

## **Student Employability and Enterprise Policy**

<b>Approval Authority</b>	<b>Version Date</b>	<b>Responsibility for Update</b>
Academic Board	1 April 2009	Head of Careers Centre

This document outlines the Employability and Enterprise Policy and links to the University Plan 2007-2012. The North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce, members of the Student Employability Sub-Group, the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee, the Students' Union, disabled students and others were consulted about the Policy before it was submitted to Academic Board for approval; in addition all students and staff were invited to view and comment on the document via a Wiki. The Chamber of Commerce fully endorses this Policy.

### **1. Context**

Employability is a priority for development within Higher Education, with Government and employers placing great emphasis on demonstrating the extent to which students' employability is enhanced. The University is currently developing and consulting on principles that will guide its future direction through a series of Change Groups, and these will further determine the development of this Policy.

### **2. Definitions of Employability**

For the purposes of this Policy, employability is defined according to researchers for the ESECT (Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team) Project:

*A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. (Booth, 2003)*

A detailed explanation of employability and its importance can be found in the ESECT Briefings on Employability (available at: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk>). In practice the attributes that an 'employable' Staffordshire University student/graduate would ideally possess include:

- Experience gained in a work-based and/or volunteering context, or through work-related projects
- The ability to reflect on a set of transferable and professional/specialist skills which meet the needs of the employment market. (Transferable skills to include: analysis, communication, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership, self-management, numeracy and information literacy.)
- The ability to set personal goals and continuously reflect on one's learning and personal development, and to articulate that learning (for example, to employers)
- The capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning and personal development
- The ability to make and implement realistic and well-informed career choices

### **3. University Commitments**

Staffordshire University is committed to ensuring that students are given the opportunity to develop their employability while at University - by gaining qualifications which are recognised by employers and by developing their skills, experience and ability to manage their career. This policy is endorsed by the Vice Chancellor and Academic Board and aims to ensure that students from all backgrounds and disciplines have equivalent access to, and are encouraged to take full advantage of, the opportunities that are on offer. The policy is in accordance with the University's Commitment to Equality and

Diversity 2003. This includes addressing the specific needs of particular groups of students, such as: disabled students, part-time students, international students studying in the UK, mature students, ethnic minority students, work-based learners, students studying purely online and our growing postgraduate community.

The University Commitments to Students are outlined below.

### **3.1. Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Career Planning and Management Skills**

There is significant activity in this area at Staffordshire University and this is aligned to Government policy statements which reveal the importance attached to IAG and its opinion that nationally there is more that could be done:

*'Employers believe that ..... people sometimes damage their own careers because they lack information and advice about the economic consequences of their ..... choices' (Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), 2008, 'Higher Education at Work - High Skills: High Value'*

#### **Included:**

**All Staffordshire University campus-based undergraduate awards**

**Non SURF UK awards**

**Work-based learners**

**All University Awards delivered in SURF Colleges**

**All Staffordshire University campus-based postgraduate (taught & research) awards**

**All Distance Learning Awards** – employability relevant to the UK graduate labour market

#### **Aim:**

All students (as outlined above) will have the opportunity to develop the ability to *make and implement realistic, well-informed decisions about their careers.*

All students will have access to an effective and responsive information, advice and guidance service delivered by the Careers Centre which will include individualised careers guidance. The service will be accredited with the MATRIX quality standard. The service will provide enhanced accessibility to disabled, part-time and off-campus students through the implementation of technologies such as e-guidance, online graduate recruitment fairs, online vacancy publication, MentorVista and a comprehensive Web site. All staff will be aware of the services provided by the Careers Centre and will refer students appropriately. **[ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; widening participation; diversity; flexibility; exploiting technology]**

All students will have access to career management skills through the curriculum. This could be delivered by the Careers Centre, by Faculties/Schools or in combination:

1. A discrete Career Management Module, for example in the second year run by tutors.
2. An integrated model – with relevant aspects of career planning (listed below) being linked to different parts of the curriculum. For example, building up contact networks and producing written applications can be integrated into professional studies modules, while research skills in terms of researching careers could link into study skills modules.
3. Personal Development Planning (PDP, see next section) – which would include structured discussions between tutor and student monitoring their progress in relation to career management skills (covering the areas listed below).
4. A “blended” model, for example with some aspects such as self analysis being explored through PDP, while other aspects are covered through the curriculum.

