphasise key points from their submission on existing work in the area of Career Development and Employability. Members highlighted the following areas:

Interim Head of Careers - Highlighted work on developing modules supporting career development and employability working with colleagues in schools, hosting employer events and ensuring students have tools available to reflect on their employability.

Student Development Manager - emphasised the need for students to be able to reflect on the skills gained from their engagement in all activities they partake in. Further to this the success of the Professional Mentoring Programme and City Buddies was highlighted.

Enterprise Education Manager - summary of the work on student enterprise/entrepreneurship was provided, with work on mapping the journey of an entrepreneur providing similarities to the process of gaining employment.

As the Enterprise Education Manager was recently appointed and is currently performing a dual role alongside their previous role as Business Development Manager in SMCSE, some reflection on school activity was also offered. Best practice in module integration of Career Development and Employability in the School was highlighted alongside placement provision supported by the Professional Liaison Unit. It was noted that placement provision is mostly concentrated in one course and that this has not been expanded and there was some discussion on the scale of investment necessary to expand this across the university. It was highlighted that there is a potential cycle of engagement with employers taking on placement students leading to future engagement.

Cass Postgraduate Careers and Professional Development - With their cohort portfolio, it was highlighted that the Cass Postgraduate provision is somewhat unique; however there was discussion of best practice which could be drawn upon. In particular, engagement early in the student cycle was highlighted, with a careers presence at recruitment days and travelling to recruitment events. The careers service offers a verdict on applicant employability as part of the application process. There is a compulsory careers induction and compulsory engagement activity throughout the course, including timetabled activity. The Full Time and Executive MBA were highlighted in particular where the timetable is structured to allow for time is dedicated to employment searches. In total the Cass postgraduate cohort of approximately 1600 students engaged in an average of approximately 2½ one to one engagements and 4 workshop type activities per student. The Deputy Vice Chancellor highlighted the opportunity to look in greater depth at postgraduate careers provision for students in the other schools.

City Law School - The subcommittee was introduced to the City Law School Pupillage service, which is bespoke and looks to support students in gaining pupillage. The programme uses practitioners with knowhow on the recruitment process to support students, including through filmed interviews. Students are also supported in gaining pro-bono work in order to build their experience and bespoke support such as using Skype and e-mail to access international internships. It was emphasised that activity is delivered by lecturers and attendance at a lecture to receive information on the service is compulsory, which again was highlighted as an important aspect. The team delivering the service are trained to ensure consistency.

School of Health Sciences - Pre-registration students in SHS generally have a natural career route, however it was emphasised that is important not to assume these students needs. Postgraduate career opportunities are broad and it is important to not just focus on the vocational route but also other opportunities to use the skills gained in study in a wider context. In some postgraduate courses there is more of a conscious choice to specialise, and this is often linked to career aspirations. The Deputy Vice Chancellor commented on graduate employment indicators for undergraduate NHS courses being lower than other London universities and it was agreed this is an area of concern given the number of employment opportunities available.

Comment was made on the need to make it structurally unavoidable for students to engage in career development and employability. The support of academics was highlighted as key to when this was successful.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor highlighted there is a pattern of increased engagement, with some subjects that have not traditionally engaged in this activity now looking to do so. Students are now demanding more of the university in this area, with other universities highlighting specialist careers provision in all courses, including, for example, on Russell Group English courses.

It was noted that it would be beneficial to have an insight from SASS and further information from other schools at a future meeting to ensure all school needs are incorporated into the groups discussions.

**Action: SASS and SMCSE representatives to offer insight at a future meeting into their existing work and ongoing provision in this area.**

**Action – Key areas to be discussed as part of ongoing discussions, including how to ensure engaging with Career Development and Employability is structurally unavoidable for students.**

#### **4. Sector developments and other best practice**

The paper was introduced as highlighting some of the key areas of best practice from competitor institutions that perform particularly well on graduate prospects relative to the UCAS tariff and overall ranking of the University. From this a number of common themes from the employability provision across the high performing Universities were extracted.

