UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN: EMPLOYABILITY FRAMEWORK

Background Information

The purpose of the University’s Employability Framework is to ensure that university staff and students share a common understanding of employability in the context of both the formal academic curriculum and the co-curriculum. The Framework incorporates a wide range of current employability practice achieved through recent Scottish Funding Council Learning to Work employability initiatives and our earlier institution-wide Curriculum Reform Project. The Framework acknowledges that effective learning, teaching and research are the corner stones of employability development in our students and it also supports the ambitions and values outlined in the University of Aberdeen Strategic Plan 2011-15, (www.abdn.ac.uk/documents/strategic-plan-2011-2015.pdf).

The University defines employability as: *The set of skills and attributes that make graduates likely to gain employment and be successful on their chosen career path.*

The Framework is an integrated, institution-wide approach designed to address:

- Our aspiration to provide an excellent education and a rewarding student experience which is underpinned by opportunities for all students to develop Aberdeen Graduate Attributes.

- The quality of the student experience through increasing the number of available employer-related initiatives such as work placements and career mentoring opportunities.

- The expectations of graduate employers and recruiters by supporting students to develop a range of qualities above and beyond the knowledge and skills developed through a degree programme.

- Changing patterns of student employment in an increasingly competitive global market as well as unemployment in the current economic climate.

- The Key Information Set (KIS) data for degree programmes which provide prospective students with information about a range of performance indicators, including employability measures for the degree they wish to pursue.

- Our institutional quality assurance procedure for annual review of courses and programmes to monitor their employability content.

Underpinning Key Features of the Framework:

1. Aligns with the University’s Learning & Teaching Operational Plan.

2. Aligns with the University’s statement of Aberdeen Graduate Attributes (www.abdn.ac.uk/graduateattributes/).

Employability Strand 1: Aberdeen Graduate Attributes

Support a culture of Graduate Attribute engagement and development in both the curriculum and co-curriculum through:

- Raising student and staff awareness of the values, competencies and skills which are characterised through the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes.
- Providing the online ‘ACHIEVE’ website to enable students to self-assess, reflect upon, and improve their development of Aberdeen Graduate Attributes.
- Articulating the importance of Graduate Attributes to students at each study level through the Personal Tutor Scheme.
- Using the externally-funded Higher Education Academy project, *Bringing Graduate Attributes to Life* and the resources developed through this project with academic Schools to contextualise Aberdeen Graduate Attributes.

Employability Strand 2: Curriculum Development

Increase the visibility of employability in teaching, learning and assessment through:

- Continuing to make employability explicit through the SENAS course and programme approval process.
- Disseminating effective employability teaching and assessment practices through staff development programmes and events, the Teaching Fellows’ Network and the provision of small teaching development grants.
- Utilising the Programme Advisory Board network to enable employers to input into the academic curriculum.
- Working closely with the Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE) to embed enterprise and entrepreneurship within curricula across the three Colleges.
- Development and delivery of credit-bearing employability courses in the academic curriculum.

Employability Strand 3: Employer Engagement

Raise the profile of the University and its capabilities to a range of employers through:

- Using the network of Programme Advisory Boards (PABs) as a channel to communicate with graduate recruiters and professional bodies.
- Enhancing links with local, national and international employers and having a coherent approach to employer engagement.
- Increasing the number of employers involved in various stages of the student experience, i.e. PABs, work placements and career mentoring opportunities.
- Investigating opportunities to work more with alumni for the benefit of current students.
Employability Strand 4: Co-curricular Activities

Develop and promote employability as part of the co-curriculum and the Aberdeen student experience through:

- Continuing to up-scale and enhance the STAR (Students Taking Active Roles) Award to recognise and reward a wider range of student co-curricular achievements.
- Raising the profile of co-curricular opportunities and student participation in work placements, study abroad, enterprise & entrepreneurship initiatives and the Aberdeen Internship Programme.
- Enhancing and expanding the University’s Career Mentoring Programme by working in partnership with organisations, employers, employees and professional bodies.
- Recognising co-curricular learning and achievements within the graduate transcript.

Employability Strand 5: Career Planning

Deliver effective career development learning opportunities through:

- Supporting students and graduates in exploring their employment and further study options through a range of careers education, information and guidance services.
- Delivering a range of co-curricular initiatives which help students to develop their employability skills.
- Enabling students to connect with employers from a wide range of sectors through fairs, employer presentations and employer-led workshops.
- Expanding the range of online interactive career planning resources to complement traditional careers service provision.

Employability Framework Evaluation

The effectiveness of the University’s Employability Framework is monitored using a diverse range of indicators, these are assessed and evaluated on an annual basis and include:

- Tracking the progression of students into employment or further study, taking into account the type of employment concerned, its relevance to the student's future career plans and the current economic climate.
- Evaluating feedback from students on the support they are given and its value to them in identifying and making appropriate career decisions.
- Feedback from employers, including members of the Careers Service Employer Board on the suitability of our students for employment.
- Annual programme review to consider discipline-specific employability provision.
- Views and comments from academic contacts in Schools & Colleges regarding the Careers Service provision.
- Comments and feedback from students undertaking credit-bearing careers education courses at both undergraduate and taught postgraduate level.
- Aberdeen Graduate Attribute evaluation feedback derived from students regarding the effectiveness and helpfulness of the process and the available online resources.
- Evaluating experiences of employers and students involved in Careers Service-sourced paid placements and the total number of work placements secured by Aberdeen students.

Ongoing mechanisms for self-review and evaluation include the preparation of reports for the University Teaching & Learning Committee, the three College Teaching & Learning Committees and through regular progress meetings with the Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching and the Director of Academic Affairs.

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