

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE

8 December 2015

REPORT FROM THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYABILITY (17.11.15)

## 1. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

### (i) International Student Employability and Student Mobility

The University involvement in this benchmarking project with ten other institutions selected from Australia, Canada and UK was outlined. The exercise aims to explore and compare external strategic relationships and partnerships with industry. The significance of internships, placement and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) for international student retention would also be addressed.

Two key outcomes of the project will include:

1. Peer Review Workshop: Areas of good practice, areas for improvement and areas for sharing;
2. A Global Think Tank Conference: on key challenges and good practice examples across the HE sector and areas for collaboration in international student employability and student mobility.

### (ii) Radox APEX programme

As a result of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Ulster University and Radox laboratories, this programme is successfully launched and active recruitment of first year students is happening across the targeted Faculties of Computing and Engineering, Life and Health Sciences and Ulster University Business School.

This provides for up to fifty summer internships leading to possible placement year opportunity and potential graduate level employment. Drop-In clinics are being run with Radox in the Career Development Centre to support the application process. The first stage is a social media post with the #iamtheoneUU where applicants present a 15-second elevator pitch.

### (iii) Ulster University Workforce Development Seminar

On 13 November 2015 at Stormont Hotel, this event brought together policy makers, employers and educators to demonstrate the benefits and impact of employer/educator collaborations.

The Seminar successfully highlighted innovative partnerships at both a National and Local level between employers and educators, showcasing the benefits that grow from these collaborations. Good attendance by Employers and policy makers was reported and follow-through by employers is encouraging.

## 2. SUB-COMMITTEE WORKING GROUPS

### (i) Student Employability Skills

Both the staff and student questionnaires within the EDORT tool have been updated, this will be available to colleagues via the employability portal. Use of this tool in preparation for revalidation exercises was reinforced, it was further suggested that employers could participate in the process and that EDORT should be included in delivery of change management training by staff development.

A suggested title for the upcoming Employability Conference was discussed and an outline format of the event on 4th May 2016 was presented. It was recommended that all participants should take away valuable learning such as ideas for resolving current challenges.

An Employability Partnership Agreement has been negotiated between the Students' Union and Employability and Marketing (E&M). This reflects a partnership approach in the delivery of the broad employability and student experience agenda at Ulster. The purpose is to ensure that the delivery of employability activities to Ulster students/graduates is undertaken in an effective, efficient and co-ordinated way. The document identifies agreed priority activities such as student engagement plans to increase student participation with the EDGE Award and a joint 'Enterprise and Work Experience Week' scheduled for 22-26 February 2016.

The Working Group is planning a review of the terminology, roles and responsibilities and systems for supporting Personal Development Planning (PDP) within Ulster. The group will collect and disseminate PDP best practice through the staff employability portal and put forward recommendations for change to the Sub-Committee on Employability.

Implementation of the Student Experience Principles is in progress and supports the development of Ulster graduate qualities. Resources are being developed to support the implementation of all principles within programmes, one of which is employability.

### (ii) Work Experience

It was emphasised that amongst the drivers for compulsory Work-Based Learning, the Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland includes an expectation that all learners have the opportunity to undertake a period of work-based learning while completing a higher education course. Subsequent to Compulsory Work-Based Learning Guidance having been developed and distributed, the Working Group will be seeking feedback from course directors on progress towards aims adopted by the University. The new staff employability portal will provide a channel to share resource and gather feedback providing evidence of approaches which build upon existing practice.

The Ulster University Placement Employer of the Year competition has been launched, the deadline for nominations is 1 February 2016. A campaign page is created at [ulster.ac.uk/placementawards](http://ulster.ac.uk/placementawards) and notice has been circulated to Deans and Heads of School/Department. A press release has showcased Liberty IT, winner in the Over 250 Employees category at the May 2015 ceremony. The 2016 ceremony will be held at the Loughview Suite, Jordanstown campus on the evening of Thursday 5 May.

Santander has confirmed bursary support for forty-five 3-month internships targeted at recent Ulster University graduates; the potential impact on DLHE statistics was welcomed. In addition, funding for seven undergraduate summer internships in 2016 has been announced. The Ulster University Professional Experience Programme currently provides twenty-eight internships for recent graduates from across faculties. The Student Employability Portal will provide opportunity to showcase such opportunities to potential participants.

### (iii) Employability Monitoring

The results of the first student Employability Journey survey have been distributed and the potential usage is perceived positively, it was also proposed to re-evaluate the survey presentation during semester 2. It was clarified that comparative data will build over time and also agreed that guidance needs to be developed on the purpose and value of survey results as indicators of areas to focus interventions by year group. This would be viewed in consideration of forward planning via a programme revalidation cycle and EDORT.

Recommendations for the University DLHE exercise had been received from Senior Executive Team and a report was provided to faculties. The first communication to faculties seeking information from course directors on known graduate destinations has been issued. It was noted that there will be an opportunity for course directors to feed into outcomes from the subsequent telephone survey.

### (iv) Employers and Entrepreneurship

The Chair recommended the Working Group seeks to ensure employers across industries understand what Ulster University aims to achieve. It was further recommended that Damian McGivern lead the Working Group in strategy to develop effective relationships with employers which links activity with delivery across the University.

## 3. EMPLOYABILITY EVENTS

An outline employability events as part of Graduate Recruitment & Work Placement Fair Week (2-5 November) was presented. As a pilot year, all events as part of Autumn recruitment took place at the Jordanstown campus. Promoted to students across all campuses, Fair Week resulted in an increase in the number of organisations engaging with Ulster students, 150 organisations supported their online recruitment with an on-campus

presence engaging over 1700 students. This included a series of 28 employer talks/skills workshops held over the four days providing useful insights into a range of sectors and how to make successful applications.

Year 2 students were well represented at the events, it is proposed to increase representation by year 1 students in future. Positive feedback was received from all stakeholders, Employability and Marketing were commended for delivery.