

Graduate Employability

- > Wednesday, March 30, 2011
- > Enhancing and Formalising Employability Programmes
- > Paul M. Marshall
- > Executive Director

Summary

- > The 1994 Group
- > The Context: Graduate Employment in statistics
- > *Graduate Employment and Earnings: Are Universities meeting student expectations?*
November 2008
- > *Beyond the Curriculum: Opportunities to enhance employability and future life choices*, November 2009

The 1994 Group

Established in 1994 to promote excellence in research and teaching. To enhance student and staff experience within our universities and to set the agenda for higher education.

- > University of Bath
- > Birkbeck, University of London
- > Durham University
- > University of East Anglia
- > University of Essex
- > University of Exeter
- > Goldsmiths, University of London
- > Institute of Education, University of London
- > Royal Holloway, University of London
- > Lancaster University
- > University of Leicester
- > Loughborough University
- > Queen Mary, University of London
- > University of Reading
- > University of St Andrews
- > School of Oriental and African Studies
- > University of Surrey
- > University of Sussex
- > University of York

Context: UK Graduate Employment in Statistics, HESA 2008/09

	% Employed after 6 months (excludes further study)	<i>Of those employed, % in Graduate level jobs</i>
>1994 Group	91	75
>Russell Group	92	78
>University Alliance	89	71
>Million+	86	70
>Total UK	90	73

1994 Group Report: *Graduate Employment and Earnings: Are Universities Meeting Student Expectations?*, November 2008

- > Using data extracted from Opinionpanel's *Higher Expectations Survey 2007/08* based on interviews with new full-time UGs in first few weeks of term and the DLHE *Longitudinal Survey* taken 3 ½ years after graduation.
- > 'Assess the relationship between students' expectations when they begin university, in terms of their perceptions of the benefits of HE on their levels of employment, earnings and career satisfaction with the reality of what is being achieved by graduates from the same universities.'

Student Perceptions

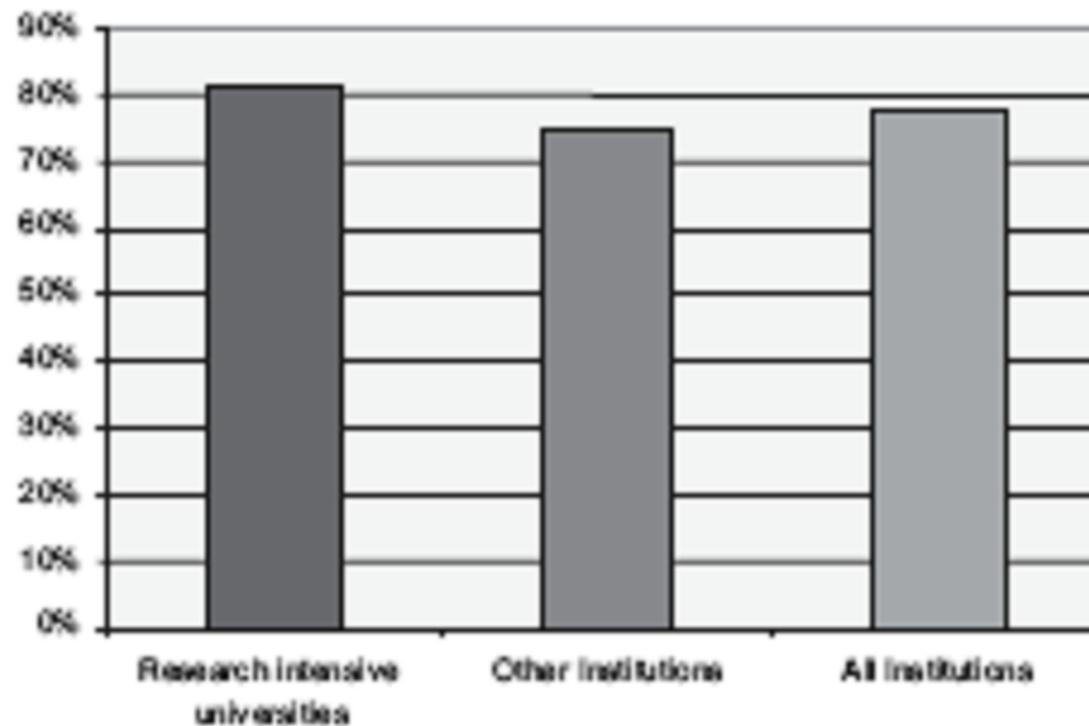
To what extent was your future employability and earning potential a consideration when you were choosing which university to study at?			
	Research-intensive universities	Other Institutions	All Institutions
To a great extent	34%	25%	29%
To some extent	50%	52%	51%
Not a consideration at all	15%	21%	19%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%