The career management skills curriculum should include the following aspects as a minimum:

- Self analysis – including competencies, personality and values
- The options available beyond course of study and how to choose between these
- Setting goals to pursue chosen options
- Making targeted applications in an appropriate format
- Interview and self-presentation skills

The Careers Centre has developed online career management skills learning material. This format is available to be adapted by all Faculties and Schools. The material is in Microsoft Word and may be available in other formats on demand. [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; widening participation; diversity; flexibility; exploiting technology]

The Careers Centre, faculties and schools are encouraged to involve employers as far as possible in the planning and delivery of IAG and career planning and management skills. [ref University Plan: employer engagement].

### 3.2. Learning from Experience

*Employers value graduates who have learnt through reflecting on experience, so that they can articulate and apply what they have learnt. (Institute of Directors, 2007).*

#### Included:

**All Staffordshire University campus-based undergraduate awards**

**All University Awards delivered in SURF Colleges**

**Non SURF UK awards**

**All Staffordshire University campus-based postgraduate (taught & research) awards:**

#### Aim:

All students (as outlined above) will have the opportunity to *gain work / community-related experience through the wealth of curriculum based and extra-curricular opportunities* available at the University.

The above awards are encouraged to provide or refer to opportunities for students to ***gain experience of the professional environment related to their field of study***. This could be achieved through, for example, part-time work, employer visits, project briefs set by employers or community organisations, employer-based mentoring, and placements. This experience can form part of reflective practice. Where a placement is part of the academic curriculum, the University acknowledges its duty to ensure that placements for disabled students are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 & 2005. [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; widening participation; diversity; employer engagement]

Similarly, awards are encouraged to refer to opportunities for students to ***gain experience of environments other than those related to their field of study*** where reflective learning may take place.

In either case referral may include to:

- The Careers Centre's JobShop for part-time work
- The Students' Union's inVOLved scheme for voluntary experience, as well as paid employment, Officer posts, activities, committee membership etc
- The Graduate Advantage project for work experience projects
- Placements
- The Careers Centre's MentorVista service for mentoring by professionals

All the above are contained within JobZone - [www.staffs.ac.uk/jobzone](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/jobzone). [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; employer engagement]

Faculties, schools and employer-facing areas such as Careers Centre, Sales & Student Recruitment, Placements, Enterprise & Commercial Development and KTP will work together using a customer relationship management system to maximise the available pool of potential experience-based learning opportunities and promote to employers the services within JobZone. Employers will be particularly encouraged to advertise opportunities for part-time work via JobShop and other opportunities within JobZone (see [www.staffs.ac.uk/jobzone](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/jobzone)). [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; employer engagement]

Employers will be encouraged to recognise the business case for diversity in their recruitment strategies. In the case of offering experience and work to disabled students and graduates, employers will be informed of any support available to them in doing so and informed of equal opportunities legislation. [ref University Plan: widening participation; diversity; employer engagement]

Opportunities to gain experience will always be promoted by the University in ways that are inclusive and which maximise their accessibility to all students in particular disabled students and graduates. The potential impact of part-time working on students' benefits will be made clear and referral made to Students' Union Money Doctor. Disabled students will be given the opportunity to explore the issue of how best to approach disclosure of their disability to employers. [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; widening participation; diversity]

Case studies of the experiences of successful graduates, in particular those who are disabled, of minority ethnic background and those from a mixture of social backgrounds will be made available through the Careers Centre to raise the aspirations of students and to demonstrate to employers the success of Staffordshire University graduates including those who are disabled. The MentorVista system will facilitate mentoring of students by successful professionals and so help raise aspirations. [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; widening participation; diversity; employer engagement]

