



Collaborations in Higher Education with Employers and Their Influence on Graduate Employability: An Institutional Project

Simon O'Leary

To cite this article: Simon O'Leary (2013) Collaborations in Higher Education with Employers and Their Influence on Graduate Employability: An Institutional Project, *Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences*, 5:1, 37-50, DOI: [10.11120/elss.2013.05010037](https://doi.org/10.11120/elss.2013.05010037)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.11120/elss.2013.05010037>



© 2013 A. Rosie, The Higher Education Academy



Published online: 15 Dec 2015.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1738



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Collaborations in Higher Education with Employers and Their Influence on Graduate Employability: An Institutional Project

Simon O'Leary

Regent's University London, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS, UK

Corresponding author:

Simon O'Leary, Regent's University London, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS, UK
Email: olearys@regents.ac.uk, Phone: 020 7487 7455

Abstract

Well-managed collaborations with employers, in the form of consultancy projects, appear to have a positive influence on the employability of social-science graduates, based on students from a business and management faculty. Employer collaborations with higher education come in many forms including guest speakers, work placements and projects of various types and are already part of many degree programmes. This article concentrates on the use of consultancy projects as a means of enhancing the employability of students as they graduate, and the indications are that such collaborations can have a positive influence and impact on employability by enhancing the capability and character of the graduates, which then potentially allows them to apply the content of their degree programme as appropriate for the employer. An employability equation ($e = 3c.i$) and model (Employability Strategy Matrix) are proposed to support the strategic decision-making process of identifying suitable employment opportunities and highlight individual graduate strengths and developmental needs.

Keywords: employer, collaboration, consultancy, project, employability

Introduction

A recent review of business-university collaboration (Wilson 2012) highlights the importance of work experience, placements, internships and other employer-based initiatives in developing the necessary skills and knowledge for employment. There has been strong evidence over the last decade to support this from Driffield *et al.* (2011), Reddy & Moores (2010), Confederation of British Industry and Universities United Kingdom (2009), Andrews & Higson (2008), Archer & Davison (2008), Rae (2007), Little & Harvey (2006), Milburn (2006) and the National Council for Work Experience (2002).

Employability has become an issue of growing importance in higher education (HE) internationally and particularly in the UK over the last decade with the introduction of rising university tuition fees for home students, and is of relevance to each of the major stakeholders; students, their families, higher education institutions (HEIs), employers,

professional bodies and government. Students hope to see a return on their investment, HEIs need to compete for students as new forms of university performance measures, including employability, are established (Smith *et al.* 2000), employers need capable graduate applicants, professional bodies aim to enhance their profile and governments and nations aim to prosper as the world further globalises and emerging economies become ever more powerful. Consequently, there are many facets to employability and it needs to be addressed in a variety of ways. There has also been a wealth of findings in the work done since 2005 by the employability and enterprise-related Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), at a wide variety of HEIs across England, and the Butcher *et al.* (2011) review outlines how the CETLs have impacted on higher education policy and practice, the extent of stakeholder engagement with CETLs and introduces selected resources and materials that CETLs have produced to support both students and staff.

The objective of this research is to add to the accumulated knowledge in the field through an exploration of the potential impact of employer collaborations on the employability of graduates, utilising an example of consultancy projects as the means of employer collaboration for Masters' level students in a faculty of business and management. This is an initial paper for a series of research activities to develop and validate a conceptual framework, not only to illustrate the impact on the employability of graduates, but also to identify ways of improving such employer collaborations with higher education.

This research indicates that employer collaborations are already part of many degree programmes. These vary in both quality and quantity depending on the requirements of the particular degree course, on the desires of the students and on the expertise available to deliver such materials. The focus of this report is on the students and graduates and, although such collaborations may also benefit several other stakeholders, including the HEIs, potential employers and government, this is not researched in detail here. Bearing in mind the involvement of more and more people and processes, collaborations can often be expected to be more complex than individual tasks and so bring with them additional challenges and difficulties that need careful management if those relationships are to be maintained and developed further. However, they do appear to add a rich seam of additional teaching, learning and pedagogic opportunities which can be taken up in different forms in different disciplines. The actual long-term impact on employability and the involvement of others such as the professional bodies and government needs to be further assessed.

Regent's University London is a private higher education provider, based in central London, which collaborates with an international network of other HEIs. It is a registered charity with a mission to deliver high quality education and a commitment to reinvest in higher education. The student body is highly international and across the two faculties, Business & Management and Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences, are over 4,000 full-time students, making it the largest undergraduate provider in the UK outside the state-funded system, and it has a long-term vision to become the leading private non-profit university in Europe. The University also has over 600 postgraduate students in subjects ranging from banking and luxury brands through to film and media, international relations and psychotherapy. There are strong links with industry and more than half of students take up internships or are involved in other employer-related programme activities. The university has a strong Careers & Business Relations service for its students and graduates and the research in this report is also partly based on the experience developed, and information gathered, by that team over recent years.