Student Perceptions

To what extent was your future employability and earning potential a consideration when you were choosing the course to study at university?			
	Research-intensive universities	Other Institutions	All Institutions
To a great extent	34%	43%	39%
To some extent	55%	47%	50%
Not a consideration at all	11%	8%	9%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%

Destinations, Employment and Earnings

Percentage of employed graduates holding graduate level jobs after 3½ years



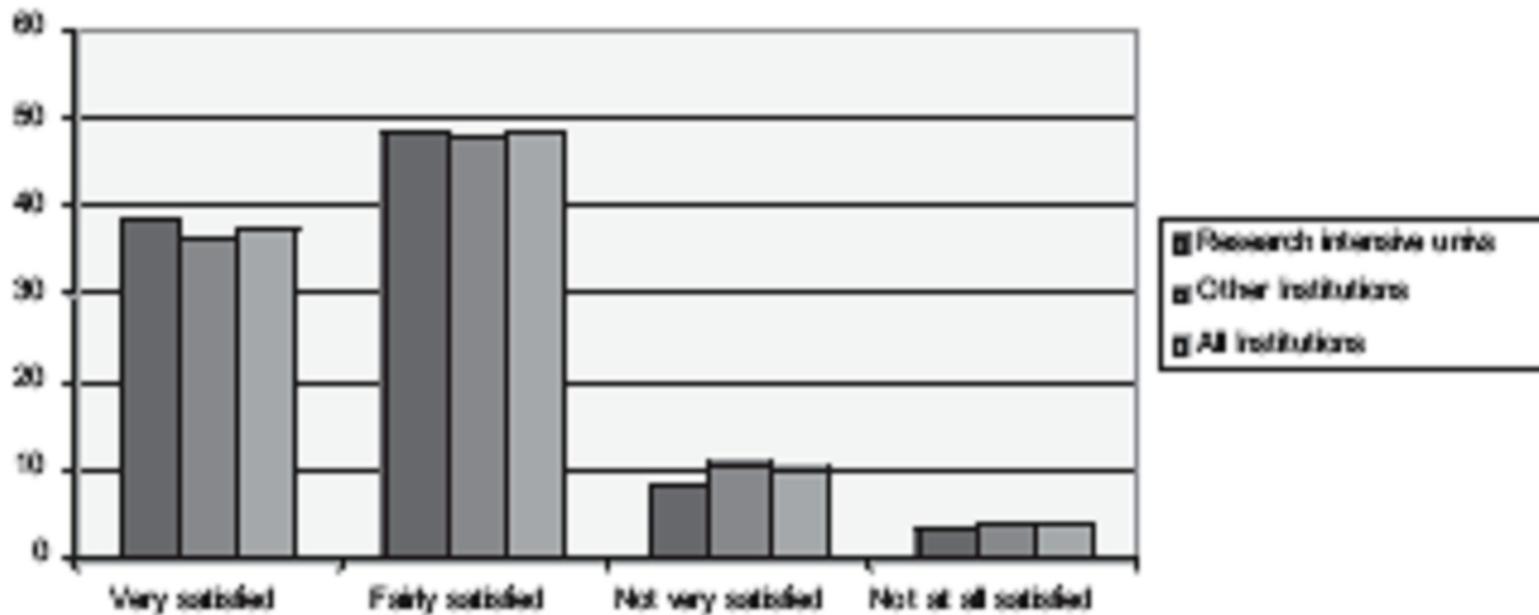
Destinations, Employment and Earnings

Proportion of respondent graduates reported to be earning over £20K and over £25K after 3½ years

