

Section 7: Personal development

POLICY ON CAREER LEARNING: EMBEDDING EMPLOYABILITY

(Approved by UBTL on 31 October 2016)

From 2016-17 the policy on Career Learning is changing, moving from a discrete 5-credit system, to embedding employability throughout every undergraduate programme. This policy has changed in line with the Curriculum Framework and is supported by the Employability Toolkit and a named Careers Consultant for every department.

Introduction

1. This policy relates to the Career Learning within the University of Reading within undergraduate programmes. This has previously been structured as discrete credit-bearing career management skills sessions or similar, within part of a larger module at Part 2.
2. It applies to all undergraduate programmes delivered from academic year 2017/18.
3. It supports the key strategy priorities of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013-18, in improving how we develop highly employable graduates, and this update to our practice improves in line with our University strategy, to transform student experiences and educate for 21st century lives.
4. Although there are examples of good practice in this delivery, success has been variable, with some examples with little cohesion between the career elements and the wider academic module and receiving poor student feedback.
5. Following the 2016 curriculum framework review and adoption of graduate attributes it is now timely to review this policy. The graduate attributes defined as part of the new curriculum framework state have informed this policy, in particular self-awareness and personal effectiveness.
6. Contemporary best practice in careers education from the HEA supports embedding employability throughout a programme, as outlined in the Embedding Employability Pack (2014)¹.

Policy changes

7. The policy is now to encourage employability to be embedded throughout the whole of an undergraduate programme. This could optionally involve retaining some discrete elements, but should not be limited to a discrete module in Part 2.
8. Programme Directors, supported by the Careers Consultant linked to their department and the Employability Toolkit of the Reading Curriculum Framework should embed employability throughout each year of study, using the principles outlined under Nature of Provision.

¹ <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/services/consultancy/employability>

Purpose of provision

9. The QAA descriptor for a Bachelor's degree with honours (2014)² states that holders will have 'qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility, decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts... analytical techniques and problem-solving skills which can be applied in many types of employment'
10. The Teaching Excellence Framework's use of destinations results has increased the urgency of the University of Reading's Vision to 'produce graduates who have developed skills and knowledge of life-long value, have the confidence and enthusiasm to fulfil their personal ambitions and seek to make a difference in the world in which they live.'
11. The NUS Comprehensive Guide to Learning and Teaching (2016)³ concludes that employability is not something which is separate from the academic curriculum. This policy aims to meet these student expectations of employability gained through their course.

Nature of provision

12. Embedding employability throughout a course is developed by academic Schools and departments in conjunction with their Careers Consultant.
13. Embedded employability practices which meet the requirements of University of Reading provision adhere to the following principles:
 - a. **Visibility** - Students should be aware of the elements within their programme which support their employability, and the skills and attributes that they gain.
 - b. **Needs-based** – A needs analysis should be completed by the Careers Consultant and used, with the Programme Director of Teaching and Learning, to inform design of employability support throughout the course.
 - c. **Student co-owned** – students should be able to influence or contribute to the design and delivery of employability elements.
 - d. **Employers and/or alumni** should be involved in the development and/or delivery.
 - e. **Experiential** – Students should use real-world tasks, to develop their employability skills within every year of their course. Placements are a great example of this, but work-based learning tasks can also be included in academic modules.
 - f. **Accumulative** – elements incorporated into programmes as part of embedded employability should form a coherent structure, which builds year-on-year.
 - g. **Everyone's responsibility**: plans for embedded employability communicate that all involved in teaching and learning have a role in developing students' employability
 - h. **Quality assured** delivery – incorporating professional standards, endorsed by Careers Consultants, and recognising the breadth of the labour market in factual and impartial delivery.
 - i. **Evaluated** for impact against targets of needs analysis, career readiness (surveyed each year through enrolment) and DLHE results.
14. Heads of School and SDTLs have a role in ensuring programme curricula meet these principles, and should be challenged by Teaching and Learning Deans the effectiveness provision.
15. Careers Consultants are responsible for supporting the development of an embedded employability approach, delivering elements as needed, and supporting evaluation, quality assurance and needs analysis.

² <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

³ <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/comprehensive-guide-to-learning-and-teaching>