This report is focused on the third and final semester of the university's MA in Luxury Brand Management. This is a relatively young programme with two intakes of students per year, in January and September, both of whom, with normal progression, graduate in the November of the following year. The programme was launched in September 2010,

producing its first set of 18 graduates in 2011, with a further 45 graduating in 2012. Due to the popularity of the programme, the student numbers have increased and, from now on, it is expected that there will be 75–100 graduates each year. The general format is that the students take several taught modules worth a total of 60 credits in each of the first two semesters, making 120 credits in total. The third semester is then worth an additional 60 credits, making 180 credits overall for the degree, and consists of either a dissertation report or a consultancy project. Further details about these consultancy projects are included later on in this report.

Methods

The topic has been tackled in two ways, with secondary research to capture the work done previously and primary research to add some new material for the debate, using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The secondary research consists of an academic literature search and a selection of information gathered by the Careers & Business Relations team at Regent's University London. The literature search has been undertaken on work done by other academics, professional bodies and other authors, to identify and distil work already published on student and graduate employability, employer collaborations with higher education and on related matters. As outlined in the list of references, numerous sources of information exist on league tables, skills, curricula, assessments, employer needs, international aspects and work experience. The research methodology is based on the Denscombe (2002) approach to social science research where, within the resources available, the aim is to make the purpose of the research clear, and to interpret the results with originality, accuracy and accountability, to produce findings from which cautious generalisations can be made in an objective and ethical way. In this way, a number of conclusions are drawn and a number of issues are highlighted for further discussion.

To this are added two sets of primary research. The first is based on the output from an online survey of 104 graduates and prospective graduates, which was undertaken in late 2011 and the results of which are being analysed during 2012. The second is an initial appraisal of a longitudinal study into the outcomes of a group of masters' level business and management graduates at Regent's University London who chose, as their final piece of work, to do a consultancy project with clients, compared to a similarly sized group on the same degree programme who chose the well-established dissertation report option instead. This is a relatively new programme with only its second set of graduates this year and therefore more data will be collected in the coming years to determine if there are any longer term trends.

Both deductive and inductive methods have been used in a multi-method approach (Bryman & Bell 2007, Saunders *et al.* 2009), with the literature survey helping to further develop the '3Cs' hypothesis (O'Leary 2012a) in a deductive manner, this being researched and developed further in an inductive manner through the online survey and the analysis of the consultancy projects, to create the proposed hypothesis, the 'Equation of Employability, $e = 3c.i$ ' and the 'Employability Strategy Matrix', which are described in more detail later in the report.

Literature search

Before focusing on employability, it is worth noting that there is much international research and development on the broader notion of 'graduate attributes' (Barrie 2004, 2007, Tomlinson 2007, Green *et al.* 2009, Bridgstock 2009, Donleavy 2012) where employability is, though important, only one aspect of a much broader spectrum of attributes that extend

beyond employability and into issues such as global citizenship, ethics and culture. This report acknowledges the depth of research already done in these areas but concentrates on that one aspect of graduate attributes, employability.

Moreland (2006) defined employability as “a set of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy” and the Council for Industry and Higher Education (Archer & Davison 2008) has identified a number of employer expectations of graduates, such as good communication skills, ‘soft’ skills such as team working abilities and professional work experience. Cranmer (2006) highlights that the classroom alone is insufficient to enhance employability and Becket & Kemp (2010) outline various ways that higher education addresses such issues, including within modules, in work placements, through optional business courses, via the careers services, in voluntary work experience, by group work and with personal development plans. Other examples are highlighted in Appendix 1.

Skills are often mentioned in the literature and it is interesting to note that a dictionary definition of the word skill (Collins Online Dictionary 2012) outlines it to be “a special ability or expertise enabling one to perform an activity very well and something, such as a trade, requiring special knowledge or expertise”. Andrews & Higson (2008) highlight a contrast between ‘soft skills’ and ‘hard business knowledge’, the soft skills covering such areas as professionalism, reliability, coping with uncertainty, working under pressure, planning and strategic thinking, communications and interpersonal interactions, teamwork and networking, writing and speaking, information technology skills, creativity and self-confidence, self-management and time-management, willingness to learn and acceptance of responsibility. The ‘hard business knowledge’ covers such areas as business qualification and expertise in specific business areas, practical abilities such as giving presentations, putting forward an argument, analytical skills and problem solving, coping with complexity, working alone and in teams. Clearly, some areas of overlap exist between some of these soft and hard skills. Bill & Bowen-Jones (2010) linked the development of such skills to a customised programme of personal development planning, and work placements of various durations are offered by many higher education institutions to help develop these skills during their degree programmes, while Higson & Parkes (2010) showed how learning objectives are linked to work placements, as shown in Appendix 2.

