

**ESSENTIAL  
FRAMEWORKS  
FOR ENHANCING  
STUDENT  
SUCCESS**

**EMBEDDING  
EMPLOYABILITY IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

# What is embedding employability in HE?

**Advance HE views embedding employability as providing the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, experiences, behaviours, attributes, achievements and attitudes to enable graduates to make successful transitions and contributions, benefitting them, the economy and their communities. Employability is relevant to all students, and at all levels of study so includes both undergraduate and postgraduate provision.**

To be addressed effectively, employability should be embedded into all learning and teaching policies, processes and practices – particularly in the curriculum – and considered throughout the student lifecycle, from the very start of a student programme through to completion of their studies. All stakeholders, including academic and support staff, students, careers services, students' unions, and employers, have a role to play in embedding employability and should be involved in doing so. The framework thus promotes the principles of inclusion and collaboration as key to achieving a joined up approach.

## Who is the framework for?

This framework has been designed to engage and support a diverse range of audiences including those involved in developing and implementing employability policy and practice, curriculum design, student support and learning and teaching. It is most effective if adopted at an institutional level and then applied across all programmes. The framework builds on Defining and developing your approach to employability (Advance HE 2013) that detailed a rationale and approach for embedding employability.

## Why is embedding employability important?

Increasing pressure to meet the expectations of stakeholders has driven the employability agenda and made it a priority in the 21st century for all higher education providers. Embedding employability is important to:

**STUDENTS:** with the rise in tuition fees, students are investing in their future careers and are more focused on how the institution can support them to enhance their immediate employment prospects and longer term employability.

**SUPPORTIVE OTHERS:** those investing and supporting students in HE, including families, communities and industry, have a vested interest in employability as an outcome.

**EMPLOYERS:** employers have specific needs in terms of graduate knowledge, skills and attributes which should inform the curriculum, HE business engagement and employability support in HE.

**INSTITUTIONS:** excellence in graduate employment and employability enhances an institution's reputation and global standing, influencing student recruitment and engagement with employers.

**UK ECONOMY:** graduate employability is a government priority as it is vital to the UK's economic growth (regionally, nationally and internationally) and supports both social and cultural development.

Advance HE believes that graduate employability can be significantly enhanced by embedding employability into the culture of the institution and specifically the curriculum. This framework and associated toolkit is designed to support this process.

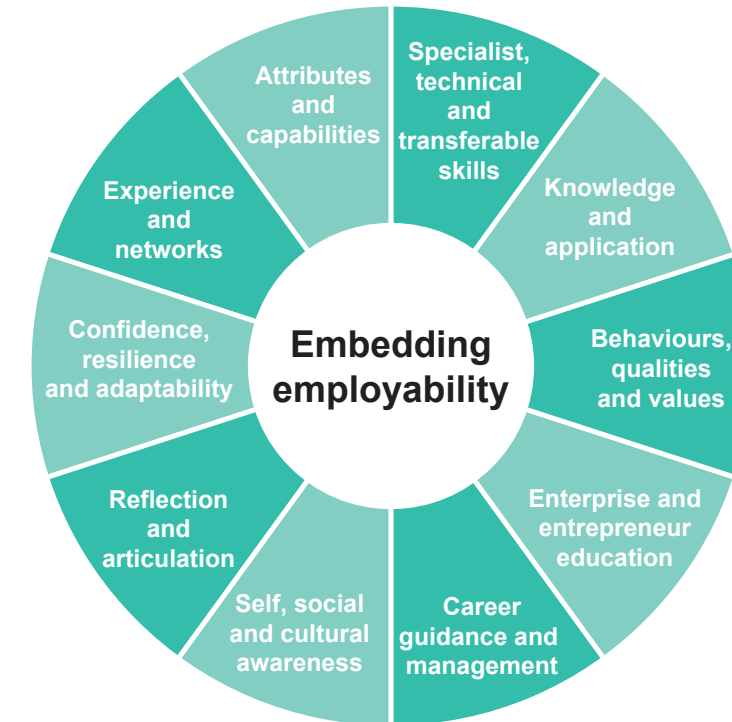
# Ten broad areas of focus

The inner circle of the framework illustrates the ten broad areas of focus that are integral for graduate employability.