The value of international experience will be stressed and encouraged and the University will respond to the current Internationalisation agenda: *'UK and UK institutions will need to broaden their perspective on overseas work. Even if recruitment of students to study in the UK remains an objective, it will increasingly have to take place in a context of bi-lateral and multi-lateral internationalisation'* (DIUS, 2008 'Higher Education at Work - High Skills: High Value'). The University is currently developing an Internationalisation Policy. [ref University Plan: internationalisation]

It is an aspiration that the University will itself offer more students part-time work: 'We want to encourage universities to adopt the approach, typical in America, of helping students find part-time jobs on the campus itself as well as with local employers' (DIUS, 2008, 'Higher Education at Work - High Skills: High Value'). University vacancies suitable for students are published by JobShop. [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability]

### **3.3 Endorsement by Employers and Accreditation**

This Policy is endorsed by the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce.

The Careers Centre is currently developing '***Making Your Work Count***', a 15-credit module that will accredit learning and reflection centred on student experience. Learning material will be available online in Microsoft Word and may be available in other formats on demand. The module is endorsed by the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce. Dependent on resources for delivery, this will be available from September 2009. [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; widening participation; diversity; employer engagement; flexibility; exploiting technology]

There is currently some provision for students to gain accreditation for employability-related activity through certain modules. Some awards have external accreditation.

The University values previous experience, and supports and encourages the use of AP(E)L in all academic Faculties/Schools & Programmes in the context of the framework. Policy on Accreditation of Prior Learning and Experiential Learning – see [http://www.staffs.ac.uk/images/apel\\_policy\\_tcm68-12703.pdf](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/images/apel_policy_tcm68-12703.pdf) [ref University Plan: widening participation; flexibility]

### **3.4 Transferable and Professional Skills Development**

*As well as professional skills, ‘employers particularly value broad ‘employability’ skills, such as communication, motivation, independence, analysis, confidence and problem solving. This is one of the strongest messages from employers to government’ (DIUS 2008, ‘Higher Education at Work - High Skills: High Value’).*

All awards are designed according to the typology of Award Outcomes, which includes key skills; these map to the skills indicated above.

#### **Aim:**

Skills development will be integrated into the curriculum. All students will have the opportunity to *enhance their professional skills* relevant to their discipline *and transferable skills* (such as problem-solving and analytical skills) through a combination of curricular and extra-curricular activities and the support available through e.g. the University’s Study Skills Centre. The skills being developed will be made explicit to students so that they are aware of their developing competence base and can articulate this to employers and others. [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability]

The importance of employers in the development of these skills will be recognised through the provision of employer-led experiences (see ‘Learning from Experience’ above) that provide opportunities for reflective learning. Employers are also be invited to deliver specific input to awards on campus and encouraged to help to develop award structures appropriate to their needs. [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; employer engagement]

Disabled students’ employability skills will be demonstrated in ways appropriate to their impairment, with reasonable adaptations which, in the context of inclusion, could lead to alternative approaches of benefit to all students. [ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; widening participation]

### **3.5 Learning, Reflection and Articulation through Personal Development Planning**

Personal Development Planning (PDP) is defined as:

*A structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and / or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development (Universities UK, SCOP et al, 2001).*

As well as enhancing student employability, PDP could serve to boost the recruitment, retention and employability of our increasingly diverse student body, in line with the University’s Student Recruitment and Retention Strategy. It can be seen as the mechanism by which the employability of individuals may be enhanced to its full potential. Personal Development Planning can build on PDP work students have already undertaken in schools and colleges

**Aim:**

All students (as outlined below) will have the opportunity to engage in a Personal Development Planning programme while at the University, as well as having access to tailored support and relevant opportunities. This will include students being explicitly aware of the skills that they have gained and being able to articulate these to employers and others. PDP is an opportunity for students to take a proactive role in their own personal and professional development with specific and structured support. **[ref University Plan: customer focus/employability]**

**For all Staffordshire University Level 1 campus-based undergraduate awards:**

All students will be able to engage in a continuous personal development planning process, which will encourage them to learn how to:

