Engaging employers to enhance teaching and learning

Ideas and approaches for work-related and placement learning
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Engaging employers in the curriculum at Reading

Welcome to this Toolkit developed by the University’s Centre for Career Management Skills (CCMS). It has been well evidenced that work-related learning and employer contact brings a range of benefits to students. These benefits include enhanced subject engagement¹, personal development² and improved graduate employment outcomes³. The challenge is how to provide opportunities for work-related learning and employer contact in ways which integrate and complement the curriculum, engage and develop the students and benefit the employer involved. Help is now at hand in the form of this Toolkit!

The beauty of this Toolkit is that it recognises that Schools will each be approaching employer engagement from different positions, both in terms of pedagogic aims and also previous experience of working with employers in this context; there is, therefore, no right or wrong answer and no ‘one size fits all’ solution. It can be used by those with limited employer engagement at present to explore the possibilities, and by those with a long history of involving employers, to reflect on their activities and investigate new approaches.

The Toolkit makes a great supporting resource for School-based review activities, not least because each approach in the Toolkit is exemplified by case studies of existing practice here at Reading. These examples contain contextual information as well as highlighting the positive impact employer engagement can have on teaching and learning. They provide an excellent starting point for discussion and consideration of practice in your own area.

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¹ Little, B, and Harvey, L. (2006) Learning Through Work Placements and Beyond, Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, Milton Keynes: Open University, p60
Introduction

‘Engaging Employers to Enhance Teaching and Learning’ has grown out of a research project at Reading undertaken by Julie Rees and funded by the Centre for Career Management Skills (CCMS).

The aim of the project was to identify the teaching and learning impact of different forms of employer engagement on the curriculum. The research revealed many examples of successful employer engagement that benefit the subject curriculum as well as employability, and identified eight distinct modes of engagement with employers (see figure 1).

The examples included in this Toolkit are indicative but not exhaustive of the rich diversity of practice at Reading. Many of the examples by their nature will be transferable to other courses and institutions. The examples span the vocational – academic spectrum and are relevant, even to programmes from which graduates seek a wide range of employment opportunities.

Implicit within the word ‘Toolkit’ is the notion of choosing ‘tools’ that are fit for purpose. Each school’s situation is different; there is no one size that fits all. This Toolkit describes in detail eight possible ways of engaging employers in the curriculum, not all of which might be appropriate for every school.

The Toolkit also provides further resources to assist schools which wish to reflect on how they are engaging with employers at present; to explore different approaches to engaging employers within their curriculum; and to identify and explore possible new activities and teaching methods that will enhance their students’ learning.
The Toolkit embodies values-driven educational change and programme level curriculum enhancement. It is designed to be used as a resource for facilitated workshops to support school-based discussion and, where appropriate, Periodic Review meetings. It aims to stimulate debate and create a non-directive space for academics to reflect on their subject in the context of employer engagement, and to seek situated and subject sensitive solutions.

Figure 1
Summary of research findings

What do we mean by employer engagement?
For the purposes of this research project, we use the term ‘employer engagement’ to embrace the multitude of ways that the University interacts with employers, including not for profit organisations. While it can refer to activities beyond the curriculum such as research collaboration, this research focuses upon employer engagement that directly impacts upon teaching and learning. Employer engagement encompasses work-related and placement learning, and activities designed to enable students to understand the real world relevance of their academic learning. Employer engagement has the potential to enhance the employability of students, to promote subject learning and to bring wider advantages for the University.

Methodology
The research was conducted during 2008 by undertaking in-depth interviews with 34 academics drawn from all Faculties, 12 employers, staff from the Centre for Applied Undergraduate Research Skills and Reading Students Union. A purposive sampling approach was used to discover examples of good practice. Respondents were identified through networking and by contacting all sub-Deans and Faculty Directors of Teaching and Learning. A round table discussion group was used as a sounding board for the project and comprised representatives from the Business School, the Careers Advisory Service, the Centre for Career Management Skills, the Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning, Research Enterprise Services and Student Recruitment and Schools Liaison. Findings were reported to the Faculty Directors of Teaching and Learning, PVC Enterprise and PVC Teaching and Learning. Feedback from all these sources was used to shape the presentation of research outputs.
Key findings
The research has identified clear benefits from engaging employers within the curriculum for the University, for our students and for employers. It has also revealed that there is further potential as yet unexploited to develop this aspect of learning and teaching at Reading, which could contribute significantly to the employability of our students.

Benefits for the University
• Improves teaching and learning of non-vocational as well as vocational programmes
• Improves number and quality of applications from prospective students, given the high priority placed on their future employability
• Provides opportunities for sponsorship, work placement opportunities, content for enquiry and problem-based learning activities, as well as networking and research contacts for staff and postgraduates
Benefits for students

• Provides a work-relevant and challenging curriculum and the opportunity to develop soft skills and business acumen
• Enhances graduate employability, particularly where prior relationships between employer and student have been built, for example through placements

Benefits for employers

• Provides opportunities to promote work-relevant curriculum content
• Raises profile and helps secure a source of employable graduates

Opportunities for the University of Reading

• Proximity to major employers in the heart of the UK’s ‘silicon valley’ is a unique benefit which could be more fully exploited
• The extent to which schools are engaging with employers varies considerably, hence there is scope for good practices to be shared widely across the University

Other findings

• Developing employer engagement is initially time-consuming but the ongoing effort is more modest and respondents feel the investment is more than justified by the long term gains
• Building durable employer-university relationships requires finding ways of working that bring clear benefits to both parties
• Schools that accrue the greatest benefits are those that value employer engagement as a whole school responsibility and have strategies for rewarding and recognising those staff playing a leading role
• How a school engages with employers should be related to the school’s approach to employability, which in turn should be related to how it aims to help students form a firm foundation for their life after graduation. Both will need to be congruent with the nature of the disciplines taught within the school. Employers are an important source of information about the rapidly changing challenges that graduates will face in the future workplace. Dialogue with employers can also help a school consider how employability might be built into a programme in appropriate ways.
Employer engagement is a relational activity; employers, universities and students all have responsibility for making the relationship work and each has potentially much to gain. By building links with employers and addressing employability, schools can help enhance graduate outcomes and signal to prospective students the schools’ commitment to employability. In the long-term, engaging with employers has the power to create a virtuous circle that benefits the schools’ recruitment and curriculum offer (figure 2).
8 types of employer engagement in the curriculum at Reading

1 Employers in the lecture room
Outside speakers working with academics to deliver lectures or assess activities.

Benefits for students
- Understanding of how skills and knowledge are used in the workplace
- Information from the ‘coal-face’ about opportunities within a sector
- Insider’s view of competitive business environment
- Current knowledge of developments in a sector

Benefits for school
- Theory augmented by relevant experience
- Industry standards to assess student work
- External expertise in skills training
- Teaching variety

Points to consider
It is a common misconception that inviting someone outside of the university to deliver a lecture on a specific area means less preparation and work for the lecturer concerned. This is not generally the case and initially using an external speaker will take the same if not more work than preparing the lecture yourself. While students might value an appropriate level of employer input, they may perceive a dilution of academic rigour if a module has too much employer contact.
Example  Theatre practice modules – BA Film & Theatre

Dr Teresa Murjas (Film, Theatre & Television) has worked in partnership with a number of professional theatre and art practitioners in delivering theatre practice modules at parts 1 & 2.

