Employability Strategy

Effective employability practice is a fundamental strand of Edinburgh Napier University's identity and offer to students, we are keen to make our current employability interventions more effective with clearer signposting. The need for this renewed focus is supported by Graduate Outcomes data which indicate opportunity to provide our students and graduates with greater employability support to develop their career readiness during their time at Edinburgh Napier and beyond.

Therefore, to truly enact our commitment to employability being at the heart of Edinburgh Napier and to respond to the needs of industry and the ever-increasing skills shortages being experienced across multiple sectors, we are committed to delivering a shared university wide employability strategy that truly reaches, includes, and impacts all our students and builds upon our reputation as 'the home of difference makers'.

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Our Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions			
SD 1 – Enhancing Employability Culture	SD2 – Embedding Employability	SD3 – Developing Experience	SD4 – Ensuring Legacy
Recognising that we are all responsible for delivery of effective employability best practice through development of School and Professional Service processes and action plans, to enhance our existing offer. We will work to identify the employability needs of a diverse student population and ensure all Edinburgh Napier students access employability interventions throughout their time at the university.	Embedding employability in all programmes to enhance student professional development within the curriculum in an inclusive, consistent, and impactful way, and in response to the skills needs of employers. This will ensure tailored employability delivery as an integral part of all students' education and support employment trajectories of all students and graduates.	Increase student access to work based and work-related learning within the curriculum (and extracurricular) to ensure a greater number of students are 'Career Ready' by engaging with a greater number of appropriate work experience opportunities which develop skills in a range of different internships, including (but not limited to) additional short to long term work placements, live projects, research, volunteering, and entrepreneurial development practice.	Developing a lasting framework for early years graduates to stay connected to Edinburgh Napier and continue their professional development through a range of employability interactions up to 24 months after graduation. Ensuring continued access to professional development support, networking events and live job roles which are accessible and inclusive for Edinburgh Napier students from all backgrounds.

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Introduction

Edinburgh Napier's vision is to be recognised as creating an environment where everyone feels proud, confident, challenged, and supported whilst evidencing practice which has been shaped by inclusivity and accessibility for all students. We want to elevate the student experience by enhancing our curriculum, underpinned, and systematically integrated with professional practice and excellent research that ensures Edinburgh Napier students will be confident and empowered to steer their own future; creating their unique path to a fulfilling working life when they graduate.

Throughout their time at Edinburgh Napier, students will combine the acquisition of exceptional academic knowledge with the development of skills, personal insights, and work experience to be fully equipped to build their careers and create opportunities. The employability strategy sets out the university's interlinked priorities, objectives, and metrics for achieving success and how key stakeholders will combine to deliver our vision over the next 5 years. The employability strategy has been developed within the context of the wider ENU strategy from March 2020 – '**Shaping Our Future: Driving Distinctiveness'**.

The integration of an institution wide employability strategy will continue to showcase our commitment to supporting our students and graduates with their professional development by ensuring an enhanced level of access to critical employability interventions as part of the curriculum and through interactions with professional services such as Student Futures. Industry research tells us that employers are no longer just seeking a degree when employing new talent but want to see clear development of students' interpersonal skills such as communication, self-awareness and professional orientations developed whilst undertaking their studies. By ensuring that employability is a consistent theme that runs through our curriculum at Edinburgh Napier, we will ensure that our diverse student and graduate cohort are equipped with the skills required to pursue meaningful, fulfilling careers before and after graduation.

External strategic context

The fourth industrial revolution has already begun driving transformational change, and pace has been accelerated by the pandemic. Advances in technology continue to change the demand for skills and create new ways of working.

The OECD estimates that one-third of UK jobs can be expected to either disappear or radically change due to automation over the next 10 to 15 years. Existing business models and working environments are being disrupted, causing rapid changes in job roles and skills needs. Respected commentators such as the World Economic Forum, the International Labour Organisation, McKinsey and Co, PwC and the Scottish TUC, all predict that disruption will change the way we work and live, with massive implications for individuals, employers, learning institutions and the skills system.

