

Employability Symposium 2024: Distilling The 3Es

25 April 2024, Horizon Leeds

Session abstracts

Parallel Session 1, 10:00-11:00

Session 1.1

Skills, attributes and competencies; the building blocks of the 3 E's (Enterprise, Entrepreneurship, and Employability)

Dr Emily Beaumont, University of Gloucestershire

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

The 3Es are firmly established in the rhetoric and practice of the Higher Education (HE) sector and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK and beyond. There is a growing recognition of the 3E relationship, with a proposed connection through the sharing of skills, attributes and competencies (QAA, 2018) and an ever-pressing need in a post covid environment to positively supporting student trajectories through and beyond university by enhancing a range of activities linked to the 3Es' (Norton and Sear, 2021). Despite this, HEIs continue to operate as though they are distinct, if not mutually exclusive concepts (Dean 2021), existing in silos, with employability regularly separated from enterprise and entrepreneurship, the latter being habitually 'lumped together' because they appear akin. In an attempt to clarify the 3E relationship and connection through the sharing of skills, attributes and competencies, this paper considers the perspective of a key stakeholder of 3E delivery; the Careers Professional.

Session 1.2

Harnessing the power of interdisciplinary teamwork for enhanced employability

Dr Sanaz Sigaroudi, Tony Morgan and Lena Jaspersen, Leeds University Business School

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

There are not many jobs out there that are done in solo. The challenges we face today span across various disciplines and so do the solutions. There is a growing demand from employers for graduates to be proficient in cross-functional teams. We show how interdisciplinary teams of undergraduate students across programmes, disciplines and faculties collaborate on real world innovation projects with external partners, to deliver real value to industry partners and potential employers. Drawing on on-going pedagogical research, we present evidence-based guidance on how to harness the power of interdisciplinary teamwork to enhance employability.

Session 1.3

Discipline-specific employability skills and awareness via the virtual learning environment: Piloting an innovative and transferable approach

Dr Dimitar Karadzhov, George Hatton, Laura Sharp, Julie Langan Martin and Fiona Stubbs, University of Glasgow

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

In the context of increased internationalisation and use of online distance learning in higher education, educators are faced with the challenge of promoting diverse students' employability in an inclusive, effective and discipline-specific way. Few case studies have demonstrated how employability skills can be embedded within the core online learning.

This presentation will address this gap by documenting how discipline-specific skills were systematically identified in a job market analysis, and integrated into the virtual learning environment, in an MSc Global Mental Health programme. Attendees will be provided with practical tools, guidance and reflection prompts.

Parallel Session 2, 11:15-11:55

Session 2.1

The role of guest talks within modules on students' learning experience, confidence, and employability: A case study

Dr Andrea Calef, University of East Anglia

Workshop (40 mins)

The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of integrating guest speakers into teaching design on students' learning outcomes and their employability. The pandemic has been a significant cut-off. Guest talks were just a few before, while now they are many and both face to face and online venues are fully exploited.

By designing a survey, this study finds a positive impact of the integrating guest speakers with different background (in terms of gender, job, location) on students' learning experience and career planning. This is especially relevant for courses, like finance, in which female share is underrepresented.

Session 2.2

Mapping graduate attributes and the undergraduate curriculum in Psychology: A co-created approach

Dr Paraskevi Argyriou, Ishani Nanda, Aisha Qadi, Leilani Van Someren and Jodi Taylor-Nettleton, Queen Mary University of London

Workshop (40 mins)

At Queen Mary University of London Psychology programme, our initiative "interrogated" the curriculum against newly identified Graduate Attributes, aiming to improve student awareness of skills development. Through a co-created mapping exercise with students and staff, we identified the BSc Psychology curriculum's role in skills development, along with the need for clearer signposting. Participants in our session will discover an easily adaptable technique, rooted in reflection, enhancing educational practices, and facilitating student's transition to the workforce by integrating and surfacing graduate attributes.

