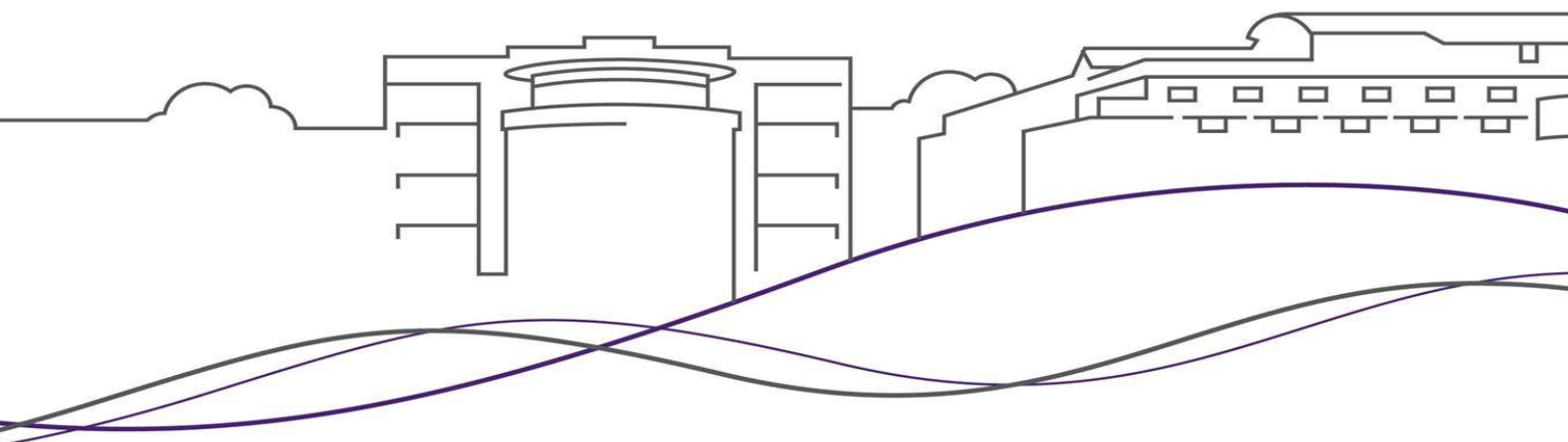




**HIGHER EDUCATION**

# **Strategy for Enhancing Student Employability v7.0**



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6.0	May 23	M Vince	Updated to reflect developments in employability provision and strategy at UCSD.
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# Higher Education Strategy for Enhancing Student Employability

## Contents

1.	Introduction .....	5
1.1	Aim.....	5
1.2	Context.....	5
2.	Key objectives .....	7
3.	Evaluation.....	9
4.	Future work .....	10

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Aim

The strategy aligns with our **Higher Education Vision Statement**: ‘South Devon College is passionate about providing excellent quality, accessible and employment focused Higher Education’.

It was written in conjunction with the **Higher Education Strategy 2019-2024** and **the College’s Career Policy 2021**. The strategy has also been informed by the QAA Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement (2020).

The strategy aims to:

Establish a clearly articulated and prominent framework which identifies career development and employability as intrinsic to the student experience at University Centre South Devon (UCSD).

Engage and support students with a diverse range of needs and ambitions in managing their employability development throughout the student journey and beyond.

Grow co- and extracurricular opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and develop relevant skills and experience; supporting them to become well-rounded graduates.

### 1.2 Context

UCSD is committed to supporting all students into employment, highly skilled employment and/or further study through dedicated activities as part of and outside of their core programme. Employability support adopts an integrated approach (see [Vince and Jones 2022](#)), building on three key areas of activity: discrete employability support via the Support Hub, embedded support within curriculum and teaching teams, and via collaborations with employers and extra training opportunities.

Under the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey which was replaced with HESA’s new Graduate Outcomes model in 2018, UCSD’s progression rates were high compared to the national average, as the majority of our students progressed to further study at Level 6. In the 2016/17 survey, 94.7% of UCSD respondents were in employment or further study (compared to 91% nationally<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/data-and-analysis/Documents/patterns-and-trends-in-uk-higher-education-2018.pdf>

Of those in employment, 72.5% of UCSD graduates were in a professional or managerial job (compared to a national average of 73.9%<sup>2</sup>). Official statistics from the first Graduate Outcomes census identified that 52.94% of our 2017/18 graduates who had studied with us full-time were in full-time, high-skilled employment 15 months after graduating.

In 2021/2022, the UCSD Enterprise and Employability Framework was developed as a tool to map and articulate employability support throughout the student journey. This framework describes 9 employability criteria that students at UCSD should demonstrate, and activities that may match these criteria. These criteria build on Advance HE's (2020) frameworks for embedding employability in Higher Education, and understanding from a wider range of academic and professional sources. From the framework, future plans include the development of data capture and evaluation across the three areas of activity; from programme teams, 1-2-1 support, and a student PDP. This data can then lead to targeted intervention and support.

Students can access employability support through a range of activities delivered by the Higher Education Academic Outcomes Facilitator (HEAOF). Current provision includes 1-1 appointments, promotion of work-related and volunteering opportunities, careers related events and awards. Students can also access a wealth of careers and employability resources through the UCSD Careers & Employability Moodle page. The HEAOF also works closely with programme teams to support and co-ordinate co- and extra-curricular activities such as bespoke volunteer programmes with local organisations.

