MAPPING AN EMPLOYABILITY AGENDA OVER THE FOUR-YEAR CYCLE

> **'**To be employed is to be at risk, to be employable is to be secure**'**.
> *Peter Hawkins, The Art of Building Windmills*

Recognizing that there is no 'one size fits all' solution to embedding employability in academic programmes, the Careers Officer proposes the following as a possible template designed to introduce elements of careers education in each year at points in the curriculum where they might most naturally fit (to be discussed with course coordinators). The Careers Officer is available to discuss the requirements of individual programmes and to customise input to the practical requirements of individual modules. Time elements proposed are indicative only and can be adjusted as required.

Year 1: Thinking Employability in First Year   *Time : 1 X 2 hour or 2X 1 hour workshops*

- Big picture : options with your degree ; begin with a self-reflection exercise about hopes, fears, expectations at the early stage of the prog.
- What our graduates tell us about future possibilities :examples of career progressions from **Graduate Surveys**, including Graduate profiles
- Employment patterns in particular sectors : e.g fulltime, parttime, limited contract, project-based etc.
- Key messages from employers in sector; what they are looking for in candidates in terms of personality, skills, aptitude etc.   Emphasis on motivation and flexibility
- Introduce the **University of Kent Skills Map** as a resource to stretch thinking about the range and variety of skills needed for employment;
- Highlight the importance of reflecting on and logging key skills learned as student progresses through the 4-year degree cycle;   what it should mean to be 'ready for work' at the end of the course; key concepts including : confidence, relevance, evidence.
- Competence-based assessment used by employers: i.e   potential to do a job will be assessed largely by the evidence provided of skills learned and developed in different contexts.
- Option: introduce an **employer** or a **graduate** in final half hour to reinforce key messages.

Year 2: Skills Awareness and Self-presentation   *Time: 1X2hr or 2X1hr. workshops*

- Return to the **Skills Map** to explore how it may be used to develop a **skills-based cv**.
- Use 'Skills' exercises in '**Taking Control of Your Future'** workbook to encourage awareness of key skills already developed and how to provide evidence for them; also, reflection around skills which may need to be developed before graduation.
- Work on a **flexible template** for a skills-based cv : one that can be easily adapted/customised according to requirements of a particular job.

- Other self-presentation tools : e.g.:
  - Cover letters/emails
  - Portfolio
  - Websites
  - Social media : LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Wordpress; etc.
- **Competency-based interviews** : Preparation for interview (this topic could be included in Year 2 , especially where its covered in the context of preparation for Work Placement modules (Fac of BH), or alternatively in Year 3).

Year 3 : The Creative Job Search   *Time: 1X2hr or 2X1hours workshops*

- Highlight different levels of employment e.g. open and hidden markets; outline differences in recruitment strategies and patterns in each. Need for a range of job-seeking strategies e.g reactive vs proactive approach.
- Pros'and con's of **large employers vs SME's**. Company culture; career progression issues.
- **Graduate Programmes:** how to compete in a large pool of candidates; online applications etc.
- **Networking** : how to do it efficiently and productively. The Networking Pyramid
- **Speculative approaches** to employers: developing a confident self-narrative.
- Reemphasise the importance of building up a **strong evidence base of skills** (from Year 1.)
- **Internships** : pros and cons; paid vs unpaid; negotiating a win-win for employer and employee
- Job search **resources**: key websites, databases, professional bodies etc.
- Developing a **strategic jobsearch plan** for Final Year: priorities and practicalities.

Year 4 : Keeping in Touch   *Time: No workshops proposed*
but a couple of half-hour information slots as follows:

(i)   30min slot early in first term: (October)

Ensuring information flow : **Careers Service Graduate Database**; key careers/recruitment resources

Details of main careers events : e.g. **gradireland Graduate Fair** in October

Highlight availability of **one-to-one careers consultations**, cv checks etc.

(ii)   30 min slot early in second term (January):

Researching Postgraduate Options : key resources; also flagging **postgradireland Fair** in February.

ALSO AVAILABLE : Inhouse careers events, e.g **Employer Forum** – arranged in collaboration with Dept. of Technology & Psychology. Potential for similar event in Faculty of Business and Humanities. **NOTE:** The Careers Officer is also willing to support /collaborate in other initiatives run by individual progs; e.g employer-student speed networking; alumni events etc.