Universities UK

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# Universities improving graduate employment

Case studies

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# Introduction

Are some graduates going on to do non-graduate jobs? Evidence we've collected from interviews with universities careers services shows many have in fact seen an improvement in graduate employment – specifically, in more graduates entering 'high skilled professions' and unemployment rates going down.

These case studies outline approaches universities have used to improve graduate employment, including student preparation and employer engagement. They also include advice they would give to other providers and suggestions to the UK Government and employers.

## Whole university approach

Universities say the improvements they've seen in graduate employment are as a result of their reformed approach to careers advice, which includes the whole university.

As part of this, careers offices have identified key skills needed for graduate jobs, which universities have then embedded into the curriculum across all departments. This has helped graduates to more easily identify the skills they have with the needs of their possible employers.

## The importance of work experience

Universities recognise the instrumental role work experience has in allowing students to develop skills required by employers – for example, social skills that cannot be illustrated through academic curricula.

Many universities have implemented a mandatory work experience element across courses, whether that be a placement year or a partnership project with local employers. As a result, graduates meet the demands of employers, who identify work experience as key to deciding the recruitment of an individual.

# The value of confidence in graduates

Universities reported that it's not graduates' skillsets that prevents them from entering graduate roles – it's their confidence in their skillsets. This is specifically evident in students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In response to this, universities have proposed initiatives aimed at uplifting graduates' confidence.

# University of Chichester

Graduate Outcomes data shows that the University of Chichester has seen an improvement in graduates entering high-skilled roles and an improvement in unemployment rates in the past year.

## How has Chichester improved graduate employment?

- The University of Chichester's Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience, Dr Mark Mason, has championed student experience that is academic-led, but built on through the whole university experience to develop students' skillsets – for example, through the students' union.
- At the heart of this approach is a holistic outlook, capturing the 'whole person'. This recognises a student's development not just in lecture theatres, but inside the university community.
- The university's graduate scheme is built around four areas:
    - **Employability in the curriculum:** through collaboration and conversation with departments, the university has brought employability into the curriculum.
    - **Real world practice:** the university provides access to placements and work experience to help students test their development in a safe environment.
    - **Engagement with local and regional employers:** the university works to develop strong partnerships with them.
    - **The relationship between employability and wellbeing:** the university takes into account how development of a student's wellbeing leads to an improvement in their confidence and their outlook on themselves and their capabilities.
- Careers and Employability Manager Federica Bocciarelli has joined the Board of the Chichester Chamber of Commerce. This has helped the university be seen as a key educational provider for the community, and establish a talent pipeline.
- Placements are offered to students on all courses. Currently, the university has 250 local business connections, including with Rolls-Royce, Chelsea Football

Club and Airbus. Due to their close relationship with employers, Rolls-Royce has joined the university's advisory board, helping to identify the needs of employers to the university internally.

## What does graduate employment look like at Chichester?

- The sector with the largest graduate uptake at Chichester is education.
- The majority of graduates stay in or around Chichester or return to their home region. This is supported by the university's strategy to improve partnerships with local employers.

## What support has been most effective in improving graduate outcomes?

- The careers service works closely with vice-chancellor's group, especially the pro-vice-chancellor for student experience, to ensure better collaboration. This has cemented the ties between the careers service and vice-chancellor group, which has been reinforced through their activity being represented in different committee groups, specifically working with students to listen to and gather their views to advise the careers service.
- The careers service employed two graduate interns in 2022, who brought fresh ideas and spoke a common language with students.
- Collaboration with academics has helped inform the development of curricula.
- Flexibility was important during the Covid-19 pandemic, and is important now to help support students to overcome any barriers to achieving their life goals.
- Chichester is a small university with 6000 students, which allows services to be personal to each individual and allows the offer of a lifelong service after graduation.

## How has Chichester addressed graduate employment inequality?

- Chichester is keen to help students recognise that the university experience broadens a student's skillset, and is not just subject-specific. The university believes this awareness needs to be spread to employers as well.

- The university is part of the Turing Scheme, aimed at improving student progress and experience for students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- Offers to study abroad are funded through an uplift grant, which aims to improve confidence in students who would not have been able to pursue such opportunities otherwise.
- At the heart of the university's approach is the need to break down barriers, challenging students through identifying the barriers they face and uplifting students' confidence, helping them to recognise their capabilities.

## What role does work experience play in student employment?

- All students are offered the opportunity to take part in some form of work placement at a local, national or international company.
- Each department has a staff member who specialises in work placements.
- The careers service is centralising work placement options from all departments, so students can decide from a range of opportunities rather than being limited to subject-specific placements.