Practitioners are invited to devise 3–4 hour workshops – sometimes a workshop series – in order to assist students in developing a portfolio of skills which they can then apply to their own end-of-module projects. Practitioner-led workshops have covered a diverse set of topics including: the principles of the Laban school, set design and approaches to devising poetry-inspired performances. In one instance, a workshop on site specific theatre that ran over two weeks entailed students generating performances in various spaces around the Bulmershe Campus, using the properties of the space to create interactive installations. These workshops provide a valuable opportunity for students to undertake realistic projects with professional artists.

The skills and insights that the students gain enrich their wider academic learning. Furthermore, the breadth of experience enhances their employability and provides evidence for their CVs. Some of the professional artists provide their time freely (perhaps where they have previous involvement with the department – some are Alumni) while others are remunerated.

There are also other forms of motivation for the professionals involved: theatre companies see running workshops like these as an important way of developing and disseminating their ideas as well as generating future audience groups. The department benefits from being able to offer diverse and realistic experience of work in-house, which would be hard to source through external work placements. Throughout, the course tutor plays a key role in managing the input of externals, ensuring practitioners exemplifying a diverse range of modes are selected and that the workshops fit within the parameters of a module. The tutor is always present during the workshops to ensure continuity and coherence.
Example  Henley Business School and O2

Dr Chris Phillips of the Henley Business School has worked in partnership with O2 in creating and delivering the part 2 Marketing module. Delivery of lectures is split between Chris and O2, with lecture examples being so current that students are required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Students are set two pieces of work, one to write a detailed report outlining their recommendations; the second to give a presentation. On completion of the module successful students/teams can be offered either summer placements or 12 month placements with O2.

Useful references

London School of Economics

www2.lse.ac.uk/careersService/informationForEmployers/CareerEvents/SkillsSessions/skillssessions.aspx
Examples of different types of skills sessions that employers might run and guidelines for employers (see Code of Good Practice)

Nottingham University Business School

www.nottingham.ac.uk/business/ug/EmployerProgramme.html
Shows range of ways used by the school to engage students with employers
2 Employer advice on the curriculum

For in-depth dialogue between schools and selected employers. At Reading at least four schools have well established Industrial Advisory Boards with middle and senior management representatives from several relevant organisations. Although currently existing Advisory Boards are in vocational areas, the model could be adapted to non-vocational subjects. For example, an active alumni network could be used to gather feedback on medium term curriculum developments.

Benefits for students
- Curriculum informed by a culture of relevance
- Increased access to placements, prizes etc.

Benefits for school
- Sounding-board for new ideas
- Confidential employer and industry insights
- Feedback on module content and delivery
- Discussion of research opportunities
- Set curriculum discussions within a wider context
- Provides a structure for maintaining durable relationships at a senior level
- Possible financial contributions

Points to consider
It is important to get the right level of employer input. Too senior and they may not know what is happening at the grass roots. Too junior and they may not be aware of the bigger picture within the industry. One of the most important factors, however, is selecting someone who is committed to giving their time and who has their employer's backing.
Example  Industrial Advisory Board
– The School of Construction Management

‘In Construction Management the role of the advisory board is not limited to commenting on the curriculum, as teaching is the minority of our work, but we are looking for the advisory board to work with us in three key areas: the industry, the economy and society as a whole. I guess the key thing is that the reason we have such strong employer engagement is that we do not think of them as mere employers of our graduates, but as partners in the whole of our mission to develop new and robust knowledge about interesting things in the management and economics of the construction sector’.

Professor Will Hughes

Useful references

Liverpool University
www.csc.liv.ac.uk/~michael/industrial.html
Shows range of ways that the Dept of Comp Science at the University of Liverpool links with employers including the composition of the Industrial Liaison committee.

Sheffield University
www.shef.ac.uk/acse/industry/index.html
Sets out role, remit and membership of the Industrial Liaison Committee for the Department of Automatic Control and Systems Engineering at Sheffield University
3 Work-based learning

A range of activities that take place within a work setting, including: placements, work experience and some forms of volunteering, providing scope for application of subject understanding and exercise of graduate level skills.

**Benefits for students**
- Improved motivation to study
- Practical application of their subject area
- Experience of dealing with ill-structured problems
- Helps them decide what they do/don't want to do when they graduate
- Greater confidence
- Development of interpersonal skills and enhanced employability
- Accumulating experience which may be desirable/essential for work or postgraduate study

**Benefits for the school**
- Placements enable schools to offer learning experiences not available ‘in-house'
- More attractive offer to some potential applicants (and their parents!)
- Increasing applications from prospective students looking for degrees that include work-based learning.
- Improved employability and employment of their graduates

**Points to consider**

Introducing a placement programme takes time. A department needs to consider whether they have the resource to support such a programme. Successful establishment of a placement programme requires robust ownership from a ‘lead' person. However, advice is available within the university from existing placement officers and CAS to help with set up tasks. Some schools have given up an academic research position to enable them to have one person dedicated to developing relationships and working with employers. Up front investment is needed to find employers that can provide appropriate placements. Time is also needed to visit the employer so that they understand the placement requirements.
As part of their year abroad in third year, modern language students are offered the option of working for seven to nine months as an English language assistant in schools abroad through the British Council assistantship programme. The scheme is open to all students who have studied a modern language module as part of their degree, and final year students and recent graduates may also apply.

Assistants provide support for English teaching in schools (they can choose which age group they want to work with, from primary up to university level). They have to plan activities and games using a variety of teaching materials, to make classes more fun and interactive. Their work focuses on improving students’ confidence in communicating in English. On their return, students can also apply to become ‘student ambassadors’ for the British Council, whose role it is to actively promote the programme within their university.

An assistantship is worth 40 credits, and will count towards the student’s final grade. This is assessed at finals by a 5,000 word report (in the modern language that they are studying) that covers the following aspects of the teaching experience:

- The school, its facilities, staffing and pupils
- The welcome and initiation received and the nature of the ongoing support
- The range of classes taught, their size, type, aims and objectives
- Problems encountered in school and their resolution
- Successes achieved

The report therefore encourages students to record their experiences whilst abroad, and to reflect on what experience and knowledge they have gained. This report is submitted to the department at the beginning of Autumn term in the final year.

The central aim of the programme is to provide students with the opportunity to improve their language skills through the practical application of living and working abroad. It also provides invaluable professional experience for students who are thinking of pursuing a career in teaching. Feedback on the programme has shown that working as an assistant provides an excellent environment for the development of personal skills essential for any career: self-confidence and self-reliance, independence, problem-solving abilities, teamwork;
creativity, cultural awareness, and communication skills. Through the scheme, students gain a wide range of broad employability skills and develop personally and socially. Living abroad helps students improve their language ability and gain wider cultural awareness that enriches their academic study. The employers gain through having additional classroom support (from native English speakers) and the department benefits by being able to offer a popular and challenging learning experience.

