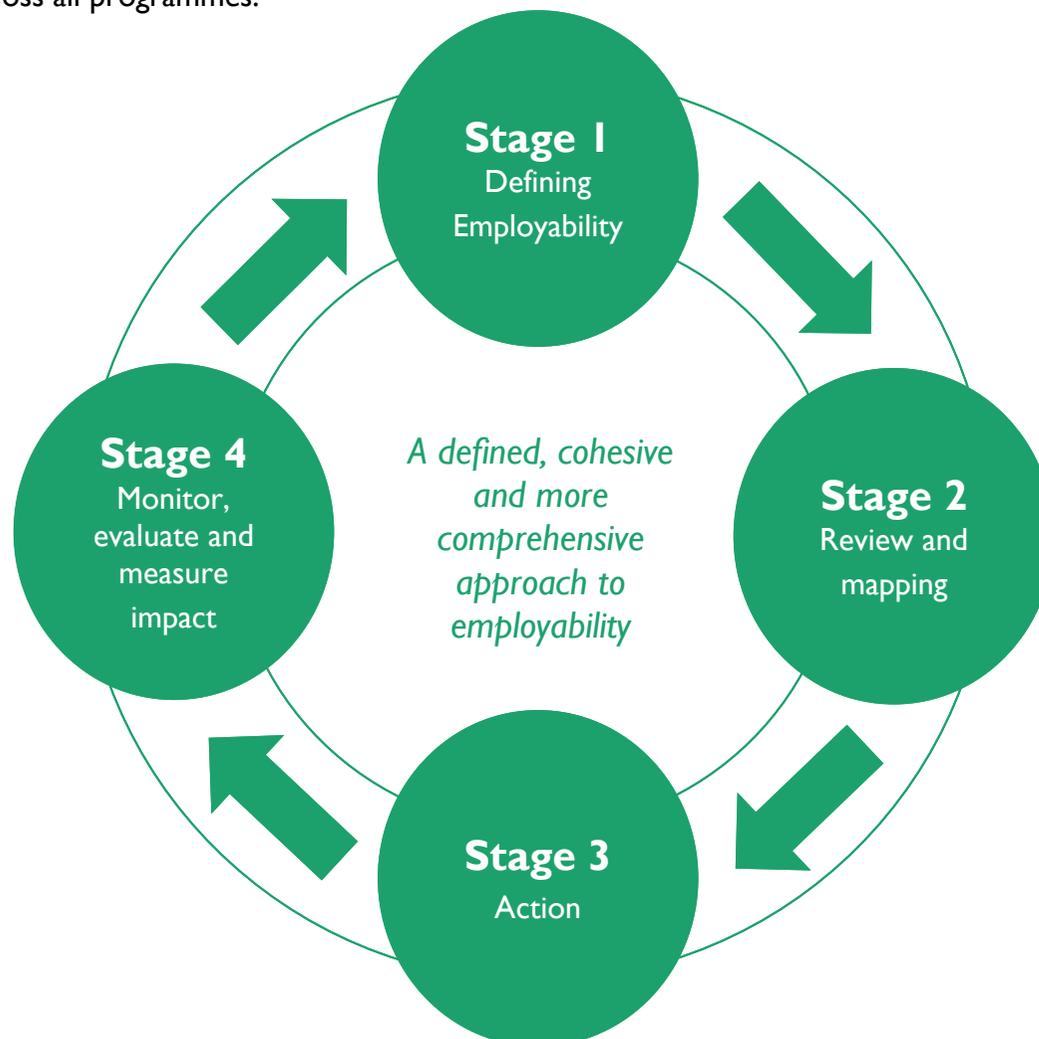# ⊛ The Employability process ⊛

This is a four staged process to help you to define and develop your own approach to employability. It is designed for use by anyone with an interest in employability and can be used at a range of levels, from senior management to academic departments, course and department teams and the students' union. Importantly, it will have the greatest impact if all four stages are addressed in sequence and if this process is adopted at an institutional level and embedded across all programmes.

Stage 1
Defining Employability

Stage 2
Review and mapping

Stage 3
Action

Stage 4
Monitor, evaluate and measure impact

A defined, cohesive and more comprehensive approach to employability

⊛ This will be most effective if used during departmental and programme meetings to facilitate discussions around the four stages of the process, as outlined here.

⊛ The employability action plan (towards the end of the process) provides a simple record of each department/programme's approach that could be shared internally and externally as appropriate, and used to target further support and resources where needed.

⊛ Any resulting plans should be applied at a programme level with mapping conducted across the duration of the programme.

⦿ Stage One: defining employability ⦿

Stage One is about creating and defining a shared point of reference for employability with your colleagues and stakeholders.

This activity helps you arrive at your working model of employability.