##### **a. Employability in the Curriculum**

The embedding of employability skills within the curriculum can come in a number of manners, and some of these were discussed. There was not support for a generic elective employability module due to specific needs of our diverse range of courses and issues with lack of engagement. Discussion centred on the need for embedding employability within course and/or module design, ensuring this is based on developing key characteristics, but ensuring this is not just a tick box exercise. The need for curriculum to be current, relevant and industry facing was emphasised. This was viewed as a cultural movement towards delivery being focussed on these areas.

##### **b. Industrial Placements**

A number of the Universities with the strongest graduate prospects have a high proportion of students taking up an industrial placement as part of their course. It was mentioned that previous analysis has shown a clear link between students taking part in an industrial placement and graduate prospects. Discussion centred on the need to ensure students are supported throughout the placement process, including applications, preparation to enter the workplace and the opportunity to reflect after undertaking the placement. A small number of courses have already recognised the opportunity to develop a unique selling point and developed their placement provision considerably; however this is occurring in siloes and would require considerable investment to compete with other universities. University of Exeter was highlighted as an institution that has grown their placement provision significantly in recent years and the Interim Head of Careers offered to use her network to develop a better understanding of how this change was instigated

**Action: Interim Head of Careers to investigate developments at University of Exeter and current placement support at City.**

**c. Co-curricular work experience**

The issue of payment and the ability of students from low socio-economic backgrounds to partake in unpaid work alongside their course was highlighted as a potential issue. The committee was largely in agreement that if work is credit bearing, then this is viewed as educational activity and thus whilst preference would be for payment, it could be acceptable for it to be unpaid. It was highlighted that unpaid internships and placements are standard practice in a number of industries, which it would be difficult for the University to counteract. It was noted that students are eligible for student loans whilst undertaking industrial placements and some are actually highly paid. There is possibility to still develop work experience alongside studies without excessive time commitment, as displayed through Queen Marys QProjects and QConsultancy schemes primarily aimed at WP students.

The pro-bon work supported by the Law school was highlighted, in particular on project which was set up voluntarily but due to a lack of ongoing support could not be maintained and operation was taken over by a partner. This partner now charges students to take part in activity.

**d. Reflective and reward based employability award schemes**

It was noted that eight of the ten universities highlighted in the paper offer some sort of employability award, with the provision varying from schemes credited on students degree transcript to incentive based schemes offering opportunities such as paid internships to students taking part in employability based activity.

Discussion centred around the need for students to be able to reflect on the skills they are gaining, the need for an incentive to encourage engagement with employability activities and deciding how best to ensure that involvement is not just from those already engaged. There were particular concerns voiced about the number of students involved in this activity at universities where employability awards are offered. It was highlighted that there was a proposal approximately four years ago which was rejected on this basis.

The importance of developing “soft skills” for all professions was highlighted, with an emphasis that these are vital professional skills which will support students future success. The potential of an award to frame the employability journey of a student and act as a marketing tool to attract new students was emphasised. It was agreed that the idea was worth exploring further and a proposal outlining how an award to this type could be structured to be most effective at City would come to a later meeting of the group.

**Action: Student Development Manager to explore options for developing an employability award and present options to a future meeting.**

**e. Learning Gain**

The Interim Head of Careers outlined work currently being developed by The Careers Group, University of London into assessing learning gain in career development and employability throughout students’ time at university. This is based on asking 2 questions as part of online registration at the start of each academic year to assess where students’ are in the career planning process and their level of work experience. This then allows resource to be effectively targeted towards those most in need. The work was pioneered by University of Leeds and it was agreed that a paper on the outcomes from this and detailing how City could be involved moving forwards would come to a future meeting.

**Action: Interim Head of Careers to bring a paper with more detail on Learning Gain to a future meeting.**

**5. Priorities**

The group discussed the priorities for the year ahead, which step change activities may be the focus going forwards and what would constitute step change activity in the areas above.

It was determined that the focus for the next meeting should be how to review current placement activity taking place across the university, developing proposals for what an employability award would look like at City and how City could develop work in learning gain, with potential benefits.

Moving forwards it was agreed there should be a focus on those who do not currently engage in career development and employability work, including incorporating compulsory activity.

**6. Date of next meeting**

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2015 at 10.00am**

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