Knight & Yorke (2002) suggest that employability can be incorporated into academic subjects in higher education and that it is important to look beyond skills and into behavioural and personal attributes of the student as well. Holmes (2001) argues that it is a desired performance, in the form of competence and effectiveness, which is required by employers and that such behaviour is just as important as skills. Leggott & Stapleford (2007) reinforce this in a study of internationalisation and employability where it is concluded that attributes are just as important as skills for those seeking opportunities for international employment.

Toland (2011) highlights that many professional bodies offer a wide range of support on student employability matters but it is unclear to what extent higher education institutions make use of this material or expertise. University careers groups also offer many employability-related services which could be incorporated into the curricula and some higher education institutions are already doing so (University of Kent 2012). Professional recruiters (Chesworth 2012) have also highlighted a ‘Vital Dozen’ of core competencies, including communication, teamwork, flexibility and leadership (the full list is shown in Appendix 3) and advise applicants to demonstrate such competencies using the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) technique advocated by many HEIs, including the Open University (2012). It is worth noting though that, although enhancing employability is a laudable aim, it is not a guarantee of a suitable job and Brown *et al.* (2002) indicate that, as

a mainly knowledge economy develops in many parts of the world, there may be insufficient positions for the quantity of graduates available and so, without the continued emergence of innovative new businesses, graduates may be more employable but not necessarily in graduate employment.

Careers and business relations

The Careers & Business Relations team of managers, coaches and advisers provides several services to both students and graduates of Regent's University London. It is a Matrix (2012) accredited service, providing support ranging from CV development to career planning, from work placements to employer events on campus, and from the advertisement of selected vacancies to alumni engagement. The Careers & Business Relations team work closely with the academics at the university and students and graduates are encouraged to use their services. Their latest Quarterly Data (2012) indicates that the main use made of their advisers is for guidance on CVs/resumes (23%), career planning (21%), coaching (12%), cover letters (9%) and applications (7%).

As may be expected, the majority (67%) of the recent vacancies advertised were in industry sectors (advertising, marketing, public relations, consultancy, accountancy, business services, hospitality, banking, investment, insurance, education, human resources, fashion, design) that reflect the programmes offered at, and the location of, the university and it is interesting to note that 8% of those vacancies were from alumni. Employers, and employer groups, who have collaborated in a variety of recent events, include Apple, Bloomberg, Quintessentially Wines, Oxford Business Group and the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The services offered by the Careers & Business Relations team continue to evolve, particularly as new technologies emerge, and the team is active in its use of social media, such as Twitter and LinkedIn, which are being increasingly used by both employers and prospective employees.

Online survey

The following is based on further analysis of an initial appraisal of the results of an online survey on employability-related issues undertaken in late 2011 and completed by 104 graduates and prospective graduates from a wide range of subject disciplines, including science, engineering, humanities, social sciences, economics, languages, drama, education, art, design and law (O'Leary 2012b). The analysis is still under way and the fuller set of results will be published once that analysis is completed. The findings so far are interesting in that they emphasise a number of the points raised in the literature search and also raise some further points.

As illustrated in Figure 1, there is overwhelming support at approximately 84% for the notion that employability should be an aim within an undergraduate degree programme, with 60% expressing a desire for it to be included in a well-managed way and a further 24% saying it should be included on an optional basis. Further analysis will reveal variations by subject discipline and by the decade in which the degree was taken.

The benefits of such an aim are illustrated in Figure 2 and can be expressed as, first, a better understanding of employer needs, second, improved capabilities within the graduate and, third, as benefits in terms of character and confidence. When the analysis is completed, any granular differences by subject discipline and by graduation decade may provide further interesting insights.

It is noted in Figure 3 that the experience of the online survey respondents is that the Careers Service is recognised as the prime provider of such support, closely followed by

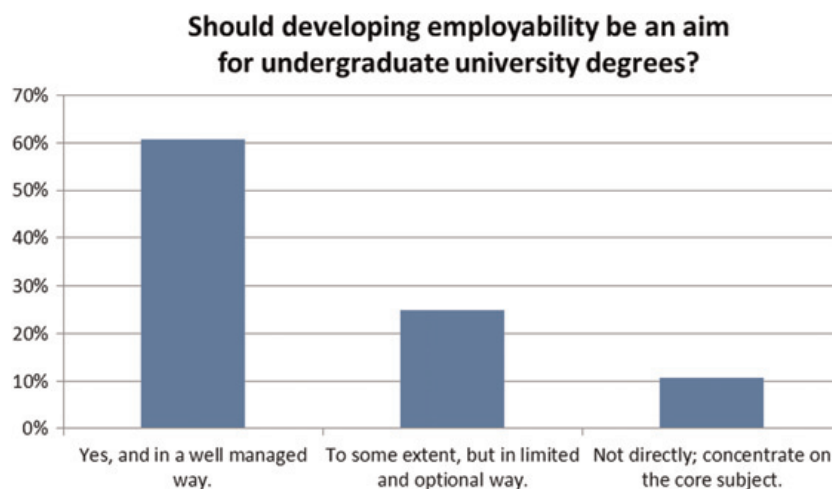


Figure 1 Whether employability should be an aim in undergraduate degree programmes