Example  **Volunteering as part of the curriculum**  
- Pro bono writing credit, the School of Law

The Law School offers opportunities for pro bono work with a wide range of organisations which are promoted through an annual Pro bono autumn Fair. The key objectives of the project are to provide opportunities for students to develop legal and life skills which will both enhance their study of academic law and support them in their future careers. The specific skills gained by volunteers vary from project to project but in every case include development of research skills, social responsibility, community awareness and development of their own legal knowledge. These support the core learning of the law degree programmes offered by the School of Law and help prepare students for their future careers, both legal and non legal.

In addition to supporting a wide range of opportunities the Law School also runs three specific pro bono schemes:

- **Citizens Advice Bureau Training** – which lasts over six months and includes weekly seminars and a four day certificate course. Qualified students then go on to work as advisors at the Reading or Wokingham or other local Citizens Advice Bureaux

- **Street Law** - which involves students going to local schools to bring aspects of law and the legal system into the community through group sessions, presentations and debating competitions.

- **Mediation Training** - First year students are given the opportunity to complete an accredited mediation course offered by professional trainers based at the organisation Resolve.

Final year students involved in Pro bono work are able to count their experience towards a full 20 credit Pro Bono Module. Students taking the module volunteer with an approved organisation for a period of six to nine months and complete an online portfolio reflecting on various aspects of their experience and the organisation concerned.
Example  Part Two ‘Communications at Work’ module
– The Department of English and American Literature (DEAL)

In this module, English students consider aspects of language and other communication tools during the seminar phase of the module. These include: TV media broadcasting; the history of print media; the art of the press release; semiotics; marketing and publishing; technology and communication.

In all of these areas, the focus is principally upon the use of language, thus picking up on the close reading skills which students have already gained, and the application of what they have learnt to new situations and material.

A key aspect of the module is that of placements: students undertake a two week communications placement which allows students to work directly with employers and puts their seminar-based learning into the work place. Students work with placement providers to develop a project based on communication issues within the placement organisation. The students then produce a fieldwork report which has a word limit of 2,000 words and comprises analysis of one or more aspects of communication in the workplace as encountered by the student.

This allows students to analyse communication in a workplace setting; it deepens their understanding of language and wider communication within this setting and enhances their skills base as they apply their skills within a professional organisation. The links between the university and the wider world are also strengthened by this module.
Example: Prospect Park Hospital – School of Psychology

At the start of their second year, Psychology students have the option of volunteering to work a number of hours at Prospect Park Hospital. Prospect Park runs a ‘drop in’ centre for patients with mental illnesses. Patients select from a range of therapeutic courses, e.g. art, gardening, cooking. Student volunteers help staff at the hospital deliver these courses. Students gain invaluable first hand experience with real patient cases, which helps improve their understanding of psychology. Staff from Prospect Park come to the university to provide six 2 hour training sessions for volunteers; the university process students’ CRB paperwork to allow them to participate in this programme. This scheme, initiated by a student and subsequently adopted by the Students Union, is now in its third year. Over 25 students take part each year.

Useful references

ASET
www.asetonline.org/advice.htm
ASET describes itself as the professional body for placement and employability staff. Its website provides practical guides covering most aspects of setting up and running work experience schemes, including providing for students with disabilities.

Centre for Excellence in Work-based Learning (CEWBL) CETL
www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/Schools/iwbl/cewbl/index.aspx
Based at Middlesex University; works with business to support students in work to gain UG and PG qualifications (including doctorates) based on their employment experience.

Centre for Professional Learning from the Workplace CETL
www.wmin.ac.uk/page-5818
Based at Westminster University; undertakes wide range of employability related projects.

Higher Education Academy
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/employability/workbasedlearning
Links to examples of and reports on campus-based learners gaining experience in the workplace, or simulations and context cases that give students experience mirroring real work situations.

Keynote Project
www.leeds.ac.uk/textiles/keynote/Keynote_WPG/index.htm
Comprehensive set of free web-based guides for students, staff and employers that cover the time before, during and after work placements.
Useful references

NCWE
www.work-experience.org/ncwe.rd/products_36.jsp
Priced products including a Tutor Resource Pack to help prepare students for work experience.

PlaceNet – forum for HE placement professionals
www.placenet.org.uk
Charity for HE Placement Officers and Tutors, employers and others concerned with student placements. Runs a mail base to enable staff to share and communicate, and works with employers to improve placement practices.

Practice Based Professional Learning CETL
www.open.ac.uk/pbpl
Based at the Open University this CETL addresses learning which arises out of, or is focused on, working practice in a chosen job, voluntary work, career, or profession. This includes courses and learning activities linked to formal work placements, those which require the application of course ideas in a work setting and those which build on experience gained in a work setting.

QAA Code of practice on work-based and placement learning
www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeofpractice
Guidance on quality standards for work-based and placement learning

Rate My Placement
www.ratemyplacement.co.uk
Students can read reviews of placements written by other students and search for opportunities.

Step Enterprise
www.step.org.uk
Offers variety of work placement opportunities including Government schemes. Works with business and universities to make work experience more accessible for students.
4 Work-related learning

Learning at university based as closely as possible on real work situations and encompassing teaching methods such as case studies, projects, study visits and simulated work environments.

**Benefits for students**

- Application of discipline theory and knowledge to practical problems
- Development of problem solving and decision making skills
- More challenging and energising curriculum
- Wider range of relevant experiences to draw on for job interviews and easier transition into the workplace

**Benefits for the school**

- Creates the conditions for students to encounter challenging situations in a controlled manner.
- Teaching environment can be structured to enhance the learning, improve reflection or focus on particular learning outcomes and assessment tasks in ways not possible within the workplace
- Provides realistic experiences that could not logistically be made available in sufficient numbers in actual workplaces

**Points to consider**

Work-related learning depends upon authenticity for effectiveness. Finding appropriate employer contacts to help co-develop authentic material, however, is not always easy. Alternatively, university staff with relevant employment experience may create realistic material. Either approach requires considerable time. Due to the complexity of creating and delivering work-related learning, schools may wish to consider at a programme level how such methods are used most effectively. Annual evaluation can help ensure that the school and employer continue to find the collaboration beneficial.
Alun Rowlands and Christine Ellison, Fine Art, have worked with Capitol Bracknell (a subdivision of Deutsche Bank) to develop a professional practice element for all Part 2 and 3 students as part of their studio modules. Teaching components are delivered by FA staff in the department and resourced in kind by Capitol. Fine Art organises an art exhibition and competition financed by Capitol for which students are asked to develop and enter a proposal.