Session 2.3

Building an employability ecosystem through authentic assessment with external suppliers

Katherine Leopold, Raluca Marinciu and Agnieszka Herdan, University of Greenwich and Alia Alhirsi, The Forage and Andrew Griggs, Prodigy Learning and David Dewey, Shortlister

Workshop (40 mins)

This workshop will begin with a short case study from the University of Greenwich Business School that demonstrates how authentic assessment and employability skills are being developed through the use of third-party platforms, specifically Forage Job Simulations, Shortlist.Me asynchronous video interviews and GMetrix Microsoft Office, now integrated into first year assessment across the Business School. This approach has increased impact (and decreased marking time!) Delegates will design a plan for using external tools

in their own authentic assessment, supported by the presenters, including how to navigate QA processes and internal IT challenges.

Parallel Session 3, 12:00-13:00

Session 3.1a

Thanks for the memories: Embedding reflection after a year in industry

Sarah Wenham and Annabelle Cross, University of Leeds

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Year in Industry students at The University of Leeds reflect upon their placement through a module run by Student Careers, set within the context of their transitional journey from school–Uni–work–back to Uni. Using academic theories to underpin their learning, students develop perspectives around theirs and others' behaviours in order to successfully transition in the future. This talk covers module design, teaching content, assessment and feedback from students, enabling discussion around how to create retrospective learning spaces for placement students. "The module has truly changed my mindset about my time [on placement] and I think the overarching theme of reflecting on both studies and placement is likely my most important learning from the past 4 years of university". (Module Student 2023-24)

Session 3.1b

Why current approaches to supporting placement students don't work

Sheena Bevitt, University of Derby

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

This presentation will present initial findings from a doctoral study exploring the lived experience of work placement from a student's perspective. The data provides insight into why our current approaches to supporting students through a work placement don't work. Pictorial representations of the experiences of 12 business students, constructed from longitudinal critical incident interviews, reveal the temporal dynamics and diversity of placement experiences. This evidence suggests HE institutions should steer away from 'one size fits all' approaches to supporting placement students and supports recent calls for more tailored and better resourced solutions.

Session 3.1c

Creating an equitable year in industry programme

Dr Andrew Hirst and Beth Medley, University of York

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

12 month placements are one of the best activities a student can undertake to develop their future employability as well as support social mobility. However, developing a scalable and equitable placements programme is a big challenge when the student body is diverse. This presentation will be useful for those interested in developing equitable work placement programmes and equitable careers support structures for graduates. We will explore the barriers to achieving a scalable programme and what we've learnt that's changed the way we provide employability support and guidance for students.

Session 3.2a

Supporting the 3Es – an extra-curricular activity that delivers student engagement

Sarah Carnegie and Cian O'Sullivan, Newcastle University Business School

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Engaging students in extra-curricular activities that support the 3Es can be problematic, even when the value of work-integrated and work-based learning is acknowledged. This presentation will detail an innovative internship approach that has achieved a significant level of student interaction. Participants will take-away the learning gained from the implementation of this joint project between academic staff and the Careers Consultants. Learning how the initiative both supported the School's strategic ambitions and also resulted in a significant rise in active engagement with the Career Consultants by students who had previously made no contact with career support available to them.

Session 3.2b

mySkills – a framework for embedding employability into the curriculum

Dr Usman Naeem, Queen Mary University of London

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Higher education institutes are responsible for ensuring students complete their degree programmes and secure graduate employment. However, students can often struggle to connect their studies to employer requirements. In addition, students encounter difficulties in engaging with self-reflection on their skill sets, leading to an underestimation of their capabilities while drafting job applications. This session presents 'mySkills', a curriculum-integrated employability framework that enables students to see the connections between their module skills and occupational areas. The framework also provides an opportunity for students to cultivate their professional brand, and document their accomplishments and experiences, which can be showcased to potential employers.