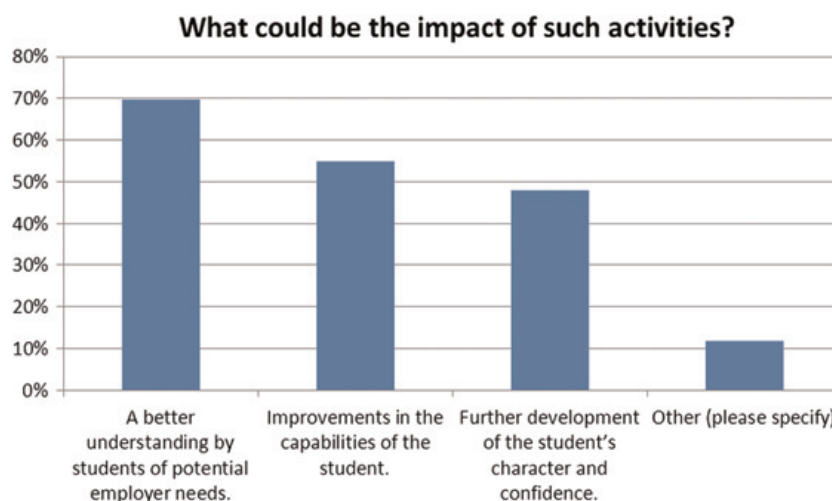


Figure 2 The expected outcome of a well-delivered set of employability-related activities and services. Examples of suggestions within the other category were improved contact networks and a better understanding of the variety of roles with public and private sector and the “third sector” of charitable and social organisations

the inclusion of employer-related content within the degree programme and the use of external speakers during the degree.

Several of these issues require further analysis but this initial analysis is revealing in that it shows that employability-related matters are certainly of relevance to students in higher education institutions and that such issues can be tackled in many different ways.

Consultancy projects

A further analysis is being made of the impact of choosing to complete a dissertation report as the final piece of work on the MA in Luxury Brand Management at Regent’s University London or selecting a consultancy project with a client as an alternative. In both cases, passing the Research Methods module is a pre-requisite and the principal differences in terms of output are that the Dissertation Report is an individual 15,000 word report, a well-established and well-respected format in use in many HEIs around the world while, in

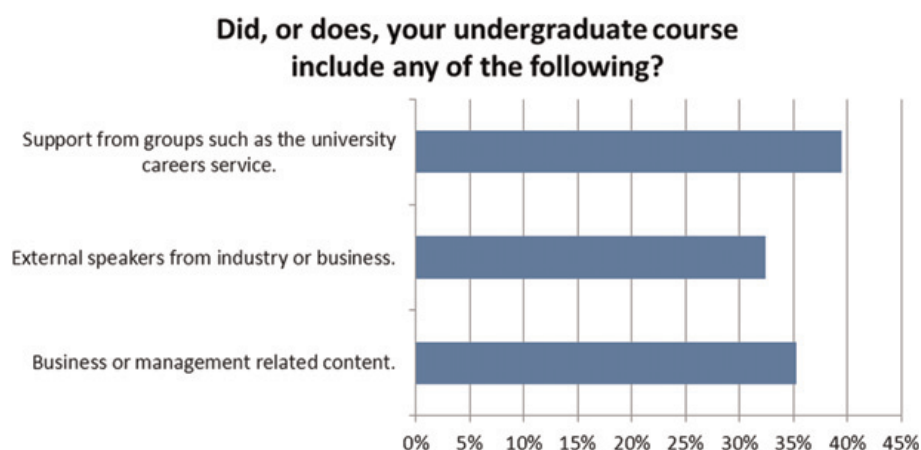


Figure 3 The deliverers of employability-related materials and support

comparison, the Consultancy Project, which can also be done by an individual student but is more typically done by a small team of two to three students, the output consists of three parts, with a Client Report of 10,000 words, a Reflective Report of 2,000 words and a Presentation of 30 minutes.

Such employer-related initiatives are being used in many business and management disciplines at masters level (MA, MSc and MBA) and in undergraduate degrees as well. There are variations in the number of credits given, it can be for individuals or small teams, it may be compulsory or an alternative to a dissertation, there could or could not be a presentation or a reflective report, and the specific requirements for the client report can vary. However, variations also exist in the requirements for a dissertation at different higher education institutions. A major study called Assimilate has recently been completed (Brown 2012), designed to explore innovative assessment at masters level and the consultancy project described in this report formed part of the output. The rationale for that major study, sponsored by the National Teaching Fellowship and based at Leeds Metropolitan University, was that fit-for-purpose assessment leads to enhanced student learning experiences, and the report highlights that an increasing number of programme teams are seeking to replace the extended text approach (eg the traditional and well-established dissertation report) to assessment, often with a variety of smaller tasks or by seeking to include the evaluation of a wide range of skills and competencies, especially those linked to employability on graduation.

