Centre for Excellence
in Teaching and Learning for Employability (e3i)

Report to HEFCE: Interim Evaluation
July 2007

Appendix 8: The SHU Employability Framework

Sheffield
Hallam University

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

Employability Framework

1. Purpose of the Framework

The University Framework provides a definition of employability and outlines those features of a course which contribute to enhancing students' employability.

The Framework is intended to:

- ensure that University staff and students share a common understanding of employability
- enable Faculties to develop their own curriculum and support strategies appropriate to their portfolio of courses
- build on and extend existing good practice.

2. Key Feature

The Framework is underpinned by the following key features:

- the development of employability is focussed on student needs and should reflect the diversity of individual career and life paths
- good learning, teaching and assessment practice is the corner stone of employability development in students
- the encouragement of the transfer of learning on the course into employment and other lifestyle choices e.g. accredited learning from work through independent study, work placement etc.
- the framework builds on and integrates current and developing policies and strategies related to Key Skills, Learning from Work, Progress Files, Enterprise and Career Management.

3. A definition of employability

The definition published by the Employability Working Group (late 2002). This definition is non-restrictive, and encompasses a wide range of career and lifestyle choices.

Enabling students to acquire the knowledge, personal and professional skills and encouraging the attitudes that will support their future development.

4. What employability means in practice

4.1 Enhancing employability from a student perspective has a number of elements

See Appendix 1 for an expansion of the following.

Core features of a programme of study:

1. The progressive development of autonomy.

2. The development of skills (cognitive/intellectual; subject specific; professional; Sheffield Hallam Key Skills: Communication - Writing Skills, Oral Communication Skills, Visual Communication Skills, Information Skills; Information Technology; Working with Numbers; Working with Others; Improving own Learning; Solving Problems. See the Sheffield Hallam Generic Learning Outcomes).

3. Personal Development Planning (involving reflection and action planning), supported within the curriculum and by tutors.

4. The inclusion of activities which are similar to those required in external environments (to encourage students' ability to see how their skills and knowledge might be transferred).

5. Students' explicit reflection on their use of knowledge and skills in order to identify what is appropriate for different contexts eg: operating in different groups; using subject knowledge in work tasks; writing reports on the course and then in employment (to encourage students' ability to see how their skills and knowledge might be transferred).

6. The encouragement of career management skills: self awareness; opportunity awareness; decision making; transition skills (including job application skills). These enable students to pull together and make sense of their experiences in order to identify and attain their future goals.

7. Engagement with work-related learning.

Other features which may be provided by a programme of study:

8. Preparation for specific professional areas.

9. Engagement with activities with a specific enterprise focus both within and outside the subject.

4.2 Examples of current features of University curricula supporting the development of employability

Core features of all existing courses, encouraged by validation and quality processes:

- good learning, teaching and assessment practice
- the integration of cognitive, subject specific, professional and key skills (see 4.1.2 above)
- the integration of progress files
- the incorporation in the curriculum of employability issues in any relevant QAA

bench marking statement.

Features to be found on a less consistent basis but which are nevertheless established in several if not many areas:

- a vocational focus
- student projects in partnership with/in industry and commerce
- sandwich placements/professional practice
- accredited learning from work
- elective and option modules
- Independent Study Modules - mainly Cultural Studies and Student Volunteering
- Career Management Modules and career management activities within other modules forming part of the curriculum
- modules on topics such as enterprise / setting up own business
- self directed study in the Learning Centre.

5. Bibliography

(from the Generic Centre)

(1) Lees, D. (2002) *Graduate employability* - literature review.
(2) Lees, D. (2002) *Information for Academic staff on Employability*
(3) Yorke, M., Knight, P. (2003) *The Undergraduate Curriculum and Employability*
(4) Allison, J., Harvey, C. and Nixon, M. (2002) *Enhancing Employability: a long term strategic challenge*
(5) Edwards, G. (2001) *Connecting PDP to employer needs and the world of work*
(6) Generic Centre: *Guide for busy academics No 5 - Enhancing student learning through voluntary work*.