- Take responsibility for their own personal and professional development
- Identify areas for self development and set goals for that development
- Develop a level of confidence and competence in terms of both professional and transferable skills
- Reflect continuously on their learning and skills development (gained from their academic, work-based and other experience both before and whilst at university)
- Articulate their learning (for example, to employers)

The PDP process will be underpinned by the personal tutoring system, with module-based and extra-curricular interventions to support individual needs. PDP will be facilitated by a wide range of resources, including the online system, Pebblepad. The latter will be particularly relevant to the needs of off-campus students. Faculties and Schools will have discretion in implementing PDP at levels 2 and 3 so that it is appropriate for their professional/discipline areas. **[ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; widening participation; diversity; flexibility; exploiting technology]**

**3.6 Enterprise and Entrepreneurship**

*'Promoting a more entrepreneurial approach among university students is a practical step which can strengthen the innovative capacity of a region'* (DIUS, 2008 - Innovation Nation: Unlocking Talent)

**Included:**

**All Staffordshire University campus-based undergraduate awards**

**Non SURF UK awards**

**All University Awards delivered in SURF Colleges**

**All Staffordshire University campus-based postgraduate (taught & research) awards**

**All Staffordshire University distance learning awards – where relevant to the UK labour market**

**Aim:**

It is recognised that generic enterprise skills and behaviours are relevant to the broader employability agenda, and not solely to business start up (NESTA, 2008) The University aims to formally embed enterprise into the curriculum so that all students have the opportunity to enhance their enterprising capacities. Moreover, Staffordshire University students will be encouraged to view starting and running a business as a genuine career choice, and where appropriate will gain access to practical support to make this happen. **[ref University Plan: Enterprise and innovation; customer focus/employability]**

All students who are interested will have the following support to develop their management skills and knowledge to help them develop an enterprising approach and start and grow successful

businesses or become enterprising as an employee ('intrapreneurship'). **[ref University Plan: enterprise and innovation; customer focus/employability]**

Curriculum-based:

- Enterprise and entrepreneurship in the curriculum – aligned to the relevant award. The University is developing a strategy and action plan to further embed an enterprise culture. The development strategy has three strands: enterprise in the curriculum; supporting academics to deliver enterprise education; developing academic enterprise.

Extra-curricular:

- Relevant programmes & support are also offered by Enterprise and Commercial Development. These opportunities can be taken up by Faculty and School staff to support their students. The SPEED scheme supports current students considering starting up their own business, offering financial support along with business village accommodation, business start-up training and mentoring. The scheme has secured funding for a further three years.

Case studies of the experiences of successful enterprising graduates, in particular disabled graduates, those of minority ethnic background and those from a mixture of social backgrounds will be made available through the Careers Centre to raise the aspirations of students. **[ref University Plan: enterprise and innovation; widening participation; employer engagement]**

### **3.7 Developing Staff who are Knowledgeable about and Committed to Employability**

All staff will be familiar with employability policy and practice and will know how to access related development opportunities and resources and how to refer effectively. Staff development will include:

- Employability as a feature of staff induction
- Creation of a bank of employability-related resources/teaching material which will include referral points
- Regular employability-related staff development activities
- Opportunities for staff shadowing and relevant industrial visits

### **3.8 Marketing of Employability**

- Prospective applicants, applicants and new students will be actively encouraged and helped to understand and invest in employability regardless of their background. **[ref University Plan: customer focus/employability; widening participation; diversity; employer engagement]**
- An inclusive approach will be taken to marketing, which will demonstrate that all students can be successful. **[ref University Plan: widening participation; diversity]**
- Students will be made aware of the need to be employable, encouraged to engage in employability learning and to access careers information, advice and guidance and enabled to feed back their needs and views. **[ref University Plan: widening participation]**
- A coherent approach will be developed in order to:
  - Enable employers to understand the benefits of and implement the employment of students and graduates of Staffordshire University, including those who have an impairment and are from diverse backgrounds. **[ref University Plan: employer engagement; widening participation; diversity]**
  - Engage employers in curriculum development. **[ref University Plan: employer engagement]**

