

St Mary's Employability Strategy

1.0. Introduction

Employability is more than just successfully achieving the first graduate job. It is the development of knowledge, skills and personal attributes to enable a person to manage and evolve their career in an ever-changing job market. Adaptability is essential to be successful not only for the jobs of today, but to be futureproofed for the jobs that are yet to exist tomorrow. Its development is the mechanism by which St Mary's students will be able to define the way they will make a positive contribution to their own career, to the economy and to society as a whole.

To enable our students to confidently navigate the changing world of work requires a holistic approach encompassing the academic, extracurricular and social and professional development elements of the student experience.

This is underpinned by key commitments in the St Mary's Vision 2025 strategy, in particular:

We will enhance our students' learning and personal development by:

- Providing a globally relevant course portfolio that equips students to be knowledgeable, critical and ambitious for themselves and for society.
- Offering vigorous student engagement through excellent teaching and personal support with learning opportunities that are stimulating, stretching and prepare them for fulfilling careers.
- Multiplying opportunities for volunteering and service

We will produce an enterprise culture by:

- Offering students the option to study a module in entrepreneurship and develop a business proposal.
- Creating a University specialism in social enterprise.
- Developing our start-up hub, working with the local community.

This strategy is designed to ensure appropriate focus is given to employability development and that best practices in improving employability are developed and shared across the organisation. It is envisaged that it is intrinsically linked to the Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Widening Participation Plan and will be a key delivery agent for the enhancement of student recruitment, retention and progression under the new Office for Students outcomes. Ultimately, this will ensure that the institution achieves its stated KPIs of having 95% employment and 80% professional level employment by 2025.

2.0 Development of the strategy

To ensure that the Employability Strategy is relevant to St Mary’s and will deliver the correct approach for our students and staff alike, Employability Services launched a university wide consultation in October 2018. This canvassed professional and academic staff and students from across a range of disciplines and levels.

In addition, Employability Services did an evaluation of strategies from institutions that:

- Have experienced recent and significant rises in their Good University Guide position
- Have achieved TEF silver or gold status
- Have a graduate prospects score (The number of graduates in employment or further study divided by the total number of graduates with a known destination expressed as a percentage) of over or very close to our benchmark of 80%

From this we defined a set of top-level objectives and operational actions that would contribute to the achievement of our goals. These have been amalgamated with the consultation analysis to create the strategy.

3.0 Graduate Attributes

The St Mary’s Curriculum Framework proposal included a set of Graduate Attributes derived from research from the World Economic Forum and other sources into the skills required for future employment. These were included in the Employability Consultation and respondents identified the following as desired qualities for St Mary’s graduates. It is proposed that these are adopted by the institution and that a subsequent objective embedding these in all programmes is included in both the teaching and learning and employability strategy.

Communication and English language	Self-management and Professionalism (includes self-awareness, self-regulation aspects of EQ as well as wellbeing and resilience)	Team working and Leadership
Problem solving and creativity	Digital literacy and IT	Innovation and Enterprise
Applied Numeracy and Technical Proficiency	Commercial Awareness/Service Orientation	Career Management (including networking)
Inclusiveness and intercultural proficiency (including empathy and social skill elements of EQ)		

3.1 Graduate Qualities

The Curriculum Framework has also defined a set of graduate qualities in conjunction with the attributes that also espouse a set of values and behaviours that differentiate St Mary's students. These are:

Empathy: ability to understand the thoughts, feelings and circumstances of others and draw on this to maintain humane relationships with those around them. Treating others as they would expect to be treated

Courage: doing what is right, not what is easy; questioning professional or social orthodoxies and exploring new ways of doing things; being resolute and resilient in the face of opposition.

Generosity: being free in their encouragement and empowerment of others, collegial, willing to give something back to society.

Curiosity: to want to understand more, better. Being reflective and willing to learn from their own experiences, and those of others, and engaging with lifelong learning both for its own sake, and as a means of maintaining professionalism.

Humility: ability to understand their own achievements, qualities and talents in a proper perspective, recognising (at the same time) their limitations, and opportunities to learn from others.