Session 3.2c

Embedding commercial awareness into the curriculum

Ruby Hammer and Martin Keogh, University of Manchester

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

This presentation outlines a University of Manchester Teaching Fellowship Project which is co-creating a set of online materials to embed the development of commercial awareness into Contract Law. Contract Law is a core, first year subject, which has a strong link to commercial awareness in Law. However, the ambition is for the project to demonstrate good practice to many other subject areas across the University and the methods used will be designed in such a way that the model can be adapted by other subjects and courses. The materials are co-created by working with a Student Partner so as to directly build upon student experience and perspective.

Session 3.3a

Create your future: An employability programme transformation from the pandemic to now

Rachel Sloan and Dr Dawn Lees, University of Exeter

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

In 2020 the University of Exeter's Career Zone launched a brand new, discipline specific, timetabled, employability workshop for all first-year students: Create Your Future. Since

it's launch, c.16000 students have engaged in the programme. In this talk we will introduce you to Create Your Future content and share with you the journey we took to improve, co-create and transform a programme to be delivered during lockdowns and beyond, into the 'new' normal. Exploring our service's openness to change and adapt has led to the programme being expanding to support second years

Session 3.3b

Empowerment through sharing experience: Designing peer-led extra-curricular skills sessions

Dr Paraskevi Argyriou and Benjamin Lang, Queen Mary University of London

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

In this session, we will discuss an innovative initiative that blends the proven advantages of peer-led learning, the expressed desire from placement students for a stronger sense of community, and the acknowledged issue of low student engagement in extra-curricular employability programmes. The initiative involved final-year undergraduates returning from placements recruited and trained to lead Skills Sessions within the established employability programme at Queen Mary University of London's Students' Union. Our discussion will revolve around tackling challenges, exploring opportunities, and crafting a sustainable version of this initiative.

Session 3.3c

Critical reflections on making enterprising co-curricular work; Opportunities to grasp, partnerships to make, challenges and lessons learned

Rebecca Padgett, University of Leeds

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Calls from industry for graduates to be better prepared for work have been longstanding and continue. Enterprise skills, knowledge and behaviours continue to be high on their list of 'must haves'.

In response, universities continue to use various pedagogical interventions to try to bridge the gap and meet these competing demands on the nexus between education, enterprise and employability.

This presentation seeks to give a critical reflection of lessons learned and opportunities to grasp from lived experiences from the development, launch and scale of co-curricular programmes and initiatives focusing on enterprise in 4 quite different higher education institutions.

Parallel Session 4, 13:45-14:25

Session 4.1

Employer-led projects for interdisciplinary learning: Authentic assessment in a final year careers module

Amy Longsde and Dr Steve Carter, University of Leeds

Workshop (40 mins)

In this workshop we will present an authentic assessment from a final year undergraduate careers module, "Developing Your Graduate Identity", during which students work in multi-disciplinary teams to engage with an employer on a real problem faced by their organisation. We will share our process of creating this new assessment alongside students and employers, the materials developed, and some of the final video

presentations produced by the teams. We will then work in groups to consider how you might adapt what we've learnt from student and employer feedback and our experiences, to suit your own institutional context.

Session 4.2

Meeting the student where they are: Inclusive employability development in curriculum

Gemma Kenyon, City, University of London

Workshop (40 mins)

This workshop considers flexible learning as a core premise of inclusive employability development in curriculum. Meeting the student where they are is essential to helping students become aware of employability, including recognising barriers they may experience, so they can become engaged in their employability development through curriculum and explore and achieve their potential. This workshop will showcase a small number of resources from our recently released Inclusive Employability Toolkit that support educators to develop student employability inclusively through curriculum. Delegates will discuss and reflect on resources and how they can be applied in their own context.

Session 4.3

EmPLAYability: embedding a playful approach to employability into a Primary Education Studies degree

John Parkin, Anglia Ruskin University

Workshop (40 mins)

This workshop will explore embedding a playful and co-constructed approach to employability into a Primary Education Studies degree. I explore using Playmobil pro as a tool to support emPLAYability. The session will begin with a short presentation about how I used Playmobil pro with final year undergraduates to devise career plans and consider the skills needed to succeed in graduate careers. Attendees will spend most of the workshop participating in facilitated activities using Playmobil pro to explore employability. Attendees will discover how a playful approach to employability can be used in their own contexts.

