THE SCHOLARSHIP FRAMEWORK

Strategic and practical steps towards scholarly employer engagement: learning from research and practice

Introduction

This quality enhancement resource is based on a report titled "How do colleges engage with employers in the development and delivery of higher education and enhance student learning in colleges?" It reviews academic, practice, and other literature including official, and think tank reports originating in EU and other non-UK sources.

This summary guidance note aims to assist practitioners in assessing what your institution has in place and what more you can do to embed scholarship into student and staff curricula to produce a work-based and work-related curriculum that offers opportunities to demonstrate and apply research skills in the completion of 'real life' projects

Key findings from the report:

Evidence from sources including the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the Scholarship Project and case studies, points to *effective* employer engagement requiring durable partnership agreements between college HE providers and employers, with the primary outcomes of

> 1. A co-designed and delivered curriculum combining scholarly and vocational learning which is relevant and current
>
> 2. Real-life work-based and/or work-related projects and placements in which both scholarship and employability are enhanced and supported
>
> 3. Employer participation in assessment and awards processes

The evidence also suggests that commitment at corporate level is necessary to support practitioners to implement effective employer engagement that combines real-life industry experience with opportunities for students to apply research and problem-solving skills through work-based and work-related

projects. This needs to be articulated through the adoption of enabling strategies, policies and practical measures.

Please download the employer engagement research report for further information.

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1. Self-assessment table

Outcomes	Common problems: tick those relevant	Measures: tick those that are already in place
1. A co-designed and co-delivered curriculum combining scholarly and vocational learning which is relevant and current	i. Outdated industry knowledge and experience among practitioners ☐ ii. Insufficient development time and underdeveloped research capacity among practitioners ☐ iii. Fragile/inconsistent relationships between providers and employers/industry bodies ☐ iv. Other (details) ☐	i. Allocating practitioner time for employer liaison ☐ ii. Incorporating research skills and current industrial knowledge as integral elements of CPD training ☐ iii. Establishing joint employer/provider forums and advisory committees ☐ iv. Consulting employers and industry representatives in the process of programme development, validation and assessment ☐ v. Co-designing research-informed learning programmes around 'real world' assessments and project briefs ☐ vi. Involving employer representatives as teachers and mentors ☐
2. Real-life work-based and/or work-related projects and placements in which both scholarship and employability are enhanced and supported 3. Employer participation in assessment and awards processes	i. Difficulties for practitioners and employers in establishing contact within each organisation ☐ ii. Employer capacity/motivation to devote time to engagement ☐ iii. Some employer perceptions of colleges e.g. inflexible, lacking contemporary industry knowledge ☐ iv. Practitioner capacity to devote to building and maintaining durable employer relationships ☐	Coordinated support for employer engagement e.g. through a dedicated unit. Functions might include: i. a central point of contact connecting employers to the relevant practitioners ☐ ii. maintaining a central register of employer contacts and partnership agreements ☐ iii. supporting practitioners in work placement arrangements ☐ iv. arranging employer outreach initiatives and events ☐ v. promoting and facilitating the benefits of partnership ☐ vi. helping to establish/maintain programme-level networks and contacts ☐ vii. supporting the establishment and functions of joint forums and advisory committees ☐

2. Establishing ground rules for effective employer/provider engagement

Building effective employer-college relationships requires establishing ways of working that bring clear benefits to all parties. Key ground rules need to include:
- working together to agree guiding principles
- clearly understanding the responsibilities and expectations of everyone involved
- working as partners in design, planning and management of work-based/work-related projects (e.g. negotiated pieces of work, either group based or individual, located at college and/or the employers' premises)

3. Common forms of employer/provider collaboration

Employer involvement in approval and validation

Employers teaching at college or in the workplace

Insight days/company visits

Internships

Master classes

Mentoring relationships - mentors and assessors providing feedback

Mock interviews

Occupational standards embedded into design, approval and validation

Student volunteering

Work-based awards (the workplace is a contextual focus for the learning throughout the course either through reflection or through the setting of specific projects)

Workplace/practice assessments

Work shadowing

Work/practice placements

Work-relevant tasks/project