



Anglia Ruskin  
University

# Employability Strategy

## 2018 - 2023

**“Our students are at the heart of our University:  
their educational experience engages, challenges  
and empowers them to reach their full potential.”  
**Designing our Future 2017 -2026****



# Graduate Employability: Why is it so Important?

Our University is committed to enhancing opportunities so that, irrespective of background or subject area, our students and graduates have the chance to realise their full potential and make a real difference, helping to transform lives and the communities they serve.

Employability is more than gaining the necessary skills for employment. Instead it should be recognised as a particular set of achievements and personal attributes<sup>1</sup> that make individuals more likely to have the ability to gain, sustain and progress in graduate employment and to be successful in their next, and future, roles.

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<sup>1</sup>Knight, P., & Yorke, M. (2004). Learning, curriculum and employability in higher education. London, England: Routledge Falmer.

Greater opportunities to secure meaningful and rewarding employment are now the most important factors for students when choosing which university and degree course to study.



# Aims of our Employability Strategy

This strategy aims to significantly enhance the ability of our students to develop lifelong employability skills and secure graduate employment outcomes, resulting in Anglia Ruskin being in the top half of our VCG chosen comparator group and moving from the fourth to the second quartile for graduate career prospects overall.

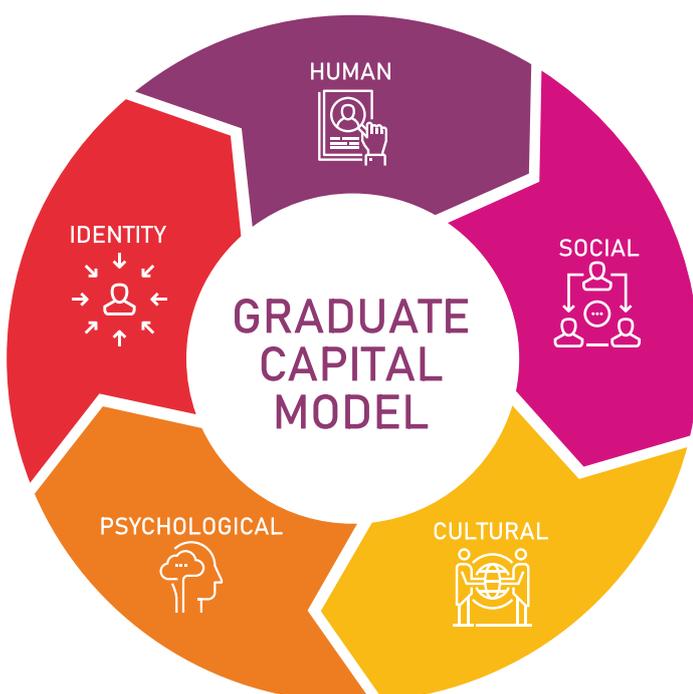
To achieve this we will:

- Place employability at the heart of our University and the education we deliver, making it a key priority for all.
- Design and deliver curricular and co-curricular activities which integrate these aims holistically.
- Close progression disparities between specific groups so that all students realise their full potential.
- Work in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure our students are developing the necessary mindset and skills to meet the existing and future demands across the region and beyond.
- Enable our students to achieve excellent graduate outcomes.



# Our Approach

The strategy is informed by a holistic student development approach based on the Graduate Capital Model<sup>2</sup> which exemplifies the broader personal capitals required to achieve good employability outcomes.



These capitals are defined as follows:

- **Human Capital:** Developing graduate level knowledge and skills to become well-rounded professionals who can confidently access the labour market.
- **Social Capital:** Building networks and social relations which can enhance knowledge and access to desired employment and/or self-employment outcomes.
- **Cultural Capital:** Appreciation of the culture of sectors and organisations in order to be able to present oneself in a credible way.
- **Psychological Capital:** Having the capacity to move into and adapt to a fluid labour market and to cope with change, challenges and pressure.
- **Identity Capital:** Understanding and reflecting on experiences, values and achievements to develop a successful professional profile.

Through our active curriculum and co- and extra-curricular activities, our degree courses will deliver core academic content and knowledge, professional and technical skills and the broader set of employability skills employers expect all graduates to possess<sup>3</sup>.

While we should recognise that employability depends on a wide range of factors, we are committed to support our graduates to develop the individual skills and attributes they need to succeed.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/staff/employability-exchange/curriculum-development.page>

<sup>3</sup> Team working, Complex problem solving, Business and Commercial Awareness, Application of numeracy, IT and digital literacy, Project management, Communication (written and verbal), Social responsibility, Intercultural awareness, Critical thinking, Negotiation and influencing skills, Emotional intelligence, Self-management.