Parallel Session 5, 14:30-15:30

Session 5.1a

Incorporating the 3E's through embedding group mentoring in the curriculum

Zurria Qureshi and Huseyin Dagdeviren, University of Westminster

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

To enhance students' employability, the University of Westminster constantly seeks opportunities to strengthen connections with industry employers and assist students in building their soft skills and professional networks.

One innovative approach we have adopted recently is the integration of group mentoring into the classroom, benefiting hundreds of students annually. We initially piloted this in the School of Computer Science and Engineering as part of the Information Driven Entrepreneurship and Enterprise module. This session will discuss how group mentoring has been integrated into students' timetabled classes and assessments to give them practical insights from industry mentors.

Session 5.1b

The power of employers' voices: using videos to support students to embed transferable skills

Deborah Morton, University of Leeds

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

In a collaborative effort between the Career Service and Digital Education Service at The University of Leeds, we have created a portfolio of employer voice videos where a range of employers were interviewed about what the skills of collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, decision making, reflection and communication mean to them in their roles, how they believe students can develop skills during their studies and apply them in the workplace. The talk will present a case study of how they have been incorporated into a 1st year module through taught sessions and then used as a foundation for an authentic assessment on transferring skills developed at university into the workplace.

Session 5.1c

Trials and tribulations in perfecting student collaboration and teamwork

Dr Nigel Page, Kingston University London

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Collaboration and teamwork are regarded as essential skills for students to develop in order to succeed in the modern workplace. They are ubiquitously listed as one of the key graduate attributes to develop and approaches to the development of teams are expected by Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). However, perfecting, teaching, and assessing these skills giving weight and wider context can be challenging along with convincing students of their value. This presentation will explore a ten-year journey into the trials and tribulations in attempting to replicate and test many of the available examples to perfecting student collaboration and teamwork.

Session 5.2a

The E of experience

Dr Sarah Flanagan, Leeds Trinity University

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

My oral presentation reflects findings from my study which explored student perspectives of employability. Students perceived employability as a multifactorial concept but, a fit between worker and their work is fundamental to employability according to students. Having recognized that employability primarily concerns a fit between worker and their work, my study also recognizes the contribution of experience to employability for students. Unsurprisingly experiential learning such as work placement is of value, however, other ingredients related to experience are of relevance, for example, historical events and social history.

Session 5.2b

Student agency and hidden treasure: Co-creation of post-graduate student employability

Dr Shirley Jenner and Devisha Bijwe, University of Manchester

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Our session outlines the findings from a collaborative action – learning project between staff and international students at the University of Manchester. We share accounts of student voices: articulating perception of challenges they face and opportunities they seize seeking work whilst studying in the UK. Our session traces the story of our co-construction journey through enhanced international student agency and knowledge-sharing. Central features of this of journey have been (i) community –building and networking using and (ii) the co-creation of a new Student Employability Champions role to enable valuable peer-peer knowledge-exchange. We share what we have found: hidden treasure.

Session 5.2c

“We heard, we listened, we acted”. The student voice – the driving force behind a Humanities Expo.

Nicola Tully, Dani McFawns and Erin MacInnes, Dundee University

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

The prospects for graduates with humanities degrees have been a recurrent concern among students, often shaped by media portrayals. The perception that such degrees are less practical than those directly linked to specific vocations, has led to a stigma. To address this, listening to, and acting on the student voice, aiming to shift that mindset, break down perceived barriers, and foster positive change, has been crucial. At Dundee University, students played a pivotal role in reshaping these perceptions by co-creating a Humanities Expo. By showcasing the diverse opportunities available, the Expo aimed to enhance employability and demonstrate ‘real-world’ relevance.

