




National
Student
Forum



09



National Student Forum

Annual Report

Priority 1: a clear university employability strategy

We would like to see every higher education institution not only implementing a clear employability strategy, but co-developing it with students, and promoting its existence to all staff and students from the time they sign up for their courses. Clearly, some subjects (especially vocational courses) have a more explicit focus on employment and career-specific skills and knowledge than others – and we are not suggesting, for example, that every English literature module have clear employment-related objectives.

However, we do think that a whole-institution approach to the development of transferable skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving and the use of complex data, will ultimately benefit all students.¹⁴

Of course, we acknowledge that many universities are already undertaking work in this area. However, the level of emphasis given to developing employability varies significantly from one institution to the next, and we would like to see *all* universities and colleges commit to an internal review of current initiatives and develop a strategy to cohere these and to foster employability across the institution.

The NSF was set up to help to define 'a reasonable student experience' and to make recommendations to Government to help to achieve this. However, many of our suggestions for improvement fall within the gift of individual universities and colleges, rather than government policy. Therefore, we have outlined recommended practice for universities and colleges in each of our key discussion areas, against which we invite individual institutions to measure their current practice.

We readily acknowledge that many universities and colleges may already be implementing some of these practices, but urge all institutions to consider whether adopting new ways of working and/or reviewing the extent to which guidance is being implemented in practice, could lead to further improvement in this area.

We would like all universities and colleges to incorporate the following aspects into the development or review of their employability strategies:

What should universities and colleges include in an employability strategy?

- explicit recognition and active promotion of the value of:
 - work placements (whether short or long term/voluntary or compulsory)
 - volunteering programmes (and recognition of this experience as part of a student's 'record of achievement')
 - part-time jobs (either while studying and/or during the holidays)
- increased resources for, and the promotion of the use of, personal development plans to explicitly outline and monitor the transferable skills developed through both academic and non-academic experiences

¹⁴Developing transferable graduate skills

Liverpool John Moores University's employability strategy centres around the World of Work (WoW®) process, which expects every student to develop and reflect on the eight transferable graduate skills the university has identified alongside their subject skills and, to a greater or lesser extent, undertake some kind of work-related learning. The eight essential graduate skills are: analysing and problem-solving, team-working and interpersonal skills, verbal communication, written communication, personal planning and organising, initiative, numerical reasoning, and information literacy and IT skills.

Key Points:

- Employer-verified World of Work (WoW®) programme available to every student, enabling them to build up a portfolio detailing how they have acquired eight key graduate skills and a certificate of higher level WoW Skills
- Review of every curriculum to build in employability and work-related learning
- Ready-for-work job application skills and employability advice
- Strong relationships with local, regional and national employers and a brokerage hub

For more information see www.ljmu.ac.uk/WoW