By responding to the reflective questions as a team you will collectively explore what 'employability' means within your department/programme and to your stakeholders.

After your discussions, agree upon a working model / definition for employability. You should consider the information in the HEA framework for employability in HE and the HEA employability toolkit pages . You should also draw upon your experiences and guidance from your institution.

Who are your stakeholders? How can you involve them in your discussions?

Who can support you in working through this stage of the process?

How should you address your institution's model / definition of employability at a departmental /programme level (where this exists)?

If you break employability down into specific features, what would these be for your programme / discipline / area of practice? How could you present this to a range of stakeholders to ensure there is a shared understanding?

Are there specific features within this defined view of employability that are shared by other programmes / disciplines / areas of practice?

Has your institution identified the knowledge, experiences, skills, attitudes, attributes and behaviours it expects its graduates to demonstrate?

Is there an institutional employability strategy to guide and inform your work?

What are the students' expectations of how you can support and enhance their employability?

Your working model / definition
What does employability look like for your department/programme area?

⊛ Stage One: identifying activity and responsibilities ⊛

Now you have agreed on your working model / definition, explore the next set of reflective questions to help you situate employability through activity and responsibility. Add your thoughts and notes after each question.

Reflective Questions

How can you address employability through the curriculum, co-curricular activity and extra-curricular activities? Are you currently engaging with your Careers and Employability Service and Students' Union?

What elements of employability can you support and develop in your programme and throughout the student lifecycle?

How and when are students introduced to the concept of employability? How will you share your agreed model / definition of employability?

Do you have a process in place for effective employer engagement? If not how might you develop one?

How do/ can you engage with professional bodies to inform discipline-oriented practices?

How do students currently reflect on, record and articulate their academic and personal development planning (PDP) e.g. the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)?

◉ Stage One: key issues to consider ◉

Ensure you are aware of your institution's employability strategy and support for its development

- This will influence and inform how you integrate employability, what you prioritise, who you work with, resources and support available, and actions to be taken.

Involve all stakeholders

- Having identified your stakeholders, involve all of them in your reflections, especially the students.

No single model

- Our intention is not to prescribe a model, but to provide a flexible and collaborative approach to the integration of employability in your institution.

Ownership: employability is a university-wide responsibility

- This requires a combined effort, working in partnership with institutional services and departments. It should also involve collaboration with external partners e.g. alumni; employers; professional bodies.

⚙ Stage Two: review and mapping ⚙

The purpose of Stage Two is to progress the reviewing and mapping activities required for planning. Using the agreed points of reference identified at Stage One, consider these questions and issues:

1. Using the definition / model you have adopted, or have created at Stage One (and using the HEA framework for employability to support) reflect upon:

- ⚙ Which specific features of employability do you currently address and to what extent
- ⚙ Is the timing and focus of your work in these areas right, given the students' needs and their development trajectory at university and beyond?
- ⚙ Do you share good practice internally and do you collaborate with colleagues? Could you share work more effectively across the institution? If so, how?

2. How do you audit your course programme/ your employability-related activities?

- ⚙ Do you currently map them against an agreed list of graduate requirements? Using your agreed model / definition you should now create your own audit tool to benchmark your provision. Where are the gaps?
- ⚙ Is employability referred to in the programme / departmental strategy and is it made clear to students and staff?
- ⚙ How is employability reflected in programme / module learning outcomes?
- ⚙ How are elements of employability assessed and / or validated?
- ⚙ How do you measure the impact of employability activity and support?
- ⚙ Do you use a range of assessments beyond summative i.e. formative or ipsative (i.e. how far each student has developed)?

3. Do students understand how their employability is being enhanced?

- Are your students aware of how they are enhancing their employability?
- Are your students encouraged to take ownership of the employability process? If not how might you begin to address this?
- Do your students understand how their learning / experiences are transferable? Can they articulate this e.g. in an interview setting?
- Can your students effectively engage in a range of external environments? How are they prepared for this, supported and encouraged to reflect on outcomes?
- Can your students reflect on and articulate their development? Is the HEAR and / or a PDP process used to encourage your students to reflect upon and articulate their development in terms of employability?
- How is feedback collected from your students to ascertain engagement, development and impact?

4. Are there any gaps in provision?

- Map your current programme provision against the model / definition of employability that was shared/ agreed at Stage One of this process.
- Are there any gaps?
- Do you utilise the support of colleagues from across your institution e.g. careers and employability service; enterprise and business units; placement support; part-time job shop;, library and information services; students' union etc.?
- How, when and to what extent do you involve the careers and employability team specifically in curriculum delivery?
- How do you seek to develop your students' emotional intelligence and their ability to work with a range of people beyond their usual peer groups?

⊚ Stage Two: Key issues to consider ⊚

Language

- Is there a shared understanding of the terminology of employability by colleagues, students and employers?