Session 5.3a

Co-creating a professional practice unit, the methodology

Samantha Elliott, Liz Evans, Cath Hawes, Samantha Karman, Adriano Digaudio, Lewis Campbell and Chris Follows, University of the Arts London: Camberwell College of Arts

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Responding to a drive across the sector for improved graduate outcomes, student feedback and the University of the Arts London (UAL) guiding principal:

“To give our students the education they need to flourish in a changing world”

By redesigning our curriculum, in partnership with staff, students and external specialists, to improve vocational opportunities, and our graduates’ skills and employability. A team of academics and students have co-created a unit that will address the 3Es, the session will outline the methodology and process which has informed the unit which will become compulsory for all 3rd year undergraduate students in 2026.

Session 5.3b

Where there's WIL, there's a way: S framework approach to embedding the 3Es and enhancing outcomes for students across disciplines at the University of Sunderland.

Ducan McDonald, University of Sunderland

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Introduced in 23/24, our cross-institutional Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Framework supports consistent engagement with the 3Es, ensuring that students from all disciplines and backgrounds benefit from purposefully designed, scalable and assessed activities which place enterprise, entrepreneurship and employability at the heart of the learning journey. Join our presentation to hear how our new framework, supported by strong academic collaboration and community partnerships, is driving engagement with the 3Es within our School of Psychology, paving the way for positive future outcomes.

Session 5.3c

Engaging music students with the 3Es – developing professional skills for careers in music and the creative sector

Dr Jane Nolan, Newcastle University

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Engaging Music Students with the 3Es – developing professional skills for careers in Music and the Creative Sector. This presentation outlines ways in which Music students are effectively engaged with the 3Es through enterprise education, experiential learning, and meaningful participation in the creative sector, by devising and presenting events, working on real-life projects, and on placements, within the academic curriculum, and in extra-curricular projects. The presentation is informed by my research during over 10 years as a 3EP discipline advocate in Music, exploring the impact with students and graduates, to understand what works and what they find valuable in their careers.

Parallel Session 6, 15:45-16:45

Session 6.1a

Understanding stakeholder viewpoints on embedding employability in higher education

Dr Dom Conroy, Cherry Benson, Nils Perez Codesal, Vanessa Airth and Neelam Thapar, London Metropolitan University

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

The need to understand diverse stakeholder viewpoints on embedding employability within higher education curricula led us to explore viewpoints from 37 individuals across six stakeholder groups within and beyond higher education. In our presentation we draw on this data to present findings that illustrate and underscore challenges to motivating learners with employability related content, the need for tailored approaches, and the difficulties connecting educators internally to address an employability agenda. These data connect with conference subthemes including the importance of flexible learning and streamlining multi-disciplinary working arrangements. Our session fosters discussion on integrating diverse stakeholder perspectives to successfully embed employability.

Session 6.1b

Translating theory into practice through work experience

Holly Street, University of Southampton

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Hear about Southampton Business School's innovative approach to peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange, leveraging the synergies between employability and enterprise. This presentation will share insights from an extra-curricular event that enabled students to share, with peers, the knowledge and skills they acquired through work experience. Students focused on specific projects they were involved with, e.g. hosting a customer experience podcast or implementing new technologies within the business. The role of peer-to-peer learning will be assessed alongside the formal curriculum. Often students complete these experiences and move onto the next thing, however, we created a forum where the knowledge can be shared with the wider student cohort.

Session 6.1c

Employability for social justice: Barriers to fairer graduate outcomes identified among six stakeholder groups

Dr Dom Conroy, Cherry Benson, Nils Perez Codesal, Vanessa Airth and Neelam Thapar, London Metropolitan University

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Our session draws on interviews with six stakeholder groups to illustrate how social justice issues dovetail with successfully embedding employability within higher education. We will articulate different layers of inequality involved in employability/ careers provision apparent from our data. These worked at individual levels, broader sector wide and societal levels, and an even wider meta layer reflecting participant talk upending conventional ideas around employability and graduate outcomes including notions around imposed identities and subjective meanings linked to graduate success. This session will foster delegate discussion linking a social justice agenda to employability and careers provision in higher education.

Session 6.2a

Employer collaboration & authentic assessment: 'Talk to the face, not the hand...'