Fine Art Academics and the Capitol’s commissioning team select a shortlist of 25 entries, and curate a public exhibition together at Capitol Bracknell. Selected students negotiate and discuss the exhibition of their individual works with the organisers. A final winner is selected by Capitol and receives a purchase prize as part of an award ceremony with local dignitaries and press.

Capitol and Deutsche Bank which has an internationally renowned art collection gain a new item for their art collection. This event also serves Capitol to promote and attract new audiences to their building development. Fine Art students gain valuable real-life experiences. The department, which already has links with the company through students who work as interns at the Frieze Art Fair each year, are able to strengthen relationships by working closely with key employees.
Dr Alina Congeve and Reading Borough Council have devised a group assignment for students to work on ‘real life’ planning situations. Students work in mixed teams and have access to council information to help them work through the case study. The proposals are then submitted to Dr Congreve and presented to representatives of Reading Borough Council. The group case study is a win-win situation for the council, students and the university. The council has work undertaken at a fraction of the cost that they would have had to pay a consultant; students do ‘real work’ which benefits their learning and understanding of their degree subject and gives them a valuable example to use in interview; the university forges relationships with employers, something that prospective students (and their parents) are anxious to see; and the collaboration also benefits the wider Reading community.

Maria Gee has created a case study approach to career learning that delivers the learning outcomes for the Part 2 Career Management Skills module. Students work in teams simulating the role of recruitment consultants. The team’s task is to hire a new member of staff to a client company. Students must develop an advertisement, job description and person specification for the post. They are then provided with realistic fictional CVs (designed by the Careers Advisory Service) and have to create and apply a selection process to determine the most suitable candidate. Students are put in the employers’ shoes, experience different work roles, and learn about the fundamental principles of job seeking and personnel selection through a realistic scenario.

For this 10 credit module students are assessed via a team written report, a team oral presentation and an individual reflective essay. In designing the module Maria drew on her personal knowledge of business and on expertise from the Careers Advisory Service. Student feedback has been very positive and indicates that the approach has led to significant learning gains.
Useful references

Case based learning in Politics
www.hud.ac.uk/cbl
8 examples of ways of including work-related learning in the curriculum from this FDTL funded project at the University of Huddersfield.

Context learning materials from Pauline Neal
www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/courses/other/casestudies/
Context has been established with the aim of promoting the use of case materials in higher education and employment. Case materials are designed to meet the needs of students for group working, decision-making and experience of work. They are based as closely as possible on real work situations and issues (in business, government and the voluntary sector). Context cases aim to give students work experience without going to the workplace.

Higher Education Academy
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/employability/workbasedlearning
Examples of and reports about campus-based learners gaining experience in the workplace, or simulations and context cases that give students experience mirroring real work situations.

TIBER – The Integrated Business Education Resource
teaching.shu.ac.uk/om/thebusiness/website/new_project
TIBER is an FDTL5 project which offers a package of materials that can be used to integrate the first year Business Studies curriculum. The resource is based on a replica company - a department store chain which has a website and a staff intranet (which holds additional information). The project has also produced a replica logistics company (Logistics plc) and produced a catalogue of learning activities that make use of both of these resources.
5 Mentoring relationships

A long term relationship between a more experienced person (in employment) and a student, to help the latter develop in their understanding of the world of work.

Benefits for students

- Individual personal attention
- In-depth insight into a particular organisation, its culture and area of work
- Role model and encouragement
- Networking opportunity that may assist with finding a job
- Helps students understand what employers are looking for
- Advice on knowledge and skills employers require and how to demonstrate them

Benefits for school

- Powerful means of building links with alumni and involving them in the life of the school
- Offers alumni a non-financial way of contributing to the school
- Mentoring can run alongside normal timetable commitments
- A flexible and time efficient way of linking students to the workplace that does not require days or weeks of off-campus attendance

Points to consider

A mentoring relationship is a supportive and confidential one. Mentoring can be offered to a whole student group, or through a selective process to allow for targeting at perhaps ‘high-flyers’ or at vulnerable groups. The level of commitment expected from the mentor can vary widely, for example the number of times they will meet the mentee, the duration and the scope of the relationship.

A school’s alumni are an excellent source of volunteers who are likely to understand the challenges facing current students and have a natural affinity to their old institution and school. Establishing systems to maintain active links with alumni can be highly advantageous. Many larger companies also encourage employees to have ‘educational liaison roles’ as part of their staff development, so regionally based employers can also be a useful source of mentors. Both mentors and mentees will require careful briefing on their respective roles and their expectations from such a relationship. Consideration
should also be given to the extent to which matching the background of the mentor to the aspirations and interests of the mentee can result in productive outcomes.

Example  
**Reading Real Estate Foundation**  
– School of Real Estate and Planning

Last year the School of Real Estate and Planning introduced a student mentoring scheme where 125 students have been matched with an industry mentor. This initiative has been set up with the help and support of RREF (Reading Real Estate Foundation). The Foundation is funded solely by Real Estate and Planning alumni and provides help and support to the school in a number of ways: providing regular speakers from industry, organising dedicated career fairs, sometimes providing work experience opportunities, funding research and academic chairs.

**Useful references**

*Aberdeen Business School*  
[www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/documents/employability/230305_RGUmentor_paperPDF.pdf](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/documents/employability/230305_RGUmentor_paperPDF.pdf)  
Describes use of HR professionals at the Robert Gordon University to mentor postgraduate students to help ease transition into employment

*Department for Education and Skills*  
Good practice guidelines, written for schools but some aspects are transferable to university context.

*Miller, A., (2002),* **Mentoring Students and Young People: A Handbook of Effective Practice,**  
London: Kogan Page.  
Includes a chapter on business mentoring in HE

*The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF)*  
[www.mandbf.org.uk/resources](http://www.mandbf.org.uk/resources)  
The MBF is the national strategic body for England. Its website includes resources for mentoring schemes (mainly aimed at pre-HE sector).
6 Employability modules

Modules specifically addressing employability issues that could include student identity, the nature of the graduate labour market, career choice, self efficacy, self-awareness, skills development, job seeking, enterprise and entrepreneurship and critical exploration of the concept of ‘career’.

Employability modules can be combined with content on Personal Development Planning, lifelong learning, study skills, work placement preparation or reflection and professional development.

Benefits for students
- Opportunity to focus exclusively on inter-relationship between degree, self and future plans
- Time is set aside within the curriculum for employability issues
- Future plans can be explored in dialogue with school and the Careers Advisory Service (CAS)
- Opportunity to reflect on own ideas as part of a structured process

Benefits for school
- Natural opportunity for employer/alumni presentations
- Intellectual space for employability-relevant aspects of degree to be drawn together
- Team teaching with CAS and/or other departments and services within the University

Points to consider
How does the timing of the module relate to key decisions that students face? How does the module sit in relation to the rest of the programme? How far is the module content congruent with the rest of the degree’s curricula? Schools will want to consider how employability might be addressed progressively throughout the degree, strategically using dedicated employability modules to complement more embedded content.
Example  Career Management Skills (CMS) – School of Humanities

This module in the School of Humanities aims to provide students from Philosophy, Classics, History, and History of Art with the opportunity to develop self-awareness in the context of career decision-making, knowledge of the career opportunities that are available to them, and the skills to make effective applications.

