

Graduate Employability

How universities can improve
students' graduate employability:
Lessons from National OLT research



DASSH

A workshop for the Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities 2015 Conference



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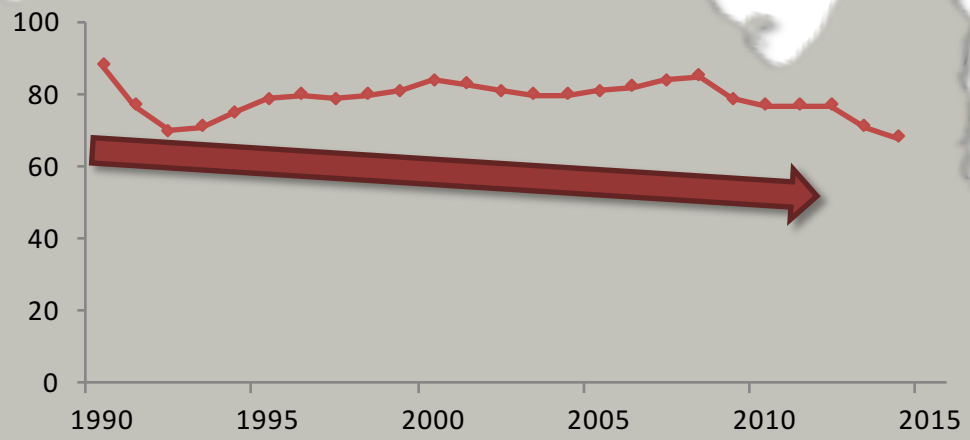
RMIT





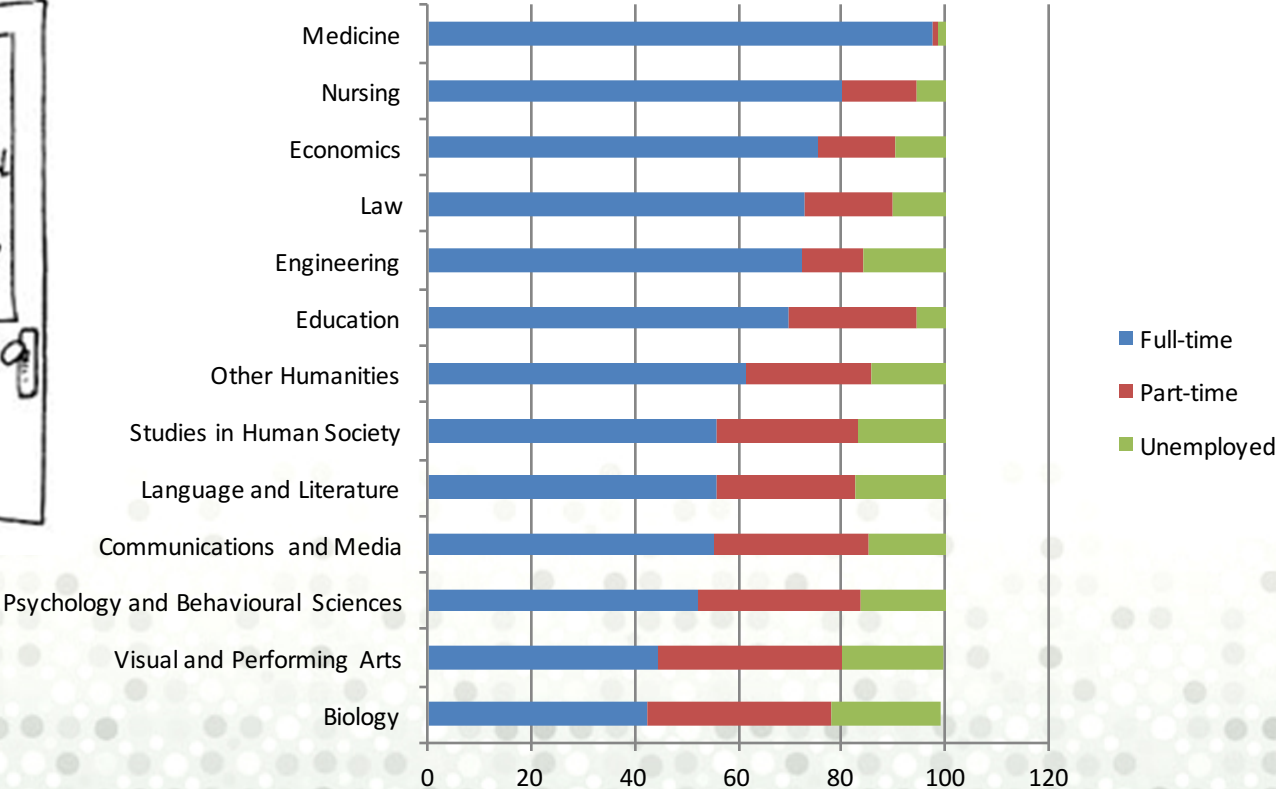
*...to all of the graduates, students,
employers and educators
who shared their strategies and
success stories*