Ownership and collaboration

- Are all colleagues engaged, with each taking some responsibility?
- How do you enagage students with employability from year one and encourage ownership throughout their studies?
- Is there a collective awareness of employability support available across the institution?
- How do you access support from your colleagues?
- How do you collaborate with colleagues internally and externally?

Sharing good practice

- Employability is a university-wide responsibility; collaboration supports a culture of employability.
- How do you access and share good practice with your colleagues (both internally and externally)?
- How do you engage and work with; alumni, the community, employers, professional organisations, third sector employers, voluntary organisations etc. to develop your students' employability?

⊛ Stage Three: Action ⊛

Stage three guides you through planning activities, helping you to systematically consider necessary actions and outputs.

Consider the discussions triggered by the reflective questions in stages one and two. In the boxes below, list the priority areas of focus or gaps that you wish to address.

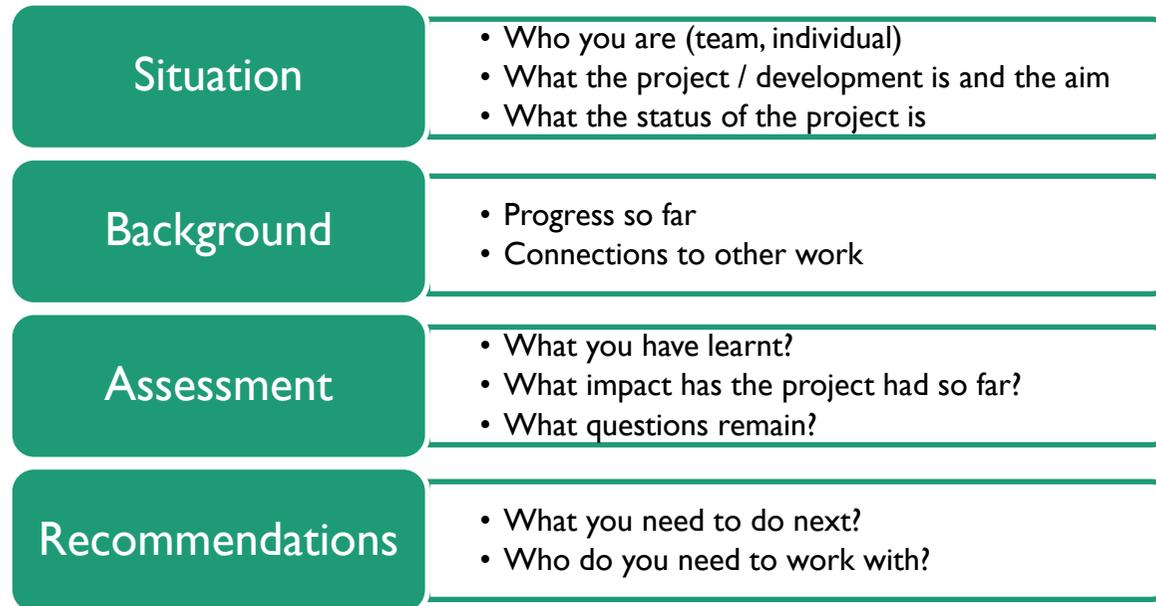| Area of focus / gap 1	Area of focus / gap 2	Area of focus / gap 3	Area of focus / gap 4

For each box agree:

⊛ Priorities and provision to address the gaps.

⊛ Proposed outcomes and timescales.

⊛ Responsibilities.

⊛ How colleagues and external partners will be engaged.

⊛ How progress will be monitored and the impact measured.

For each box identify:

⊛ Who can support internally.

⊛ Who can support externally.

⊛ Whether there are staff training/ continuing professional development (CPD) needs and how these will be addressed.

⊛ Whether there are resource needs and who can support this.

⊚ Stage Three: Sharing and accessing best practice ⊚

Using a structured format like the one below is useful for communicating the status of your project to stakeholders at critical milestones in order to ensure there is a shared understanding and sustained engagement.

Situation	• Who you are (team, individual) • What the project / development is and the aim • What the status of the project is
Background	• Progress so far • Connections to other work
Assessment	• What you have learnt? • What impact has the project had so far? • What questions remain?
Recommendations	• What you need to do next? • Who do you need to work with?

Consider:

⊚ How will you find out what others are doing (internally and externally)?

⊚ How will you disseminate good practice?

⊚ How can you involve students in the dissemination of good practice?

⊚ How can you utilise peer mentoring to engage students with employability activities and support?

⊛ Stage Three: Who can support you? ⊛

As a team, map out your employability network. Consider the following questions:

- ⊛ What other activities support students' personal development beyond the curriculum? For example the Students' Union and their volunteering programme?
- ⊛ Which colleagues can support? E.g. careers and employability service and business and enterprise unit.