Inclusivity: ability to embrace diversity and champion tolerance; exercise intercultural competence; maintain a global perspective.

4.0 Strategic Themes and Key objectives

Following research conducted by Employability Services into similar strategies within the sector, alongside the feedback from staff and students resulting from the Employability Strategy consultation, five key themes emerged spanning seventeen strategic objectives for cementing employability as a culture at St Mary's.

4.1 Embed employability in the student experience

1. Employability will be embedded in a subject-based curriculum. Aligning teaching and learning strategies with 'real world' challenges and scenarios. Creating a culture which champions relationships and connections between higher education and the world of work in its broadest understanding.
2. Employability will be embedded in the culture of the institution, with metrics clearly defined at an institution and programme level.
3. We will achieve the benchmark for graduate employability indicator (KPI 1: 95% employment KPI 2: 80% graduate level employment) in the Graduate Outcomes (formerly DLHE) return at both subject and institutional level.
4. St Mary's will create clear professional development pathways from Level 3 or 4 to graduation to help students plan, develop and record employability activities. These will help students to identify and showcase their unique strengths.
5. Employers and alumni will be involved in the design and content of all programmes appropriate to the subject discipline, including employability initiatives and plan.

6. Collaborative approaches between academics, employability and professional services will be used to design and deliver programmes and extracurricular employability initiatives.
7. We will engage department employability champions; academic staff with the remit to promote employability good practice and professional development.

4.2 Enable students to play an active and meaningful part in their own academic and professional development

8. St Mary's will engage with students as active co-creators of their academic and professional development as opposed to consumers e.g. through pedagogies such as peer and collaborative learning.
9. We will embed opportunities for students to evaluate their professional development e.g. through a mini appraisal with personal tutors or the employability team.
10. Programmes will ensure students are equipped with a clear set of graduate attributes that enable them to make self-informed and externally-informed choices about their career pathway and manage their continual professional development by recognising and being able to effectively articulate their transferable skills and experiences.
11. St Mary's will enable all students to engage with student enterprise activities either within or extracurricular.
12. Implement a St Mary's Award to enable all students to undertake, reflect upon and articulate activities, through a professional development portfolio, that contribute to their employability.

4.3 Achieve employability excellence through professional development and sharing best practice

13. Develop and deliver employability training for academic staff e.g. how to connect to commercial organisations, practice sharing and toolkits. Embed this into the existing Academic Development Framework.
14. We will develop a robust process to collect and utilise data connected with the employability of students and graduates with senior leaders, academics and professional staff. These data will be used to inform, and measure the impact of, employability developments and initiatives.
15. We will draw regularly on employer and alumni feedback and sector best practice to improve employability at St Mary's.

4.4 Augment student support to build professionalism, confidence, knowledge and skills

16. A transparent process for professional development support for students will be implemented and communicated to students via personal tutors, employability services, other academic staff and professional services.
17. St Mary's commits to creating and resourcing initiatives specifically to support the employability of Widening Participation (WP) students from pre-entry through all levels, including foundation year and master's.

18. St Mary's will seek funding to create bursaries to facilitate more students to take placements as part of academic modules where these are unpaid.

4.5 Provide inclusive access and increased options for gaining professional experience

19. All undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (including foundation and PhD) have the opportunity to gain experiences that enable personal and professional development appropriate to their aspirations, e.g. internships, industrial year programmes, work placements, volunteering, shadowing and mentoring. These need to be flexible options that fit with the needs of students, e.g. around part-time work.
20. We will leverage our connections with business, alumni and community locally to generate a diverse range of employment opportunities and facilitate community engagement.
21. We will work with companies to explore graduate apprenticeships and support students into graduate training programmes.

The achievement of these objectives will be supported through a data and intelligence driven approach so we can understand our students needs and where we can capitalise on local and regional opportunities to maximise outcomes.

5.0 Implementation, monitoring and governance

Oversight of the strategy will reside with the Academic Board.

The strategy will be accompanied by an action plan where key actions will be recorded and monitored through Academic Development Committee. Day to day actions to support employability will be documented in the Employability Services Operational Plan.