Employment Rates (%)

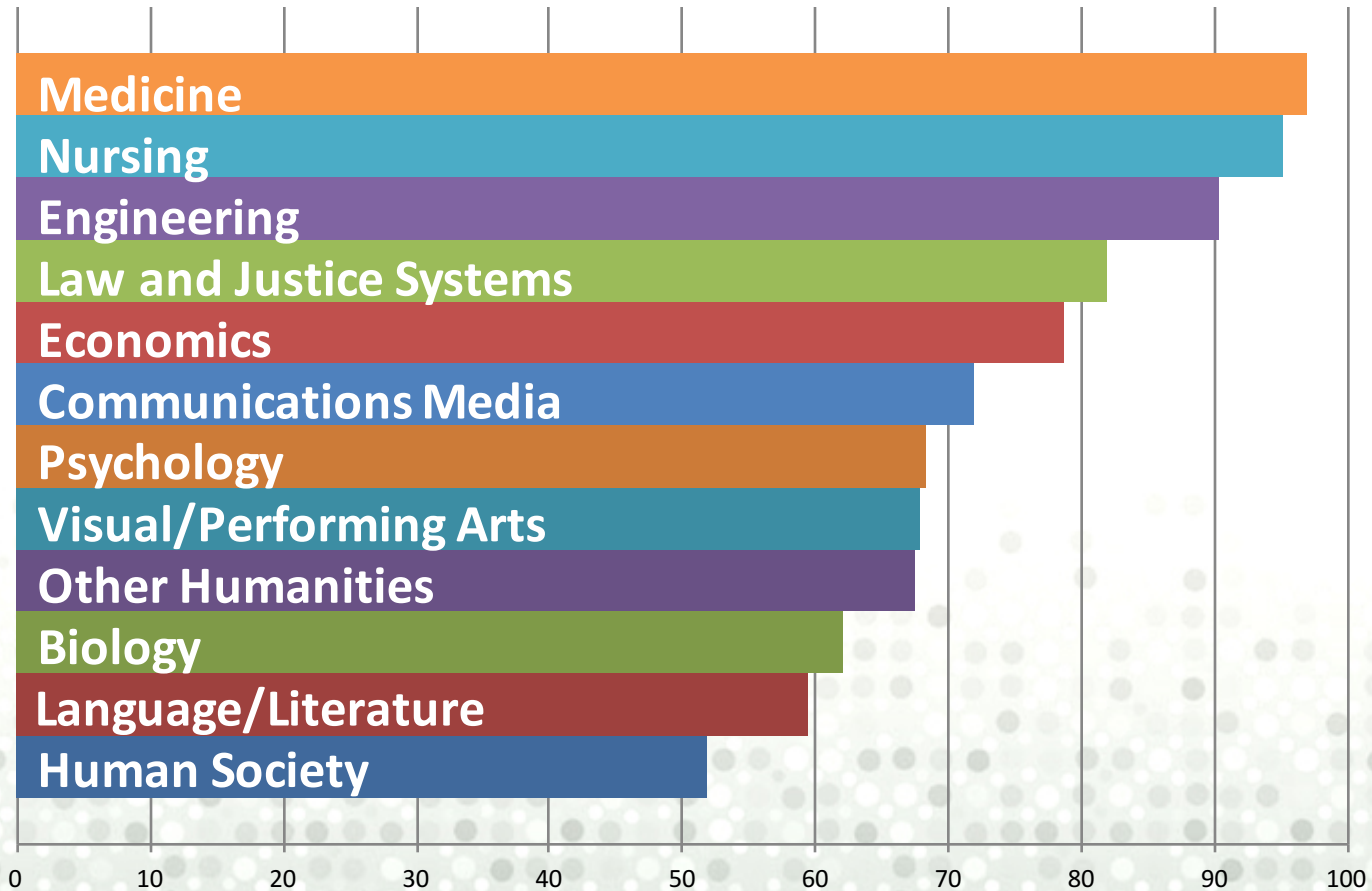


Graduate Careers Australia released data indicating that employment rates of newly graduated bachelor degree holders are the **worst** they have been in **20 years**.

GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT RATES, 2014 (%)

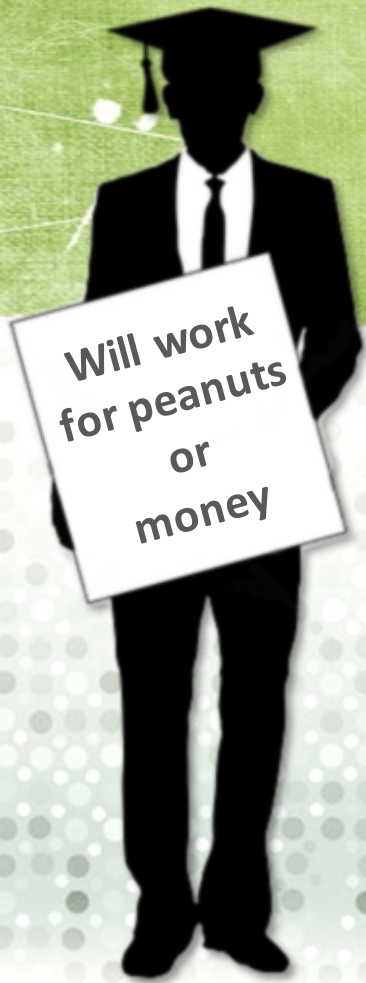


Bachelor graduates in full time work who said that their field of study was at least somewhat important to their jobs, 2014 (%)



The BIG Question

How do we increase **GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY?**



Definition of

GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY



Graduate Employability means:

- Higher education alumni have developed the capacity to obtain and/or create work
- Institutions and employers have supported the student knowledge, skills, attributes, reflective disposition and identity that graduates need to succeed in the workforce (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011; Holmes, 2013; Knight & Yorke, 2004; Yorke, 2006; Yorke & Knight, 2006).



What is

GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY



To be employable once you have graduated from university means that you:

- Are able to demonstrate soft **skills** (e.g. communication, problem solving) and career specific skills (e.g. computer software)
- Have accumulated **knowledge** and can apply information in the workplace
- Show a positive **attitude** of energy, commitment and contribution



What is

GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY



To be employable once you have graduated from university means that you:

- Know yourself, your profile, your desired career path and be able to positively **present yourself**; and
- Leverage a developed **network** to connect you with career opportunities

