

Sector Innovations in Careers and Employability

Summary

To inform the work of the Career Development and Employability Sub-Committee this paper was developed to summarise current innovations in Career Development and Employability. This report extracts best practice from key competitors and examines the areas City may wish to focus on in the future, and was used by the group to give context to conversations on ongoing developments at the University given the level of innovation across the sector.

Key areas covered by the report include:

- Integration of employability in the curriculum
- Industrial placements
- Co-curricular work experience
- Reflective and reward based award schemes
- Learning gain

Recommended action

Education & Student Committee is asked to:

- (i) **Note** the report received by the first meeting of the Career Development and Employability Sub-Committee on Sector Innovations

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Sector Innovations in Careers and Employability

Following discussion on the Education and Student Strategy (2014-2020), the Career Development and Employability Hub has been identified as a priority for development. The destination for the Careers Development and Employability Hub in the strategy can be seen below with the Step Change Activity identified in the subcommittee terms of reference.

We support our students in developing their careers, realising their individual aspirations and enhancing their employability through a range of curricular and co-curricular activities. Our graduates are highly employable and innovative professionals who have benefited from opportunities to develop the skills they need to become the leaders and entrepreneurs of the future.

In order to ensure City University London reaches this destination and delivers the step change activity it is important to understand innovations within the sector. From these themes and projects may emerge for the Careers and Employability Sub Committee to further develop.

According to the Sunday Times University Rankings 2015, City University is ranked 35th for Graduate Prospects. Of those above City University, only Queen's University Belfast, University of Buckingham, Aston University, Swansea University, University of Kent and Robert Gordon University have a lower UCAS entry tariff. A full graph with selected strong performing and competitor institutions is available in Appendix 1. From this comparison, it is worthwhile considering best practice in particular from Bath, Surrey, Cardiff, Kent, Exeter, Loughborough, Robert Gordon, Aston, Swansea and Birmingham.

It is clear from reviewing their work that at the forefront of the employability work of these high performing institutions is an ethos of developing the individual in a holistic manner which is heavily endorsed by graduate recruiters. This is endorsed by the Association of Graduate Recruiters with Carl Gilleard, former Chief Executive stating "Twenty-first century graduates need to demonstrate to employers that they can 'hit the ground running'. In addition to working hard to gain a good degree, students should engage in extra-curricular activities and obtain work experience in order to develop skills that will make them better prepared for the world of work"

Integration of employability in the curriculum

Employability skills are inherently embedded within many courses due to their structure, both by design and as an offshoot of academic and personal development. From final year projects sourced from industry through to group work designed to develop collaborative practice there are a number of academic aspects which support the development of student employability. However in recent years there has been a concerted move toward more direct intervention in curriculum design. In some instances this has included offering either compulsory or elective modules based on employability skills.

One example of this is the Imperial College elective *Professional Skills for Employability* Module which is designed "to encourage students to understand and acquire a range of professional skills, including working as part of a team, giving a presentation, the importance of networking and understanding business etiquette."

There are also an increasing number of elective modules in enterprise and entrepreneurship, following on from Lord Young's 2014 report *Enterprise for All*, which encouraged "Universities to have an elective enterprise module available to all students".

There are already a number of innovations in this area at City, including the employability and the graduate market module as part of the LLB (Hons) Law course and final year MEng courses having a compulsory integrated design project, where students work with leading engineers from industry, to research and develop a design solution for a real and current project.

Alternative methods for embedding industry and employability within the curriculum can also be a part of larger collaborations such as Coventry University's "Faculty on the Factory Floor", run in collaboration with Unipart Manufacturing Group. This £32m project on Unipart's manufacturing site in Coventry aims to produce industry-ready world class engineering graduates, accelerate next generation powertrain related technology and disseminate research and new technologies for the benefit of Unipart, its suppliers and wider industry. This collaboration was £7.9m funded from the HEFCE Catalyst Fund with £17.9m funded by Unipart in addition to a further £5.6m towards student scholarships and product research and development. From this collaboration the University has developed new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Industrial placements

One of the most recognised and long established forms of employability in the curriculum is the undertaking of an industrial placement, over either a 6 or 12 month period. Aston University, University of Surrey and University of Bath have around 60% of students undertaking an industrial placement, whilst Loughborough have over 35% of students undertaking an industrial placement (HESA 2013/14). It is worth noting that of these universities Bath, Surrey and Loughborough do not have any other University rank above them for graduate prospects which does not have a greater UCAS tariff and Aston has only one. This is well in excess of the overall UK HEI average of 6.5%.

University of Exeter have shown that considerable increases in the number of students undertaking an industrial placement can take place, and have made "Excellent opportunity for high quality placements and internships and the development of employability attributes" one of the 6 aims of their education strategy. This has seen an increase from 0% in 2009/10 to 19.6% of 2013/14 leavers having undertaken a placement as part of their course.

According to the 2013/14 DLHE statistics, currently 4.9% of City University students undertake an integrated sandwich placement as part of their course. As part of this some of the Schools do operate placement teams to support students seeking industrial placement opportunities.