## What support do graduates need from the government and employers?

- There is a demand for the government to supply funding either directly to students, or to universities as grants, to provide financial backing to support students in unpaid opportunities. This is important to improve social mobility and bridge the gap in opportunity facing those from low socio-economic backgrounds.

# Heriot-Watt University

Graduate Outcomes data shows that Heriot-Watt University has seen an improvement in graduates entering high-skilled roles and a reduction in unemployment rates in the past year.

## How has Heriot-Watt improved graduate employment?

- For the past two years, the core curriculum for first year students studying within the School of Social Sciences at Heriot-Watt, includes a mandatory module on effective career planning. This presents students with a timeline of effective career planning, encouraging them to start research on the jobs market themselves.
- Heriot-Watt surveys students on their career readiness and uses this data to identify cohorts that are behind in their career planning activities. The university targets cohorts which are 'at risk' with targeted career events and workshops.
- Career support is structured through school-based specialised advisors.
- The employer engagement team has kept employers engaged with the university, particularly when they are distracted by unprecedented events and the status of the economy. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the university held a virtual careers service, which was reported by employers to be one of the most successful nationally. This helped get the message out to students that there was still a need for forward thinking and planning during the pandemic.

## What does graduate employment look like at Heriot-Watt?

- Heriot-Watt's School of Mathematics, Actuarial and Computing Science has seen the highest level of positive outcomes for graduates.
- Students have gone on to work at blue chip companies including PwC, Mercer, JP Morgan and Mott MacDonald. These companies have good relationships with the university's departments and careers team.

- There's still work to do to improve positive outcomes in creative industries. In this school, work is focusing on building students' confidence and developing their entrepreneurial mindset.

## What support has been most effective in improving graduate outcomes?

- Heriot-Watt has aimed to maintain online delivery of their services since students have returned to campus after the pandemic.
- The cost-of-living crisis has pushed more students to get jobs rather than pursue further study. This is why a hybrid model has been effective in the careers service.
- Employing specialist school-based careers consultants, and working with the university's schools (groups of departments) in general, has been instrumental.
- Employer-based events include specialist careers fairs and insights days. 'Careers uncovered', which aims to demystify job roles, is a particularly popular event.
- The university has also identified that different cohorts need different support. As a result, it's about to launch an aspiring careers programme, which aims to work with students on the different barriers they face. Development of the programme involved talking to student groups to find out where perceived barriers are, and bringing in specialist groups to tailor to their needs. In particular, it focuses on widening participation for those who lack social capital.

## How has Heriot-Watt addressed graduate employment inequality?

- Heriot-Watt has focused on needing to be more data-driven to reach out to students who they've identified as being most in need, rather than waiting for students to contact them. This is because students with more social capital have traditionally been the most proactive.
- The Head of the Careers and Graduate Futures service sits on the university's Learning and Teaching committee to advise on how best to further embed employability in the curriculum.

- The university's 'Becoming a professional' course aims to change the mindset of students identifying the skills they already have, and putting concrete plans in place to develop the skills they currently lack.

## What role does work experience play in student employment?

- Heriot-Watt places importance of work experience from the first year of students' courses. Internal temporary and casual work work within the university is actively promoted to students, giving them more opportunities to develop skills in a workplace environment, but also supporting students to identify the skills they already have, but may not recognise.
- The university helps students to work towards internships in third year. Enhanced support is in place to particularly support those students who might face barriers to engaging in the typical summer internship programmes. There's a specific emphasis on volunteering and internships, and some Master's-level programmes have integrated placements.

## How is career guidance aligned with current skills gaps?

- Heriot-Watt sees career guidance as person-centred, rather than being guided by a perceived skills gap.
- Industry skills gaps are addressed through the university continually developing its' programme portfolio. This includes integrating new areas into the curriculum, including sustainability, AI and data analysis, which may face skills gaps in the future.

## What support do graduates need from the government and employers?

- The government should look again at the Graduate Visa for international students, as recent data has revealed that only 3% of employers are currently recruiting international talent through this route. Pitching the idea that the UK welcomes international talent is getting harder and harder, meaning international students are looking elsewhere.
- The government should make more funding available for graduate internship programmes, particularly for those who face barriers to employment.

- The university would benefit from more off-cycle internships and micro-internships being made available by employers.

# University of Huddersfield

Graduate Outcomes data shows that the University of Huddersfield has seen an increase in graduates entering high-skilled roles in the past year.