Identity



Our RESEARCH

147
people



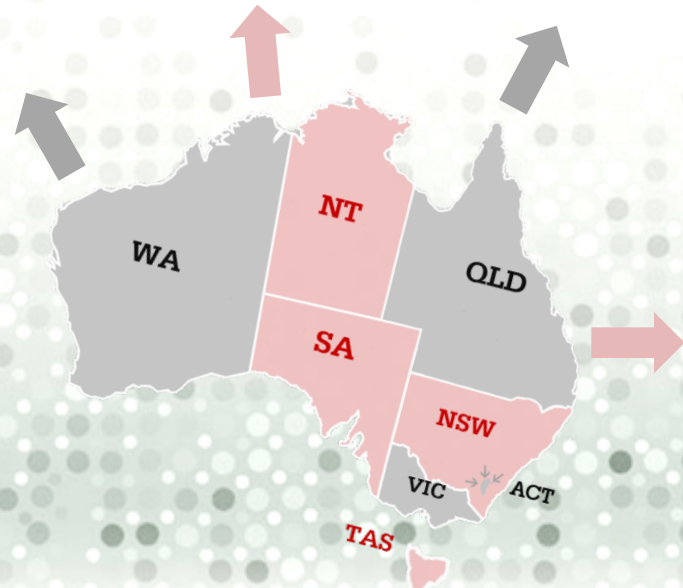
700+
Surveys

4 Stakeholder Groups
Employers Educators
Graduates Students

8 States/Territories and some International

80+

In-depth Interviews / Focus
Groups



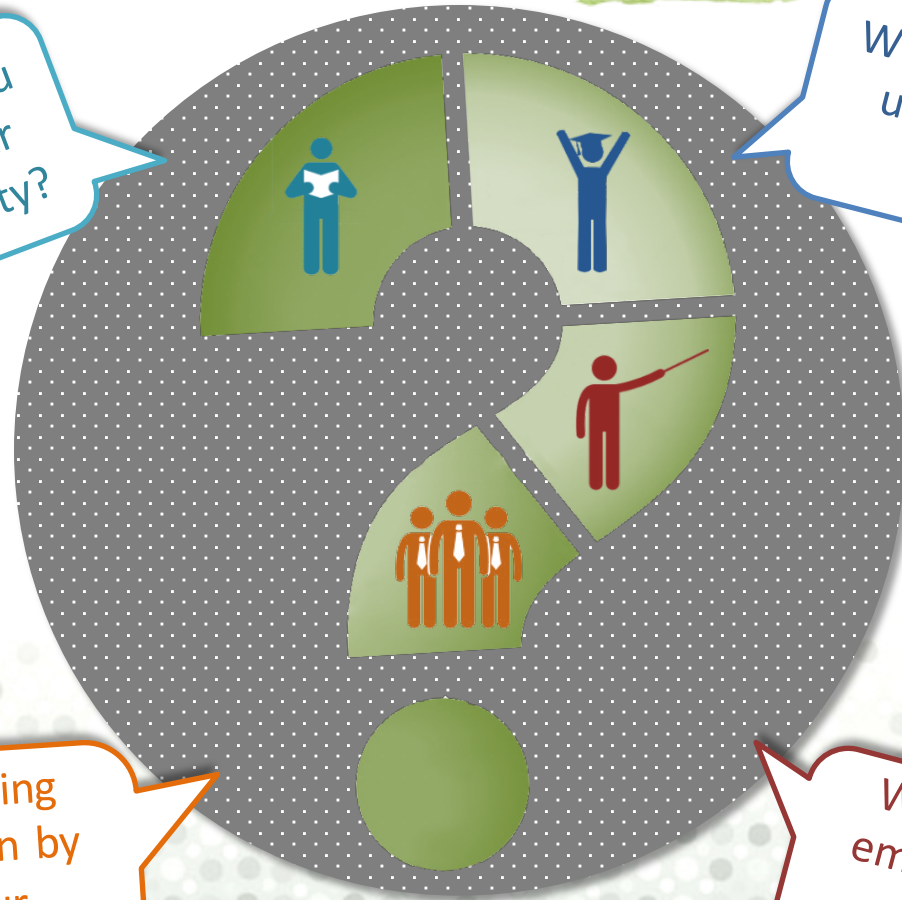
Survey Questions About Strategies

What strategies are you using to improve your graduate employability?

What strategies did you use to improve your employability?

Which of the following strategies undertaken by students does your organisation value when recruiting graduates?

Which of the following employability strategies do you provide for students?



Strategies

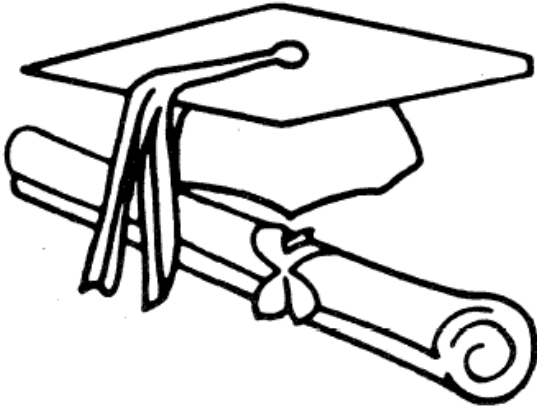
Strategies	Students	Graduates	Educators	Employers
Capstone/Final semester project				
Careers advice & employment skill development	59%		64%	
Extra-curricular activities			65%	60%
International exchanges				
Mentoring				
Networking		52%	51%	
Part-time employment	53%	53%		
Portfolios, profiles & records of achievement				
Professional association memberships/engagement			54%	
Social media/networks				
Volunteering		50%		53%
Work experience/ internships/ placements	74%	74%		87%



