

Employability Symposium 2023: Lighting the Labyrinth: Enhancing Student Success through the 3Es

25 April 2023, theStudio, Manchester

Session abstracts

Parallel Session 1, 10:05-11:05

Session 1.1

Interdisciplinary translation: How students from three schools have taught each other the same content from their discipline's perspective

Kris Lines, Dr Claire Stocker, Dr Nutchaya Ungcharoen and Gupreet Chaggar, Aston University

Oral presentation

This paper represents some of our best practice recommendations about interdisciplinary peer-learning and assessment. In particular, staff and students from the Law, Medicine and Pharmacy Schools share how the same content can be delivered to the same students through near-peer learning opportunities, and how this has helped to translate the technical concepts through their lived experiences. The presentation will also show how other schools and faculties could use these lessons to develop similar opportunities within their own curricula.

Session 1.2

Stirling University and BBC Scotland: Production partnership for employability

Professor Dario Sinforiani, University of Stirling and Sam Poling, BBC

Oral presentation

A summary of a unique and unprecedented partnership between Stirling University's production team and BBC Scotland, which saw final year students given intensive training and mentoring in investigative journalism for broadcast, and led to two teams making successful journalistic films for iPlayer just as they graduated. This project combined practice-based workshops with work-integrated learning, and embedded the 3E's throughout the process to enhance graduate employability and develop a new generation of production and journalistic talent.

Session 1.3

Illuminating the pathway to employment: Authentic assessment for embedding employability skills

Dr Maria Romero-Gonzalez, Queen Mary University of London

Oral presentation

Using authentic assessment for building skills can be perceived as difficult and onerous due to requirements for its implementation that can be perceived as time consuming, limiting its use in small or isolated modules. This presentation aims to provide an opportunity to explore the use of authentic assessment for developing professional skills. Participants will explore questions relating to adapting module design to use authentic assessment, how to build skills at programme level, and challenges and opportunities to use this assessment method. Through discussions, participants will be able to identify strategies that can be used in their practice and leave with a step by step guide of how to use authentic assessment for embedding employability skills in modules and programmes.

Parallel Session 2, 11:20-12:00

Session 2.1

Designing modules for employable and sustainable change-makers through education for sustainable development

Dr Kieran Higgins, Dr Alison Calvert and Alysha Thompson, Queen's University Belfast and Tracy Galvin, Glasgow Caledonian University

Workshop

With sustainability so high on the agenda for all sectors, employable graduates will also be sustainable ones. Based on the facilitators' respective experiences as lecturers, educational developers and students, and their recent design of a new food industry sustainability module for undergraduate students, participants will complete the workshop with a working understanding of ESD and its core competencies, and be introduced to learning design that utilises co-creation, transformative pedagogy, active learning, and authentic assessment. Participants are encouraged to bring an existing module, or one currently in development, to be worked on.

Session 2.2

Going fishing: Catch that collaboration

Dr Catherine Teehan and Dr Wendy Ivins, Cardiff University

Workshop

Fishbowl discussions involve speakers in an inner circle (the fishbowl) and listeners in an outer circle. Speakers participate in active discussion sharing experiences and ideas. Listeners become speakers by 'tapping' out a member of the fishbowl and taking their place, giving all an opportunity to participate as either a speaker or listener. Using the fishbowl format, initial discussion will focus on our experiences of collaborative learning with industry. Giving examples of innovative methods to encourage student and industry engagement, we will share our highs and lows and move on to exchange war stories and fairy tales as audience participation is encouraged.

Session 2.3

Turning sustainability into skills

Dr Steven Burke, University of Warwick

Workshop

This workshop will explore the challenges faced in translating concepts and agendas of sustainability to skills development, recognition, and the articulation of positive relevant experiences in applications, interviews, and employment. In the session, we will work towards a useful solution by exploring the development of the Core Skills Framework, which includes Sustainability as a "Core Skill", and the development of the Warwick Award programme, before carrying out a Sustainability Challenge activity and reflecting on it, allowing participants the opportunity to identify the links between practical experience, transferable skills, and the emergence of a sustainable mindset in participating students.

Parallel Session 3, 12:05-12:45

Session 3.1a

Interdisciplinary challenge-led learning: A blueprint for the future

Dr Alison Griffiths, Staffordshire University and E.J. Power, University of Salford

Oral presentation

Graduates of the future will be required to work in areas that transcend traditional academic disciplines and therefore new pedagogical approaches are needed to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge, skills, networks and attributes to thrive. A case study is presented on "The Creative Connection at Staffordshire University". By using challenge-based learning, we took students outside of their comfort zones by forming cross-discipline networks to co-create, generate knowledge, and ultimately develop 21st-century skills to

work within an interdisciplinary context of uncertainty. The Creative Connection is presented as a best-practice framework, drawing on specific examples of interdisciplinary collaborative design challenges.