Dr Angela Dalrymple, Swansea University

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Academics and students are increasingly benefitting from employer involvement in authentic assessment co-design such as live projects and consultancy, welcoming the world of work into curricular assessment. Recent research at UWTSD however shows that employers want universities to “talk to the face, not the hand”, yet this key interaction frequently fails, owing to university reward structures, lack of experience and training. This session presents a new framework for steering away from collaborative failure, enabling academics and employers to co-engage successfully in authentic assessment design, with highly positive outcomes around employability skills and opportunities for students, academics, and employers alike.

Session 6.2b

Knowledge – application – employability: An authentic assessment framework for hospitality management education

Alexandra Constantinescu and Lisa Wyld, Buckinghamshire New University

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Drawing from a recent case study of assessment design and implementation, this presentation provides valuable insights into a new authentic assessment framework for Hospitality Management education. The case study is grounded in constructive alignment theory, it is underpinned by Equity, Agency, and Transparency (EAT) principles - and adopts a non-linear iteration of the Design Thinking process. The Knowledge-Application-Employability (KAE) framework is based on a tri-dimensional view of authentic assessment co-creation, where students, educators and industry experts play an equally important role.

Session 6.2c

The blueprint for women in STEM networking

Leo Robertson, Pash Selopal and Amaani Rahman, Queen Mary University of London

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Come to this session to hear about how you can showcase, celebrate and encourage more Women into STEM. Hear from current STEM students alongside an Employer Engagement Officer and a Careers consultant.

We see a greater interest in Careers from academics because of this event being a catalyst towards employability from students when they go back into the lectures with increased confidence.

Employers get to network with each other to further understand approaches, initiatives, and share trends. It also gives the careers department the ability to advise on the best approaches to target applications and can maximize relationships and engagement by cross selling other internal or external Programmes.

'The event were fabulous. I was looking for exactly these kind of networking events'. -3rd year Engineering student

- 95% of students would recommend this their network
- 100% of employers would recommend this to another student

'This was an excellent collaboration between the Women in STEM society and the Careers Service ensuring engagement in genuine way' – Women of STEM QMUL society.

Session 6.3a

Re-connecting students with their career journey: A co-design approach

Dr Donna Caldwell, Ulster University, Northern Ireland

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Design your career journey was developed as a career intervention for multi-disciplinary undergraduate students and an extra-curricular skills-based module to support, re-connect and aspire employability readiness. This co-creator employability module uses Mind Mapping methodology aligned with developing workplace readiness. Employability is multifaceted and involves careful application when working with a wide range of student

cohorts across different campuses, each at various stages of their career planning. The effectiveness of Mind Mapping as a visual, innovative co-creator learning tool enables students to take career ownership. Ultimately, this enhances student confidence and career ambitions, thus creating a valuable skilled work force.

Session 6.3b

Embedding assessment centre: Do's and don'ts

Darren Clarke and Zoe Conlon, Kingston University London

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

Over the past several years Kingston University has embedded Assessment Centres into courses, now our Strategy is expanding delivery of simulated assessment centres as a core part of the second year stage of our Future Skills Student Journey. From September 2024 we plan to have all level 5 undergraduate students participate in assessment centre exercises.

Initial participation was low, changes like transport support and enhanced briefings were made, improving attendance, understanding, feedback, and grades. Considerations remain around delivery format, exercise alignment, and expansion. Potential future developments include implementation across all university programs, and degree apprenticeships utilising assessment centres.

Session 6.3c

Live, representative assessments and LinkedIn ready representation - reshaping the context of authentic assessments.

Dr David Gordon, De Montfort University

Oral presentation (15 mins plus 5min Q&A)

This presentation highlights an opportunity for universities to develop a framework for live, authentic assessment. Current curriculum often lacks the immersed teaching of tools and approaches and the granular understanding needed for many contemporary practices. This approach offers an opportunity to restructure the assessment methodology and regime for authentic education assessment. This realistic, live approach will produce students with a conceptually underpinned, pragmatic and instantly applicable value set.