Artificial intelligence and automation are reinventing our workforce and replacing a myriad of traditional occupations. Technology is altering consumption and demand patterns and changing consumer preferences and expectations, for everything from soft drinks to cars. This is likely to result in frequent disruption in the labour market that requires recurring occupational change and a need to significantly and regularly retrain and upskill. (Careers by Design Report, 2022)[1]

In the future, graduates entering the job market will have both a larger number and a wider variety of different careers than previous generations (WEF, 2018)[2] The linear career path is expected to 'cease to exist' (PwC 2017)[3], which will require future employees to be flexible, resilient, digitally capable and committed to lifelong learning as a fact of working life. To be successful in the job market graduates must have the ability to manage their own careers. Universities must not only develop the skills that graduates need to succeed in the new world of work, such as career resilience and commitment to lifelong learning, but they must work with employers to ensure that programmes of study are relevant and align to the skills needs of the economy.

These insights provide us with further evidence that shaping a clear employability strategy across our university, and embedding employability into all degree courses, will be critical to responding to our employer, industry network and alumni

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[1] *Careers by Design, Report of the Career Review Programme Board (SDS and YPG), February 2022*

[2] *WEF 2018 The Future of Jobs Report*

[3] *PWC 2017 The Workforce of the Future*

partnership requirements for student and graduate talent, and evidencing our responsiveness to skills shortages across industry sectors as the new world of work continues to take shape and evolve.

Internal strategic context

Across the wider institute and in line with '**Shaping Our Future: Driving Distinctiveness'** strategy, the university has been positioning a range of new initiatives and areas which have links to shaping greater practice around employability and the shaping our external reputation as the home of difference makers. These links strengthen our need for a unified employability strategy and underline the potential for greater joined up practice.

ENhance - Edinburgh Napier's Curriculum Enhancement Framework (ENhance) is a starting-point for enhancement conversations about curriculum design – at programme team and University levels. As well as providing a shared reference point and vocabulary for these conversations, it is now being used to enable more systematic sharing of existing good practice and innovation in curriculum design at Edinburgh Napier. It will also facilitate future enhancements through a supportive process underpinned by resources and workshops. These will bring together curriculum design expertise from around the university to make it more accessible to programme teams. Consultation identified the framework's five main themes – **Employability; Global Focus; Inclusion; Sustainability;** and **Research- and Practice-Integration** – as a focus for enhancing curriculum design over the coming years. Student-centredness is the guiding principle in the centre, encouraging us to ask: how does our curriculum enhancement recognise student diversity, engage, involve, respond to, and benefit students?

ENU Curriculum Management – The successful introduction of a curriculum management system will move us into a very different place in terms of our ability to design new programmes, refresh and reinvigorate existing programmes, and to support our students and staff during programme implementation. From an employability perspective this will help measure the role of placements within the curriculum and how these are integrated through appropriate planning processes and underpinned with resources that enable the prework is delivered to ensure our placement targets are achievable.

Innovation Hub – Research and Innovation plays a crucial role in underpinning our ability to solve real-world problems for our partners. The ENU Innovation Hub provides advice, knowledge, and expertise to industry, the public and third sectors building strong partnerships with organisations of all sizes in Scotland, the UK and beyond, key to the development of wider employer engagement opportunities.

Bright Red Triangle – This critical service within ENU provides a range of services centred on advising and supporting budding entrepreneurs with key skills related to setting up businesses, developing creative ideas as well as developing business plans and pursuing funding for their start-ups. The links between entrepreneurial skills development and employability are extensive, as is the need to develop key relationships with external partners across multiple industries.

The importance of embedding employability

The increasing pressure to meet the needs and expectations of all stakeholders has driven the employability agenda and made this a priority for all higher education providers. We know from evidence in the sector that student success can be significantly enhanced by embedding employability into the curriculum and into the culture of the whole institution. (Advanced HE Essential Frameworks)[4]

Students: Students and their support networks view HE as an investment into their futures and expect Edinburgh Napier to support them to make successful transitions, manage their careers and enhance their longer-term prospects in relation to graduate employability.