Session 3.1b

Employability through a lens: Multidisciplinary, student-centred approach to career development

Stephany Veuger and Weronika Biala, Northumbria University

Oral presentation

Our project aims to facilitate students' reflection on the transferable skills they have gained from course modules and expose them to the range of career options. Through talking heads with employers and alumni, and reflection skill worksheets, students will gain deeper understanding of their strengths and skills demanded in the job market. Our goal is to support students in making informed career decisions and equip them with knowledge and confidence to succeed in their chosen path.

Session 3.2a

Connecting sustainability and employability: Guiding sustainable marketer behaviour

Dr Richard Howarth and Fiona Winfield, Nottingham Trent University

Oral presentation

This work focuses on the development of graduate marketer behaviour and the benefits of aligning what may be seen as different or competing priorities related to sustainability and employability. This work adds to, for example, Winfield and Ndlovu (2019) as it focuses on: a wider and specific course and learner perspective; the development of overlapping competences and behaviours through the learner journey; how the alignment of work in these areas (through attention to competences and behaviours) can benefit course design, outcomes and employability.

Session 3.2b

Community engagement with higher education: Framework for developing student employability skillset

Dr Aisha Abuelmaatti, Queen Mary University of London

Oral presentation

The programmes were conceived to help local SMEs, charities, local start-ups and new entrepreneurs explore new opportunities by developing new ideas. This is done by facilitating short, high-impact interventions at no cost, where stakeholders (clients) are given access to research, knowledge, techniques or technology that would help them drive their business forward. The clients are paired with talented students along with a supervisor, where all parties work together on a specific project that benefits the growth and development of the client to move rapidly up the curve. The findings from the proposed study will measure the effectiveness of this sustainable approach to provide insights on how to facilitate student-community-industry engagement.

Session 3.3a

Embedding authenticity in our programmes to prepare students for the graduate world

Dr Pauldy Otermans and Dr Stephanie Baines, Brunel University London

Oral presentation

It's important that we, as educators, prepare our students for the job market which is challenging, changing and diverse in the current landscape of Industrial Revolution 4.0. Our work focuses on embedding authenticity in the programme. Our approach is

to consider not just the authenticity of the assessments themselves but also how we can embed authenticity in the content we teach and how we deliver it. This session will cover our approach with detailed examples and share good practice with participants.

Session 3.3b

Authentic assessment for improving employability prospects and creating responsible citizens

Andrea Todd, University of Chester

Oral presentation

This session will explore the experiences of the presenter and her students during the first iteration of a co-created, student-led module which aims to enhance students' employability prospects; assist them in improving the articulation of their skills on paper and during interview; and send them into the world of work as socially responsible citizens ready to make a difference.

Parallel Session 4, 13:35-14:15

Session 4.1a

Identifying the employability skill gap for Chemical Engineering graduates

Dr Maryam Malekshahian and Jessica Dautelle, University of Manchester

Oral presentation

Employers have consistently expressed their dissatisfaction with Engineering graduate skill sets. Furthermore, as Chemical Engineering graduates may pursue a vast array of graduate roles in different industries, the skills required both to gain and adapt to employment may vary significantly. This session will present the employability skills requirements for Chemical Engineering graduates in different industries by combining results from a systematic literature review, surveys issued to students and hiring managers, as well as statistical analysis of graduate role skill requirements in job advertisements.

Session 4.1b

Establishing a discipline-focused employability framework: A European Sport Management project

Steven Osborne, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Oral presentation

The ERASMUS+ funded (€360,000) Developing Sports Managers & Leaders Across Europe Project led by Cardiff Metropolitan University aimed to develop European-wide guidelines to establish employability frameworks for the Sport Management discipline. This collaborative project has taken a transdisciplinary approach to connect industry stakeholders, Sport Management academics and employability-focused disciplinary networks to build relationships and facilitate knowledge exchange. The workshop will outline how the project has explored disciplinary attitudes to employability, initiated collaborative work, developed pedagogic case studies and developed an interactive toolkit to support the Sports Management disciplinary community in implementing and researching employability interventions.

