

UK

What are the main challenges for your country in terms of employability? (eg Is graduate unemployment a problem? Are there restrictions on access to certain jobs? Is there a careers and guidance service?) What would help you most as an output from this working group?

- Graduate unemployment is very low: holders of HE qualifications are more than half as likely to be unemployed as non-graduates (2.4% vs 6.5% - LFS, Q2 2007, England).
- There are no restrictions to a majority of jobs (although obviously jobs in areas like medicine and law are exceptions).
- Each University has its own careers and guidance service.
- The main challenge is that a lot of employers think that universities are not doing enough to prepare graduates for the world of work. Some universities query whether they should be doing anything at all.
- What would most help us is for the group to encourage employers and universities to cooperate more to ensure that the skills that employers feel graduates need are reflected in the degrees that they take.

Is there a dialogue in your country between higher education institutions and employers? If so, at what level does this take place – national, regional, institutional etc? What sort of issues does it cover?

There is a dialogue between HEIs and employers but it is not a systematic one. Where it happens it takes place nationally (Universities UK etc in discussion with Confederation of British Industry (CBI), for instance), regionally (through the Regional Skills Partnerships) and locally (eg Aston University and links with local employers). As a consequence of the Leitch Report DIUS will be publishing a Higher Level Skills Strategy designed to set out the way forward to encourage employer engagement with higher education institutions. The Sector Skills Councils are also encouraged to cover higher level skills.

Can you provide two examples of good practice in your country in relation to any of the themes to be covered by the report on employability?

University of Derby: University of Derby Corporate

The aim of the project is to enable University of Derby to make a step-rise in its capacity for employer engagement and fully exploit its proven flexible frameworks for responsive, customised skills development and lifelong learning. More employers, including those in sectors with no tradition of HE, will be engaged through a continuum of opportunities to develop a highly skilled workforce underpinned by University of Derby's flexible framework for bespoke and shorter awards. Credit accumulation, Accreditation of Prior or Experiential Learning (APEL) and accreditation of in-house learning will be key elements of the offer to reach out to potential new learners in the workplace including adults in the workforce choosing to return to education.

The three objectives of the project are to:

- Establish a new single mission business model for employer engagement to result in more HE programmes in partnership with employers.
- Create a well respected and supported academic career pathway in employer engagement.
- Create a purpose built facility for services to employers that meets the standards required by business clients.

Coventry University: Work-based learning: combining capability and competence

This project centres on the delivery of a learning programme – The Capability Improvement Programme - for middle managers in large employers which enables them to both benchmark their competence and develop future capability and potential. As a result of completing the year long learning programme participants could achieve a National Vocational Qualification at level 4 (which is a bachelor degree level) in a relevant occupational area or prepare evidence of benchmarking against organisational standards such as the National Health Service Knowledge and Skills Framework. They will also gain a Certificate of Lifelong Learning (Capability Improvement).

The Capability Improvement Programme supports organisational development for each employer involved. Learning is delivered and assessed by a university Learning and Development Consultant who is on site at the employer for the majority of the week. Learning is customised around critical incidents from each employer and is delivered at work/in work reducing the necessity for time off the job. In its first year of delivery the programme has recruited approximately 260 students working with four large employers.

University of York: social entrepreneurship:

<http://www.agcas.org.uk/articles/28-Social-Entrepreneurship-at-the-University-of-York>