The first part of the module component focuses upon individual and organisational values. Personality questionnaires are used to encourage students to reflect on what they might like from a career and, from their responses, identify recurrent themes. These themes can provide important criteria for reviewing their career options in the second part of the CMS module.

The second part of CMS offers students a menu of workshops that are tailored towards their needs. Sessions often include recent alumni talking about their experiences or speakers addressing development opportunities within Reading, for example the Student Ambassador Scheme and enterprise modules. For CMS students choosing two workshops, typical options include:

- Careers using your History Degree.
- Careers using your Philosophy Degree.
- Careers using your History of Art Degree.
- Careers using your Classics degree.
- Mature Students – What next?
- Finding work experience.
- Working in the media.
- Working in charities and the government.

The third part of CMS concentrates upon CVs, and applying for work. The Careers Advisory Service uses a ‘before-and-after’ self-evaluation tool so that students can identify the amount of learning they have achieved as a result of CMS.
Example Career Management Skills (CMS) – Department of Mathematics

Mathematics Professor Peter Grindrod has recognised the importance of not just teaching the skills related to studying mathematics, but also making students aware of how these skills are relevant to a whole range of different careers. ‘A Maths degree doesn’t have an obvious career path, so it is important that the students recognise the skills they learn from the degree so they know the types of jobs that value these skills when they graduate. Through the Career Management Skills (CMS) module we encourage students to consider different career paths by using our alumni to give presentations on their careers to our students. We then ask the students to investigate one specific job in a company that interests them’.
Example  **Practice of Entrepreneurship**  
– a cross-faculty accredited entrepreneurship module

The Centre for Entrepreneurship provides students from across the University of Reading with a chance to experience entrepreneurship. The 20 credit Practice of Entrepreneurship module attracts up to 150 students from Part 2 to Masters level and across all subjects. During the module students form teams, formulate business ideas and construct a business plan. Throughout the module, industry professionals, successful University of Reading alumni and experienced entrepreneurs deliver guest speaker sessions to give a taste of entrepreneurship in practice. The module also allows students to engage in surgery sessions and facilitated business planning games; expert surgery sessions have included IP lawyers and commercial bank managers. Toward the end of the module, guest speakers return to assist in judging the entrepreneurship exhibition, where students pitch their ideas in a high intensity trade-show environment.

Whilst only a small number of students start up a business on completion of the module or immediately on graduation, all students benefit from gaining an insight into a variety of business functions such as finance, marketing and management, and learning business skills including building a successful team, budgeting and conducting market research. Students develop their employability and career planning skills by learning how to evaluate their skills and motivations, understanding the entrepreneurial mindset, developing commercial awareness and demonstrating the application of key communications skills including teamwork, networking and pitching. By linking in with employers and entrepreneurs, the University can provide students with up to the minute insights into a variety of careers and entrepreneurial trends. Having supportive guest speakers and facilitators enables innovative teaching, learning and assessment including the Entrepreneurship Exhibition.

This event also attracts media attention and corporate sponsorship, helping to raise the profile of Entrepreneurship at the University and secure further support.
The entrepreneurs involved gain a great deal of satisfaction by sharing their learning from their own successes and failures with the next generation of entrepreneurs. Through their involvement they also benefit from networking with other entrepreneurs, professionals and academics, and gaining access to wider University networks. Employers get a chance to interact with the most enterprising students at the University of Reading and locate potential bright sparks. Involvement in teaching programmes also leads to the development of collaborative projects and placements for large and small employers.

Useful references

Careers Education Benchmark Statement
www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/33-Careers-Education-Benchmark-Statement
Guidelines on including career learning within the curriculum and brief examples of employability modules

Careers education case studies
www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/66-Careers-Education-Case-Studies-Series
Further more recent in-depth examples of careers/employability modules

Developing Entrepreneurial Graduates:
Putting entrepreneurship at the centre of higher education
cihe-uk.com/category/themes/key/enterprise
The report aims to provide practical guidance to stakeholders charged with the development of the entrepreneurial abilities of students and graduates.

Integrating Employability, PDP and Work-based Learning within the Curriculum
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/documents/employability/191004CaseStudy3.pdf
Shows how the School of Media, Language and Music at the University of Paisley integrated Employability, PDP and Work-based Learning within the Curriculum.

Napier University - Elective employability/PDP modules
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/documents/employability/JudyGoldfinch_revised.pdf
Describes 30 credit elective modules

National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (NCGE)
www.ncge.com/communities/education/
Has dedicated area for staff involved in promoting entrepreneurship through the curriculum

Realistic Work Experiences
www.uclan.ac.uk/ahss/ceth/realistic_environment/rwes.php
Realistic Work Experiences – approaches to embedding employability learning experiences within non-vocational disciplines devised by the Centre for Employability Through the Humanities CETL at the University of Central Lancashire.
7 Accreditation programmes

Degree programmes or parts of programmes that are accredited by professional, regulatory or statutory bodies.

Accreditation usually requires that the programme covers specific content. Sometimes students are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their degree discipline by spending a specified number of hours working practically in that field or by completing a work-related assignment in a company. A variation on professional accreditation is where a company recognises a particular degree and provides support and work experience opportunities for students studying for the degree. Examples of accredited programmes at Reading include many courses offered by the ICMA Centre, the (MPharm) Pharmacy degree programme and the BSc Quantity Surveying degree programme.

Benefits for students

- Gaining an ‘industry’ standard qualification
- Laying a foundation for future professional progress
- Curriculum activities grounded in real world practice
- Developing links with an employer which might lead to an offer of employment

Benefits for schools

- Offering a course that can attract those seeking a clear employability dividend
- Curriculum content informed by close collaboration with profession
- Potential research work with external bodies
- Spin off benefits for other cognate programmes
- Kudos for school
Points to consider
Accreditation programmes require an ongoing commitment of time and financial resources from a school to meet the necessary standards. These external requirements impose some restrictions upon curriculum content, and can have implications for staff recruitment. In so far as the accreditation entails work placements, then schools must also service this requirement. More broadly accreditation poses questions about how schools enable staff to develop employer facing roles. Some schools might prefer staff to adopt specialist roles (academic or employer facing) while others may see advantages in combined roles.

Example  MEng degree – School of Systems Engineering

The MEng. Program in Electronic Engineering starts to differ from the BEng. at the end of the second year. The emphasis on practical and laboratory work is even greater in the MEng. Programme. There is a major project in the third year and a six month industrial placement in the forth year (for which students are paid by the employer). This course fully meets the educational requirements set out by ECUK for Chartered Engineer status.

The School recognises the importance of industrial experience to employers and hence has a dedicated Placement Officer whose role is to assist students in finding placements. The Placement officer also helps the students with writing CVs, interview skills and recruitment tests. Whilst on placement students are visited by faculty staff several times to ensure that they are offered challenging work and opportunities to learn.