Session 4.2a

Employability: A collaborative approach

Dr Danielle Prescott, Anglia Ruskin University

Oral presentation

Employability is highly contested in terms of definition, measurement and accountability. Although there is much literature on graduate employability, there is very little on 'student'

employability. This session will present the findings from research conducted over a nine-year period that captures the student voice on perceptions of employability as both an undergraduate student and a graduate three years later. The session will introduce how the need for a collaborative approach not only assists in defining employability, but also provides a shared responsibility of accountability between institutions, students and employers, whilst finally giving students a louder voice in the arena of employability.

Session 4.2b

Using apps to support placement development

Sheena Bevitt, University of Derby

Oral presentation

This presentation will discuss the pilot use of the 'LoopMe' education social media app (loopme.io) with Business School undergraduates from the University of Derby undertaking a year in work placement between their second and third year of study. It will explain the use of 'tasks' to stimulate reflection, 'comments' to provide a coaching approach to student development and 'emojis' to monitor student wellbeing. It will provide initial student feedback on their experience of using the app and insight into how our use of the app will be developed further for future use.

Session 4.3a

The career activation programme

Gemma Kenyon, City, University of London

Oral presentation

City's institutional strategy, the Career Activation Programme (CAP), makes employability development a core part of the student journey for all undergraduates. Our strategy contains two commitments to all undergraduate students; all are supported to develop 'career focus' and all gain professional experience. These two commitments have been realised by transforming the core, credit bearing curriculum of all undergraduate programmes. All 'career focus' modules are bespoke to programmes and our innovative range of 15 credit professional experience modules reflect diverse career paths. This session includes reflections upon our experience of leading institutional change to help colleagues embarking upon a similar project.

Session 4.3b

Do professional year placements matter for job quality? The case of Economics graduates

Dr Miguel Flores, National College of Ireland and Dr Panagiotis Arsenis, University of Surrey

Oral presentation

We have studied whether student participation in a work placement during undergraduate studies enhances graduate job quality. We used regression analysis on a sample of Economics graduates from a UK university and considered demographics, educational background, academic achievement, job characteristics, and self-selection bias. We found limited evidence indicating that work placement matters for earnings or job security. However, we found a positive effect of work placement on career fit: placement graduates are more likely to find jobs that fit their career plans than non-placement graduates. Job location, type of industry, and school background are also factors contributing to graduates' employment quality.

Parallel Session 5, 14:20-15:20

Session 5.1a

Interdisciplinary enterprise education for the creative industries

Gemma Kenyon and Ralph La Fontaine, City, University of London

Oral presentation

This session will describe an innovative new module being run in 23/24 in City's School of Creativity and Communication to support students to build a freelance entrepreneurial career in the creative industries. From freelancing or agency work to starting and building a career, this module is available both to undergraduate and postgraduate students contemplating a career in the sector. Not only is the content innovative in its practical orientation, it is innovative in its interdisciplinary structure as students from multiple courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate taught level will work together replicating the world of work.

Session 5.1b

Business in the Biosciences: A compressed format entrepreneurship course with employability skills at its core

Dr Laura Mccaughey and Dr Anna McGregor, University of Glasgow

Oral presentation

This presentation case studies Business in the Biosciences - a multidisciplinary entrepreneurship course from the School of Life Sciences and the Adam Smith Business School at the University of Glasgow. Learn about our approach of compressed teaching (2 weeks' vs the normal 12 weeks) and how this creates a lived experience that inherently embeds employability skills into the curriculum. With active learning and teamwork at its core we will provide insight into the key employability skills this course nurtures and key considerations when designing a compressed course i.e., teacher-student relationship, real-time feedback etc.

Session 5.1c

Dropping the E-words: An introduction to threshold concepts in entrepreneurial thinking and their benefits to educators seeking to integrate enterprise and entrepreneurship in their curriculum to enhance employability

Dr Lucy Hatt, Newcastle University Business School

Oral presentation

Introducing the idea of threshold concepts, this presentation will focus on the benefits of the approach to educators of all academic disciplines wishing to integrate enterprise and entrepreneurial thinking in the curriculum to enhance employability without using the "e" word!

Session 5.2a

Value of work-integrated learning to support student transition into career roles

Sarah Carnegie, Newcastle University

Oral presentation

The importance of engaging in work-integrated learning [WiL] to build student skills and experiences relevant to the 'real-world', aiding their transition into career roles, is increasingly recognised. This presentation will provide an overview of learning gained from 14 years of delivery of a WiL module for students at Newcastle University Business School. The module requires students to work in small teams for an external client addressing a business problem. The structure and content of the module has been consistently refined ensuring that students actively reflect on developing their skills and the impact of these on their future careers and employability.

