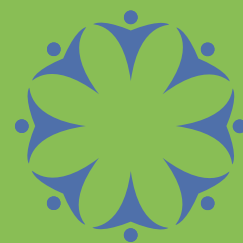


Supporting Graduate Employment and Employability in Yorkshire



Executive Summary

Yorkshire Universities
May 2022



The Yorkshire context

Widening geographical inequalities in educational attainment in England, especially at GCSE and A Level, can, from a supply side, shape the trajectory and impact of graduate outcomes. Yorkshire's graduate retention rate is close to the English regions' average, with a good share of highly skilled posts, across the full spectrum of graduate jobs, available to graduates in the region. However, there is a significant concentration of highly paid graduate jobs in London and the South East, and differences in opportunities between and within regions are compounded by other factors, including household income and ethnicity. Nationally, we are also seeing the increasing prioritisation of broader factors, beyond pay, in graduates' choice of jobs, leading to the growing importance of other factors, such as the quality of life, which underpin place attraction strategies.

In this context, it is important to adopt a nuanced approach that takes account of, but also goes beyond, graduate retention to focus upon improving graduate utilisation to enable more students and graduates to achieve employment and career success in Yorkshire. It is important that there is tailored support for employers, especially microbusinesses and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to create and sustain good graduate jobs in the region for more people from different backgrounds. Likewise, students and graduates need support to access diverse pathways into graduate employment and to equip them to make the most of the opportunities available and emerging across the region.

Our task and approach

YU convened a Graduate Task and Finish Group, with the aim of identifying and agreeing a series of shared priorities and collective actions that can support graduates into graduate-level employment and improve graduate utilisation in Yorkshire.

Stakeholder roles and responsibilities

Our proposals require the continuing involvement of, and increased collaboration between, a broad range of partners and stakeholders. These actors have varying roles and responsibilities that shape the recommended actions they could take, both individually and collaboratively, outlined across the different priority areas set out in this report.

HE providers:

have a responsibility to support students and graduates into successful outcomes. This involves action from a range of teams and staff across institutions, as well as collaboration between providers where there is potential to improve opportunities in the region for all. The HE sector also has a key role in centring the student voice and ensuring support is co-created.

Local & sub-regional governance institutions:

including Local Authorities (LAs), Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Metro Mayors, have responsibilities in supporting businesses, skills and economic growth. They are also leaders in placemaking and providing services that make the region a better place to live, study and work. These functions mean they are central to improving graduate employment and utilisation in the region, which, in turn, will support their broader objectives.

Employers:

including businesses, are central to expanding opportunities for graduates across the region and can benefit from graduate recruitment by filling skills gaps and bringing in new talent and ideas that can help spark innovation and growth.

Students & graduates:

should be engaged in co-creation of initiatives to ensure developments are shaped by the diversity of needs, priorities and goals of different students and graduates.



Guiding principles, priorities and recommended actions

An overview of the eight priority areas is outlined below. More details of examples of existing work from across the region and recommended actions to build on this ongoing work can be found in the main body of the report.

A series of guiding principles underpin and inform the recommended priorities and actions in the report:

- Learning from, building on and scaling up existing good practice.
- Sharing knowledge, information and resources.
- Improving coordination.
- Co-creation with students and graduates.
- Building on the brand and identity of Yorkshire and promoting its graduates.¹

1 Readiness for the changing nature of work

Ensure that graduates are equipped to anticipate and adapt to the changing nature of work by investing in enhanced employability and enterprise skills through intra and extra-curricular activities. Help employers understand and adapt to the changing expectations and priorities of graduates.

2 In-study and work experience opportunities

Create more opportunities for students and graduates to engage with employers through internships, projects and placements, etc. Highlight the benefits to employers of engaging with students and graduates, and encourage more creative, low risk opportunities for students to gain experience.

3 Tailored careers and enterprise support

Tailor careers and enterprise support to meet the particular needs and aspirations of specific groups of students and graduates, especially those facing barriers to employment.

4 Models to connect graduates to graduate-level jobs

Create a supportive environment that encourages graduate recruitment and enterprise. Utilise and develop more joined-up, collaborative 'brokerage' models to connect more graduates to good graduate jobs in the region.

5 Common messaging on the value of graduates

Develop common and coordinated messages to employers on the value of working with graduates to encourage graduate recruitment, emphasising the value and transferable skillset of all graduates.

6 Clearer entry points and lines of communication with HE providers

Create clearer and more visible entry points for employers to engage with the diverse activities of the HE sector, including recruitment of graduates, and ensure institutions present a joined-up offer.

7 Aligned strategic priorities and strengthened partnerships

Align strategic economic development priorities and strengthen existing and emergent partnership work around delivering a shared ambition to make Yorkshire a more attractive region to live, work and study in.

8 Data sharing & analysis for effective strategy and action

Build on or create mechanisms to improve the collation, sharing, analysis and interpretation of data to support forward planning and the development and implementation of more effective strategy and action within the region.



Outcomes and implementation

The shared priorities present a renewed opportunity for increased collaboration within the region. We believe that broader commitment and deeper engagement by stakeholders will contribute towards improving productivity, tackling inequalities, and increasing prosperity within Yorkshire. For this to happen, all partners and stakeholders will need to undertake specific roles.

It is important to emphasise that the suggested actions under each priority clearly build on existing and ongoing activity. There are actions that could be delivered at individual stakeholder level with existing resources to improve more joined up working, whilst others would require further scoping and research, substantial coordination and additional resources.

Whilst all stakeholders will be required to continue playing their individual and invaluable roles, YU proposes to establish a work programme as part of its 2022-2025 Strategy to detail the implementation of each priority area. Where appropriate, YU will commission or undertake further research, and encourage more collaborative action to promote and add value to existing work.

Since 1987, Yorkshire Universities (YU) has been the regional voice for higher education in Yorkshire. YU represents eleven universities and one specialist higher education institution. The vice-chancellors and principals of these institutions form YU's board of directors.

The twelve members are the universities of Bradford, Huddersfield, Hull, Leeds, Leeds Beckett, Leeds Trinity, Leeds Arts, Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam, York, and York St John, as well as the Leeds Conservatoire. YU thus convenes a diverse eco-system of universities and higher education within and across Yorkshire.

Find out more

More information about the work of YU is available at: yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk



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