Institutional group	Over £20K	Over £25K
Research intensive univs.	75%	49%
Other Institutions	59%	27%
All Institutions	65%	35%

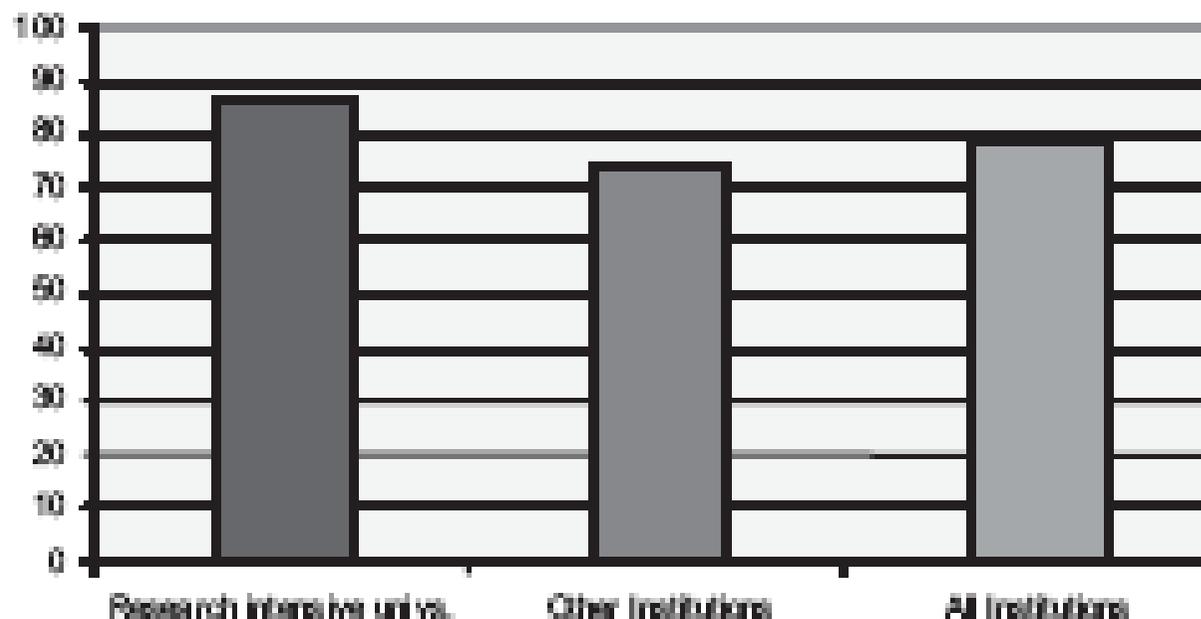
Destinations, Employment and Earnings

DLHE Longitudinal respondents 2002/03 by overall satisfaction with career to date and institutional group



Destinations, Employment and Earnings

Percentage of graduates who would be unlikely to choose another institution in future



Conclusion

- > There is a perception amongst students at Research-intensive institutions that their university will attribute them good employment and earnings prospects. To a large extent this is due to an appreciation of the reputation of these universities.
- > Students attending Other institutions place higher importance on employability and earnings potential when choosing their particular course than those attending Research-intensive universities.
- > Potential for mismatch between Research-intensive student expectations and realities of needs of employment market.