The MA Luxury Brand Management programme at Regent's University London is still in its infancy and just 65 students have progressed to the final semester so far. Of those, 63 have completed the whole programme, with only the second graduation ceremony taking place in late 2012. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the consultancy project option is just as popular as the traditional dissertation report option. The experience so far with three cohorts is that there is typically a 50:50 split between the two. In fact, the consultancy project is slightly more popular overall with 55% having opted for it. However, it should also be noted that the sample size is still small, so this may well change as the number of students increases. It has been observed in the reflective reports that employability-related issues are being highlighted as some of the main reasons the students are choosing this option and, as the numbers increase in this longitudinal study, it will be interesting to note how the graduates fare in employment and career development. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that all (100%) of the most recent cohort of consultancy project students commented favourably on employability-related issues in their reflective reports and, as examples of this, made the comments outlined in Figure 4.

1. "... essential contribution for my future career ..."
2. "...very good practical experience ... enhance my skills ... transferable skills ..."
3. "... helped me improve my skills ..."
4. "... stepped out of my comfort zone, and feel it has provided me with more confidence to enter the job market."
5. "I learned so much through this project. It is because of this opportunity that I feel even more excited ... working in this sector in the future."
6. "... I feel more confident about my qualifications ... greatest part of the MA programme."
7. "... my communication, interpersonal and organisational skills improved massively during this exciting consultancy project. I feel very good about my future career after having worked with real luxury brand managers ..."
8. "... the things which you would never be able to find out in a book ..."
9. "... consultancy project was both enjoyable and challenging at the same time ... what ultimately matters is that everybody wants to learn and grow."
10. "Working on this Consultancy Project was one of the best decisions I have ever made ... enabled me to focus on what I do best and what I am interested in."
11. "... first-hand experience of working with a company ..."
12. "... I consider this assignment very important for my future career ..."
13. "... chance to meet very interesting people ... helpful for my own brand in the future ..."
14. "... apply my newly gained knowledge to real world issues ... gained valuable contacts and experience for my future career."

Figure 4 Examples of employability-related quotes made in consultancy project reflective reports

These comments were drawn from the latest set of reports by the 14 students who undertook a consultancy project and worked with a variety of clients in the luxury jewellery, perfume, drink, club and jet business sectors, consulting on issues ranging from competitor pricing and product positioning to international expansion and establishing a brand. Of particular note is the enhanced confidence expressed by the participants and it is interesting to note that, in addition to the perceived benefits of direct client interactions, many of the comments reflect on the fact that they worked in small teams of fellow students and learnt from each other as well as from the clients and academic supervisors. These comments certainly reinforce the potential research benefits of the planned longer term longitudinal study on these students.

Discussion

Collaborations with employers appear to have a positive impact on the employability prospects of graduates and the increased confidence of the graduates to deal with employers is striking. This collaboration can take several forms, including the use of consultancy projects with clients as an alternative to the well-established academic dissertation. Such collaborations can be of significant benefit to graduates as they seek employment and it is worth noting that discussions with the applications team here at Regent's University London, about the enquires made by prospective candidates for the MA Luxury Brand Management programme, indicate that the existence of a consultancy project option is often a significant discussion point with the applicants and so appears to be a key factor in attracting students to this particular programme. Therefore, the suggestion is that employer collaborations are important, not only to the students and graduates, but also to the HEIs themselves as they seek to compete for new students. A complete analysis of the

destinations of leavers, employers and the types of work will take some time to produce statistically relevant outcomes but it is worth noting the following examples of the range of roles that the MA Luxury Brand Management graduates have secured for both long-term and developmental purposes: Sales Promoter, Membership Manager, Managing Partner, Communication Manager, Project Manager, Brand Manager, Founder, Associate, Trainee and Volunteer with several of the major brands in the luxury sector in the fashion, jewellery, drinks, cosmetics, theatre and publishing industries.

This research has reinforced the earlier analysis (O'Leary 2012a) that employability can be enhanced via the development of the '3Cs of Content, Capability and Character', content being the accumulation of relevant knowledge, capability being the ability to apply that knowledge in a relevant way and character being the personal qualities to work effectively alone and in teams. This research has helped take that work another step forward with the development of the following 'Equation of Employability' $e = 3c.i$ and 'Employability Strategy Matrix' model.

**Equation of
Employability**

$$e = 3c.i$$

- Factor 'e' is the employability index.
- c factors: c, content, c, capability, c, character.
- Factor 'i' is the suitability of the identified role.