## How has Huddersfield improved graduate employment?

### Partnerships with departments

- The University of Huddersfield transitioned their careers advisors into careers consultants, partnering each with an academic school (group of departments at the university).
- Careers consultants have then set up school-based career employability and enterprise groups, working closely with each school's academic employability lead.

### Global Professional Award

- The university offers the Global Professional Award programme to all undergraduate students on three-year degrees to provide a solid foundation in wellbeing, enterprise and employability skills, leading to a Chartered Management Institute (CMI) Level 5 qualification.
- This programme is designed to reduce the attainment gap between students from different backgrounds.

### Data dashboard

- The university shares Graduate Outcomes data with academics through a dashboard.
- This work has been complemented by resources for academics, such as a regional jobs guide for students, highlighting opportunities across West Yorkshire and Manchester.

### Kickstarter initiative

- In 2021 and 2022, the university used the government's Kickstarter scheme to recruit graduates to work in service teams across the university.
- This provided recent graduates with an opportunity to develop their skills and also provided a springboard for graduates into permanent opportunities, including In the careers services team.

## What does graduate employment look like at Huddersfield?

- Home students tend to come from the region and stay in the region. Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data shows that in 2021–22, 75% of Huddersfield's home first degree entrants were from Yorkshire and the Humber, with 63% being from West Yorkshire (including Kirklees, Calderdale, Wakefield, Bradford and Leeds).
- Graduate Outcomes data shows that in 2020–21, 60% of graduates from Huddersfield who were in work were in the Yorkshire and the Humber, with a further 13% in the North West region.
- Many graduates move on to roles locally in the Kirklees area in sectors such as digital, manufacturing and engineering, healthcare, and education. Many work for the small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that make up 99% of Kirklees' businesses. Others work for larger employers, like Thornton and Ross, Syngenta and Cummins.
- It's also common for graduates to look for opportunities in neighbouring regions, such as Calderdale, Bradford, Leeds, Manchester, York and Sheffield, particularly in larger hubs like Leeds and Manchester, where a greater volume of opportunities exist in fields like media, finance and the legal sector.
- Graduate Outcomes data shows that the average starting salary in Yorkshire and the Humber was around £25,000. While this is lower than in London and the South East, it's balanced by a better ratio of median house price to median annual gross earnings than many other parts of the country.

# What support has been most effective in improving graduate outcomes?

## Graduate Boost programme

- The careers service has been offering targeted, 1:1 graduate coaching and bespoke webinars and weekly emails from graduates from the Class of 2022 between June and September 2023.
- Evaluation will determine whether this form of targeted support for unemployed and underemployed graduates could be repeated on an annual basis to get relevant careers support to the graduates who need it the most.

## Huddersfield Graduate Internship Programme

- Every summer, the Business Partnerships Team offers around 20 paid internships with local employers to recent graduates. Many go on to employ the graduates they work with on a temporary or permanent basis after the internship scheme.
- This helps the university demonstrate the value of graduate knowledge and skills to local employers, while providing recent graduates with a stepping stone into graduate-level employment, and a better understanding of the opportunities available locally.

## Huddersfield Business School Alumni Mentoring Scheme

- Final-year students from business-related courses were mentored by Business School graduates between March and June 2023. A ‘coaching’ approach to mentoring focused not just on providing mentees with industry insights, but also supported them to reflect on how prepared they felt for the next stage of career and what support they might need to make this transition as effective as possible.
- 70% of mentees involved in the scheme reported a positive relationship with their mentor, with significant improvements overall in career confidence. One PR graduate secured an internship in the industry of their choice through contacts supplied by their mentor. After this pilot, the mentoring scheme will be expanded.

# How has Huddersfield addressed graduate employment inequality?

## Women of the Future

- Women of the Future was a collaboration between the careers service and the School of Educational Professional Development (SEPD) designed to enhance the confidence of female students in their chosen roles, linked to courses within the school that had experienced a decline in graduate outcomes based on previous years.
- It was a six-week intensive programme featuring sessions from guest speakers on topics such as identity, values and failure within a supportive and safe environment.
- Evaluation saw a significant increase in confidence among the women who took part, both in their self-awareness and understanding of what mattered to them, and also in relation to their confidence in communicating with others and recognising the skills and qualities they'd developed in their degree to date.

## My Graduate Plan

- This initiative is a structured approach to career development being implemented within all undergraduate courses in the School of Education and Professional Development, aiming to improve graduate outcomes.
- The programme is part of timetabled academic skills sessions for students and includes a reflective exercise at the end of each academic year to help students transition to the next stage of their degree, or onto life as a graduate. It's designed to help students consider how they're developing graduate skills, so that they're in a better position to recognise and articulate them.