Employers: All employers have specific – and ever changing – needs in terms of graduate skills, knowledge, and attributes. These needs should inform strategies for higher education (HE) and business engagement, the curriculum and employability support but also be balanced against the very real challenges in HE of tailoring an employability strategy to suit a broad range of industry needs and individual organisations.

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[4] *Advanced HE Essential Frameworks for Enhancing Student Success: Flexible Learning*

Higher education providers (HEPs): excellence in graduate outcomes enhances an institution's reputation and global standing and influences recruitment and employer engagement. The requirement to demonstrate how students are being supported to enhance their employability and achieve successful graduate outcomes (ie league tables, National Student Survey (NSS), Graduate Outcomes Survey, Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) survey have all made embedding employability a priority within HE.

Graduate employment and measuring success

HEI's are increasingly measured against the success of where our graduate cohorts gain employment and at the level to which they do so. This naturally requires Edinburgh Napier to significantly extend and expand the support it gives to students after they graduate if positive results are to be achieved at a sector level for indicative measures such as the Graduate Outcomes Survey. As an institute it requires an institutional wide focus, with curricula being shaped to provide the best possible chance of improving results across all 5 schools. We must ensure a better quality of student contact data and a greater awareness of the infrastructure required to create an engaging narrative which compels our graduates to respond positively to the survey when they are asked to do so. We also need to recognise that not all student groups benefit equally from their time in higher education in regard to attaining graduate level employment and ensure that our strategy takes into account the additional support that individuals impacted may be require.

Employer engagement

Edinburgh Napier University recognises the centrality of employer engagement in the design and delivery of the curriculum, enhancing student employability and responding to local and national demand for skills. The university's strategy '**Shaping Our Future: Driving Distinctiveness'** specifically highlights growing our employer, industry, government, and alumni networks as a fulcrum to how we will deliver greater opportunities to our students and graduates. Given the distributed nature of our three campuses the university is uniquely placed to fully engage with, and deliver, direct meaningful impact across the business community in Edinburgh and beyond. This employability strategy will look to further increase the level and quality of coordinated engagement with local, national, and international employers to further enhance employability integration within all degree programmes.

ENU Employability Strategy: Strategic Directions

The following are the broadly defined strategic directions (shown as SD below) which have transformative actions attached to each one, indicating how these will be achieved, and the current status for each action in contrast to existing practice within the university, along with the scale of resource across teams required to achieve these goals. The four key strategic directions are mapped out in the table below with actions on the following pages;

Strategic Directions			
SD 1 – Enhancing Employability Culture	SD2 – Embedding Employability	SD3 – Developing Experience	SD4 – Ensuring Legacy
Recognising that we are all responsible for delivery of effective employability best practice through development of School and Professional Service processes and action plans, to enhance our existing offer. We will work to identify the employability needs of a diverse student population and ensure all Edinburgh Napier students access employability interventions throughout their time at the university.	Embedding employability in all programmes to enhance student professional development within the curriculum in an inclusive, consistent, and impactful way, and in response to the skills needs of employers. This will ensure tailored employability delivery as an integral part of all students' education and support employment trajectories of all students and graduates.	Increase student access to work based and work-related learning within the curriculum (and extracurricular) to ensure a greater number of students are 'Career Ready' by engaging with a greater number of appropriate work experience opportunities which develop skills in a range of different internships, including (but not limited to) additional short to long term work placements, live projects, research, volunteering, and entrepreneurial development practice.	Developing a lasting framework for early years graduates to stay connected to Edinburgh Napier and continue their professional development through a range of employability interactions up to 24 months after graduation. Ensuring continued access to professional development support, networking events and live job roles which are accessible and inclusive for Edinburgh Napier students from all backgrounds.

