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Cylchlythyr

Circular

Employability statements

Date: 27 September 2010
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To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of further education institutions in Wales
Response by: 31 December 2010
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This circular asks all higher education institutions, and further education institutions with 6000 or more higher education credits, to publish an employability statement on the commentary section of the Unistats website and to disseminate it through their own communication channels. It also provides an update about work underway to review employment data and performance indicators.

This document is available online, in large print, Braille, on CD and on audio CD and cassette. Should you or someone you know require this in an alternative format, please contact us on (029) 2068 2225 or email info@hefcw.ac.uk.

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Introduction

1. We are asking all higher education institutions, and further education institutions with 6000 or more higher education (HE) credits (ie the equivalent of 50 full time students or more) in total (directly funded and/or franchised in provision), to publish an employability statement via the commentary section of the Unistats website (www.unistats.com). We are also asking for these statements to be disseminated through their own communication channels.
2. All institutions should publish a statement as soon as possible, preferably by the end of **2010**.
3. For further education institutions the statement relates only to their HE provision. Information in the statement can relate to both directly funded and franchise HE provision, although only information on franchise HE provision is currently available via Unistats.
4. This circular also provides an update about work underway to review employment data and performance indicators.

Background

5. The Westminster Government's Coalition Programme, published in May 2010, signalled its intent to publish more information on the costs, graduate earnings and student satisfaction of different university courses. In response to this, HEFCE asked its funded institutions to publish employability statements via the Unistats website by 31 August 2010.
6. HEFCW's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee (SETQC) considered the publication of employability statements on the Unistats website at its July 2010 meeting. It advised that Welsh institutions should also publish employability statements for the benefit of prospective students, and to ensure that comparable information was available for institutions in Wales and in England.
7. The Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB) has posed an 'Employer Challenge' to higher education regarding whether there were long-term coherent systems in place to ensure that graduates had the basic employability skills expected by employers¹.
8. In addition, a review of public information is underway in England and Northern Ireland. This will include a consultation on the provision of information for students, including Teaching Quality Information (TQI) and the National Student Survey (NSS). The consultation will be issued jointly by HEFCE, Universities UK and GuildHE in late 2010.

¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/100528employabilityskillsen.pdf>

9. HEFCW will carry out a consultation on public information in spring/summer 2011, once the outcomes of the consultation in England and Northern Ireland are known. This will include consideration of matters relating specifically to Wales.

Information on employment and support for employability

10. Employment data from the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey are published through the Unistats web-site. HEFCW is working with the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the other funding councils to determine how data on employment outcomes can be enhanced.
11. The following long-term programme is under way:
 - reviews of the six-month and longitudinal DLHE surveys;
 - review of classifications of employment outcomes to reflect labour market changes;
 - the Performance Indicators Steering Group, which includes members from government departments, the funding councils and representative bodies, will consider the development of measures based on the types of employment undertaken by graduates.
12. An indicative timeline for the data review programme is available at **Annex A**.

Employability statements

13. HE prepares students for employment in many ways, both through study and the broader student experience. Institutions have developed distinctive approaches in supporting the employability of their students to reflect their mission, the range of subjects they provide, and their students' needs.
14. Graduates need to be equipped for varied careers. Their HE experiences should provide them with the capability to make a smooth transition to work, but also give them the opportunity for intellectual and personal development, to be effective and adaptable within a rapidly changing economy and society, and to enable the Welsh economy to thrive.
15. Given the diversity of the HE sector, prospective students need good quality information about the support and opportunities available to them in order to make decisions about their future. Institutions also need to ensure they present effectively the benefits of what they offer.
16. As employability statements are available for England and Northern Ireland, we believe it will be of benefit for Welsh institutions to publish similar statements on the support they provide to students to enhance their employability. This will provide prospective students with greater clarity

about what support will be available. For this reason, statements should be provided as soon as possible, preferably **before the end of 2010**. This is an interim measure, as our approach from 2012/13 will be informed by the public information and employment data reviews.

17. The employability statement is intended to be a short summary of what institutions offer to their students to support their employability and their transition into employment and beyond. Statements are not intended to duplicate existing information that many universities already provide through their websites, but are intended to make the information easily comparable and accessible to students and to strengthen its profile and visibility. The statements also provide an opportunity to promote more broadly the extent and breadth of what HE is already doing to support employability.
18. As employment outcomes data are already provided on the Unistats website via the outcomes of the DLHE survey, the statements should focus on support available to students.
19. We, together with the other funding bodies, are working with the Higher Education Academy to identify how we can continue to support sharing of good practice in the longer term.
20. Guidance notes to help institutions develop statements are at **Annex B**. Statements should address the four priority areas identified in the notes (careers, work experience, curriculum support and accreditation), but the examples given in the guidance are not prescriptive. Institutions that have distinctive or innovative approaches to supporting employability are encouraged to reflect these in their statements.
21. Institutions are asked to disseminate their statements via their own communication channels (eg their own websites, prospectuses, facebook) as well as via the commentary section of the Unistats website.
22. HEFCW officers will monitor the provision of this information in January, and will report the outcomes to the February 2011 SETQC meeting.