Employer Needs

- > *“Employers greatly value the knowledge and skills that graduates develop whilst studying at university, along with the skills and experience they gain from undertaking activities beyond the curriculum.*
- > *The most employable graduates are those who not only have this blend of skills, but who are able to demonstrate and articulate how they have developed their skills and why they are important.”*
- > *Miles Templeman, Director-General Institute of Directors*

1994 Group Report: *Beyond the Curriculum: Opportunities to Enhance Employability and Future Life Choices*, November 2009

- > Gathered information on the co-curricular activity taking place or being developed at member institutions.
- > Considering 5 aspects to activity, the report presented a 'snapshot' that summarised and analysed current practice, highlighted examples through case studies and looked forward with recommendations for universities, business and the government.

Key Findings: Nature of Activity

- > The majority of 1994 group institutions offer a formal co-curricular award, or had plans to do so.
- > The awards encompass a range of activities, including skills sessions, volunteering, work experience, sports and societies, and have a formal assessment process.
- > Other institutions have programmes that provide volunteering or work experience placements and career development modules, which may be on an assessed or more informal basis.
- > Employability is a key aim of co-curricular activity, as is enhancing the student experience.

Nature of Activity: Case Study

- > A student participating in the **Leicester Award for Employability** is required to:
 - > Attend three interactive workshops throughout the academic year
 - > Complete two pieces of reflective writing based on their work experience
 - > Participate in e-learning activities via Blackboard
 - > Give a short presentation at the end of the programme
- > There are several support sessions planned throughout the year to help students with all aspects of the programme. The Award is formally endorsed by the University of Leicester and will appear on a successful participant's academic transcript.

Nature of Activity: Case Study

- > The York Award requires participants to demonstrate the skills they have gained across the breadth of their academic and non-academic experience at university, including their work-related experience and personal interests.

Nature of Activity: Case Study

- > 'Sam', a chemistry undergraduate, received a York Award by demonstrating:
- > **Academic study:** the employability skills developed by studying for his Chemistry degree
- > **Work experience:** the transferable skills gained from his vacation job working in the DEFRA Central Science Laboratory, from his part-time job in a bar, and working at a children's summer camp
- > **Personal interests:** the employability skills developed whilst being a Students' Union Events Rep and through his involvement in the University rugby club
- > **Elective Courses:** from the broad range of extra-curricular courses available as part of the York Award, Sam completed the following:
 - > An Introduction to British Sign Language
 - > The York Enterprise Scheme
 - > Team Development

Nature of Activity: Case Study

- > Each of these elements contributed a certain number of 'points'. Sam needed to achieve 100 points before applying for the York Award.
- > To apply for the York Award, Sam completed a substantial application form and was interviewed by a panel that consisted of an employer, an academic and a York Award representative.
- > Throughout the application process Sam needed to demonstrate, and evidence, an analytical and reflective approach to the development of a range of skills.

Recommendations: Nature of Activity

- > There is no one 'right' model for co-curricular activity and the diversity of provision between institutions should be seen as a strength, ensuring it is tailored to individual circumstances.
- > Nevertheless, institutions can learn a lot and receive invaluable support from one another.
- > Awards should aim to enhance both employability and the student experience.

Key Findings: Participation

- > Co-curricular awards are primarily aimed at undergraduates, although in some institutions postgraduates are eligible or will have another award developed for them.
- > Generally all undergraduates are eligible, although some newly-piloted awards have been restricted to particular year groups.
- > The more informal activities, such as volunteer placements, are available to all.
- > Because most awards have only recently been piloted, data on participation and completion is not extensive. Participation ranges from small pilot cohorts of 25 to registrations numbering over 3,000.

Recommendations: Participation

- > Co-curricular activity should be as widely accessible as possible and have sufficient flexibility to cater to the wide-range of needs and commitment within the student body.
- > Elements of an award programme can be opened up to all students, even if they are not completing the award.
- > Resourcing an award for 1,000 students is of an entirely different magnitude to 100 participants. As such, the scalability of activity should be considered from the outset.