Appendix 1. Examples from the sector

Employability Services reviewed 5 strategies from the sector from institutions that had achieved large rises in the league tables (Good University Guide used for comparison), TEF silver or gold and had a graduate prospects index comparable to our aspirational target of 80%, currently 73.8.

Strategy	Rank	TEF	Grad prospects	
Staffordshire University	73	TEF Silver	79.3	http://www.staffs.ac.uk/about/pdf/connected-university-strategy.pdf Achieved biggest rise of 32 places the 2019 Complete University Guide.
University of York	21	TEF Gold	81.1.	https://www.york.ac.uk/media/studenthome/workandvolunteering/otherpdfs/Student%20Employability%20Strategy_Extended_HR.docx.pdf Dropped 1 place in the 2019 Complete University Guide Won the TARGETjobs National Graduate Recruitment Awards, Best Employability Strategy 2017.

De Montfort University	70	TEF Gold	80.4	http://www.dmu.ac.uk/Documents/About-DMU-documents/Teaching-Excellence-Framework/DMU-TEF-submission.pdf Rose 12 places in Complete University Guide
London Southbank University	93	TEF Silver	81.7	http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/45032/lrbu-corporate-strategy-2015-2020.pdf A London-based competitor achieved a rise of 12 places in the 2019 Complete University Guide.
Liverpool Hope University	53	TEF Gold	80.5	Liverpool Hope Employability Strategy A faith based institution; similar discipline spread to St Mary's in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and education. Rose 6 places in 2019 Complete University Guide

University of Staffordshire:

- Institution has an overall vision, but no employability strategy. Employability is embedded into the vision:
- 20% students partaking in work placements or study abroad opportunities. All new undergraduates guaranteed work placement opportunities. <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/work-experience/>
- Incorporated employability into all teaching modules
- Defined 6 graduate attributes across the institution
- Local temping agency (Unitemps) on campus
- Positive terminology within the plan – interconnection a key theme.
- Mission – explore, experience, connect, and reach for goals – institutional theme!
- Regional hub = connections and links with local employers.
- Be inspired – hub for entrepreneurship, mentors, coaches and additional support.
- Specialist team to support student enterprise in the careers service
- Digital fluency – interactive online CV services – perfect for commuter students.
- Online support for alumni.
- Creative options for work experience.
- Social mobility – main objective – linked to alumni, employers and raising aspirations.
- Careers and personal development team.

London Southbank University:

- 2020 target for 95% in work or further study, 80% in graduate employment. 20,000 students - Southbank has more vocational courses.
- Focus on fostering student start-ups
- 50 enterprises created in 2014.

- Sponsorships for individual students and degree programmes.
- Commitment to work experience and study abroad opportunities for all students.
- Emphasis on volunteering – for example drop-in clinics available to local people or companies by business and law students.
- Extra-curricular activity built into the framework of degrees e.g. company visits, Formula Student (engineering), Bloomberg Investment Challenge (finance)
- Progression metrics – KPIs at each level year on year.
- Skills based focus to seminars – using technology to facilitate blended learning.
- Social mobility a major aim of the university (South London focus). They had numerous students with P/T jobs and commuter students vs accommodated students.
- Move to school-based responsibility for employability.
- Student enterprise loyalty card scheme – students collect stamps for attending employability events and services.
- Degree apprenticeships offered; about 400 students participating.
- Commitment to offer placements and study abroad opportunities from Level 4 onwards.
- LSBU learning pathways in all courses focusing on knowledge and practice
- On campus temping agency to enable students to get graduate level experience

University of York:

- Extracurricular programmes such as York Strengths for students to learn how to articulate skills and strengths and track their development online
- York Futures aims to create a pathway for personal development so students can clearly identify how to develop their employability and at what stage
- Focus on strengths and augmenting them. Hugely positive in term of message and language.
- All students have the opportunity to undertake an accredited placement year
- Broadening of volunteering and other work experience opportunities to support personal development
- Increase in work and study abroad opportunities and greater promotion of these
- Capturing data on number of students gaining work experience and career readiness through annual enrolment process
- Targeted employer engagement in line with institutional strategic objectives
- Focus on volunteering through a volunteering hub and a champion of volunteering. Strategic direction and driver for volunteering in the local community.
- Centralised hub for publishing opportunities – connected to student experience.
- Aspect of wellbeing and resilience.
- Addresses real world challenges, adapting students to deal with changing landscapes.
- Project managers connected to each faculty to implement the strategy.