# What role does work experience play in student employment?

- The careers services' Business Partnerships Team delivers events and initiatives throughout the year, including virtual and in-person careers fairs and bespoke employer-focused events (such as Green Careers Week, Volunteering Fair and Employer Spotlights).

- The team partners with other teams across the university who are involved in employer engagement, such as placement teams and the business development team, to maximise opportunities for students to interact with employers. For example, the university-wide careers fair was combined with the placement fairs, which were previously separate, and the careers service now runs the 'Careers and Recruitment Fair'.
- The university also works with local organisations to connect students with opportunities. For example, a volunteering speed-meet for Childhood Studies students in October 2023 will allow students to meet 10 charitable organisations in areas such as speech therapy, mental health and wellbeing. They will use this as a fact-finding mission to work out if they would be interested in approaching the organisations for work experience as part of the placement part of their course.

## How is career guidance aligned with current skills gaps?

- Training for careers service colleagues aims to enhance their labour market intelligence and help them stay on top of skills shortages and developments. This has included analysis of the university's Graduate Outcomes figures from sector experts like Charlie Ball from Jisc, who is a specialist in the graduate labour market. These insights are shared across the institution by careers consultants.
- Colleagues share labour market updates to schools (groups of departments) they work with. This helps colleagues be more informed when delivering 1:1 or group guidance with students and graduates.
- Huddersfield is a member of the steering group for the regional GradSkills programme in West Yorkshire, which aims to enhance graduate outcomes in the region by providing free professional development courses and connecting graduates with local employers.

## What support do graduates need from the government and employers?

- The government should put greater effort into promoting the benefits of the Graduate Immigration Route by working with employers and other organisations to demonstrate the potential for filling skills shortages in particular industries and businesses.

- The government should reconsider the metrics of 'success' graduates are assessed against. From their experience working with many students and graduates, Huddersfield's careers service knows that how individuals define 'success' after university can be extremely subjective, but this is rarely acknowledged by measures such as Graduate Outcomes and the Office for Students (OfS) progression indicator.
- The government should factor regional wage rates into its Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset and benchmarks, to avoid misleading comparisons between universities based in areas of the UK with significantly different salary averages.
- The government should provide additional devolved funding for regional areas to spend on early-career graduate programmes. For example, these programmes have already been delivered under the now-unavailable European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund, such as the Liverpool City Region Graduate scheme and the RISE scheme in the Sheffield City Regions.
    - Ring-fenced funding for devolved metro regions to run sustainable versions of these type of programmes could provide a greater number of graduate-level opportunities for individuals who want to stay and contribute to their own region, while also supporting local businesses to meet skills shortages.

# University of Leicester

Graduate Outcomes data shows that the University of Leicester has seen a reduction in graduate unemployment in the past year.

## How has Leicester improved graduate employment?

- The main way that the University of Leicester has improved graduate employment is through embedding employability, which is contextual, in each module and degree programme.
- The university offers a full employability programme to all undergraduates informed by the Career EDGE Model for Graduate Employability. This maps out a critical path to best prepare for life after university. After asking students career readiness questions, interventions are communicated based on responses to provide support. It covers three steps:
    - Getting students to think about themselves is done through **the Leicester Award programme.** Over the course of several years, beginning in 2017–18, all undergraduate programmes have been supported to introduce the Leicester Award (at level 4, or year 1) and introduce the intended learning outcomes from the Leicester Award Gold (at level 5, or year 2) as a teaching assessment. It requires students to self-assess their transferable skills and identify development opportunities from that, to prepare students to seek out and secure work-related experience.
    - **Accelerated 'catch-up' support for final year students** if they're not in the position they want to be in as the end of their degree programme nears.

## What does graduate employment look like at Leicester?

- Leicester's medical school boosts graduate employment, as students have a natural path into a graduate-level role.
- More students than average go onto further study. This is reflective of Leicester's research focus as a university.

- The NHS, Leicester Council and The University of Leicester are top employers in Leicester.
- The East Midlands region is the region which retains graduates the least. Leicester is working with other local universities and partners to showcase the potential for graduates to secure a career path in the region and in Leicester through our Civic Universities Partnership.