Session 5.2b

Student attitudes to employability in the Humanities and Arts

Dr Mark Hicknull and Claire Gallon, University of Lincoln

Oral presentation

This short talk will present the results of a comparative study of attitudes concerning the future employability and career ambitions of undergraduate students taking practice-based degree programmes and Humanities degrees at an East Midlands university. Undergraduate students were surveyed about their beliefs and attitudes about their employability and career ambitions. The survey was supplemented with a more in-depth exploration of students thinking about these issues using small focus groups. The presentation will describe and analyse the results of the study, comparing and contrasting student attitudes and aspirations across the different types of programmes.

Session 5.2c

Employability skills for the fashion industry

Lisa Trencher, Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester Fashion Institute)

Oral presentation

Delivering employability at scale: over 500 undergraduate fashion students (Level 5) spanning seven undergraduate courses at Manchester Fashion Institute undertook a 15-credit employability unit. Students replicated simulation of the recruitment process for subject-specific job roles within the fashion industry. The unit followed the process from application form, digital tasks, to live assessment centre event. Assessment output provides a powerful and insightful narrative of the student experience, their learning and action plans moving forward. This narrative will allow a diagnostic approach to curriculum development moving forward, and support positive graduate outcomes. This presentation will share findings and incorporate student perspectives.

Session 5.3a

Embedding employability in the Social Sciences

Teri-Lisa Griffiths and Nichola Cadet, Sheffield Hallam University

Oral presentation

Drawing on their leadership in employability and enterprise development, Nichola Cadet and Teri-Lisa Griffiths, will share findings from a critical reflection paper based on delivery of employability modules and placements to Criminology undergraduate students. Topics will include, engagement and relationship development with the external sector, student readiness, and the role of academic staff. The aim of the session is to provide an opportunity to critically consider how we deliver employability.

Session 5.3b

Skills wallets: A holistic approach to embedding employability across campus

Professor Norbert Morawetz, University of Reading

Oral presentation

This session will introduce a holistic model to helping students capture and articulate employability skills gained through the curriculum and co-curricular activities using portfolio learning and skills wallets.

Session 5.3c

Data-related programme students' employability matrix

Dr Yijing Li, King's College London

Oral presentation

Upon years' practices on data-related programmes with placement module and projects with partners, this study accumulated the feedbacks from partners and student alumni for a 4*4*3 employability matrix, which suits for Data-Featured programmes, in the model of Knowledge,

Attributes, Skills and Experience (KASE). The project had also produced a poker cards set for visualisation of outcomes, and could be presented during the session.

Parallel Session 6, 15:35-16:15

Session 6.1

'Academy without walls': Work-integrated learning in community and professional settings

Dundee Lorraine Syme-Smith, Charis Robertson and Dr Jean McEwan-Short,
University of Dundee

Workshop

This workshop will consider ways in which to develop a successful work-integrated curriculum using an 'academy without walls' perspective. From their own experiences in higher and community education, the presenters will share how this has been done in their own programmes and workplaces in professional and community employment settings. They will then lead a discussion on how participants have work integrated into their programmes within their own environments. Participants will leave the workshop with ideas on how to develop work-integrated curricula.

Session 6.2

Building the skills portfolio of Physics students through sustainability

Dr Anne Louise Booth, University of Sheffield and Dr Andrew Mizumori-Hirst,
University of York

Workshop

Supporting all students to develop graduate skills for future labour markets is of critical importance. An equitable way to do this is through curriculum delivery, review and reflection in collaboration with employers. Use of a module portfolio with embedded Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) enables students to reflect on their project work. This reflection assists metacognition of academic and employability skills interconnected with global challenges. This session will be useful for those interested in embedding sustainability and employability skills into their programmes. We will also explore the potential of introducing an industry-led, multidisciplinary undergraduate project related to sustainability and Physics.

Session 6.3

Navigating skills in the curriculum: A new student journey

Annie Yonkers, Kingston University

Workshop

According to the 2022 Kingston University Future Skills Report, skills including communication, adaptability, creativity, and relationship building are key to addressing global challenges our graduates will face during their professional lives. But where do students learn these skills, how do they develop the confidence to articulate their value in the myriad professional contexts they may encounter? The Future Skills Student Journey hopes to address this by developing a collaborative approach to a skills-based curriculum at Kingston. This session will highlight some of the activities we undertake and explore the challenges with an ambitious institutional strategy.