De Montfort University:

- Employability embedded in the curriculum.
- Faculty embedded careers/employability teams. Centralised and decentralised teams.
- Tailored activities to subject of study
- 2 enhancement weeks – industry professionals giving lectures.

- Variety of placements/internships – correlation to post-grad success clear from analysis of DHLE data.
- Grad Champions – 6 week paid internship with big business for recent graduates. Big emphasis on alumni support post-university. Ongoing business start-up support also provided.
- Acquisition and tracking of skills related employability development.
- Annual tracking of student progress with backing of all programmes.
- Practical assessments and incorporation of employers on programmes (guest speakers, visiting lecturers).
- Specific employability programme for disadvantaged students.
- Local based volunteering programmes.
- Placement years positively impacting student progression.
- Equipping students with language and confidence through skills development scenarios with professionals.
- International mobility – highlights connection to retention.
- Financially viable and inclusive placements.

Liverpool Hope

- Focused sections within the strategy with KPI links.
- Each faculty have specific careers & employability
- 8,000 students (similar to St Mary's)
- Employer workshops and placement workshops in curriculum
- Links to QAA benchmarks, academically robust.
- Service & leadership award – subject related volunteering – strategic commitment
- Aim to mould students into the ideal image of LHU graduate – overarching identity and institutional brand of graduates.
- Employer Engagement KPIs and targets for finding recruiters, professional bodies, local and national, etc.

Appendix 2 St Mary's best practice examples (as articulated in the consultation)

Institute of Education

- School experience is an integral part of the course. Students spend a minimum of six weeks in school each progressing from teaching small groups to whole classes.
- Elective subjects in the second year, allowing students to showcase their talents and follow their particular interests
- Teaching takes place in purpose-built classrooms that mirror those found in primary schools.
- Tutors model good practice in the use of ICT and use lectures, seminars, and group activities to stimulate and encourage students to become reflective practitioners.
- A diverse arrange of assessment methods are used from essays, rationales, portfolios, lesson plans, presentations, resource innovation and one formal examination. School experience is assessed against the government's standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status.

Law

- I introduced certificates for top module mark each semester (very popular with students and good for CVs)
- Sponsored awards for top degree mark (prize by external solicitor-see website).
- Links with outside agencies e.g. local law centre and CAB for regular work experience.
- Commercial Awareness workshops e.g. this week on AI and the future of employment.
- Annual career forum -next week's Law Forum.
- Workshops in networking and interviewing skills.
- Bespoke work placement module run by the programme.
- Skills module e.g. advocacy, negotiation. Mooting/mock trials with new moot court.
- Assessments to enhance skills e.g. vivas, presentations and simulated negotiations.

SIMMSport Programme

- Student- led programmes with students in key leadership roles
- Pathways to develop into leadership roles from being a volunteer. For example, 1st year students shadowing 3rd year students as volunteers, progressing into their roles upon 3rd year graduation
- Three-way service level agreements in place with institution, student and provider
- Rewards for engaging in employability roles
- End of year employability awards/celebrations
- Online platforms to promote opportunities, log hours, give feedback and track rewards

Bioethics

- Mentoring opportunities with professionals in the area of work the student aspires to move into. Internship/work placements that exposes the student to the area of work they aspire to move into, builds confidence and potentially allows them to submit assessments that are based on real life scenarios and situations.
- Careers forum to show case the range of potential careers available and to help build connections between employers and students. We ran the first bioethics careers forum last academic year (2017-18) and it proved particularly successful in raising awareness of just can be achieved and the careers that can be pursued with a postgraduate degree in bioethics. Alumni and representatives from different professions attended and presented.
- Guest lectures from leaders in the field - helps to show case how a subject relates to real world issues and how understanding can be applied in particular areas of work.
- Reflective journals to aid reflective practice and which certain entries/summaries could be shared with employers to demonstrate professional development.
- Maximising the value of alumni who can speak of their experiences and how they have progressed professionally. There is nothing more powerful than for a student to hear from a graduate "This is my story This is what I've been able to do". This has worked well on our programme.

