

# How to increase graduate employability at a university

[Sociology](#), [Empowerment](#)



4390228000

Research Report

Student Name: Majed M Almalki Student

ID: 3622608

Class: L7-1906

December 2017

Teachers: Rosie Paspaliaris and Tammy Tan-58367329120Abstract

The employment rate amongst university graduates is a real concern for most universities around the world. The purpose of the research report, which was commissioned by the Careers Department at a university is to identify the best approaches to increase their students' employability skills before joining the workplace.

The findings suggest that while universities have the most responsibility to prepare their students for the marketplace, employers have to play their essential role to engage them with the real work environment. There are many kinds of approaches a university can use, and research shows they can be divided into work-integrated learning, career guidance and critical soft skills that are required in the workplace.

It is recommended that the Careers Department starts implementing these approaches through including work-based classes in the students'

curriculum, inviting experts and employers to enable students to select the right track and embedding soft skills in the students' curriculum. 1

## **Introduction**

The Careers Department at a university has a duty to prepare their students well to join the marketplace. However, they are concerned that they are not helping their students with required skills and essential knowledge to improve their employability chances. This report, requested by the director of the Careers Department at a university in Australia, describes the most effective and efficient approaches in order to make recommendations that can be used to improve graduates' ability to feel confident in the workplace.

## **Findings**

There are a number of approaches that various stakeholders can use to improve the employability rates of graduates in Australia. The identified findings fall under work-integrated learning (Jackson 2015), the importance of choosing the right discipline for the future career (Kinash et al. 2017), and critical soft skills (Meeks 2017).

### **Work-integrated Learning (WIL)**

WIL enables graduates to increase their employability by boosting their confidence in their workplace capabilities and giving them exposure to enable them to understand the required industry standards (Jackson 2015). Gamble, Patrick and Peach (cited in Jackson 2015) claim that WIL is important in enabling graduates to gain a better appreciation of how the world of work is like.

It combines traditional learning as well as other forms of exposure which may include: job placements, field work, job shadowing, and internships (Treuer et al. cited in Jackson 2015). This combination serves an essential role of ensuring that students are able to transfer the skills they learned in the college to the workplace (Crebert et al. cited in Jackson 2015).

Jackson (2015) claims that WIL prepares graduates for their future careers by fostering their professionalism, ability to communicate effectively, think critically, and solve problems (Coll et al. cited in Jackson 2015). In one of the studies conducted in 2012 involving 131 undergraduates who had completed a work placement, it was noted that some students experienced difficulties such as stress, inadequacy and anxious when applying what they had learned in the classroom to the marketplace (Jackson 2015).

Students who were on a work placement for the first time had to learn how to manage themselves, communicate effectively to a public audience, and use technology. As such, work placement was the best experience that could prepare them adequately for joining the workplace (Jackson 2015).

### **Choosing the Right Discipline**

Choosing the right discipline increases the student's chances of getting a targeted job in the future (Kinash et al. 2017). Students who choose the relevant career path while in college increase the chances of achieving their future careers (Kinash et al. 2017). In a survey that was conducted on 28 graduates and 22 university students, it was noted that most students made random degree choices without having a specific career goal (Kinash et al. 2017).

This could explain why some students felt there was disconnect between the career industry and the degree courses they were pursuing (Kinash et al. 2017). Many students remained hesitant about their career options from the time they joined universities to the point of graduation (Kinash et al. 2017). In addition, it was noted that students are most likely to make career goals after they have graduated (Kinash et al. 2017).

Some of them are unhappy in their careers because possibly universities do not support their career decision-making. It is important to note that most students may not have had exposure to career services prior joining the university, which affects the choices they make (Kinash et al. 2017).

### **Developing Critical Soft Skills**

Embedding soft skills in the university curriculum ensures students to develop important soft skills, which can improve graduate employability rate. Employers value individuals with soft skills because they are 'easier to work with and relate better to clients, ultimately driving business outcomes' (Deloitte Access Economics 2017). Although a degree is an important item when searching for employment, most degrees tend to focus on equipping students with hard skills while ignoring the soft skills (Meeks 2017).

This leads to a situation where a substantial number of graduates lack important soft skills that are necessary for a better performance in the workplace (Meeks 2017). As Figure 1 shows, the most demanded soft skills across all industries. Figure 1: Adapted from Workable (cited in Deloitte Access Economics 2017)<sup>3</sup> Conclusion The research has shown that there are a variety of approaches to boost the graduate employability.

These approaches, which consist of WIL, career guidance and developing critical soft skills can be implemented by the Careers Department at a university with cooperation with other stakeholders, so that students feel well-equipped with the essential experience and skills to be successful in the marketplace.

### **Recommendations**

**Establishing work-based environment** Because there is an obvious lack of work experience among graduates, work-based classes might be included in students' curriculum to prepare them adequately for employment. At the same time, they may partner with other organizations, such as companies, to give students the opportunity to get internships and work placements.

**Offering career guidance** The Careers Department might offer career support to all their students.

This can be implemented by inviting employers and experts to run some workshops to share their experiences to enable students to choose the right courses that will make them realize their career goals. Including soft skills Soft skills need to be embedded in the students' curriculum to ensure that they get both hard and soft skills. This will help the Careers Department to improve their graduates' employability because most employers want graduates who have soft skills.

### **Reference List**

- Deloitte Access Economics 2017, Soft skills for business success, Company report, Deloitte Access Economics, viewed 25 November

2017, ; [https://www2.deloitte.](https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/soft-skills-business-success.html)

[com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/soft-skills-business-success.html](https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/soft-skills-business-success.html) ;

- Deloitte Access Economics 2017, Soft skills for business success, Company report, Deloitte AccessEconomics, viewed 25 November 2017, <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/soft-skills-business-success.html> ;
- . Jackson, D 2015, 'Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: Barriers and best practice'. *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 350-367, viewed 25 November 2017, RMIT Library.
- Kinash, S, Crane, L, Capper, J, Young, M,
- Stark, A 2017, 'When do university students and graduates know what careers they want: A research-derived framework', *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 3-21, viewed 25 November 2017, RMIT Library.
- Meeks, G 2017, 'Critical soft skills to achieve success in the workplace', viewed 30 November 2017,
- [https://search.proquest.com. ezproxy. lib. rmit. edu. au/docview/1950281403/previewPDF/D2798047B2094522PQ/8?accountid= 13552 ;](https://search.proquest.com/ezproxy.lib.rmit.edu/au/docview/1950281403/previewPDF/D2798047B2094522PQ/8?accountid=13552), ProQuest Library.