Figure 5 Proposed Equation of Employability. Each individual factor is rated 3 (high), 2 (medium) or 1 (low) and the multiplying effect can raise 3c from 1 to 27, creating an e range from 1 to 81

This employability index may help to monitor a graduate's readiness for employment in a particular role. For example, for each, a rating of low, medium or high can be allocated and a strategy developed to clarify which of the c areas needs more attention to help improve the chance of achieving the desired role *i*. This can be used as a measure of readiness for employment in a particular role and help manage the process of developing the employability of graduates. Employer collaborations can be of particular value in identifying suitable opportunities and understanding what content, capabilities or characteristics need to be highlighted or addressed to increase the chance of being considered for or successfully achieving that employment goal.

This employability index has been developed further, based on inspiration from a selection of business models widely used in business and management programmes and practice (Johnson *et al.* 2011), including the Ansoff matrix (1988), the Boston Consulting Group matrix (Henderson 1979), the GE-McKinsey matrix (Hax & Majluf 1990) and the Ashridge parenting matrix (Goold *et al.* 1994). Common features of these models are that they are typically constructed using a full spectrum gradation range (low to high) or as a grid (two by two or three by three) with broad measures of high to low or specific categories of high, medium and low. This is in part due to the fact that the information to complete such models is rarely fully available (e.g. actual market share or expected future growth rates) and the management team has to make best use of its experience and judgment to position itself, or its products or services. The main benefit of such models is that they aid the decision-making process, and provide options for discussion and consideration, rather than providing a direct answer or solution. Such an approach has helped develop this employability strategy model where the judgments on the three values of *c* and on *i* are

Employability Strategy Matrix model

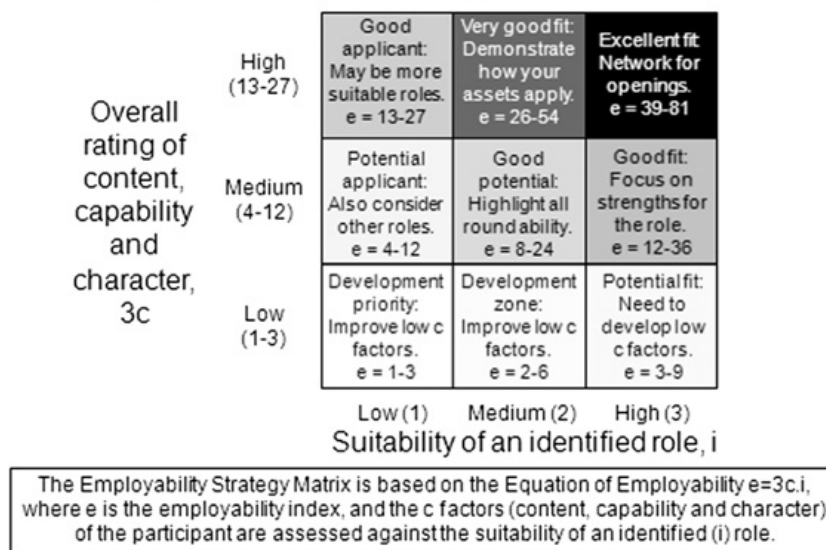


Figure 6 Proposed Employability Strategy Matrix model

also open to debate and discussion, with the objective being to reach a determination of the readiness of the participant in terms of employability for identified roles.

The aim for the graduate would be to move up the matrix, by ensuring that content, capability and character ratings are as high as possible, and to head toward the right by identifying the most suitable roles. The following example may best outline how the matrix has been used to help support students and graduates on the MA Luxury Brand Management programme described in the report. Consider a graduate from the programme who is aware of two roles, Marketing Director and Brand Manager, being advertised with a major luxury jewellery brand. The potential applicant has the necessary marketing skills and other business knowledge for both roles and so, c_1 content, can be considered high (3). On capability c_2 , the applicant has sufficient experience and expertise to warrant a medium (2) for the brand manager role but low (1) for the marketing director role as that expertise is not fully proven. On character c_3 , the applicant is well motivated and has shown excellent characteristics in engaging with employers over the years and so could be considered high (3) for this factor. Therefore, the multiple $c_1 c_2 c_3$ is 18 ($3 \times 2 \times 3$) for the Brand Manager role and 9 ($3 \times 1 \times 3$) for the Marketing Director role. In terms of the suitability of the identified role, the Brand Manager role is more suitable as the applicant can meet most of the criteria required (high i rating of 3) while certain types of experience and expertise are outlined in the Marketing Director role that the applicant could not satisfy at this career stage (medium i rating of 2). Therefore, the Brand Manager role fits in the top right category (e of 54, from i of 3 and $3c$ of 18) while the Marketing Director role is in the central box (e of 18, from i of 2 and $3c$ of 9) and shows the applicant to be of good potential but perhaps not quite ready for the role just yet as others with more suitable profiles may well apply.