2023 has seen the development of the UCSD Personal Development Portfolio (UCSD PDP) to capture students' employability development. Designed in concert with the Learning Resource Centre team, the UCSD PDP sits within Moodle and allows students to record any extra- and curricular activity and map these to the UCSD Enterprise and Employability framework. Trialling this academic year, it is hoped that this becomes embedded in students' practice at UCSD.

Likewise, the Employability Activity Form (EAF) allows staff to record employability activity within their programmes. The EAF provides another avenue of data capture for the plethora of employability-related activity that may or may not be discreetly employability or extra-curricular. The EAF also ties in with the mapping in the UCSD Enterprise and Employability Framework. So far there have been 17 responses to the EAF, meaning that work still needs to be done to embed this reporting in everyday practice.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk/what-do-graduates-do>

We continue to utilise relationships with stakeholders including local employers, alumni, and University of Plymouth's Careers and Employability Service to support provision. We also work closely with South Devon College's Careers and Employability Centre (CEC) to network, share opportunities across the organisation (such as through the JobTeaser online jobshop), and discuss best practice.

Students also receive support with careers and employability within their programme. This support is typically embedded within dedicated modules and can include Curriculum Vitae (CV) development, visiting guest speakers, live projects, placements and additional qualifications. To facilitate this, programmes work with internal and external stakeholders including local employers and organisations, partners and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory bodies (PSRBs) where aligned to programmes.

In the wider context, the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), launch of Graduate Outcomes to replace DLHE and Access and participation plans, have placed an even greater focus on actively supporting student progression, graduate employability and positive outcomes.

## **2. Key objectives**

### **2.1 Raise the profile of employability at UCSD**

**To achieve this, we will:**

- Increase use of UCSD digital platforms (website and social media) to promote and share relevant, student-focused employability content
- Continue to develop an integrated approach to raising the profile of Graduate Outcomes amongst students, graduates and staff
- Capture and promote student and alumni employability success through mediums such as case studies, working with Marketing and programme teams
- Encourage the use of the UCSD Enterprise and Employability Framework and Employability Activity Form amongst staff.

### **2.2 Provide comprehensive support to enable students to develop their employability**

**To achieve this, we will:**

- Enable access to employability support throughout the student experience, including:

- Access to inclusive 1:1 employability support for students outside of their core programme
- Access to group workshops and training sessions throughout the academic year
- Internal and external opportunities for further training and development (i.e. online courses)
- Provide targeted employability and career development support to specific cohorts, including final year students
- Continue to administer a ‘student profile’ for all students to complete annually during induction/reinduction. The profile will capture employability data including work experience to date and career intentions, to inform provision and help track progress
- Increase the number and breadth of real-world work opportunities accessible via the SDC & UCSD Careers and Employability Centre
- Draw on experience and expertise of employers and alumni to improve students’ knowledge of labour market and recruitment practices

### **2.3 Engage students in managing employability throughout the student journey**

**To achieve this, we will:**

- Explicitly recognise and value employability across the curriculum, ensuring that students are supported to understand the wider relevance and application of their learnings, such as choice of assessment
- Provide opportunities to recognise and celebrate students within UCSD who are actively engaged in developing employability, to inspire others
- Develop and promote co- and extra-curricular opportunities to enable students’ personal and professional development
- Work in partnership with Programme Teams, Helpzone, the Student Support Hub and other relevant support services to enable students to access opportunities and recognise, reflect on and articulate the skills and qualities they are acquiring

### **2.4 Support students to progress into employment, highly skilled employment and/or further study.**

**To achieve this, we will:**

- Work closely with academic teams and the Student Support Hub to promote and help students access progression, further study and employment opportunities



- Continue to grow our alumni network and utilise the network to input into student employability, such as developing graduate case studies to promote varied career pathways and advocating extra-curricular activities
- Support with the systematic review and monitoring of student outcomes at both institution and programme level to help inform employability initiatives, including through the UCSD Graduate Destinations Survey
- Support the development of course level employability activity and the review of work-based learning as part of the Annual Monitoring Process. The HEAOF will also attend stage 1 approvals in an advisory capacity.

## **2.5 Measure progress and achievement**

**To achieve this, we will:**

- Encourage the use of the UCSD Enterprise and Employability Framework to map and articulate areas of employability activity within programmes and curricula.
- Encourage the use of the Employability Activity Form to capture employability activity across UCSD.
- Continue the development of the student PDP so that employability engagement can be better tracked and measured.
- Monitor the success of extra-curricular interventions undertaken to enhance students' employability
- Develop our reporting method for employer engagement activity within and external to the curriculum to increase staff engagement and access to employer engagement opportunities for all programmes of study, where relevant and possible
- Assess the feasibility of running a number of student focus groups to help shape employability provision at UCSD

## **3. Evaluation**

We will measure the success of the strategy and its implementation through monitoring of:

- Student views including course reps, Student Consultative Forums, Student Satisfaction Surveys, programme meetings and evaluation forms.
- An increase in the number and range of opportunities available to students.
- Student participation in employability events, workshops and engagement with promotions and resources including via the Careers and Employability Centre, Moodle and social media
- Employer feedback through methods such as Employer Focus Groups, Sector Focus Groups and Industry Liaison Panels.

- Tutor engagement with initiatives and feedback on the level of active understanding among students of the skills they are developing.
- Interventions such as the employability profile to measure and map students' perceptions of and confidence in their employability.

#### **4. Future work**

- A review of the Higher Education Strategy for Enhancing Employability will be undertaken in one year (May 2024).
- Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for employability enhancement will be established for 2023/24 implementation.