

STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY, 2018-21

INTRODUCTION

This Strategy document sets out the University and Kent Union joint vision for enhancing the employability of Kent students and producing graduates who will make an effective contribution to the world of work and be successful in an increasingly competitive and global economy.

The University of Kent is committed to providing opportunities for its students to acquire skills and develop attributes that will enhance their employability. A set of core Kent Graduate Attributes has been identified, in conjunction with employers and graduate recruiters, and through student and staff focus groups and the Staff Employability Forum. These attributes are intended to develop our students as accomplished and independent learners through the various stages of their student experience whilst at Kent and to prepare them for future success in employment or further study.

The Kent Graduate Attributes identified are:

- 1) Confidence
- 2) Creativity and Innovation
- 3) Critical Reflection
- 4) Global/Cultural Awareness
- 5) Integrity and Accountability
- 6) Intellectual Curiosity
- 7) Resilience

This Strategy supports delivery of the University Plan, 2015-20 and the University's Education and Student Experience Strategy, 2016-20.

In addressing the employability of our students, this Strategy will focus on four key thematic areas: curriculum development and design; co-curricular opportunities; collaboration; and communication and engagement. This document also highlights how the Strategy will be monitored and reviewed during the period of its implementation.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

The University and Kent Union strive to provide and support an excellent academic education and life-changing student experience. This can be achieved through a modern, innovative and inspirational curriculum that recognises and values employability, and which embeds opportunities for students to gain relevant skills and be creative, analytical and critical in their development of knowledge and attributes, which are central to teaching excellence and lifelong student success.

The academic curriculum will build on Kent's disciplinary and interdisciplinary strengths and embed developmental experiences that encourage students to recognise and reflect on

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their personal development, articulate what they have learned and proactively plan for the very best outcomes in terms of employability or further study.

In order to achieve this strategic objective the University and Kent Union will:

- Actively embed employability within the academic curriculum and provide opportunities for students to reflect critically on their learning and relate it to institutional level graduate attributes
- Promote personalised learning which fosters the development of graduate attributes alongside the acquisition of academic, professional and work-ready skills
- Increase opportunities for all students to gain valuable work experience and professional development through workplace visits, placements, internships, academic and work-based research, business start-ups and study abroad options

CO-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

The University and Kent Union believes that every student deserves to have an outstanding student experience at Kent with opportunities to participate in a wide range of co-curricular experiences, whilst pursuing their academic studies and carefully managing their time. Co-curricular activities are an important part of the student experience which nurture employability skills and support the development of attributes that should stay with graduates beyond their University life.

In order to achieve this strategic objective the University and Kent Union will:

- Strongly encourage engagement in high quality opportunities, including employment/internships and volunteering on campus, within the local community and Kent region; alongside membership of Kent Union clubs, societies and academic communities
- Develop the relevant mechanisms and systems to support students in reflecting on their co-curricular experience and relating it to institutional level graduate attributes
- Provide access to employers, experiences of work, training, and support in accessing internal and external opportunities regionally, nationally and internationally that will enhance student employability

COLLABORATION

The University and Kent Union will develop and support a whole institution approach to graduate employability, with all stakeholders working proactively together and with external organisations. Partnership and collaboration with industry, alumni and others is a key employability driver and is pivotal to the University's position as a major enabler of economic, social and cultural growth in the region and beyond.

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In order to achieve this strategic objective the University and Kent Union will:

- Work closely together to share innovations and best practice, and to actively seek opportunities to collaborate on events, activities and initiatives for the benefit of our students
- Commit funding and prioritise initiatives, activities and resources to support a whole institution approach
- Actively engage and work with alumni and graduate employers to better understand their needs and maximise the opportunities available to Kent students

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The University and Kent Union will aim to deliver appropriate and engaging employability messages to its students, developing effective channels for two-way communication. This will ensure students are aware of all opportunities and understand their own responsibilities in acquiring employability skills and developing graduate attributes.

In order to achieve this strategic objective the University and Kent Union will:

- Develop a communications strategy to support stakeholder engagement
- Target hard to reach groups to increase their engagement with employability opportunities
- Promote an integrated approach to student employability across the institution

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The University and Kent Union will oversee the implementation of this Strategy through regular meetings of the Employability and Skills Sub-Committee and at an annual meeting of the Student Experience Board.

In order to achieve the four strategic themes referred to in this document the University and Kent Union will:

- Develop and agree Key Performance Indicators to measure success
- Develop a student focused institutional level implementation plan that includes Academic Schools, Professional Service Departments and Kent Union. This plan will detail the operational steps that will be taken to deliver the Strategy
- Commit to the sharing of good employability practice and enhancement of delivery through the Employability and Skills Sub-committee and via various University and Kent Union fora