There is of course no guarantee that employment in a specific role will be achieved and the aim of this approach is to help the prospective applicants focus their efforts as effectively and efficiently as possible, to generate more interest from employers and, ultimately, employment of the desired nature. It will be interesting to explore whether similar conclusions can be reached in areas beyond the discipline of business and management, in other streams of the social sciences, in arts and humanities or in science and engineering for example. The model, although developed primarily for graduate employability

purposes, may also in principle have further potential application in employability areas beyond graduates and this is to be researched further.

Appendices

Appendix 1. What employers are looking for

Based on HECSU Higher Education Careers Services Unit and AGCAS Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (2010). *What do graduates do?* Table entitled "Skills that employers want and how they can be developed":

Type of skill required	What employers are seeking	Examples of how demonstrated
Self-reliance skills	Self-awareness; Proactivity; Willingness to learn; Self-promotion; Networking; Planning action.	Duke of Edinburgh Award; Music band; Competitive sports; Public speaking; Amateur dramatics.
People skills	Teamwork; Interpersonal skills; Oral communication; Leadership; Customer orientation; Second language.	Working in a restaurant; Charity fundraising; Voluntary work; Team sport; Air Training Corps.
General employment skills	Problem-solving; Flexibility; Business acumen; Computer literacy; Numeracy; Commitment.	Young Enterprise Award; Project work; Member of clubs.
Specialist skills	Specific occupational knowledge skills; Technical skills.	European Computer Driving Licence; Language skills; Web design skills; Writing articles; NVQ qualification.

Appendix 2. What student can learn through work placements

Based on Higson & Parkes (2010), in a table entitled "Learning objectives for students on placement", Aston Business School outlines seven aims:

1. The integration of study and work experience.
2. Appreciation of the responsibilities, tasks and relationships in management work.
3. A practical understanding of their chosen specialism if relevant.
4. Understanding how their placement organisation operates.
5. Personal awareness of own interests, competencies, values and potential.
6. Communicate the work experience with peers and academic staff.
7. A better ability to make informed career choices.

Appendix 3: a dozen core competencies required by nearly every job.

Based on Chesworth, N (2012), in the Jobs Commercial Recruitment section on page 71 in a table entitled "The Vital Dozen":

1. Communication.
2. Commerciality.
3. Achievement-driven.
4. Flexibility.
5. Customer focus.

6. Developing others.
7. Teamwork.
8. Problem solving.
9. Leadership.
10. Analytical thinking.
11. Organisation.
12. Relationship building.

References

- Andrews, J. and Higson, H. (2008) Graduate employability, “soft skills” versus “hard” business knowledge: a European perspective. *Higher Education in Europe* **33** (4), 411–422.
- Ansoff, H. (1988) *New corporate strategy*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Archer, W. and Davison, J. (2008) *Graduate employability: the view of employers*. London: Council for Industry and Higher Education. Available from: <http://www.cihe.co.uk/about/contact/search-results> (accessed 15 November 2012).
- Barrie, S. (2004) A research-based approach to generic graduate attributes policy. *Higher Education Research & Development* **23** (3), 261–275.
- Barrie, S. (2007) A conceptual framework for the teaching and learning of generic graduate attributes. *Studies in Higher Education* **32** (4), 439–458.
- Becket, N. and Kemp, P. (eds.) (2010) *Enhancing graduate employability in business and management, hospitality, leisure, sport, tourism*. Newbury: Threshold Press.
- Bill, K. and Bowen-Jones, W. (2010) Enhancing enterprise, entrepreneurship and employability through PDP. In *Enhancing graduate employability in business and management, hospitality, leisure, sport, tourism* (N. Becket and P. Kemp eds.). Newbury: Threshold Press.
- Bridgstock, R. (2009) The graduate attributes we’ve overlooked: enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research & Development* **28** (1), 31–44.
- Brown, P., Hesketh, A. and Williams, S. (2002) *Employability in a knowledge-driven economy*. Working Paper Series, Paper 26. Cardiff: School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.
- Brown, S. and the Assimilate project team (2012) *A compendium of examples of innovative assessment at masters level*. Leeds: Leeds Metropolitan University.
- Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2007) *Business research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Butcher, V., Smith, J., Kettle, J. and Burton, L. (2011) *Review of good practice in employability and enterprise development by Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*. York: Higher Education Academy. Available from: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/employability/EEL_CETLs_review_Summary_Jan2011.pdf (accessed 15 November 2012).
- Chesworth, N. (2012) The 12 must-haves to get that job. *London Evening Standard*. 1 November 2012, p71.
- Collins Online Dictionary (2012). Available from <http://www.collinslanguage.com> (accessed 1 November 2012).