Strategic Direction 1: Enhancing Employability Culture

Recognising that we are all responsible for delivery of effective employability best practice through development of school and professional service processes and action plans, to enhance our existing offer. We will work to identify the employability needs of a diverse student population and ensure all Edinburgh Napier students access employability interventions throughout their time at the university. We will;

Ref	Action
1.A	Ensure all students, regardless of location, situation, programme or mode of study, should have equitable access to opportunities to enhance their employability, making successful transitions and managing their careers. We will continue to ensure our employability culture is built on equal professional development access and opportunities for all.
1.B	Ensure employability is presented and communicated as integral to Edinburgh Napier student Open Days, through ongoing marketing campaigns, and through curriculum communication highlighting an employability theme running consistently through all programmes. School specific communications will help all students familiarise with employability vocabulary as part of a formative pillar of their academic development and journey, underpinned by extensive industry networks and opportunities.
1.C	Promote employability at a high level across campuses, ensuring that students recognise the employability brand, have suitable physical space across campuses where they can engage with professional services and maintain momentum in their pursuit of greater employability awareness and interaction.
1.D	Provide a clear Edinburgh Napier 'language of employability' that all students', graduates', and staff can commonly share and around which we can shape consistent deliverables and outcomes across all Schools.

1.E	Shape employability through partnerships. A collaborative approach to successful employability integration must be achieved by schools and professional services working together for the best possible student outcomes.
1.F	Ensure employability is effectively resourced across schools and professional services, ensuring delivery of university wide employability strategy is underpinned by adequate staff numbers and expertise facilitating improvement of employability partnerships and development between all key internal stakeholders, both academic and non-academic.
1.G	Create employability steering group which will be critical in taking the employability strategy forward, whilst ensuring continued momentum. These groups must be underpinned by a collaborative ethos and encourage a supportive and respectful working environment for academic and professional service staff to contribute effectively, discussing progress, challenges, and key milestones. The steering group should also examine and make recommendations on equality data recognising the diversity of the student population and encourage action for those student populations underserved in the graduate labour market.

Strategic Direction 2: Embedding Employability

Embedding employability in all programmes to enhance student professional development within the curriculum in an inclusive, consistent, and impactful way, and in response to the skills needs of employers. This will ensure tailored employability delivery as an integral part of all students' education and support employment trajectories of all students and graduates. We will;

Ref	Action
2.A	Create a minimum standard for the integration of employability skills content in all school curricula, including generic and subject-specific elements. This will include input from students, alumni and employers underpinned by collaborative consultation with Student Futures.
2.B	Assessment methods requiring employability-relevant skills are routinely and consistently embedded across all subject areas with a central provision of examples and materials that can be adapted by schools for their programmes and hosted digitally and ultimately ensure our students are 'employment ready'.
2.C	Ensure modules aimed specifically at employability skills are viewed as a critical part of a student's educational infrastructure and are in response to the needs of industry.
2.D	Ensure Personal Development Tutors (PDT's) prompt and encourage students to engage with employability support, are directed to additional support provided by professional services and reflect on co-curricular activities whilst starting to think about their life after graduation. Tutors will prompt students to reflect on their progress towards employability.
2.E	Use digital tools to evidence the skills students are attaining in their programmes and through professional services activity, to help demonstrate the impact our interventions are having on students' professional development. This will also help students understand their own progress through digital tracking and allow Edinburgh Napier to develop student employability award frameworks and ultimately improve Graduate Outcomes data.
2.F	Ensure all programmes have employability embedded into their curriculum, reflecting an understanding of the differing requirements of employability support at all levels of HE education and underpinned with bespoke careers resource and effective signposting to relevant development opportunities.
2.G	Create a greater range of interactions between industry partners and academics to ensure consistent shaping of employability in curriculum is based on the skills needs of employers. This will be achieved by consistent academic and professional services industry workplace visits and running academic sessions within employer environments to promote the impact of our programmes.

Strategic Direction 3: Developing Experience

Increase student access to work based and work-related learning within the curriculum (and extracurricular) to ensure a greater number of students are 'Career Ready' by engaging with a greater number of appropriate work experience opportunities which develop skills in a range of different internships, including (but not limited to) additional short to long term work placements, live projects, research, volunteering, and entrepreneurial development practice. We will;