## How has Leicester addressed graduate employment inequality?

- Leicester's employability programme aims to support students to have greater access to career development learning through their degree programme. Integrating employability content into degrees results in students recognising the importance of these skills, rather than seeing them as an 'add on'.
- Previously, the university had raised the floor for everyone, but had not addressed gaps between groups of students. This was an approach of aiming for equality rather than equity. Learning from this is important in successfully breaking down barriers in inequality and developments are underway to support our student groups in preparing for life after university.

## What role does work experience play in student employment?

- Leicester has been thinking more strategically about its relationships with local organisations, and the supply of graduates they offer to help local employers grow.
- , a place where industry, academics and students can collaborate to drive growth in space, allows smaller and local organisations to access high level, qualityadvice.
- The university has tested boundaries in the way the curriculum is delivered, introducing work-related learning modules.
- An example of a new module is the sustainable enterprise partnership project, an interdisciplinary model which allows different schools (groups of departments) to work together.
- A part of Leicester Award Gold, it supports students to search for significant work experience. After researching, looking at best practice and engaging with local, national and international employers, Leicester identified a core set of work experience activities known as 'significant experience'that increases the likelihood of a student securing a positive graduate outcome. Participation in

'significant experience' supports students in developing the self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem needed to enhance their employability.

- The university would like all programmes to operate like their medical school, where students have access to experience and learning in the workplace, as this enables students to have a natural path into a graduate-level role.

## How is career guidance aligned with current skills gaps?

- Leicester is currently working on improving its response to skills gaps. Currently, the university doesn't align its career guidance with skills gaps. Instead, the careers service uses the opportunities listed by employers including the location and sectors to map across students' interests and intentions. This also informs the partnership and engagement with local, national and global employers.

## What support do graduates need from the government and employers?

- The government should fund or provide incentives for universities to develop skillsets that are in need from employers and the labour market in general. This includes investment in degrees which government and employers would like to see more of, or will require in the future.
- Leicester has funded and organised their own example of this. To support students, Leicester has introduced a concept of Pathways which provides information about particular sectors and clear routes to work experience and graduate opportunities. However, the university needs wider national support from the government to provide the best services possible for students and future graduates.
- Employers and the government also need to recognise the value of university outside of providing employment training programmes – for example, the research and innovation that is inspired and curated at universities that can support further economic growth. There are many great ways in which universities and businesses can collaborate. As such, the approach to graduates meeting skills demands must be balanced with other ways in which university is valuable.

# Liverpool John Moores University

Graduate Outcomes data shows that Liverpool John Moores University has seen an increase in graduates going into high skilled roles in the past year.

## How has Liverpool John Moores improved graduate employment?

- Improvement in graduate employment at Liverpool John Moores has aligned with the launch of a new graduate employment strategy.
- The university's graduate employment strategy was approved just before the pandemic, so launched fully in 2021. This was a product of discussion and dialogue across the university and with employers.
- The strategy foregrounds transferable skills. Nine employability skills are consistently referenced in the curriculum and used widely outside the curriculum.
- Work-based learning is now a guarantee for all undergraduates, in the form of placements, student projects and developing portfolios of professional experience.
- No student leaves without an onward plan for after graduation.
- The university has worked with the Liverpool City Region to create new degree-level jobs and graduate-owned businesses.

## What does graduate employment look like at Liverpool John Moores?

- A recurring point in developing Liverpool John Moore's strategy was the importance of students feeling confident in their abilities. This prompted the careers service to rethink what employability confidence looks like and what makes students feel more or less confident.
- Many students at Liverpool John Moores are from the Liverpool City Region or Northern Ireland. Many are commuter students from a low socioeconomic

background, and may not have family guidance in career insight or accessing experiences.

- 47.1% of students stay in the Liverpool City Region to work after graduating. This means the success of many students is tied to the success of the economy in the region. It's therefore important for the university to get involved in creating jobs in the region.
- Support from Charlie Ball, a graduate labour market expert from JISC, has also helped map the City Region graduate labour market.

## What support has been most effective in improving graduate outcomes?

- The careers and employability service has found success in creating a consultant role who acts as a bespoke delivery partner and adviser to academic schools.
- The service provides 1:1 careers advice, which two-thirds of students at Liverpool John Moores say they have not received before joining the university. It also offers careers support for life.
- The service has a long-established reputation in supporting student and graduate start-ups.

## How has Liverpool John Moores addressed graduate employment inequality?

- A high proportion of students at Liverpool John Moore's come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Helping students develop social capital and mobility is therefore important across all programmes. For example, the university has tailored their work with care experienced students and the careers and employability service includes a disabled employment specialist. It's also engaged in co-creation with interns and students from different backgrounds.
- The service has also used data to identify which cohorts are in most need, helping strategically key Schools (groups of subjects) put more career support into the curriculum.