Useful references

Alliance of Sector Skills Councils
www.sscalliance.org
Portal website linking to all 25 Sector Skills Councils

Higher Level Learning (UUK, 2006)
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Publication-251.aspx
Publication containing many case studies of accredited and badged degrees at Foundation, Undergraduate and Masters level throughout the UK at research as well as business facing HEIs. Examples are themed around economic sectors.
8 Sponsorship and scholarships

The provision of financial support for students towards study costs, often including opportunities for paid work placements as part of the degree or during vacations. The provision of financial support to the university for academic prizes and awards, equipment, facilities or events.

Scholarships are often used by companies to attract more students to a specific degree discipline in order to secure a supply of suitably qualified future applicants.

Benefits for students
- Additional funds and work placements/vacation opportunities
- Opportunity to demonstrate academic achievement through competing for prizes

Benefits for school
- Kudos from endorsement of the courses by external bodies
- Improved ability to attract high calibre applicants
- Funds for added value extra-curricular events
- Companies involved with sponsorship and scholarships also tend to lend their support to the schools by attending open days and generally supporting the school in other ways

Points to consider
Schools will usually publish details of these schemes in promotional material and on the schools’ website. However, the administration and management of these schemes are usually run by the companies themselves. Employers are increasingly selective about which universities to work with. They will monitor the impact of their collaborations to see if and how it generates successful future employees. It is important that schools invest time and effort to ensure that collaborations are effective in order to retain existing employers’ sponsorship and to attract new ones.
Example  Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences

As one of the leading universities in Food Bioscience in the UK, undergraduates of the department can apply for company sponsorship and scholarship opportunities with major food companies. For example Northern Foods offers 10 annual student sponsorships of £1,000 each year of full time study (excluding placement year). GlaxoSmithKline provide scholarships of £1,100 per year (for each of the three teaching years the student spends at Reading) for the best two students entering the department to study a BSc course. Students are selected by the department based on the best overall performance in science A Levels. Sainsbury’s, Dairygold Food Ingredients and Kerry foods provide a similar level of sponsorship for final year students who have successfully completed an industrial placement with them.

Dairygold Food Ingredients also offer £200 prizes to students taking BSc Nutrition and Food Science for the best exam results and a £200 prize for the best MSc Nutrition and Food Science research project. Dairy Crest and NFU provide scholarships to children of farmers from Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset.

Useful references

Best Practice Building Network
www.cebe.heacademy.ac.uk/BPBN/casestudy/kingston_ssg1.htm
A detailed description of an FDTL 3 funded project to embed company sponsorship within a degree programme.

Higher Level Learning (UUK, 2006)
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Publication-251.aspx
Publication containing many case studies of accredited and badged degrees at Foundation, Undergraduate and Masters level throughout the UK at research as well as business facing HEIs. Examples are themed around economic sectors.
Making use of the research

Using employers effectively to enhance teaching and learning

Like any educational intervention, employer engagement should be driven pedagogically. The starting point should be:

- Why do we want to involve employers?
- How can this add value?
- What is the best way to use employers?
- How can we access suitable employers?
- Why might employers want to get involved in our curriculum?

Involving employers in the curriculum is not straightforward. Time has to be allowed to make contact, identify suitable staff to work with and organise arrangements. For many employers, operating in Higher Education will be an unfamiliar experience. Careful briefing to ensure that activities are undertaken in an appropriate way is important and employer interactions might be evaluated more effectively by a course team, to ensure that quality is maintained.

Some schools already have very well established links with employers. For those that would like to explore avenues for engaging employers within their curriculum and wider activities, possible starting points might include:

- Research and Enterprise Services (RES)
- Centre for Entrepreneurship (CfE)
- Careers Advisory Service (CAS)
- Employers of your recent graduates, as per the DHLE survey data available from CAS
- Alumni of the school
- Regional Development Agency, e.g. South East England Development agency (SEEDA)
- Sector Skills Councils and professional bodies
- Employer groups, e.g. Council for Industry in Higher Education (CIHE), Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR)
Durable relationships hinge on mutual respect and interest. Schools need to provide a convincing rationale to persuade an employer to invest their time and efforts in helping our students. To ensure a productive two-way relationship schools must be able to articulate what the employer should expect to get out of the arrangement, as well as the university and its students.

**Examples of win-win scenarios for employers and the university**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Benefits for the university</th>
<th>Benefits for the employer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employers provide real problems for students to work on</td>
<td>Students are motivated by challenging realistic tasks</td>
<td>Range of new ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers provide staff for delivering skills training/mentoring</td>
<td>Curriculum enriched, students get access to individual support/role models.</td>
<td>Staff development opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers provide work placements</td>
<td>Students gain valuable experience and pay</td>
<td>‘Tries-out’ potential employees and attracts future applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers provide presentations, sponsorship of events or prizes</td>
<td>Funds for added-value activities, kudos helps to attract UCAS applicants</td>
<td>Raises profile and has direct contact with suitable applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers take part in university fora e.g. an industrial liaison board</td>
<td>Stakeholder feedback on curriculum and information about developments in wider political and commercial context</td>
<td>Senior level contacts, potentially useful research opportunities, plus affects long term supply of suitable graduates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developing a programme specific stance toward employer engagement: Reflecting on current practice

Employer engagement cannot happen overnight; ideally practice and policy emerges out of wide ranging discussions that enable a school to arrive at a clear understanding of what employer engagement means for the programme and its students. Developing a programme-specific strategy is helped by:

- Examining the employability context of your students by using DHLE returns (and for staff at Reading using entry standard data from Planning Support [www.reading.ac.uk/closed/planning/planning/DepartmentalDataMenu.asp](http://www.reading.ac.uk/closed/planning/planning/DepartmentalDataMenu.asp))
- Establishing the current level of practice within the programme
- Examining ways used by cognate disciplines (by, for instance, using this booklet, talking to colleagues and seeking advice from HEA Subject Centres)
- Drawing on expertise within the University (e.g. CAS, CDoTL, Centre for Entrepreneurship)
- Allowing time and space for staff to discuss the practical and theoretical issues raised by employer engagement
- Linking with other enhancement cycles (e.g. Periodic Review and the Pathfinder Process) when possible
- Taking a programme level overview of activities
- Involving alumni as a resource - can give post-graduation feedback, and are an important point of employer contact
- Identifying priorities and allocating roles based upon a shared school-wide responsibility

Where are we now?