The overall findings of this project were that:

- 1. There is evidence of gaps between the perspectives of students, graduates, employers and higher education personnel in how to approach the overall higher education experience for heightened employability**
- 2. Multiple stakeholders stated that the most employable graduates are those who have a broad-based experience, and are able to sell their own personal identity, brand and profile**
- 3. Transferable skills and a broad-based student experience are more important than the particular discipline of study for impacting employability**
- 4. Higher education personnel (private and public) believe they can bolster graduate employability by promoting/supporting extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and skill development (technical and transferable) through work experience, internships and placements and other types of employability strategies**
- 5. Students have a variety of needs, resources and capacities, such that extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and experiences may not be realistic and accessible to all**
- 6. There are barriers to employment, such as gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic background that may override employability strategies and supports.**

Results related to DASSH disciplines



45% of employers ticked one to four of the generalist disciplines (humanities, life sciences, computer science, visual/performing arts)

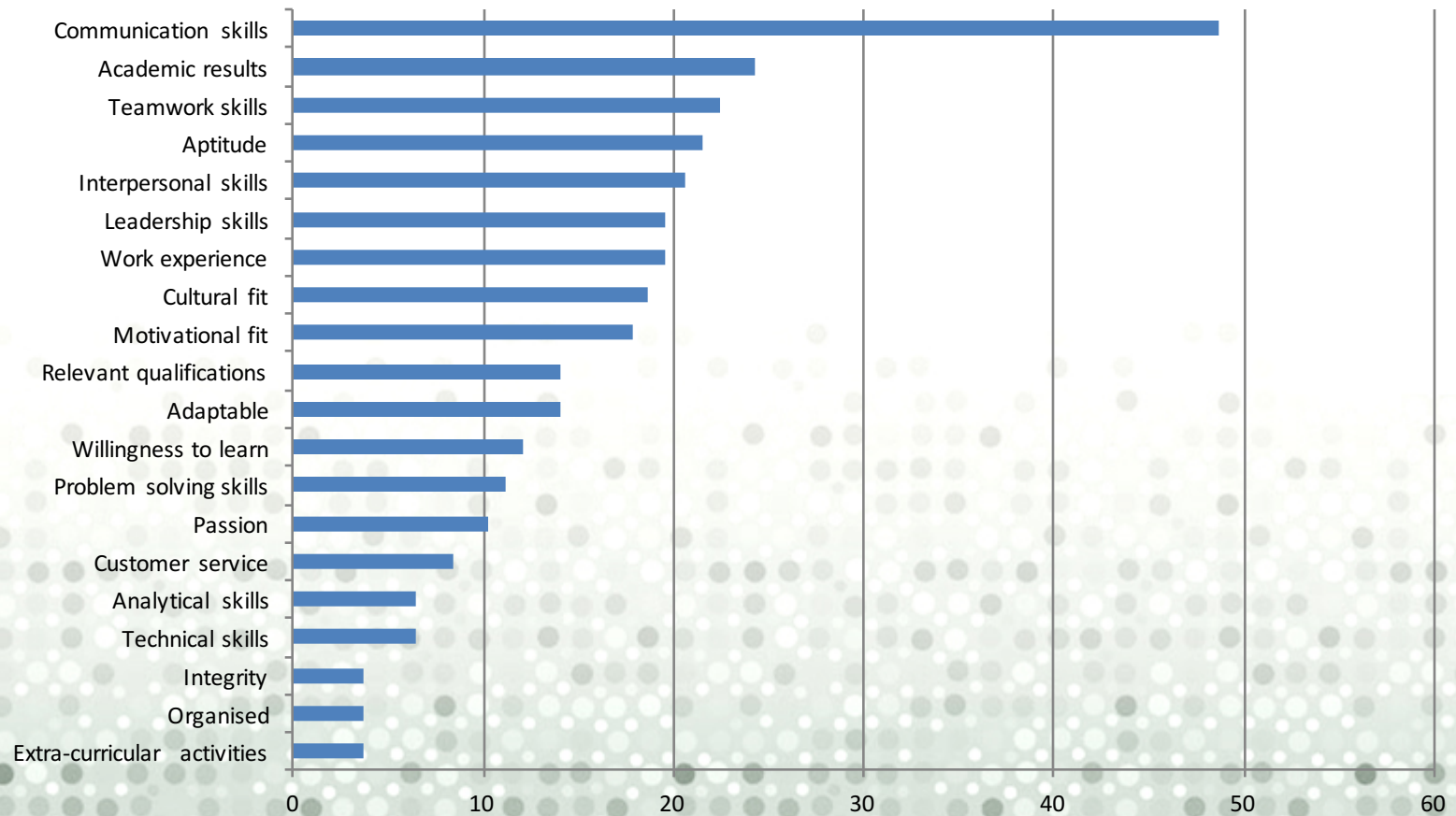


Employers were asked to tick the disciplines from which they have or are likely to employ graduates...

