GRADCORE

ADOPTING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO GRADUATE OUTCOMES: THE EMPLOYABILITY HEALTHCHECK MODEL

Erasmus+ Project
EPD Best Practice Toolkit for HE Employability: lessons from case studies

19 July 2023

Employability Healthcheck Model: background

- **Gradcore** – social enterprise, developed model over 20 years experience working with 70+ universities across UK, Europe and beyond, alongside graduate employers
- "**Look in, look out, look forwards**" approach
- Wide range of **stakeholders** – provides credibility and increases commitment
- Enables HEIs to adopt **strategic approach to employability** and graduate outcomes, with independent evidence base
- **Case study**: Kingston University

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UK Context

- Who is **responsible** for preparing graduates for the labour market?
- Shifts in UK **policy landscape** – funding changes, student consumerism, accessible metrics, increased regulation, technological advances, and shifts in employer requirements
- Graduate employability no longer Careers Services domain- increasingly HEIs adopt an **institutional approach** to employability
- **Disconnect** between Careers, academics and employers – resolved by curriculum design, development and delivery

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RESULT?

Universities increasingly held to account for graduate outcomes

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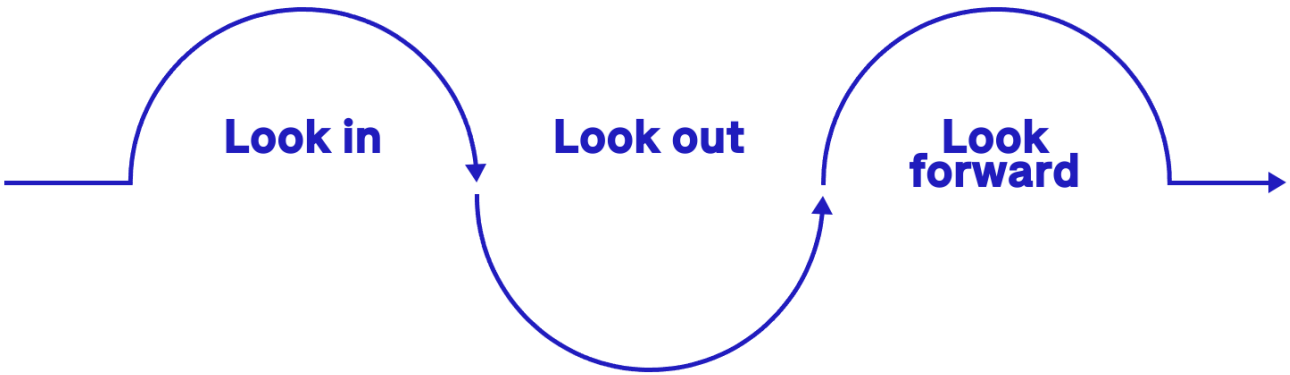
Employability Healthcheck Model: methodology



Look in – evaluate current practice and activity, and establish baseline data

Look out – review and draw on relevant external examples, case studies and best practice

Look forward – synthesize findings into a pragmatic set of recommendations with an underpinning report

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Employability Healthcheck Model: in practice

LOOK IN:

Data Collection and Analysis

- Request for Information
- Curriculum mapping survey
- Interviews and workshops with university staff, students and employers
- Graduate survey
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis

LOOK OUT:

Horizon Scanning

- Global employability trends
- Employer requirements and future skills
- UK Higher Education policy context
- UK Higher Eduction Institute practice

LOOK FORWARD:

Reporting and Recommendations

- External employability landscape
- Institutional overview, including employability strategy
- Summary of key findings and themes
- Set of solution-focused, contextualised recommendations
- Resource plan, with sector comparisons

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EHM Case Study: Kingston University 1

- **Background** – new model of education "*Town House Strategy*" ensuring future skills most valued by employers are embedded in curriculum for every student
- **Employer Engagement** – extensive consultation 2,000 businesses, 1,000 students => Future Skills report

Top 10 skills:	
1. Problem solving & processing skills 2. Critical thinking 3. Communication skills 4. Digital skills 5. Analytical skills	6. Adaptability 7. Resilience 8. Creativity 9. Ability to build relationships 10. Initiative

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EHM Case Study: Kingston University 2

- **The Model** - EHM 2020/21, employability not as visible as could be, potential to be more widely embedded across curriculum => “joining the dots”

Look in	Look out	Look forward
320+ staff, student and employer participants; workshops, interviews, roundtable meetings, surveys, ‘Employability Summit’	Defined skills survey within UK policy and practice context	Horizon scanning informed: Institutional employability strategy, reporting findings and recommendations

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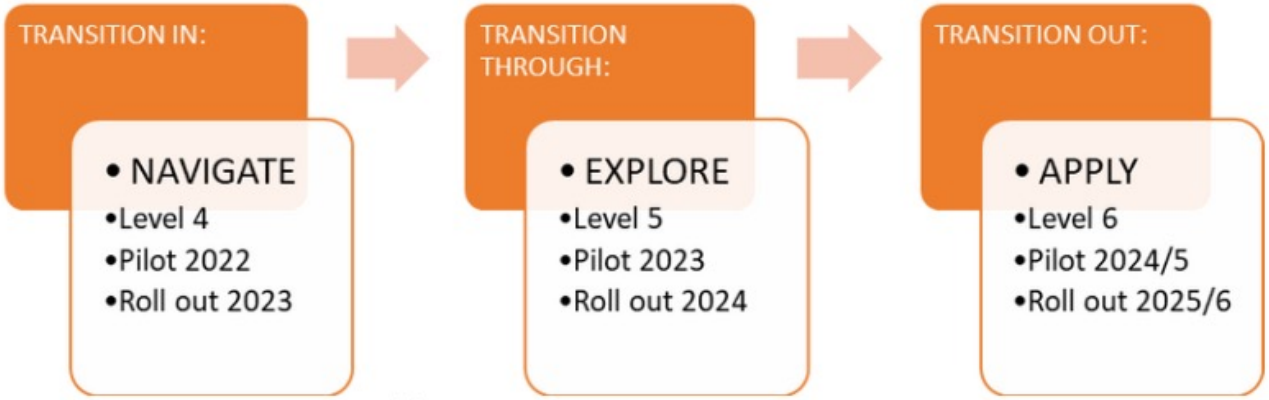
EHM Case Study: Kingston University 3

- **Investment** – Careers and Employability Service 14 to 34 members over 3-4 months, new central Placements and Partnership team, secured external funding £1.7 million
- **Curriculum Impact** – EHM findings & recommendations for embedding employability in curriculum => different models of embedding work-related learning across curriculum
- Won Best Faculty Programme at Global Careers Services Summit 2022



Kingston University Future Skills Framework

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“while there may well be a strong correlation between graduate outcomes and personal development, personal development is often approached as a ‘bolt-on’ that students are expected to pick up independently and with little support.”

Module Leader, School Director of Learning and Teaching

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