The following reflective questions and the associated “prioritisation grid” are intended as tools to assist schools to reflect at a programme level on the effectiveness of current employer engagement activity within their curricula and to prompt discussion about how activity might be developed further. This tool is designed to be used with each of the eight types of engagement identified through the CCMS research and recognises that the relevance of these eight types will necessarily vary between programmes.
For each aspect of employer engagement, there are six reflective questions to consider. The two reflective questions with numerically coded responses (questions 1 and 3) provide a way of quantifying how important any particular way of engaging with employers is for a school (or a programme within a school) and conversely how well the school is doing in this area. By transferring scores onto the grid below you can compare the relative importance and performance of current activity. In this way the grid allows the situation in relation to each of the different forms of employer engagement to be contrasted and can help to identify those aspects that your school or programme might choose to prioritise for further development.
Reflective questions

1. How important is this type of employer engagement (e.g. work-based learning) for the school/programme?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>8 9 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. In what way is this important for the school/programme? (Describe the nature of the importance)

3. How do you rate the performance of the school/programme with regard to this aspect?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very low</th>
<th>Very high</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>8 9 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. What evidence is there for this assessment?

5. Which stakeholders have a particular interest in this aspect of employer engagement?

6. How would your key stakeholders rate your performance and why?
Plot the answers from questions 1 and 3 onto the grid below.

Notes on using the prioritisation grid

The design of the grid does not imply that an ideal score is, for example, in the middle of the chart. Nor does it imply that only the scores that are in the upper right quadrant are ‘good’. Rather, underpinning the grid is the conviction that different patterns of scores have different strengths and weaknesses.

The function of the grid is not to arrive at answers but to pose questions about the extent of the match or mismatch between performance and importance. Questions prompted by this may lead off into wider discussions about the relative importance of the various forms of employer engagement.
Developing employer engagement further in the curriculum

The Toolkit shows that there are many possible ways of engaging with employers and correspondingly many potential benefits. Schools have many options and the prioritisation process can give some pointers on how to further develop curriculum-based employer engagement strategies.

A natural place to start is by comparing the scores on the Prioritisation Grid for different aspects of employer engagement. It is important to reiterate that there is not one ideal score or position on the grid. However, it might be instructive to plot each of the eight ways of engaging with employers onto the grid – perhaps by using a different letter to represent each of the eight ways.

Possible questions to stimulate further discussion around developing employer engagement in the curriculum include:

- How do we feel about the position of X aspect of employer engagement on the grid?
- Does this come as a surprise?
- What are the causes of this situation?
- How does this rating fit with the values of the school/programme?
- How does this rating fit with the stated aims of the school/programme?
- How does this rating fit with the values and stated aims of relevant University policies?
- How would our stakeholders view this rating?
- If we have placed the aspect in the top right hand quadrant, do we feel that the effort is justified?
- If we have placed the aspect in the bottom right hand quadrant, do we feel that more effort is justified, and what sort of actions might be appropriate?
- How are the scores distributed?
- Are there any hot spots, and if so why?
- How do we feel about the overall profile?
- How strong does the profile look?
- Have we properly acknowledged the efforts of the staff that are responsible for the strengths of the school/programme?
- What factors underpin our success, and how can we build on them?
• Do we need to rebalance our effort and activity?
• Which degrees will this particularly affect?
• How will any development in employer engagement be patterned across the programme?
• How will developments and new initiatives work out in content, and assessment?
• How will they interact with other employability-related aspects of the curriculum?
• How does any proposed development express the values and aims of the school/programme?
• What do we expect students to get out of any new initiatives?
• How might other stakeholders benefit?
• How will the school benefit?
• What’s in it for the employer?
• What are the resource implications for the school/programme?
• What other costs will we face?
• What timescale do we want to adopt?
• Do we really want to do this?
• What can we do to help us sustain our commitment to new initiatives and changes in approach?
Which ways of engaging with employers might be relevant to our aims and objectives?

The eight types of engagement identified through this research provide an ideas bank showing the diverse possible ways that schools and programme teams can engage with employers. These are presented as a menu of options, to encourage staff to consider which might assist them in achieving their learning and teaching outcomes. The examples provided show the scope for adapting each of the types to suit the local context.

The table can be used to help find which of the eight types of employer engagement are most likely to be relevant to your aims and objectives. The shaded cells identify which of the eight types of employer engagement are likely to be especially relevant to the objectives listed in the left hand column. Most of the types of employer engagement have some potential to contribute towards achieving most of the objectives. This table aims to emphasise where the potential for contribution is strongest. The linkages made by this table are contingent upon the way that a type of employer engagement is put into operation, and are indicative and not exhaustive.
## Stakeholder support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Employers in the lecture room</th>
<th>Employers advice on the curriculum</th>
<th>Work-based learning</th>
<th>Work-related learning</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Employability modules</th>
<th>Accreditation</th>
<th>Sponsorship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaining external endorsement/input</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding funds for ‘added value’ activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering a professional qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building alumni links</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Student opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Employers in the lecture room</th>
<th>Employers advice on the curriculum</th>
<th>Work-related learning</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Employability modules</th>
<th>Accreditation</th>
<th>Sponsorship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting individual students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining sponsorship for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering job offers for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing work placements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing students’ confidence/social skills</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Curriculum enhancement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Employers in the lecture room</th>
<th>Employers advice on the curriculum</th>
<th>Work-related learning</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Employability modules</th>
<th>Accreditation</th>
<th>Sponsorship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting students to understand the real world relevance of academic learning</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating ideas and gaining access to resources for programme development</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using expertise from other university departments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including realistic learning experiences (e.g. problem-based learning)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting employment sector developments in curriculum</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Engaging Employers to Enhance Teaching and Learning

Ensuring effective engagement of employers

Before embarking upon a new initiative or activity, schools and programmes can use this ‘health-check’ form to see if there are any risks that could prevent plans from being successful. Negative responses indicate risk factors that require serious attention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Yes or No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>Have you identified an implementation date, working backwards and recognising constraints on partners?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Do you understand what you are seeking to achieve and can you explain this concisely to others?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deal makers</td>
<td>Can you understand partners' values and establish a common set of objectives?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will to succeed</td>
<td>Just how much do you need to do this? Is it a number one priority? Are your partners fully committed to it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win-win</td>
<td>Do all partners stand to gain from the proposed collaboration?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>What will be the demand on funding streams? Is this realistic and achievable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>In addition to funding, are there enough hours for your team to engage and deliver the project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical input</td>
<td>Key team strengths – do you have them? Do your intended partners have them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Can your plan adapt to the possible changing requirements of your proposed partners?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural alignment</td>
<td>Do you have adequate understanding of the cultures that will need to blend in order for the programme to succeed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-down</td>
<td>Do institutional leaders not only approve but actively support and champion the proposal?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass-roots</td>
<td>Do staff on the ground understand and appreciate the rationale for the programme?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical path/ review</td>
<td>Are all the key interactions and related timings understood? Are suitable evaluation steps in place?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More resources and references for engaging with employers in the curriculum

Recent reports and policy statements

**Future Fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work (CBI, 2009)**
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Newsroom/Media-Releases/Pages/CBI-UUKfuturefit.aspx
A report on research into HE/employer views of employability, strategic and practical issues for employer engagement and has good practice examples

**HEFC**
www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/employer
Policy on and provision for HEFCE’s workforce development programme. Information on funding, projects and reports.