# Our Key Priorities

Our Employability Strategy aims to address these capitals within four major strands:

1. A whole curriculum approach - embedding employability into our curriculum and assessment strategies at all levels and from the start.
2. Significantly increase the number and breadth of real world work opportunities available to our students.
3. Improving student engagement with employability and with their own career development from the start.
4. An institutional commitment to improving employability and enterprise in every subject.

These key priorities are further expanded here to outline expected outcomes and how we will go about achieving them.

## 1. A whole curriculum approach to embed employability into the curriculum and assessment.

This will result in the following outcomes:

- Students will be able to directly link their learning in the context of their subject to employability through active reflection.
- Course content which is relevant, though not limited to the world of work and future skills requirements.
- Increased staff confidence to develop and embed components of employability into the curriculum through a recognised framework.
- Improved academic connections with employers and professional bodies.

To achieve these results, we will:

- Build graduate employability skills into each course from level 4 as part of our Ruskin modules and the active curriculum approach more generally (Education Strategy).
- All courses will embed a range of appropriate flexible work-based learning and entrepreneurial opportunities into the curriculum.
- Implement regular employer engagement into every subject cluster to inform curriculum content, development and assessment.
- Provide access to external market intelligence and future skills/workforce information for curriculum development and review activities.

## 2. Significantly increase the number and breadth of real world work opportunities.

This will result in:

- Students feeling better prepared and more confident to take up work opportunities.
- Greater connectivity between Anglia Ruskin and the employer community across our region.
- Significantly increasing the number of students going out on placements and internships.
- ARU being recognised for enabling work opportunities for all students.



To achieve these results, we will:

- Deliver work experience and placement provision through a dedicated and appropriately resourced Employability Service function (excluding statutory placements).
- Promote the advantages of placements/ internships/study and work abroad opportunities, and the support provided at ARU to prospective students.
- Design and implement a student development programme to increase the number of students successfully obtaining and taking up competitive experience opportunities and reduce the number of students moving from 4 year programmes including work placements to 3 year programmes.
- Continue to promote and support self-employment and entrepreneurship through the Anglia Ruskin Enterprise Academy (AREA) as viable and desirable graduate outcomes for our students.
- Establish 'Makerspaces' University Hubs for Entrepreneurship and Innovation to facilitate student and graduate start-ups<sup>4</sup>. This will involve the creation of two areas in Chelmsford (Health and Engineering) and Cambridge (Creative Industries) to foster creativity and collaboration between students, staff, local businesses and community.
- Set up small business advisory service(s) to enhance graduate enterprise and engagement with regional SMEs.
- In co-operation with faculties develop an employer engagement approach to promote ARU as a source of excellent graduates.
- Put a specific focus on disadvantaged groups and work with them and employers to address barriers to entry.
- Provide financial support for students covered under our Access and Participation Plan who take up low-paid graduate internships.

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<sup>4</sup> Dependent on funding

### 3. Improve student engagement with employability and career development from the start.

This will result in:

- Students becoming experts in developing, articulating and evidencing their graduate attributes.
- More confident, employable graduates who are highly regarded by graduate recruiters.
- More students feeling confident about starting and running their own businesses.

To achieve these results, we will:

- Develop and introduce a career readiness assessment tool for new entrants for us to better understand our students' capitals and to tailor our co- and extra-curricular offer to their needs.

- Develop and introduce a personalised employability development plan (linked to Personal Development Tutors (PDT) programme) from year 1 which helps direct and structure co- and extra-curricular activities.
- Inform a training programme for Personal Development Tutors (PDT) to engage with and encourage students in their personal development agendas.
- As part of the student journey project, aspire to provide a digital platform for tutors and tutees to engage in development planning.
- Work closely with alumni and the Students' Union to create a programme of co- and extra-curricular activities that include skills building and networking.
- Create a team of student employability activators/champions for each faculty to work in an "outreach" capacity on campus.
- Assess the feasibility and development of a Career Mentoring Programme for students.



## **4. Institutional commitment to improving graduate employability in every subject.**

This will result in:

- A commitment at all levels and in all areas of our university.
- Prioritised implementation of the Employability Strategy underpinned by sufficient resources (staff time and money).
- Clear targets and objectives with measurable outcomes.

To achieve these results, we will:

- Appoint “Employability Leads” at Faculty (Deputy Dean) and School level (Deputy Head of School) to provide leadership, coordination, focus and implementation.
- Agree on targets and prioritise activities informed by appropriate and timely business intelligence in cooperation with faculties.
- Develop a 3 year roadmap with yearly action plans to enable a longer term focus.
- Restructure the Employability and Enterprise Services to facilitate strategy implementation.
- Continue the Employability Steering Group under the leadership of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Enterprise and Employability).



## **Cambridge Campus**

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## **Chelmsford Campus**

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## **For more information**

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