Employability is complex, therefore no single area of focus is the solution, for example addressing the provision of placements alone. It is the combination of a number of areas of focus and the processes used to embed them that will strengthen your approach.

Taking time to reflect, define and identify the employability priorities of your particular institution and programmes is significant at the start of the process. Involving industry partners, students and other stakeholders will enable you to develop a clearer view of the combination of areas of focus that are right for your particular context.

We can work with you to apply the framework to suit your institution's needs. Our frameworks audit will help identify which areas you need to prioritise for enhancement and where your institution is already demonstrating good practice.



# How the framework can be used

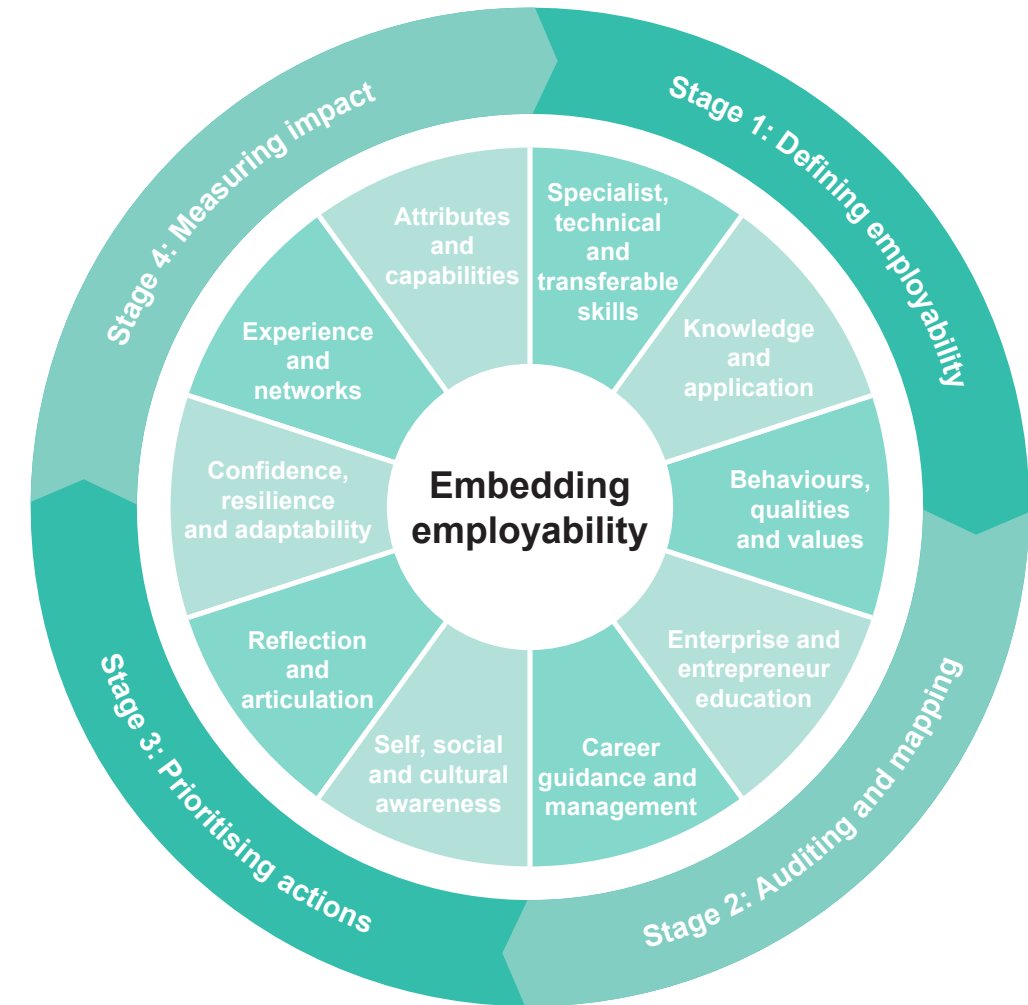
The framework outlines a cyclical process to help you reflect on and address current employability policy and practice in your institution, faculty, department and programme(s). It is helpful to work through stages one to four as introduced here, when designing and planning curriculum, as part of curriculum validation/revalidation, or within staff development opportunities.