Discipline of study/work by stakeholder groups

Disciplines	Students	Graduates	Employers
Accounting	21%	5%	6%
Business		8%	
Construction			4%
Consulting			4%
Education	23%		4%
Law	15%	7%	
Nursing	19%		
Psychology	26%		
Social Sciences		5%	
Sport and Recreation			4%

Most important selection criteria when recruiting graduates, 2014 (%)



for

STUDENTS

- **Start early - in your first semester**
- **Participate in work experience, placements and internships**
- **Join extra-curricular (student societies, clubs, competitive sport)**
- **Do volunteer work (related to your career pathway)**
- **Get to know your professors and your career development centre personnel**



for

GRADUATES

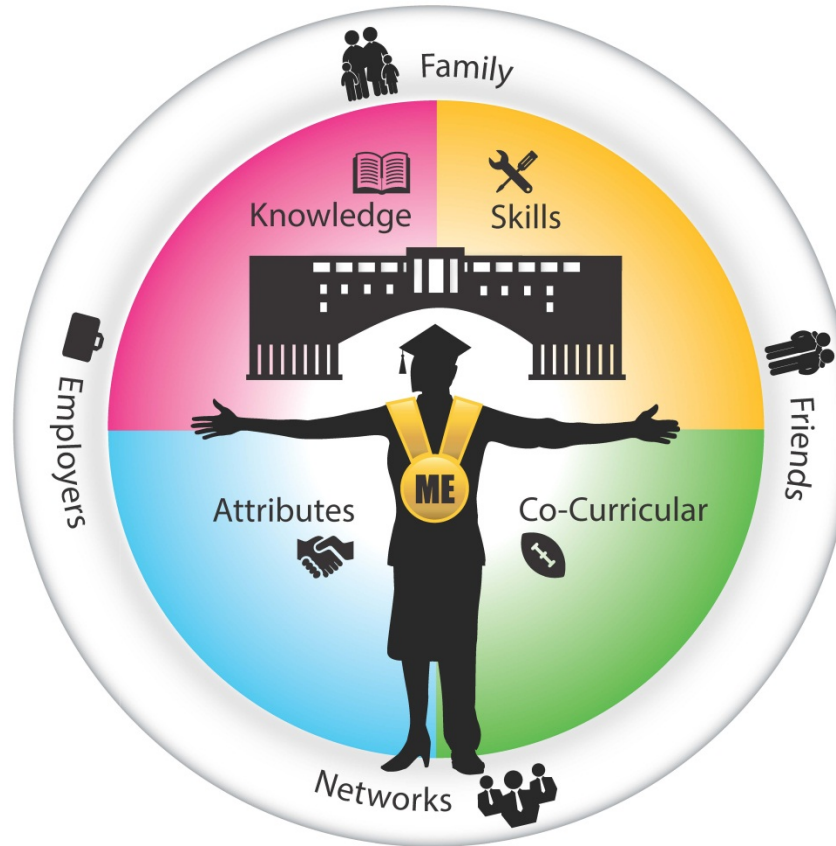


- **Less is more – choose a few prospective employers, do your research and tailor your application**
- **Edit, edit and edit again – particularly your online applications**
- **Participate in industry graduate initiatives when offered**
- **Know yourself and practice articulating / demonstrating your personal employability brand**
- **Remember that interviews are two-way. Do you fit the organisation and do they fit you?**

Graduate employability framework

Graduate Employability Framework

This framework is designed for students, graduates, employers, higher education academics and career development professionals based on the data from over 700 surveys and 85 interviews/focus groups. Support for the production of this framework has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this framework do not necessarily reflect their views.