# What role does work experience play in student employment?

- Employers have indicated that they really value work experience. The university's own research highlights that students with work experience are more likely to achieve higher grades, achieve a degree and go on to high skilled employment.
- The university recognises that not all students can do a placement year, so it's important to have some form of work experience embedded into every course, meaning students don't have to sacrifice their extracurricular time and part-time work to participate and benefit. Work-based learning provides students with the opportunity to connect with the outside world for learning, and also to benefit the organisations and communities they work with.
- Outside of the curriculum, the university provides 150 fully-funded internships every year.
- The university has also worked with SMEs in the region, recognising it's important to connect to the local economy to model and create new jobs. This has been particularly important in recovery after the pandemic.
- When working with other organisations, it's been essential to critique their efforts for social mobility. This includes working with the Purpose Coalition. They have helped to voice students' views that employment isn't a level playing field, and help to implement blind applications and cover the cost of travel for interviews.

# How is career guidance aligned with current skills gaps?

- Career guidance is aligned with current skills gaps to an extent. Graduate labour market expert Charlie Ball's advice was that Liverpool John Moores maps quite well onto the labour market. Consultants help to research and develop how to give more nuanced advice to students, providing them with several potential plans.
- The careers service has developed a Green Insights Fair, which includes information on how to work in sustainability in many businesses.

# What support do graduates need from the government and employers?

- Employers need to be serious and sensible with social mobility. Employers should be inclusive of all universities, as those who aren't higher tariff institutions typically include more diverse students, including more students from minority backgrounds.
- This will involve challenging recruitment practice. Suggestions to develop mentorship and networking include treating socioeconomic background as a characteristic of an individual and recognising the barriers everyone may face. For example, using university blind interviews can help to tackle unconscious bias.

# Regent's University London

Graduate Outcomes data shows that Regent's University London has seen a reduction in graduate unemployment in the past year.

## How has Regent's improved graduate employment?

- Regent's University's careers service has been redeveloped across the past two years. This has included the onboarding of a new careers platform called Handshake. This platform puts all resources in one place, such as access to events appointments and networking with employers.
- In June 2021, the university launched a new strategy, embedding industry into what they do, not just from a careers consultancy perspective, but also through the curriculum. This approach includes a new curriculum model, where all undergraduates now take a module that embeds careers and industry into their learning.
- The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Geoff Smith, has promised to prioritise industry connectivity which is aimed at the whole university, rather than sub-sections of it.
- The university has developed the relationships between the network and development team, the alumni team and the careers team. This has brought more alumni expertise into careers advice.

## What does graduate employment look like at Regent's?

- Self-employment is a significant pathway for graduates, with 26% of recent graduates being self-employed. Students at Regent's have been identified for their entrepreneurial flair.
- Alumni come back to Regent's Founders Programme – a programme to all those interested in starting their own enterprise. The university has also partnered with Huckletree to launch an innovation lab on campus.
- Graduates go into sectors such as the luxury sector (for example, in marketing and brand management), finance and business and management.

## What support has been most effective in improving graduate outcomes?

- Regent's aims to make career support as accessible as possible. Most students access 1:1 career appointments as well as career events, and the university has found that the more tailored and personalised the careers support, the better.
- Due to the small size of Regent's University, students benefit from a more bespoke support network, and can receive career support for life.
- The university's alumni network can give a feeling of support to students when needed.
- Students have reported that they want to meet and see employers. As a result, the university set up a speaker series with speakers from businesses such as Harrods and McLaren.
- Regent's has aimed to build relationships and connections with academics through the curriculum, working to promote academics as champions to students.

## How has Regent's addressed graduate employment inequality?

- Bespoke 1:1 career coaching appointments that take place over several months aim to help students overcome barriers.
- The university has made resources more accessible, such as by updating services to support disabled students.
- Partnering with Handshake has helped identify data, such as which subject areas see students applying for more jobs compared to others. This is helping the university to target certain subject areas through targeted communications and events.
- The careers service has partnered with the students' union to help understand what students need and want, and have collaborated on events.

## What role does work experience play in student employment?

- Regent's has always encouraged work experience, and sees UK work experience as important to international students. All students have the opportunity to undertake work experience as part of their course in their second year.
- Handshake has helped the university identify where connections with employers are weakest. For example, Regent's has boosted the number of employers in the creative sector it has association with.
- The university has existing relationships with business such as Dunhill, McLaren, JP Morgan, Mulberry and Harrods.

