Employability Strategy

Employability is recognised in the University of Stirling as “a set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen careers, which benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.” (Yorke, LTSN Generic Centre et al. 2004)

Higher education institutions across the UK are facing similar external challenges and trends. These include an increasingly competitive graduate job market due to the recession, increasing scrutiny of graduate destinations with the introduction of Key Information Sets, and a changing job market where the importance of gaining relevant work experience and the ability confidently to articulate skills and abilities have become paramount. Internally, the strategic challenges facing higher education in relation to the employability agenda may be summarised as: confusion or ambivalence about the meaning of employability amongst academic staff; student resistance and non-engagement; the challenge of partnership working within institutions; and engaging with employers in a timely and meaningful way. The findings from the consultation with staff, students and employers reflected these challenges and this strategy aims to respond effectively to them.

Our Vision

To be acknowledged for our commitment to developing employable, confident graduates with the requisite skills, knowledge and experience to contribute and succeed in an ever changing environment locally, nationally and globally.

Our Mission

To be ambitious in providing the opportunities for our students to develop the skills and attributes that will enhance their employability.

Our Ambition

- To develop graduates who can successfully manage the transition from school to higher education and from higher education into the economy.

- To have a cohesive and holistic approach across the institution with common understandings and goals for enhancing employability, built around the development of the Stirling Graduate Attributes.

- To ensure linkage, where appropriate, to strategies and enhancement themes within the institution.

- To acknowledge, support and recognise the importance of employability development in the learning and teaching environment.
Our Priorities

- To promote the key components of the strategy throughout the University and its undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. These include embedding the University’s graduate attributes, engaging employers and developing placement opportunities where appropriate and practicable.

- To identify key staff to oversee the delivery of the components of employability in their respective schools and service areas.

- To provide a focus for employability through the creation of an ‘employability hub’ as part of a coherent approach to integrating employability across the institution.

Graduate Attributes at Stirling

The recent QAA Enhancement Theme of ‘Graduates for the Twenty-first Century’ and the current theme of ‘Developing and Supporting the Curriculum' highlighted the concept of graduate attributes, and encouraged debate across the sector on the key skills and characteristics that those graduating from Scottish higher education should be able to demonstrate. Each institution has developed its own set of graduate attributes and Stirling, in the current Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES), articulates its Graduate Attributes as follows.

Stirling graduates are:

- Knowledgeable and skilled within and between the disciplines
- Employable and confident
- Critically and intellectually curious thinkers
- Active global and local citizens

How we prepare all of our graduates (UG and PG) is a key part of the employability agenda. As an institution Stirling supports its students to fulfil their potential academically, personally and professionally. The strategy will ensure that the opportunities to develop the Stirling’s Graduate Attributes are built into and through each student’s experience at Stirling, giving them the skills necessary to meet the challenges they will face both in work and life.

Components of an Employability Strategy

The University of Stirling Employability Strategy identifies the following key components of an employability strategy and how they may be addressed.
# Components of Employability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivering the University of Stirling Graduate Attributes in the Curriculum</td>
<td>The equipping of all Stirling’s graduates (UG and PG, inc RPG) with these attributes is integrated as an objective of all aspects of the curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging Employers in the Curriculum</td>
<td>Employers are strategically engaged in all aspects of the curriculum, including its design, teaching and assessment as appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing Work-Based and Work-Related Learning</td>
<td>Opportunities are available for all students to experience work-related or work-based learning in the curriculum, co-curriculum and extra curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Targeted Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)</td>
<td>Students are provided with the tools to plan their careers and achieve their goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using the Wider Student Experience</td>
<td>Students are facilitated to link the wider student experience to their own employability development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing Reflective Practice</td>
<td>To ensure students and graduates have the ability to review and plan their learning and skills development needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Marketing and Promotion of the University’s Approach</td>
<td>The University’s approach to employability is marketed and promoted consistently to all stakeholders: students, staff and employers.</td>
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## Key Principles for Delivering the Strategy

The principles outlined below reflect the University’s commitment to providing clarity and support to employability development for all of its key stakeholders: *students, staff and employers*. For students, the strategy aims to provide an environment that is vibrant with opportunities to develop skills, confidence and to benefit from opportunities for work related learning in the UK and globally. For staff, it aims to provide an environment that is sustainably supported, co-ordinated and resourced. For employers it aims to create an institution that is employer responsive. The principles underpinning the strategy reflect the key findings from the consultation among these groups. There should be:
An institutional commitment to developing graduates who can successfully manage transition from school to higher education and from higher education into the economy.

A cohesive and holistic approach across the institution with common understandings and goals for enhancing employability, built around the development of the Stirling Graduate Attributes.

Linkage, where appropriate, to strategies and enhancement themes within the institution. This refers in particular to the University’s Strategic Plan, the Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy and the Internationalisation Strategy.

Acknowledgement, support and recognition of the importance of employability development in the learning and teaching environment

It is accepted that subject contexts, student recruitment and labour markets differ across the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the University and no single employability strategy or approach will fit all. However, the strategy and its implementation plan aim to develop and provide an overarching framework and internal infrastructure that will support schools and service areas to plan and develop their embedded and devolved approaches to employability.

Objectives and Actions

This section sets out the objectives and actions designed into the strategy. The actions are expanded in detail, including responsibilities and timelines, in the accompanying Implementation Plan.

**Objective 1: To review the existing structures and resources for employability development and its integration into the University-wide curriculum for all students.**

*Action 1.1:* Deputy Principal for Education and Students, together with senior management, to review existing structures in relation to the needs of the strategy.

**Objective 2: To embed the development of employability in the curriculum, co-curriculum and extra curriculum**

*Action 2.1:* Academic staff are supported to review and plan the development of employability in the curriculum.

*Action 2.2:* Employability development is embedded in planning processes across the institution, and into the programme review and approval processes.

*Action 2.3:* A framework is created to ensure recognition of the development of employability in the curriculum, co-curriculum and extra curriculum.
Action 2.4: Staff engage with the development of reflective practice through the promotion of Personal Development Planning (PDP).

Action 2.5: Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) is embedded in a year group strategy approach across the institution with the Career Development Centre working in partnership with schools, service areas and the Student Union.

Action 2.6: The strategy and implementation plan is reviewed and measured on a sustainable basis.

Objective 3: To engage students with the development and articulation of their employability

Action 3.1: Create a skills award with linkage to the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) and to Personal Development Planning (PDP).

Action 3.2: Create a student employability pathway which maps the student employability journey throughout their academic experience.

Objective 4: To establish Stirling’s reputation as an institution that effectively engages with, and is responsive to, employers.

Action 4.1: Create an employer engagement strategy.

Action 4.2: Increase the number of work-related and work-based opportunities for students in the curriculum, co-curriculum and extra curriculum.

Action 4.3: Work strategically with alumni for employability development.

Objective 5: To consolidate Stirling’s reputation as an institution that prioritises the employability of its students

Action 5.1: To develop key sets of information on employability for top level institutional, school, service and Student Union websites.

Action 5.2: Develop graduate case studies and vidcasts related to programmes.