Audio visual services and media arts

- Employs students within the AV department to enable them to gain live experience e.g. filming content at the Teaching and Learning Festival 2018.
- Developed so students can gain experience on IT helpdesk to extend experience.

Drama

The majority of the Acting, Drama and Tech Theatre degrees at St Mary's are designed exactly to prepare students for the kind of challenges and tasks they would undertake in a real-world context including:

- Practical and performance-based assessments based on building essential employable skills in voice, movement and acting, - professional portfolios and career planning,
- Mock auditions and meetings with agents and casting directors, for which we bring in real agents and casting directors. These have directly resulted in students finding representation and work.
- Showcasing student work online and in central London venues.
- One example I have taken from my previous institution (University of Northampton) and hope to using in next year's Creative Thinking module, is assessment in the form of an Arts Council application, ensuring students are au fait with the mechanisms of finding funding and can apply their written skills directly in that manner.
- Project 10 in the Drama department which prepares students with practical knowledge of their industry. It enables students to create a CV, portfolio and networking strategies and contacts.

Centre for workplace learning

- Centre for Workplace Learning professional practice modules are grounded in academic principles whereby students can link theory to the valuable experience that they gain during placements.
- The CWL has excellent links with industries.
- Placement officers meet with all module participants to ascertain their placement needs and match them to appropriate opportunities
- Understanding these needs helps collaboration with employer engagement to source placements
- Lecturers and placement officers have an open door policy to support students.

History

- Workshops at national archives, field trips, greater understanding of world of public history and the practical considerations that exist in the industry
- Making history work is a workplace learning module run by the programme with input from the CWL and Careers Services. The placement takes place in a history organisation.

SHAS (Faculty initiatives)

- Links with professional organisations to deliver degrees - e.g. Chelsea foundation degree where students are part of a professional organisation from commencement of their degree programme.
- Work placement opportunities offered to students within the St Mary's community, for example the Physiology clinic which is run by MSc students for elite level athletes who study/train here.
- Field trips and activities off site in programmes e.g. teaching at Chelsea's training ground at Cobham, providing massage and sport rehabilitation support at various charity competitions and attendance at events such as the Olympia business show and a food processing plant.
- Embedded initiatives including placements available in most programmes as well as continued engagement with industry through guests and alumni within lectures.
- SHAS employability conference including workshops on CV structure and writing; developing your social media presence and writing successful applications. Students were also able to book onto mock interviews with specialists from Careers for a chosen current job related to their programme subject area complete with video feedback.
- Targeted SHAS fair with relevant employers to the sports and health industries run at a time aligned with the students' timetable.

Psychology

- Built programme from L4-L6
- Validated CWL work placement modules giving students a flavour of different work environments and experience.
- Psychology Alumni Careers event for Level 6 students in December
- Alumni Research event in April

Nutrition

- Developed an annual initiative with local Age UK entitled 'man with a pan'
- Supported Level 6 Nutrition students applying for business start-up funding

Strength and Conditioning

- Recently hosted a work placement/ careers day where employers pitched roles to current students and served as a networking event.

Sports Rehab

- Placements are embedded within modules and are credit bearing
- All placements are quality assured to meet PSRB requirements and to ensure student experience is enhanced
- International placements are offered (professional baseball in the USA, clinical placement in Madrid, others being developed)
- Co-ordinated by dedicated placement admin and clinical staff member
- Clear processes in place if any issues either with the placement or the student
- A broad range of placement opportunities are provided in different settings i.e. professional sport, clinics with various patient profiles

Business Management

- Created an assessment where L6 students would post material on marketing, change management and digital business.
- Invited professionals from LinkedIn network to feedback on the posts. Over 90 people engaged.
- Objectives both pedagogical and employability, enabling students to develop a LinkedIn profile and use the tool for networking.