Graduate Employability means that higher education alumni have the developed capacity to obtain and/or create work.

Graduate employability framework

Graduate Employability Framework



Graduate employability means that higher education alumni have the developed capacity to obtain and/or create work. Graduate employability has ten elements.



1) **A higher education degree** – the figure in the image is standing in the shape of a T. The body represents the specialisation of the degree. In order to be employable, the student/graduate extends oneself, reaching out for a broad-based and full experience.



2) **Respectable grades or levels of achievement in the degree** - grades are a factor in employability but study should not be pursued to the exclusion of other student experience.



3) **Knowledge** – employable graduates have a broad knowledge spectrum and the ability to apply that knowledge, including emotional intelligence.

4) **Career focus and goals** - whereas students are encouraged to be open-minded and widely pursue their options, focus and an intentional career pathway often advance employability.

5) **Identity** – the figure in the image is wearing a 'Me' medallion. This represents the central importance of identity. Successful graduates have confidence, defined career goals, explicit self-awareness and are able to communicate their employability profile to future employers.



6) **Match between industry employment vacancies and type of degree** – long-term hiring patterns should be considered when selecting a discipline.



7) **Internships/Work Experience** – students have pursued opportunities to experience the desired industry and network with employers and professional associates.

8) **Skills** – employable graduates are able to apply their knowledge and skills to work within their chosen industry and identify strategies to facilitate transferability to other workplaces.



9) **Attributes** – employability behaviours such as teamwork, resilience and flexibility are nurtured in the broader context of family, friends and community and reinforced in higher education.



10) **Co-curricular** – students have actively engaged in a broad-based variety of experiences (relative to the needs and resources of diverse students) such as sport, volunteer work and student leadership positions. Higher education has supported, embedded and acknowledged these relevant activities in the program of studies. This also gives students contact with a wide range of contacts, such as Career Development Professionals and Professional Bodies (represented by “Other Networks” on the diagram.)



Kinash, S., Crane, L., Judd, M.-M., Mitchell, K., McLean, M., Knight, C., & Dowling, D. (2015). Graduate Employability Framework. Supporting graduate employability from generalist disciplines through employer and private institution collaboration. www.graduateemployability.com

for

EMPLOYERS

- **Offer work experience, placements and internships**
- **Make yourself available to your local universities and/or online**
- **Prioritise the transition and adjustment of new employees / graduates. Assign a mentor**
- **Invite innovation and intra-preneurship**
- **Allow the opportunity for new employees to meet with senior management and to rotate between divisions**

for

EDUCATORS

1. Support increased opportunities for student work experience, placements and internships.
2. Explicitly articulate the relevant graduate employability skills in the learning outcomes for every subject.
3. Design authentic assessment activities, aligned with industry practices, standards and approaches.
4. Know your disciplines' career options and outcomes and be explicit about career pathways.

for

EDUCATORS

5. Make the learning experience about knowledge, skills and attributes.
6. Invite employers to engage.
7. Invite graduates to engage.
8. Explicitly teach students how to be employable.

STAKEHOLDER ROLES

Each Stakeholder has roles to play:

Students

Seek out and fully participate in employability initiatives

Graduates

Be strong alumni and success story ambassadors for your alma mater

Educators

Prioritise graduate employability as a goal and high-impact outcome of the student experience

Employers

Welcome graduates and continue lifelong learning opportunities



STAKEHOLDER ROLES

University leadership and strategy:

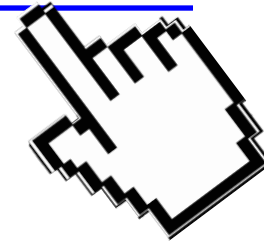
- Top priority
Second questions
- Alignment with the strategic plan
- Strategy planning
Collaborative conversations
- Industry engagement
- Collaboration with the Career Development Centre
Internal agents know your degrees and disciplines & embedded strategies





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