Further information / responses to

23. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Annex A

Indicative timeline for development of review of employment data

Summer 2010	Issues paper on employment characteristics using six-month Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey to be published
Autumn 2010	Third Longitudinal DLHE survey undertaken (this happens every two years)
Autumn 2010	Consultation on public information in England and Northern Ireland
October-December 2010	Performance Indicators Steering Group considers employment characteristics in employment Performance Indicators
April 2011	DLHE review completed
Spring 2011	Higher Education Public Information Steering Group considers use of job characteristics measures in Teaching Quality Information/Unistats
Spring 2011	Consultation on public information in Wales
Summer 2011	Outcomes of third Longitudinal DLHE survey released
April 2012	First collection of revised six-month DLHE (tranche one)
August 2012	Revised job characteristics measures published on Unistats for 2010-11 qualifiers
August 2012	Institutions provide an agreed set of public information for prospective students
January 2013	First collection of revised six-month DLHE (tranche two)
Summer 2013	First release of information from revised DLHE collection

Annex B

Guidance on producing employability statements

What are employability statements?

1. Employability statements are short summaries of what institutions offer to students to support their employability and their transition into employment and beyond.
2. The purpose of the statement is to improve information available to students and to help them navigate existing information. Statements should therefore be written in an accessible way, and be primarily aimed at a prospective student audience.
3. Statements are not intended to duplicate the information that many institutions already provide, through their web-sites for example, but to make this easily accessible to students and to strengthen its visibility through signposting or links to website information.
4. Employment destinations data are already available through the Unistats web-site and we are undertaking a comprehensive review of employment information, so employability statements should focus on the support available to students rather than outcomes data on employment.
5. Further education institutions with HE provision exceeding 6000 credits (ie more than the equivalent of 50 full time students at level 4, 5 or 6) total (directly funded and/or franchised in provision), should include information related to their HE provision. Only information on franchise HE in FE provision is currently available via Unistats. However, institutions may provide information relating to all their HE provision if appropriate.

Which definition of 'employability' should be used?

6. We have not provided a definition of employability. Institutions should use the definition that is relevant to their institutional approach, drawing upon existing expertise and guidance as appropriate (for example developed by the Higher Education Academy). A list of suggested web resources to help develop employability statements is available online².
7. We encourage approaches that include:
 - support for students in making career choices and decisions;
 - support for students in finding employment;
 - how the institution supports the development of broader employability skills, qualities and attributes (particularly those that employers say they require);

² <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/employer/employstate/>

- how the institution ensures that vocationally oriented courses remain relevant to the sector's or employers' needs, or to professional practice.
8. Statements should link to information on the range of support available throughout the student life-cycle, including for postgraduate students and after graduation.
 9. Institutions may include information at discipline or course level in addition to institution level in a way that reflects their own approach.

Where should the statement be published?

10. Statements should be published via the main commentary page for your institution on the Unistats web-site (www.unistats.com). You can do this through the content management system at <https://cms.unistats.com>.
11. You can either include the statement on the main commentary page for your institution, or provide a link from that page to a statement held on your own website.
12. Institutions should also publish the statement through their own communication channels (such as web-site and in future prospectuses).

Where can I get help?

13. Each university and college should have a Unistats 'super user' who can set you up as a user or upload the text for you.
14. If you are not sure who your super user is, there is an institutional help desk for all technical queries at Unistats. Contact details are: unistats@ucas.ac.uk. The Unistats support team phone number is 01242 544682.

How long should statements be?

15. The Unistats commentary section has a 3,000-character limit (including spaces) so if institutions publish their statements directly to the commentary page, rather than via links from that page to their own website, they will need to concisely summarise information that is useful to prospective students.
16. Institutions are welcome to provide information beyond the statement – such as links to existing information on their web-site or to specific publications. This should be easy to navigate.

Which areas of activity should be included?

17. We have suggested four priority areas and a further four for consideration (paragraphs 20 to 27). The examples are indicative only, and are not intended to be prescriptive.
18. Institutions that have distinctive or innovative approaches to supporting employability are encouraged to reflect these in their statements.
19. We strongly encourage that statements address support for equality and diversity, including:
 - how institutions promote equality through their employability activities, for example support for disabled students to access work experience, or mentoring schemes
 - available support that is tailored for diverse student needs such as part-time or mature students.

Priority areas for inclusion in the statement

20. **Career planning and employment:** for example careers services, student 'job shops', recruitment fairs, employer involvement in interview preparation, CV clinics, small and medium-sized enterprise recruitment mentoring.
21. **Opportunities and support for work experience and placements:** as an accredited part of study programmes (such as sandwich placements) or alongside study programmes (such as vacation internships); accredited schemes; pre-placement programmes; knowledge transfer partnerships; volunteering.
22. **Signposting where information is available on courses accredited or endorsed by professional bodies, employers or Sector Skills Councils:** for example courses that confer licence to practise, courses developed in conjunction with employers to meet their needs.
23. **Support for the development of employability within courses:** for example 'live projects'; generic skills development within programmes; accredited modules; employer guest lectures; employer involvement in curriculum design or assessment; key skills training; employer mentoring.

Other activities which institutions may wish to include

24. **Promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship:** for example, opportunities to explore self-employment; enterprise training modules; incubator services; business advice; venture capital; student enterprise awards; enterprise societies.

25. **Opportunities for personal development planning and recording achievements (including informal learning and part-time work)** through, for example, personal development planning, e-portfolios or accredited institution-wide schemes.
26. **Support for postgraduates and research students:** for example, career planning, summer schools, workshops, GRADschools, placements.
27. **Opportunities for developing employability outside the curriculum:** for example, student union or student-led activities, extra-curricular activities.
28. **Whether they have a long-term and coherent system in place which ensures that all students have the basic employability skills which employers expect,** as identified within the WESB 'Employer challenge.'