Co-curricular work experience

Increasingly there has been a developing focus on Universities supporting students to gain work experience as part of their course, without necessarily partaking in a full sandwich course. A number of approaches have been taken to this, from supporting conventional summer internships after the first or second year to more innovative initiative based on shorter term projects.

On such example of this is the Queen Mary University of London Qprojects initiative, winner of the Guardian University Awards Employability Initiative category in 2014. In essence this scheme looks

to match students to local charities to deliver projects that they would not otherwise be able to deliver. Typically these work experience placements total approximately 30 hours over 3 months and students are mapped to opportunities based on their needs and skill set, but are advised throughout the process. Queen Mary creates a job specification, shortlists candidates, co-interviews students and pays travel expenses. The scheme placed 228 students between May 2012 and October 2013, with a higher proportion of project leaders coming from lower socio-economic groups. 86% of project leaders who graduated in 2013 were in a graduate level job or study six months after leaving, 13% higher than the overall Queen Mary figure. This has now been expanded into a suite of programmes including QInterns and QConsult, where students are given training on consultancy by JP Morgan, then assigned to projects in local SME's.

The Coventry University Social Engagement for Employability Development (SEED) project aims to give international students, who often struggle to secure placements in the UK, access to real life work experience. Due to this the university decided to focus their efforts in the not-for-profit and public sector, working with bodies such as West Midlands Police, the NHS and Charities such as Save the Children and The Red Cross to offer experience whilst adding value to these organisations. With these organisations working with diverse social groups, and international students offering a different cultural outlook and linguistic abilities, the initiative quickly grew with 260 students having been involved in the first two years.

Given the "Heart of a Global City" hub as part of the Education and Student Strategy it is also worth considering employability schemes which also develop links to the local community. One example of this is RISE Sheffield, a collaboration of Sheffield City Council, University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and the private sector. Specifically aiming to attract highly qualified graduates into SME's in order to improve productivity levels in the city, the scheme removes much of the time intensive recruitment process from the business. This has resulted in a £5.71 return on every £1 invested in the scheme and of the first cohort of 50 students places, 40 converted into full time employment at the end of the 6 month internship.

Another example of successfully developing links between students and SME's has come through UCL. Through UCL Advances 102 students undertook either an eight or twelve week internship with small businesses in London over the summer of 2014. This internship scheme is part of a wider range of programmes, many which are also offered by other universities including student consultancy services and student start up support. The 12 week internships offered through the scheme were supported by the Santander Universities SME internship scheme, a programme in which City also participates. Through this scheme Santander funds £1500 towards a 3 month internship for recent graduates and in 2013/14 65% of these internships were converted into full time roles. This scheme has seen a significant increase in participation in the last year at City, with Unitemps now administering the project and all 15 Santander intern allocations being used.

Reflective and reward based award schemes

In the past decade a substantial proportion of Higher Education providers in the UK have launched employability award schemes, many with a bespoke set objectives aligned to the aims of the institution. Of those highlighted earlier as showing exceptional graduate prospects eight out of ten

currently offer at least one cross institutional personal development or employability award. These schemes can take on a variety of different forms, either being points based or involving a set of requirements, and being activity based or more reflective.

One example of this is the University of Kent *Employability Points* scheme, where students earn points through a variety of activities which add value to their employability. At the end of the academic year these can then be used to access over 550 rewards offered by external sponsors and partners. These vary depending on the number of points amassed from a paid internship, project placement or work experience through to a £10 Amazon voucher.

Others instead recognise the achievements of their students through formal recognition on their degree transcript, such as the Bath Award and the Swansea Award. Both of these are reflective awards, based on students completing a skills and employability assessment on themselves, then undertaking a series of activities including a combination of co-curricular activity, skills sessions and further reflection in order to add to their employability. Swansea also offer a range of other employability based awards including the Discovery Award (for volunteering), Sustainability Award and the International Award, offering accreditation for specific areas of personal development.

The University of Birmingham frames its employability offer through the Personal Skills Award (PSA). Students can achieve the PSA by undertaking one of our three pathways; each one helps them highlight your range of skills to prospective employers. The PSA (Foundation) opens up a suite of innovative online modules to develop the students skill set, exclusively for University of Birmingham students. The PSA (Modular) enables the student to practice their professional skills by undertaking bespoke accredited modules on topics such as leadership and project management. The PSA (Activity) recognises and develops the student skills by taking part in on-campus activities such as: being a Student Ambassador, sporting activities or external work experience and volunteering. There are over 200 on-campus activities recognised, offering the student the opportunity to undertake new experiences, meet new people, and prepare them for graduate employment.

Learning Gain

One new and expanding area of work is Learning Gain, the cognitive and skills gain of a student whilst at University. This is likely to expand across the sector with indications the Teaching Excellence Framework will increase the focus on this area. Within the careers field there is currently a pilot, led by The Careers Group, University of London, working with both constituent colleges and other Higher Education Institutions.

This work is focussed on using a small number of questions asked as part of the registration process, to measure students' work-readiness, in each year of study. From this careers services can target their services more effectively at ensuring those students most in need are the focus of career advice, development and guidance work. This is already operational at University of Leeds and a number of other institutions are looking to roll out a similar programme.

Graduate prospects v UCAS entry tariff