## How is career guidance aligned with current skills gaps?

- The new curriculum model has an upcoming session on the labour market and what to expect. For example, it aims to teach students how to research a labour market skill. It places high focus on future skills and how to prepare students for the future of work.
- The careers services aims to stay ahead of trends and help students develop skills which will be needed when they graduate.

## What support do graduates need from the government and employers?

- The opening of the Graduate Visa route has been beneficial and needs continued support from the government. The government should lower entry requirements for this route so that graduates can enter them more easily, which will benefit the labour market.
- Employers should make sure they're up-to-date with the Graduate Visa route by increasing their knowledge of what it is and making sure it doesn't pose an issue to them when hiring graduates.
- Employers should offer more paid internships to graduates and be more open to placements generally.

# University of Winchester

Graduate Outcomes data shows that the University of Winchester has seen a reduction in graduate unemployment in the past year.

## How has Winchester improved graduate employment?

- The University of Winchester has invested in services and applied individual strategies to areas of concern to improve graduate outcomes.
- The university has invested in a Careers and Opportunities Hub and has increased the number of staff in the careers service, transforming the service's ability to provide lifetime careers support.
- The university has built gaining employability skills into every course curriculum. This includes modules focused on careers skills, lecturers from careers advisers, modules on volunteering or placements, tailored careers fairs, guest lectures from industry and alumni visitors, toolkits on employability to support courses going through approval, and workshops to development course teams.
- The university has aimed to increase the number of professionally focused programmes and meet workforce needs in public sector areas, such as nursing. 43 courses were recognised by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) in 2021–22, compared to 26 in 2018–19.

### Psychology Futures

- The Psychology Futures programme uses personal tutoring, compulsory embedded modules in each year, optional applied modules in level 6, and a combination of reflective, goal directed and applied assessments to develop students' higher-level learning.
- In the final year, the programme provides timetabled individual career coaching to help each student prepare for their transition to work or further study.
- A survey in May 2022 of 168 level 6 students, with a response rate of 43.5%, found that 85% value the embedded employability content, 80% believe it's

helped them develop their self-awareness, and 81% feel it has helped them identify potential career options.

## What does graduate employment look like at Winchester?

- 93% of UK full-time undergraduates in the 2020–21 cohort went on to employment or further study, ranking in the top 10 of universities.
- Two-thirds (66%) of UK full-time, first-degree graduates in the 2020–21 cohort are in high-skilled employment, placing Winchester in the median quartile in the sector.
- The median salary of graduates has increased year-on-year by 9% to £25,000, placing Winchester in the median quartile in the sector.
- The university's alumni scholarship scheme has encouraged 15% of undergraduates to enhance their employability by going on to further study, placing Winchester in the upper quartile in the sector.
- Graduates enter a wide range of businesses including education, health and social work, the public sector, IT and science, finance, the arts, and entertainment.
- Large proportions of students find excellent graduate opportunities in the region.

## What support has been most effective in improving graduate outcomes?

- A holistic approach to improving employability has resulted in success. This means involving all members of the university.
- The university tailors specific support to their faculties through linked faculty employability advisers, who work with programme leads to deliver careers education in the curriculum.
- Advice to other universities would be to look at their data and use it to identify where more support is needed.
- Winchester's success is also about building links with organisations, understanding what they're looking for and promoting opportunities to students and graduates.

# How has Winchester addressed graduate employment inequality?

- Winchester's Access and Participation Plan aims to improve progression rates to further study or graduate employment by 2025. It aims to close progression gaps between men and women from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, disabled and non-disabled students and white and Asian students from the UK.
- The university has worked to expand support to students from a background recognised as needing wider participation. This includes:
    - a professional mentoring programme towards groups with lower graduate progression rates
    - employability advice and guidance through the careers services
    - an online job board, including positive action schemes
    - financial support for students from underrepresented backgrounds to access overseas study
    - the Winchester Employability Fund, which supports students to access funding to take on opportunities where finances may be a barrier

# What role does work experience play in student employment?

- Winchester encourages every student to engage in accredited work placements, volunteering, or an internship.
- The university has developed its postgraduate courses, making sure all undergraduate programmes have a progression route to further study.
- Winchester is a major provider of professional education, delivering teachers, nurses, social workers, and many other health and public services professionals.
- The university works with a range of businesses across the region and beyond to support a vibrant and thriving business community, and provide graduates with opportunities.

