Graduate Employability
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Thank You

...to all of the graduates, students, employers and educators who shared their strategies and success stories
This report aims to inform the improvement of higher education graduate employability through disseminating the perspectives of students, graduates (alumni), higher education personnel (including educators and career development professionals) and employers. The team of report authors propose that students must do more than study and complete their courses in order to be employable upon graduation. Students, graduates and employers all agreed that work experience, internships and placements are the most significant set of strategies to enhancing graduate employability. Furthermore, participation in a number and range of graduate employability strategies is particularly important for students who are not enrolled in generalist programs like humanities that teach graduate attributes such as critical thinking and communications. The research approach of the project presented in this report was survey methodology. Four survey versions were created and distributed online and via paper resulting in over seven hundred responses. Process and outcome data was rigorously collected, analysed, compared and contrasted. The report provides empirical evidence that higher education providers must support graduate employability using a variety of strategies. Research also revealed that employers are open to hiring graduates of professional programs and generalist programs such as humanities, life sciences, computer science and visual/performing arts. Because of the chosen survey approach, the results point to effective strategies for improving graduate employability, but does not enable detailed how-to information. Therefore, the next phase of the project research, forthcoming in a follow-up report, is to conduct interviews and focus groups with all four stakeholder groups to provide rich process details about employability. This current report includes recommendations from the survey responses to guide the improvement of strategy supports of graduate employability. This report fulfils an identified need to improve the ways in which graduate employability is supported to improve the outcomes for the emerging educated workforce.
Three Phases

1. Online Survey
   (www.graduateemployability.com)

2. Assessment Rubric

3. Case Studies
The Surveys

For Students

For Graduates

For Higher Education

For Employers
Survey Responses (by Respondents)

- Employers: 8% (53)
- Higher Education: 15% (108)
- Graduates: 14% (102)
- Students: 63% (442)

Total: 705 Students

Graduates
Student Demographics

By Discipline

- Humanities: 66
- Visual/Performing Arts: 4
- Life Sciences: 32
- Computer Sciences: 15
- Other: 255
- Combined/Double Degree: 70
Employer Perspectives

DISCIPLINES LIKELY TO HIRE FROM

- Computer Science: 11%
- Humanities: 21%
- Life Science: 11%

Employers were asked to tick the disciplines from which they have or are likely to employ graduates.

ARE THE JOBS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE DISCIPLINE

- Yes: 70%
- No: 28%
- Don’t Know: 2%

Twenty-four (45% of) employers ticked one to four of the generalist disciplines.
From which courses are students and graduates finding work?

One hundred and eighty-seven student respondents ticked one of the generalist disciplines to describe their course.

Twenty-eighty graduates ticked one of the generalist disciplines to describe their course.

3% of the students enrolled in ¼ generalist disciplines had secured relevant graduate employment while still a student.

Whereas 11% of the students enrolled in the other disciplines had secured employment.

64% of graduates from ¼ disciplines secured graduate employment.

44% of students from other disciplines had secured employment.
### Other Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disciplines</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Employers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport and Recreation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Questions About Strategies

What strategies are you using to improve your graduate employability?

Which of the following strategies undertaken by students does your organisation value when recruiting graduates?

Which of the following employability strategies do you provide for students?

What strategies did you use to improve your employability?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Educators</th>
<th>Employers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capstone/Final semester project</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers advice &amp; employment skill</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-curricular activities</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International exchanges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolios, profiles &amp; records of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional association memberships/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media/networks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience/internships/placements</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top Strategies

- Work experience/ internships / placements
- Careers advice and employment skill development
- Extra-curricular activities
- Networking
- Part-time employment
- Volunteering
- Professional association memberships / engagement
Which employability strategies DID/DID NOT work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Use by those who are EMPLOYED</th>
<th>Use by those who are NOT EMPLOYED</th>
<th>Statistical Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Advice</td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>U = 14896, p = 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Associations</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td>U = 16144, p = 0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Exchange</td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>U = 16824, p = 0.039</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Distinguishes a Top-Performing Graduate?

Notably, graduate employability is not restricted to securing employment. It also encompasses longevity, success and lifelong learning during one’s career. Employer were therefore asked to comment on what distinguishes a top-performing graduate from an average employee. Seven themes emerged.

**Skills**
Both work-specific (hard) and transferable (soft)

**Real-world experience**
Engagement with industry and employers throughout university has developed realistic notions and expectations of the workforce

**Well-rounded**
In addition to study, successful graduates had pursued sports and/or hobbies as well as community engagement

**Value alignment**
Employees are a good fit with the organisation, sharing values such as customer service orientation

**Social support**
Employees are resilient and are able to handle work-related stress when they have healthy family relationships and friendships

**Initiative**
Motivation and enthusiasm are important in that employees are then able to self-initiate tasks and find intrinsic rewards in work

**Goal-oriented to learn**
Employees make the most of opportunities to develop and do not have unrealistic expectations of immediate high-level positions
Recommendations

International exchanges must be improved so that they are authentic learning experiences that allow students to engage with employers and employment in other cultures.

Further resources are necessary to support universities’ provision of work experience, internships and placements.

Partnerships and collaboration between universities and employers must be strengthened so that career advice and employment skill development is industry-relevant and involves workplace and professional association mentors.
A diverse range of degree options should be continued including career-specific pathways such as education and accounting, and generalist degrees such as humanities, life sciences, computer sciences and visual/performing arts.

The employability focus of universities should be on *work* while learning and the focus of employers should be on *learning* while at work.

Campaigns must be developed to raise the awareness of students and graduates as to: the importance of extracurricular activity; the understanding that non-career-related part-time work does not enhance their employability and; the relevance of career-related volunteering as an effective means of bridging education into employment.
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