

Employability Audit

An Audit is a good way to initiate discussion and development on an issue. It enables you to make clear the range of activities which may contribute to the issue and the process can reassure colleagues that quite a lot of work may already be developed in the area. The process can also recognise local autonomy and priorities, within an institutional framework, and can:

- encourage development of a strategic plan to clarify how employability can be developed in relation to a particular discipline;
- identify how far and in what area development should take place;
- give recognition to existing activity which contributes effectively.

However an Audit also serves broader purposes:

- raising awareness by staff of practice in general and of the institution's plans;
- engaging a wider constituency within the academic community; and
- facilitating dialogue and development within and between teaching units.

The purpose of this audit is developmental, not simply to come up with an overall score for the course. It is designed to help teachers consider the content and design of a course with respect to the issue of employability and to see where they could improve the course to better address this issue.

The Employability Audit can be downloaded from the Centre for Bioscience website:

www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/audit.aspx

The audit can be changed to suit your requirements. All we ask is that you clearly acknowledge Centre for Bioscience as the originator. We would appreciate it if you would let us know that you are using the audit tool and the nature of any changes you have made as a result of your analysis.

How to use the Employability Audit

The audit should be carried out with respect to the totality of provision within a course. The numeric scoring system allows for the situation where an issue might be addressed but only superficially or at the wrong time. Only score 4 if you believe the course optimally deals with the audit point.

Within each of the aspects allocate a score between 0-4 for each of the audit questions. Score 0 if the audit point has not been seriously considered at all. Score 1-4 if the audit point is considered to be satisfied poorly (1), partially (2), adequately (3) or optimally (4). Think about it from the student's point of view as well as that of the course team.

Having completed the employability audit you should analyse each of the audit points with a score of 2 or less:

- i) What possible options could be envisaged which would satisfy the audit point?
- ii) Do resource or other constraints make any of these options unrealistic?
- iii) At what point in the course could appropriate changes be made?
- iv) Which changes would most benefit employability aspects of the course?
- v) Can a realistic action plan be formulated to introduce these changes into the course before the next intake of students?

Are there potential quick wins? There may be something that you or your colleagues could do very easily that would not cost a lot in terms of resources or time.

Are there changes that require longer term planning? Does the change require agreement of others/resource allocation/time to implement?

Collect all your action points into the action plan at the back of the audit.

Having instituted changes as a result of the audit the process should be repeated in 12-24 months.

You may also be interested in:

A variety of resources to address employability issues are available from the employability section of the Centre for Bioscience website:

www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/employability

1. Graduate employment

| | Score |
|--|-------|
| Do academic staff know who actually employs your graduates? | |
| Has graduate employment destination data been circulated to academic staff within the last 2 years? | |
| Do current students know who employs graduates from this course? | |
| Do recent graduates visit to talk about their current jobs? | |
| Are students made aware of where they can obtain information on graduate destinations in employment? | |
| Are students aware at an early stage of the employment opportunities open to them? | |

2. Career-path development

| | Score |
|---|-------|
| Are visitors giving research talks encouraged to reveal their own career paths? | |
| Are graduate career profiles available to students? | |
| Do recent graduates visit to talk about their career paths? | |
| Do more senior graduates visit to talk about their career paths? | |
| Are students explicitly taught career management skills? | |

3. Relationships with employers

| | Score |
|--|-------|
| Have you made potential employers aware of the skills your students develop? | |
| Is your institution/unit on the list of favoured institutions with important employers? | |
| Do you know what employers perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of your students? | |
| Do students have the opportunity to visit local employers? | |
| Do you have good communication with major employers of your graduates? | |

3. Relationships with employers (cont.)

| | Score |
|---|-------|
| Do employers visit your unit to give talks about employment opportunities? | |
| Do employers attend any student final year project presentations? | |
| Do you know what skills, knowledge and attitudes your major employers see as becoming more important in the next 4 years? | |

4. Options for work experience

| | Score |
|--|-------|
| Are work experience opportunities provided/encouraged during vacations? | |
| Are sandwich placements provided/encouraged as part of the course? | |
| Are overseas placements possible and encouraged for students? | |
| Are realistic simulations used to give experience of real work situations? | |
| Do some students carry out course project work in real settings with employers? | |
| Are work placements available in areas not involving your specific discipline? | |
| What proportion of students on your course have obtained work experience before graduation? (0=don't know; 1=<5%; 2=5 to 20%; 3=20 to 50%; 4=>50%) | |
| Are students on work placements supported by a process which encourages reflection and emphasises breadth of learning opportunities? | |

5. Does your curriculum promote employability?

| | Score |
|---|-------|
| Do you know specifically what employers are looking for in graduates? | |
| Have employers reviewed your curriculum and provided feedback on its content? | |
| Are generic skills (e.g. communication, group working, IT) explicitly taught? | |
| Are generic skills assessed? | |
| Is there a skills matrix which is completed by each student? | |

5. Does your curriculum promote employability? (cont.)

| | Score |
|---|-------|
| Are subject-specific skills taught and practiced? | |
| Are subject-specific skills assessed? | |
| Can you detect any of your students who are not numerate? | |
| Do you assess ability to write clear, concise, correct English? | |
| Are key skills and employability issues in the relevant QAA benchmarking statement incorporated in your curriculum? | |
| Do students have a choice of modules or choice of work areas within a module so they can tailor the content of their course to their perceived needs/interests? | |
| Are appropriate professional attitudes developed and discussed with students? | |
| Have you identified where work related learning activities take place in the course and are these made explicit to students? | |
| Have opportunities to increase work related learning in the course been identified and taken? | |
| Are all students given a basic grounding in ethics within the discipline field? | |

6. Are students helped in obtaining and developing careers?

| | Score |
|--|-------|
| Is a 'Record of Achievement' maintained throughout the course? | |
| Is reflection on and review of achievements actively promoted within the course? | |
| Do students get help with producing/improving a CV? | |
| Do students get help with letters of application for employment? | |
| Is help with module choice available in each year? | |

7. Extra-curricula activity

| | Score |
|---|-------|
| Is the contribution of extra-curricula activity to CV and skills development explained to students early in the course? | |
| Are extra-curricula activities and responsibilities recorded by your students? | |
| Are extra-curricula activities known to staff (e.g. personal tutors)? | |
| Are arrangements in place to encourage voluntary work by students? | |

8. General

| | Score |
|---|-------|
| Is there an effective relationship between the course team and your Careers Service? | |
| Are students explicitly guided in the course to make contact with the Careers Service? | |
| Do you know the name of the Careers Adviser associated with your subject? | |
| Are your students encouraged to have confidence and high aspirations? | |
| Do staff generally have access to full information about a student's in course and extra-curricula performance (e.g. student's CV) when writing references? | |
| Have you considered employability in the context of widening participation? | |
| Have you considered employability in the context of disability? | |
| Have you considered employability in the context of ethnicity? | |

Action Plan

Make a note of the resources you will need and whose help will be required.

1.

2.

3.

4.