- ⊛ How effectively are co-curricular and extra-curricular activities promoted to students?
- ⊛ Which external stakeholders can support?
- ⊛ Are you aware of additional sources of funding, advice, training and resources?

⊚ Stage Three: Key issues to consider ⊚

Research and Scholarship

- Gather evidence, as part of the review process, to document the results of your work.
- If you have developed reflective practice within a student group, how can you record and share it across the institution and possibly externally?
- This may also provide you or your colleagues with opportunities for scholarship or research which can then be shared internally, externally, or be published.

Engaging with and involving employers to support employability

- Recognise the full range of benefits to be gained from the broader work-related learning offer as this will strengthen employability provision for students.
- Optimise opportunities for including work-related learning activities for each year group?
- Research has shown that work experience is valued by graduate recruiters and enables students to link their studies to the world of work, develop their confidence and enhance their employability, skills and attributes.
- Creating a menu of work -related learning opportunties; live design briefs, competitions, case studies, simulations, role plays, discussions, presentations, workshops, mentoring etc. are some of the ways in which students can directly engage with employers on campus.
- These opportunities will allow you to support larger numbers of students to gain valuable experience through direct engagement with employers.
- Involve alumni:
  - With the pressures of league tables recording employment outcomes only six months after graduation, alumni case studies can provide a more longitudinal view of employability as an ongoing, lifelong concept rather than a single measure.
  - Students value the opportunity to engage with, and listen to, alumni.

⚽ Stage Four: monitor, evaluate and measure impact ⚽

The questions listed below and the example templates can help you generate the evidence to verify the status of employability within your organisation. Responding to these questions and completing the templates will help you to track progress and to identify what is working and what needs attention.

1. To what extent do you have a defined, cohesive and comprehensive approach to employability?

- ⚽ What evidence do you have for this?
- ⚽ Are all of your colleagues aware of the approach to employability, and are they fully engaged with it?
- ⚽ Are students aware of your approach to employability?
- ⚽ Do you utilise support from colleagues and students across your institution?
- ⚽ Do you utilise support from employers and other external organisations?

2. What evidence do you have that this work is effective?

- ⚽ What are your measures of success? (Directly linked back to Stage One and the aspirations you outlined in your working model/definition.)
- ⚽ Have you developed relevant benchmarks of success?
- ⚽ What feedback have you obtained from students, stakeholders and colleagues?

3. How have you assessed impact?

- ⚽ What methodologies have you used e.g. surveys; focus groups; online questionnaires; interviews?
- ⚽ How rigorous is this process?
- ⚽ How do you utilise feedback to inform future practice?

4. Are you actively engaging with employers and alumni? *(See also Framework for Student Engagement through Partnership)*

- ⚽ If yes, how do you measure impact and build on good practice?
- ⚽ How do you share successful approaches with your colleagues?
- ⚽ If you are not engaged with employers and alumni, reflect on barriers to engagement and how you could start to address them.

5. Sharing impact and disseminating good practice

- ⚽ Have you considered sharing good practice with your colleagues, both internally and externally?
- ⚽ Have you considered opportunities for further research and possible publication?
- ⚽ Are you aware of support available from organisations, such as the HEA, to aid the development and dissemination of good practice?

⊛ Stage Four: monitor, evaluate and measure impact ⊛

The following templates are a means of capturing current good practice, developing plans for sustainability and considering where the gaps in provision may exist. Please adapt and / or edit this document to meet your specific needs.

Programme/ area of study: **Date:**

Module/ area name	Evidence of good practice?	How will you share this with others?	How will you sustain and build upon this?	Resources/ support required?
1.				
2.				
3.				

◉ Gap Analysis ◉

Complete this action plan using the stage 4 key questions, along with your institutional and/ or departmental strategy on employability (where appropriate). Please adapt and/or edit this document to meet your specific needs.

Course / area of practice: **Date:**

Gaps identified?	Actions planned?	Expected outcomes?	Timescale and review date?	Person/ people responsible?	Resources/ support required?
1.					
2.					
3.					

◉ Stage Four: Key issues to consider ◉

Is your approach sustainable?

- Can you do it again next year?
- Can you continue to build on good practice?
- Can you continue to utilise existing contacts and resources?
- What changes to your approach might you want to/ have to make and why?

How do you use results developmentally?

- Do they feed into further work?
- How do you collaborate across your department and more widely?

Do you share, disseminate and access good practice?

- Sharing internally and externally may help others who have a need but have no existing resources.
- Equally, learning from others can enhance your practice and provision.
- Do you utilise opportunities to disseminate good practice?
- Are you aware of any support available to enable you to do this e.g. from professional bodies?

Does your approach reflect a cyclical process?

- Do you reflect on what you have done, what you have learned from it and what you will do in the future?