## **4. Implementation**

To ensure that Staffordshire University students benefit from the commitments outlined in the Policy:

- 4.1 The Learning and Teaching Directors for the four Faculties and two Schools have a responsibility in conjunction with the Employability Co-ordinators and all relevant staff to ensure that the Policy is implemented in its entirety for undergraduate and postgraduate (taught) students
- 4.2 The Learning and Teaching Directors will ensure that the summary of this Policy is included in all award handbooks
- 4.3 The Members of the Research Committee are responsible for ensuring that the Policy is implemented for all postgraduate (research) students
- 4.4 The implementation of the curriculum aspects of the Policy are the responsibility of the link tutors in SURF colleges, as is the distribution of the Policy to SURF students, e.g. via handbooks
- 4.5 The Careers Centre, Enterprise and Commercial Development, Information Services, Sales & Student Recruitment, Placements, Marketing and Professional Development are all responsible for contributing to the delivery of the relevant parts of the Policy.
- 4.6 All the above plus the four Faculties and two Schools will appoint a working group to produce/update annual action plans that will detail how they meet/will meet the commitments in the Employability and Enterprise Policy.
- 4.7 Programme proposals should articulate how they meet the requirements of the Employability Policy. SESG will make available a validation briefing document to alert Panel chairs to the need to check that employability issues are covered in documentation/validation discussion.

## **5. Monitoring**

- 5.1 A working group from SESG will provide overall monitoring. A working group made up of members of the SURF Quality Board will produce and monitor an action plan for SURF colleges which will be monitored by the SESG working group.
- 5.2 The Student Employability Sub Group (SESG), chaired by the Head of Careers Centre, is responsible for ensuring the ongoing promotion, implementation, monitoring and review of the Policy across the institution. Regular reports will be submitted to the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee.
- 5.3 SESG will annually monitor the following employability-related output measures and recommend action where necessary:
  - The Employment Performance Indicator (EPI) benchmark. The EPI is taken from the annual Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) Survey.
  - The level of graduate jobs achieved by each cohort, compared to our comparator institutions
  - The actual career destinations of our graduates
  - Longitudinal career destinations of graduates and graduate case studies
  - Surveys of employers in the region relating to the reputation of Staffordshire University graduate employees
  - The Dean of Students & Academic Registrar is responsible for including a section on Employability within surveys of student views. The results of the surveys will be considered by the Group & where necessary relevant action taken.

- More specific and in-depth student feedback on their experience of the delivery of Employability, perhaps linked to the module monitoring process

## **6. Student Commitments**

Students are expected to utilise actively the positive opportunities provided to them by the University to enhance their employability, while also at all times presenting themselves appropriately as representatives of Staffordshire University.

## **7. Conclusion**

The national, local and institutional drivers highlighted in this policy indicate that employability will be one of the keys to the success and survival of Higher Education institutions. For Staffordshire University, recruiting, retaining and enhancing the employability of students from diverse backgrounds is and will continue to be an important focus. Taking a strategic approach to employability by developing a sound policy and clear strategy for implementation will ensure that the University retains its edge in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

## **8. Equality & Diversity**

Staffordshire University's commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of gender-neutral language, jargon-free plain English, recognition of the needs of disabled people, promotion of the positive duty in relation to race, gender and disability and avoidance of stereotypes. This document is available in alternative formats on request. If you think we can improve the fairness of this policy please contact the individual who has responsibility for its update.

Updated January 2009

The Policy will be reviewed in December 2010

## **Reference list**

- Booth, J., ESECT, Briefings on Employability 6, 2003. *Good learning and employability: issues for HE careers services and careers guidance practitioners*
- Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), 2008. *Higher Education at Work - High Skills: High Value*
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- Institute of Directors' Skills Briefing, December 2007. *Graduates' Employability Skills*
- NESTA, 2008. *Developing Entrepreneurial Graduates*
- Universities UK, SCOP et al, 2001. *Guidelines for HE Progress Files*