Ref	Action
3.A	Ensure programme leaders work in collaboration with Student Futures to utilise the curriculum management placement checklist, ensuring key processes are followed when reviewing or introducing work-based learning interventions. These will be based on the ability to evidence employer needs, the impact on students' professional development and in consideration of academic and professional services resource required to ensure delivery of all work-based learning commitments outlined.
3.B	Ensure students are well prepared for placements through increased interaction with Student Futures, employers and academic interventions provided within the core curriculum.
3.C	Introduce consistent academic led alternative options for all students who do not secure a placement or work-based learning experience during at the designated point in their curriculum.
3.D	Provide students with the opportunity to maximise their placement and feel supported by ensuring a minimum of one academic workplace visit for every student undertaking 6–12-month on-site industry placements. This will also significantly benefit employer engagement and increase further employment opportunities for Edinburgh Napier students and graduates.
3.E	Create opportunities for students to reflect on their work-based learning experience through a range of professional development workshops on and practices through compulsory reflection meetings with academics, PDT's and Student Futures.
3.F	Link placement-based learning experiences to new employability skills developed by students enabling them to prepare for graduate employment, exploring interventions that shape all students understanding of how their experiences will ensure they are ready for the world of work.
3.G	Create a greater range of access to, and accessibility of, student placements both in the UK and Overseas utilising digital placement portals and through promotion of existing Edinburgh Napier placement case studies to students preparing for a placement.

Strategic Direction 4: Ensuring Legacy

Developing a lasting framework for early years graduates to stay connected to Edinburgh Napier and continue their professional development through a range of employability interactions up to 24 months after graduation. Ensuring continued access to professional development support, networking events and live job roles which are accessible and inclusive for Edinburgh Napier students from all backgrounds. We will;

Ref	Action
4.A	Develop a lasting framework for early years graduates to stay connected and continue their professional development through engagement in a range of employability interactions hosted through the University and tracked via digital profiles up to 24 months after graduation.
4.B	Provide access to live graduate job roles and educate graduates on the importance of the Graduate Outcomes Survey to ensure greater response rates and results.
4.C	Ensure that academics and central support staff consistently promote the importance of students staying in touch with the university and understand how to communicate a range of digital graduate level employability tools to secure employment for our students to engage with, before and after graduation.
4.D	Promote the measures for which Edinburgh Napier are assessed on graduate employability (such as Graduate Outcomes Survey) to key staff associated with delivering strategy, to consider the impact of plans and how they deliver on improving results and metrics directly linked to the employment of our graduates.
4.E	Engage the Edinburgh Napier alumni team in the development of employability interactions with graduates now working in industry, to promote opportunities for students to secure work placements and employment within their organisations.
4.F	Evidence the link between successful work placements and graduate employment, demonstrating the high number of students who return to full time work with their original placement provider and the importance of the student's employability development during their time at Edinburgh Napier.
4.G	Run a range of early years graduate summer events and activities to promote the continued support of Edinburgh Napier to our most recent graduates, delivered across the institute by both schools and central support services. Such activities will be cognisant of, and respond to, the additional employability challenges faced by some student groups.

Indicative Performance Measures for the Strategy

University Profile
- Establish Edinburgh Napier University as a leading HE institution for student and graduate employability.
- Meeting or exceeding the HESA PI for employability.

Curriculum
- Employability and enterprise embedded in all programmes of study as demonstrated through the evaluation and re-validation processes.
- Develop programmes that are informed by employers' requirements both nationally and internationally.

Employability Support
- Recognition that employability is the responsibility of the whole university through School and Professional Service processes and action plans.
- Foster and further enhance the development of active internal and external partnerships to support student & graduate employability.
- Increase the number of student-led career enhancement activities.

Career/Employability Development
- Provide an employability offering that enables students from all backgrounds, ages and those with a disability to increase in confidence, discover and action their career goals as evidenced by the outcomes of the Graduate Outcomes Survey and NSS.
- Increased student engagement in career development learning and employability activities reflected in high student satisfaction and better impact measures.

Employer Engagement
- Increased graduate employer engagement measured through the numbers and range of opportunities for students and improved reputation measures in relevant metrics.
- Increased opportunities through the University's alumni network, building on existing mentoring and engagement programmes, to connect more students with appropriate individuals and opportunities.
- Increased participation of employers in Faculty/School/Programme Advisory Boards.
Work Experience
- An increase in the range and availability of work experience and placement opportunities for students and graduates.
- Increased numbers of students undertaking international work experience.