## How is career guidance aligned with current skills gaps?

- Careers advisers work with current students and graduates to provide impartial advice and support. This includes understanding the skills they've gained from their degree and how these relate to opportunities advertised by employers.
- Employer liaison staff monitor the sectors that have skills gaps and seek to connect with these organisations to promote opportunities to students and graduates.

## What support do graduates need from the government and employers?

- Increased support for students on courses with placement costs.
- Subsidised accommodation, so graduates can access jobs in all locations.
- Support for SMEs to hire graduates to grow their business.
- Specific diversity schemes for graduates working in public sector roles.
- Paid graduate internships in the creative sector.

# York St John University

Graduate Outcomes data shows that York St John University has seen an increase in graduates going into high skilled roles in the past year.

## How has York St John improved graduate employment?

- York St John University's approach to graduate employment is rooted in tracking data. In the past, the university tended to look at graduate employment by subject level. Now, the approach is to look at graduate employment on an individual level. For example, by tailoring the approach to students from a particular background.
- The careers service aims to tailor activities to the broad spectrum of needs for students. For example, neurodivergent students are supported by a career advice specialist. This support helps students identify what the barriers are to them getting into work, and helps them challenge themselves. Often, a barrier may be that students don't have the confidence to pursue new opportunities. This especially applies to students from underrepresented backgrounds, who take on part-time jobs at university, and decide to stay in these jobs after graduating.
- However, the careers service also wants to break the stigma of part-time work. Part-time work can allow some graduates to work around other responsibilities they have – including, caring responsibilities.
- It's important to keep the approach timely, recognising when graduates are more likely to consider support. For example, the careers service sends a postcard to students when they graduate.
- The careers service focuses on students' curiosity and confidence, asking what drives them and what their values are. This helps the service to adopt a more tailored approach, rather than matching students with ad-hoc opportunities.

# What does graduate employment look like at York St John?

- Many graduates from York St John go on to enter the public sector, particularly health. Others go on to work in sectors such as marketing, political affairs and HR.
- Many students go on to work for SMEs in the region.
- Typically, students want to stay in the region after graduating. The careers service therefore takes a local approach to employment and graduate job creation.

# What support has been most effective in improving graduate outcomes?

- The University is increasing its focus on making clear links between education and work. For example, all History students in their second year take on a work experience module. The module explores how the knowledge students gain through their degree can be used in workplace environments. This helps graduates to recognise the skills they have when they are applying for jobs.
- Without support a proportion of graduates would still enter highly skilled employment. Therefore, the careers service aims to target those less likely to enter high skilled employment, identifying the barriers and challenges that may stop graduates from being successful by developing networking events around them that are inclusive by design.

# How has York St John addressed graduate employment inequality?

- The careers service uses data analytics to develop a student employability indicator. At a course level, this looks at different drivers to success and barriers. Starting with an individual's background, it gives them a score in terms of risk, and then adds wider factors such as previous access to student finance support services. This is because those who need financial support are less likely to want to take risks in the labour market.
- The service doesn't just use data as a determinator. The team listens to students to find out what matters to them holistically, and uses this information to support them accordingly.

## What role does work experience play in student employment?

- York St John knows that a placement year is a significant advantage in accessing high skilled jobs. Some students might not have the confidence to pursue a work placement themselves, so the university is embedding work-related learning across all levels of the curriculum.
- The Work-Related Experiential Learning Framework is designed to ensure that all students benefit from externally grounded experiences of work across every year of study. Not limited to traditional placements these include projects, challenges, simulations, assessment centres and employer focussed final research or consultancy projects.

## How is career guidance aligned with current skills gaps?

- York St John aims to look at how to develop and engage with future opportunities, rather than taking a prescriptive approach.
- The careers service communicates with partners who would like to work with the university and have skills gaps, and puts these partners in front of students through work experiences embedded in the learning activities.
- Skills gaps are changing at a fast pace, so it's important to question how to prepare for the unknown and gain a balance between current skills needs and the future picture for students.
- The university focuses on ensuring students leave with enterprising and innovative skills, as well as the mindset that you shouldn't be afraid to fail. This means the university needs to be a safe space for students to fail, and learn from that. This is tricky in assessment, but can help to raise students' confidence.
- Course portfolios are always being assessed against local and national skills plans.

## What support do graduates need from the government and employers?

- The government should make use of the upcoming lifelong loan entitlement (LLE).

- The government should also rethink the apprentice levy. It could turn it into a skills development levy, developing short course micro-credentials to help with upskilling and the transition from university to work.
- There needs to be a two-way relationship between employers and universities. Employers should be much more involved in the design of higher education and delivery, helping to foster the talent they want.

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