- Confederation of British Industry and Universities United Kingdom (2009) *Future fit: preparing graduates for the world of work*. Available from <http://www.agcas.org.uk/assets/download?file=941&parent=383> (accessed 15 November 2012).
- Cranmer, S. (2006) Enhancing graduate employability: best intentions and mixed outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education* **31** (2), 169–184.
- Denscombe, M. (2002) *Ground rules for good research: a 10 point guide for social researchers*. Milton Keynes and Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Donleavy, G. (2012) Proclaimed graduate attributes of Australian universities: patterns, problems and prospects. *Quality Assurance in Education* **20** (4), 341–356.
- Driffield, N., Foster, C. and Higson, H. (2011) *Placements and degree performance: do placements lead to better marks or do better students choose placements?* Birmingham: Aston University. In ASET Annual Conference. Available from <http://www.asetonline.org/documents/HelenHigson-2.1.4.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2012).
- Goold, M., Campbell, A. and Alexander, M. (1994) *Corporate level strategy: creating value in the multibusiness company*. New York: Wiley.
- Green, W., Hammer, S. and Star, C. (2009) Facing up to the challenge: why is it so hard to develop graduate attributes. *Higher Education Research & Development* **28** (1), 17–29.
- Hax, A. and Majluf, N. (1990) The use of the industry attractiveness business strength matrix in strategic planning. In *Strategic planning: models and analytical techniques* (ed. R. Dyson). Chichester: Wiley.
- HECSU and AGCAS (2010) *What do graduates do?* Higher Education Careers Services Unit and Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services. Available from http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/current_projects_what_do_graduates_do.htm (accessed 12 November 2012).
- Henderson, B. (1979) *Henderson on corporate strategy*. Cambridge: Abt Books.
- Higson, H. and Parkes, E. (2010) Preparing Aston Business School students for placement. In *Enhancing graduate employability in business and management, hospitality, leisure, sport, tourism* (eds. N. Becket and P. Kemp). Newbury: Threshold Press.
- Holmes, L. (2001). Reconsidering graduate employability: the “graduate identity” approach. *Quality in Higher Education* **7** (2), 111–119.
- Johnson, J., Whittington, R. and Scholes, K. (2011) *Exploring strategy*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Knight, T.K. and Yorke, M. (2002) Employability through the curriculum. *Tertiary Education and Management* **8**, 261–276.
- Leggott, D. and Stapleford, J. (2007) Internationalisation and employability. In *Internationalising higher education* (eds. E. Jones and S. Brown). London: Routledge.
- Little, B. and Harvey, L. (2006) *Learning through work placements and beyond, a report for HECSU and the Higher Education Academy's Work Placements Organisation Forum*. Available from http://ww2.prospects.ac.uk/downloads/documents/HECSU/Reports/Workplacement_Little_Harvey.pdf (accessed 15 November 2012).
- Matrix (2012) *Quality standard for information advice and guidance services*. Available from www.matrixstandard.com (accessed 9 November 2012).
- Milburn, A. (2006) *The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*. London: HM Government, Cabinet Office.

Moreland, N. (2006) *Entrepreneurship and higher education: an employability perspective*. Learning & Employability Series. York: Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team, ESECT.

National Council for Work Experience (2002) *Work related learning report*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.

O'Leary, S. (2012a) Impact of entrepreneurship teaching in higher education on the employability of scientists and engineers. *Industry and Higher Education* **26** (6), 431–442.

O'Leary, S. (2012b) Using entrepreneurship to enhance the employability of scientists and engineers, In *1st annual conference on Aiming for Excellence in STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) Teaching and Learning*. London: Imperial College London & The Royal Geographical Society.

Open University (2012) *STAR (Situation Task Action Result) technique*. Careers Advisory Service. Available from www.open.ac.uk/careers/_pdp-star-technique.php (accessed 12 November 2012).

Quarterly Data (2012) *Careers & Business Relations Report Card*. A quarterly statistical review of activities [internal intranet material]. London: Regent's University.

Rae, D. (2007) Connecting enterprise and graduate employability: challenges to the higher education culture and curriculum? *Education+Training* **49** (8/9), 605–619.

Reddy, P. and Moores, E. (2010) Aston University: measuring the benefits of a psychology placement year. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* **31**, 551–567.

Smith, J., McKnight, A. and Naylor, R. (2000) Graduate employability: policy and performance in higher education in the UK. *The Economic Journal* **110**, F382–411.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009) *Research methods for business students*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Toland, T. (2011) *HE STEM employability skills review*. National Higher Education Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (HE STEM) Programme. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

Tomlinson, M. (2007) Graduate employability and student attitudes and orientations to the labour market. *Journal of Education and Work* **20** (4), 285–304.

University of Kent (2012) *Careers employability award*. Available from www.kent.ac.uk/careers/moodle.htm (accessed 15 November 2012).

Wilson, T. (2012) *A review of business–university collaboration*. Available from www.wilsonreview.co.uk (accessed 1 October 2012).