

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN: EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Background Information

The purpose of the University's Employability Framework is to ensure that university staff and students along with employers share a common understanding of employability in the higher education context, encompassing both the formal academic curriculum and the co-curriculum.

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 recognises that effective learning, teaching and research are the cornerstones of employability development for our students, whilst also supporting our mission and values outlined in the University of Aberdeen Strategic Plan 2015-20, (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/about/strategy-and-governance/strategic-plan-20152020-735.php>).

“To equip our students with the skills and experience which will allow them to maximise their opportunities as responsible global citizens upon graduation.”

The Framework approaches employability through the provision of six key strands: Aberdeen Graduate Attributes, Curriculum Development, Employer Engagement, Co-curricular Activities, Career Planning and Enterprise & Entrepreneurship. It is anticipated that each academic School will address these employability strands with their own more detailed school-level plan, taking account of their specific discipline needs.

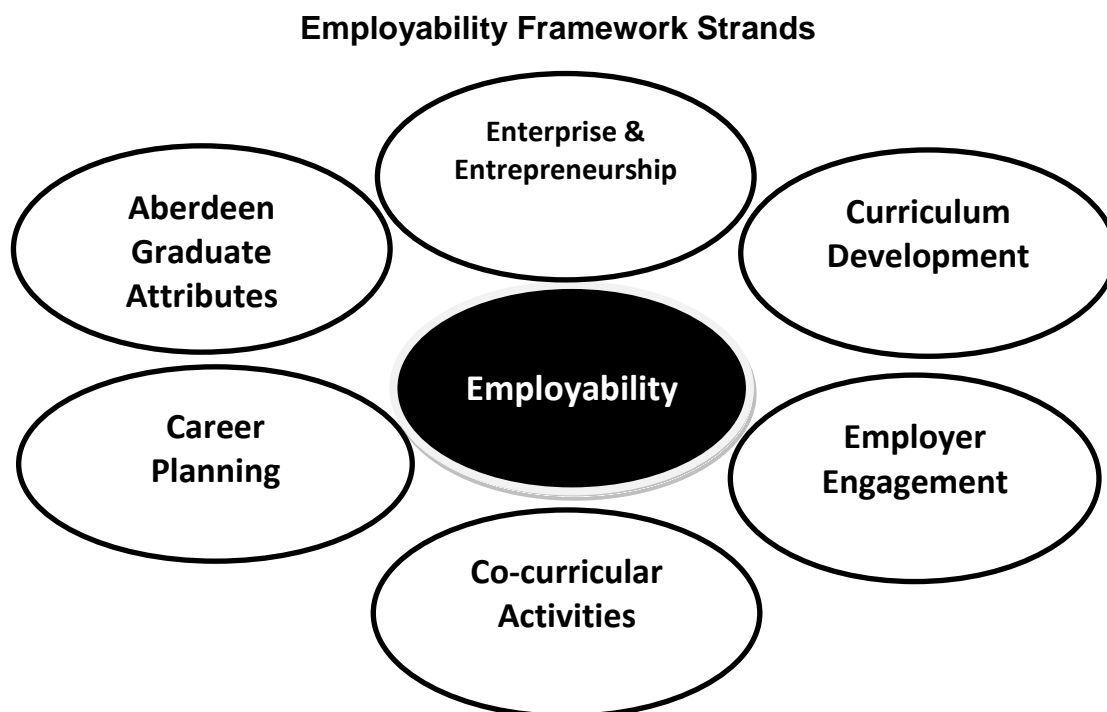
The Framework is an integrated, institution-wide approach designed to address:

- 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, career mentoring and work-related learning 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 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. Supports academic School-level strategic plans.
2. Aligns with the University's statement of Aberdeen Graduate Attributes (www.abdn.ac.uk/graduateattributes/).
3. Comprises six employability strands, namely: Aberdeen Graduate Attributes, Curriculum Development, Employer Engagement, Co-curricular Activities, Career Planning and Enterprise & Entrepreneurship.

4. Recognises the enterprise¹ and entrepreneurship² guidance provided by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).
(www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/enterprise-entrepreneurship-guidance.pdf)



Below is a brief explanation of each of the six strands of the Employability Framework highlighted in the diagram above:

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 Aberdeen Graduate Attributes to students at each study level in taught academic courses, the co-curriculum and through Personal Tutor interactions.
- Using the authentic voices of employers and other external stakeholders to strengthen the significance and value of the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes across the entire student experience.

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-related teaching and assessment practices through staff development programmes and events, the Learning & Teaching Network and the provision of small teaching development grants.
- Utilising the Programme Advisory Board (PAB) network to enable employers to input into the academic curriculum.

- Development and delivery of credit-bearing employability and work-related learning courses in the academic curriculum.
- Promoting the value of authentic, 'real-world' assessment to contextualise student learning.

Employability Strand 3: Employer Engagement

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

- Using the network of PABs and the Careers Service Employer Board as a channel to communicate with graduate recruiters and professional bodies.
- Enhancing links with local, national and international employers from micro-businesses to multi-national organisations from diverse employment sectors and organisational sizes.
- Increasing the number of employers involved in various stages of the student experience, e.g. PABs, work placements and career mentoring opportunities.
- Investigating opportunities to work more with University of Aberdeen 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, Santander-funded initiatives, 'micro- internships' 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.
- Building students' higher-level skills capacity through innovative initiatives such as the Leadership Academy.
- Recognising co-curricular learning and achievements within the University's Enhanced 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.
- Working in partnership with academic Schools to deliver careers input to taught courses.
- 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 Strand 6: Enterprise¹ & Entrepreneurship²

Create support and provision for enterprise activities through:

- Working closely with the Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE) to embed enterprise and entrepreneurship within our provision and channelling appropriate student businesses towards the SIE Entrepreneurs masterclass programme.
- Establishing an effective network of academic champions to promote and deliver enterprise and entrepreneurial education.
- Sharing academic practice via a series of online enterprise case studies.
- Continuing to grow student enterprise awareness and competencies through the ABVenture Zone and Enterprise Campus initiatives and the student-led Aberdeen Business & Enterprise Society (ABES).
- Engaging in local, national and international enterprise-led initiatives and events.

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.
- Monitoring the quantity and range of Enhanced Transcript co-curricular entries.
- Evaluating feedback from students on the support they are given and its value to them in identifying and making appropriate career decisions.
- Monitoring employability data collated through the National Student Survey (NSS), the UK Engagement Survey and the International Student Barometer.
- 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 Careers Service provision.
- Comments and feedback from students undertaking credit-bearing careers and employability 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 Committee on Teaching & Learning, School Teaching & Learning Committees and through regular progress meetings with the Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching and the Directors of Student Life and Academic Affairs.

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Footnote:

¹Enterprise Education: the process of equipping students and graduates with an enhanced capacity to generate ideas and the skills to make them happen.

²Entrepreneurial Education: equipping students with the additional knowledge, attributes and capabilities required to apply these abilities in the context of setting up a new venture or business.