The process encompasses the four stages involved in developing a defined and cohesive approach to employability. This provides an institutional approach that also enables local ownership and development at a programme or subject level. In our employability toolkit, the process is explained in more detail and provides a range of questions at each stage to facilitate and support discussion and reflection between staff, employers, students and key stakeholders.

## Four stage process to apply the framework in practice

The areas of focus are encircled by a cyclical process that is key to embedding employability across the institution and at a programme level.

- STAGE 1** **Defining employability** including all key stakeholders and making this explicit at an institutional and programme level and with all your students.
- STAGE 2** **Auditing and mapping** provision and support, considering all policies, practices and processes, against the definition agreed at Stage 1.
- STAGE 3** **Prioritising actions** to address gaps, sharing best practice and agreeing measurable outcomes/outputs within policy, practice and processes.
- STAGE 4** **Measuring impact** identifying measures of success and using feedback and evidence to inform future priorities, resourcing and areas of focus.



# Principles underpinning employability

The outer circle of the framework contains the principles that underpin how the areas should be applied in practice.

## INCLUSIVITY:

All students, regardless of location, situation, programme or mode of study, should have equitable access to opportunities to enhance their employability, make successful transitions and manage their careers.

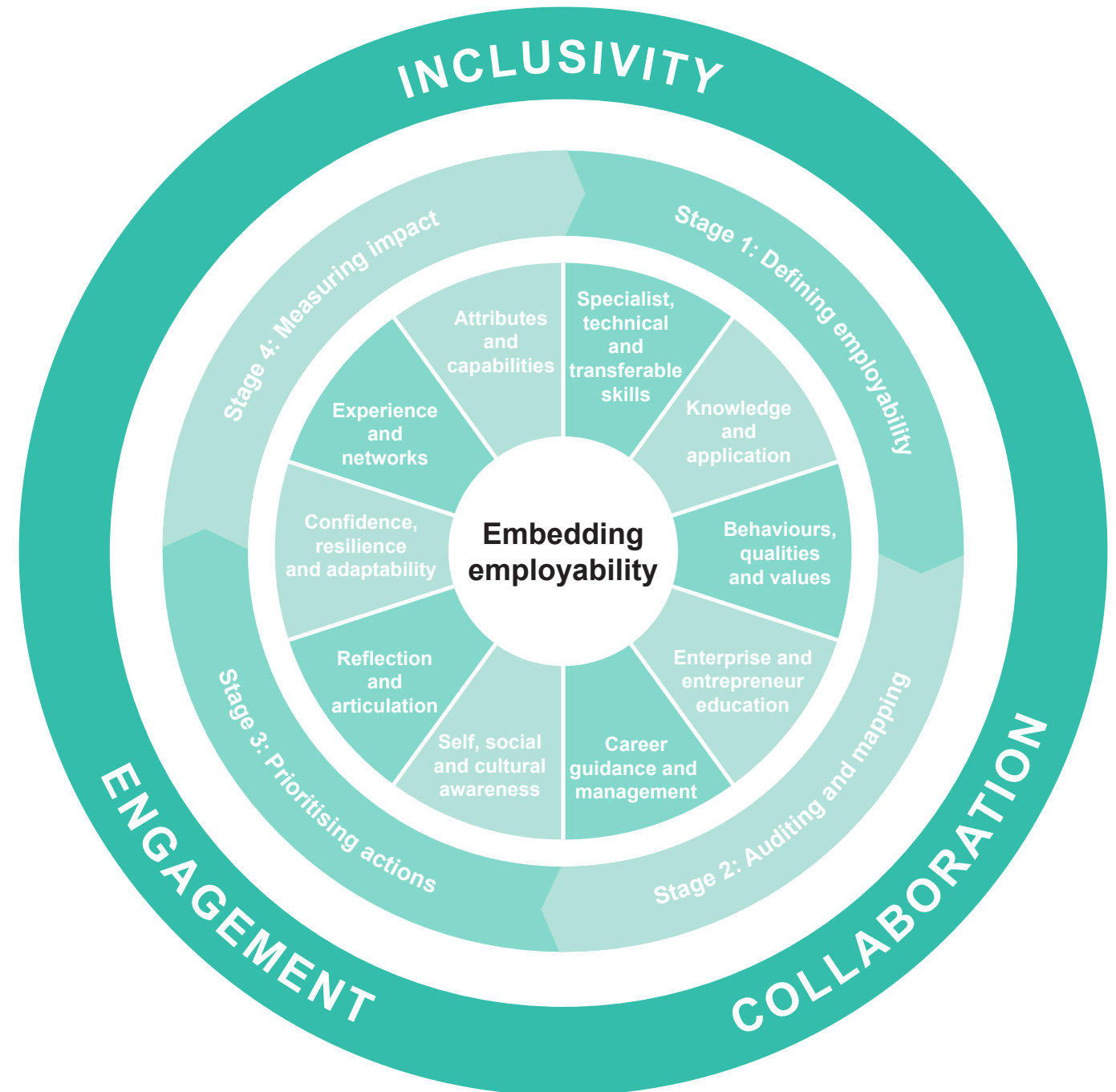
## COLLABORATION:

Collaborative approaches to learning and teaching can enrich and inform the curriculum and support graduate employability. Collaboration between HE and business provides opportunities, informs the curriculum, and should be a key feature of your approach to employability. Employability is a process of engagement and continual enhancement and is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders.

## ENGAGEMENT:

The language used around employability is critical in terms of its potential impact on engagement, with all stakeholders. Developing a shared understanding and view of employability in any given context will facilitate staff, employer and student engagement. Students can subsequently engage proactively in seeking to develop as individuals in the areas of focus being highlighted.

It is the combination of these underpinning principles along with the areas of focus and the cyclical process that enables employability to be embedded comprehensively and consistently. Embedding this process into your existing institutional policies, processes and practices so that it is integral and not bolt on, will have the greatest impact.



# How does this framework align with the Professional Standards Framework (PSF)?

Staff may want to consider how their engagement with embedding employability in higher education can offer an effective approach to areas of activity, enable deeper understanding of core knowledge, and demonstrate alignment with professional values. It is particularly relevant to the following dimensions:

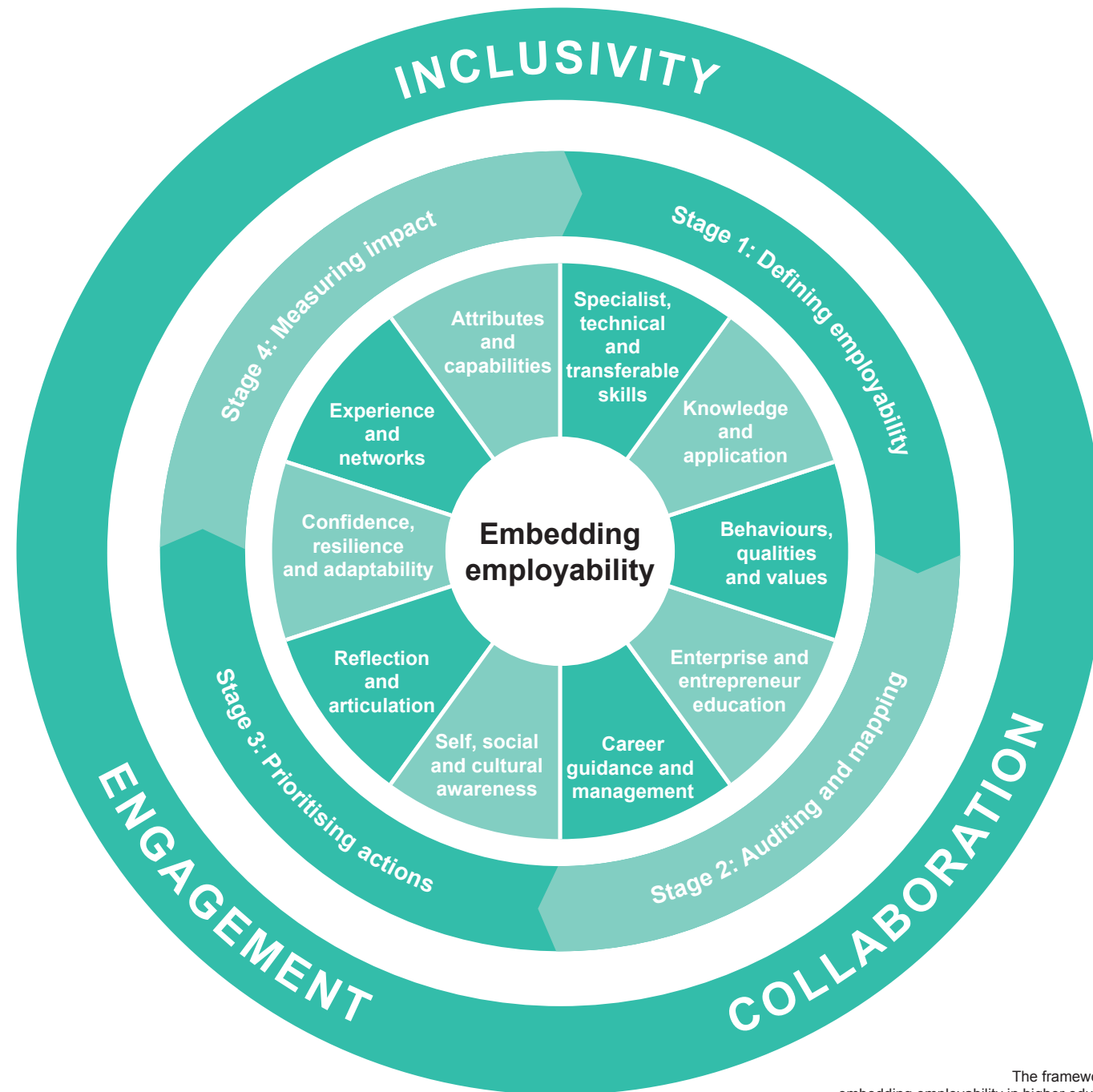
**ACTIVITY:** A2 AND A4

**KNOWLEDGE:** K1, K2 AND K5

**VALUES:** V2, V3 AND V4

Advance HE invites lecturers, teachers and learning support staff to evidence their use of this or other Advance HE frameworks in applying for Fellowship in recognition of their commitment to embedding professional practice.

To find out more about Fellowship visit: [www.advance-he.ac.uk/fellowship](http://www.advance-he.ac.uk/fellowship)



## Acknowledgements

This framework is based on the Advance HE publication, Defining and developing your approach to employability; a framework for higher education institutions (2013) and was originally developed with sector expertise as part of a learning and teaching summit. Since its launch, it has also been informed by feedback from representatives of the 37 higher education institutions who participated in Advance HE's Embedding Employability Strategic Enhancement Programme (2014–15). Thanks are due to them and the authors of Advance HE publications whose work informed this framework.

SUPPORTED BY:



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To find out more about how to make our Student Success Frameworks work for you, or to see the rest of the framework series, email us at [solutions@advance-he.ac.uk](mailto:solutions@advance-he.ac.uk) or visit [www.advance-he.ac.uk/student-success](http://www.advance-he.ac.uk/student-success)