Key Findings: University Commitment

- Institutions are committed to developing co-curricular activity, which is seen as a strategically important area.
- This commitment is clearly manifested through the resourcing of dedicated staff to develop and administer award programmes.
- Students' unions play an important part in helping develop and deliver the activities.

Recommendations: University Commitment

- > Management and co-ordination of an Award, especially if to cater for a large number of students, requires dedicated staff.
- > Co-curricular activity can benefit from the input of a wide range of individuals across an institution, from both academic and support divisions, who should be involved in awards to as great a degree as is possible.
- > It is fundamental for the success of co-curricular activity that awards and activities involve partners such as students' unions and employers as, on top of the benefits the activities bring to participating students, many benefits are experienced for universities and their partners through building these strong partnerships.

Key Findings: Employer Involvement

- > In order to meet the employability aims of co-curricular activity, employers – the ultimate arbiters of this quality – are heavily involved in awards.
- > This spans the development, delivery and assessment stages, in addition to sponsorship and endorsement.
- > For universities, employer involvement ensures that the schemes are meaningful and produce employable graduates. For employers, involvement ensures that the awards meet their needs in terms of skills development, and is an opportunity to raise their profile among students.

Recommendations: Employer Involvement

- > The involvement of employers from an early stage of development is crucial to creating awards that will meaningfully address employability. Their input should, furthermore, be sought at all key stages and on a regular basis.
- > Multiple employers, from multinationals to charities and local businesses, should be approached in order to benefit from varied viewpoints and diverse experiences.
- > Employer involvement at the assessment or moderation stage is particularly crucial to endowing the awards with credibility in employers' eyes.
- > Students should have contact with employer representatives, for example through the delivery of skills sessions, in order to gain access to employer perspectives.

Key Findings: Measuring Success

- > The success of co-curricular awards and activity is being measured by widely-sourced feedback covering students, alumni, staff and employers.
- > The feedback received thus far has been overwhelmingly positive and strongly endorses the introduction of co-curricular programmes from both a student experience and employability perspective.
- > Students report that they have gained immense personal benefit from their co-curricular activity, have a much clearer idea of what employers are looking for and believe it will help them in their careers.

Recommendations: Measuring Success

- > Feedback should be systematically sought from students, alumni, staff and employers and this be fed back in to the development process.
- > Employability data should be gathered to measure the impact of an award or activity on a graduate's employment prospects.

Key Finding: Conclusion

- > Recognised 'co-curricular' activity, run in parallel to degree programmes, is a route through which to meet employers' demand for skills obtained outside the academic curriculum and develop the employability and career prospects of graduates.
- > It is also, crucially, an extremely effective way of enhancing the experience of students in higher education, whether they are undergraduate or postgraduate, from the UK or abroad, studying full-time or part-time.

Key Findings: Challenges

- Resourcing is clearly a key challenge to delivering this activity effectively, especially when the extension of activity to larger numbers of students is considered.
- High-quality delivery and robust assessment, crucial to the student experience and creating a credible award that employers value, are resource-intensive but not areas that can be compromised.
- It is also critical to ensure that activities appeal across the student body and overcome the time constraints that students face as they combine academic study, work and other activities.

Recommendations: Challenges

- > The government should show its support for co-curricular activity by creating incentives for employers to become involved, such as a scheme in which government matches employers' contributions (whether these are cash or in kind).
- > Institutions should consider developing different levels of activity; a general award or training to be undertaken by a significant proportion of students, and a 'high-flier' award for those students who are highly-motivated and committed.
- > There must be a balance between demanding so great a commitment that only a few students complete an award, and requiring too little for the award to be meaningful.

Conclusion

- > “When I was a student it was not apparent that all my teachers cared about my learning experience – their research progress seemed to be more important than my wellbeing as a student. This is certainly not the way it is in the 1994 Group of universities.”
- > *Prof. Shirley Pearce, Vice-Chancellor, University of Loughborough, 7th October 2009*

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