**Higher Level Learning: Universities and employers working together (UUK, 2006)**
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Publication-251.aspx
Interesting examples illustrating different ways that HE and employers can collaborate at a discipline level.

**Influence through collaboration (CIHE, 2007)**
www.cihe.co.uk/category/themes/key/skills
Nuanced discussion of the issues around employer engagement and the need to move beyond a simplistic notion of employers as customers

**Unleashing Aspiration (Cabinet Office, 2009)**
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/accessprofessions.aspx
Wide ranging recommendations which if implemented would include implications for university sector.
Engaging Employers to Enhance Teaching and Learning

Websites with reports and research

3Ei CETL
extra.shu.ac.uk/cetl/e3i/case%20studies.html
Case studies illustrating different approaches to providing real world learning activities, work-based learning, professional skills modules, and activities conducive to PDP and developing learner autonomy.

Bridges CETL
www.beds.ac.uk/bridgescetl/projects/fellows
Information about T&L projects looking at PDP, employability and professional practice etc.

Centre for Employability Through the Humanities (CETH) UCLan
www.uclan.ac.uk/ahss/ceth/index.php
Descriptions of a range of innovative approaches for embedding employability in arts and humanities programmes

CETLS
www.hefce.ac.uk/Learning/TInits/cetl
There are 74 CETLs in England and NI. Many are involved in work connected with employers and employability. A number are focused upon specific sectors and discipline groups

Council for Industry and Higher Education
www.cihe.co.uk
Research and reports; employer perspectives on HE issues, especially strong on international comparisons and sensitive to the particular issues facing HE and employers

Enhancement Themes
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/themes/Employability/publications.asp
Reports and wide range of case studies on employability produced by the Scottish QAA as part of their employability enhancement theme

HEA Subject Centres
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning
Subject centre websites often have resources for employer engagement/employability and examples of approaches undertaken across the UK

HECSU
www.hecsu.ac.uk/hecsu.rd/index.htm
Wide range of current research into employability, including the longitudinal FutureTrack survey
**Tools for employer engagement**

**EDORT**

careers.ulster.ac.uk/staff/edort.html

Sophisticated curriculum auditing tool developed by the University of Ulster and used extensively within the institution. Allows perceptions of staff and students to be compared using rating scales.

**HEA Employability resources**

www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/employability

Tools for promoting employability within the curriculum and papers which relate theory to practice.

**Books and articles exploring the pedagogy and ethics of employer engagement and employability**


Poemical argument about the risks and opportunities for research collaboration between industry and academia.


Nuanced and comprehensive discussion of employability and associated pedagogic challenges.


Research on potential for work placements to enhance use and acquisition of higher level degree knowledge.


Discussion and synthesis of different research based models of employability.
University of Reading resources: sources of support and advice

Career Management Skills (CMS)
www.reading.ac.uk/careers/employer/withstudents.asp
CMS is an award winning scheme which incorporates education on careers directly into undergraduate programmes. CMS helps students reflect on their strengths, explore their options after graduation, consider work experience and articulate their skills on paper. Employers can get involved by providing recent graduates from the University of Reading to talk about their own career decision-making process and to provide an insight into a typical working day. Employers may also be involved by, for example, running an exercise to develop/assess key skills (e.g. team work), giving a short presentation on career opportunities in their field of expertise, or on job seeking advice (e.g. how they recruit and what employers look for in a good CV).

Centre for Entrepreneurship (CfE)
www.henley.reading.ac.uk/management/undergraduate/enterpriseandentrepreneurship/mgmt-ugentrepreneurship.aspx
- Student Enterprise – a first year module offering students from across the University the chance to create and run their own venture, including guest speakers & surgery sessions.
- Social Enterprise – a module for final year and masters students which includes consultancy visits with existing local social enterprises to learn about the sector first hand.
- Entrepreneurial Management for Food Scientists – a subject-specific module using a live case study and exploring entrepreneurial thinking in an existing organisation.
- Enterprise Experience – a scheme matching talented students with entrepreneurial companies and SMEs for short work experience placements on specific projects.

With a selection of four different 20-credit modules, students can access entrepreneurship at any stage in their degree. It is now also possible for students to create a ‘minor’ in entrepreneurship by choosing one module each year.
For advice on entrepreneurship, contact Dr Jess Co: j.co@henley.reading.ac.uk

Headstart Programme
www.reading.ac.uk/careers/employer/withstudents.asp
Headstart is the centralised careers workshop programme run by CAS. It offers employers the opportunity to run “skills based” or vocational workshops in areas such as interview technique, writing effective application forms, mock interviews and commercial awareness. The Headstart programme is open to all students across year groups and disciplines, and enables students to choose what help they need and when they need it. Students rate the sessions highly and really appreciate employer input.
Engaging Employers to Enhance Teaching and Learning

Reading Placement Tutors’ Form (only accessible to staff at Reading University)

www.reading.ac.uk/careers/staff-only/placements/index.asp

Run by the Careers Advisory Service (CAS). Helps tutors and staff prepare students effectively for their placement. Promotes and disseminates information relating to placements, including good practice guidelines. Includes: list of placement tutors at Reading, guide to opportunities for students – Experience Works – and the University of Reading Placement Code of Practice, as well as many other useful documents from national bodies. CAS offers advice to staff and students on work experience and a wide range of related aspects of employability.

SEED and other University-wide placement opportunities

Summer Enterprise Experience & Discovery is an innovative, project-based internship scheme for University of Reading students and local/regional business and enterprise. The Careers Advisory Service co-ordinates SEED to provide students with valuable project-based work experience, whilst giving local employers requiring additional help with access to a resourceful pool of talented, willing and able interns. SEED is open to all first and second year undergraduates. In addition, it is open to any third year undergraduate or postgraduate who is a returning student in the forthcoming academic year.

For more information contact Em Sowden, International Employability Development Manager, e.l.sowden@reading.ac.uk, or Andy Port, Employability Projects Manager, a.r.port@reading.ac.uk

Glossary of abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AGCAS</td>
<td>Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGR</td>
<td>Association of Graduate Recruiters</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>Careers Advisory Service (University of Reading)</td>
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<td>CCMS</td>
<td>Centre for Career Management Skills (University of Reading)</td>
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<td>CDoTL</td>
<td>Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning (University of Reading)</td>
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<td>CETL</td>
<td>Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIEE</td>
<td>Centre for Entrepreneurship (University of Reading)</td>
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<td>CIHE</td>
<td>Council for Industry and Higher Education</td>
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<td>CMS</td>
<td>Career Management Skills (module at University of Reading)</td>
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<td>NCWE</td>
<td>National Council for Work Experience</td>
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<td>NASES</td>
<td>National Association of Student Employment Services</td>
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<td>PDP</td>
<td>Personal Development Planning</td>
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<td>RES</td>
<td>Research Enterprise Services (University of Reading)</td>
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Acknowledgements

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Engaging employers to enhance teaching and learning

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