



Transnational Study on Employability in Higher Education

Progress Report

May 2017

Phase 1: This global project was activated in 2016 with University of Wollongong funding, to explore trends emerging in the intersecting domains of employability, work integrated learning, and career development learning. The research activity, using a qualitative descriptive methodology, based around semi-structured interview questions, involved nine institutions across Australia (3), United Kingdom (3), and Canada (3). The goal was to initiate conversations - for fact-finding and theory building, using a general inductive analysis of the interview transcripts. The underpinning research question: ***How is employability termed, driven and communicated by universities internationally?***

Using the Skype interview transcripts, the project team identified the following categories to frame further analysis:

- The use and conflicting definitions of employability
- External and internal factors impacting effective employability strategies
- Characteristics of good practice

Phase 2: Graduate Careers Australia (GCA) released funding in Quarter 4 of 2016 – enabling university careers services to submit funding bids focusing on employability and career development themes, which add to the scholarship informing practice in Australian universities.

Securing these funds has enabled the Project Team to expand the number of global participants and synthesise the diverse global perspectives for application to the Australian university and careers service context.

Phase 2 of the project will culminate in the production of a Final Report ***“Employability in a Global Context: Learnings for Australian practice”*** incorporating discussion of the research project and key outcomes, and examples of practices occurring globally which lead to good practice in the employability – career development field.

At present, the existing nations of Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, have now been joined by institutions from South Africa, The Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, and the United States.

Project Impact

It is proposed to leverage the research analysis from Phases 1 & 2, to produce a Final Report. Whilst the GCA funding requires the project team to have strong Australian oriented outcomes integrated across the Final Report – the research outcomes will be of value to all participating institutions and the countries they represent. The Report will include:

- employability definitions and interpretations based on national and global factors;
- a literature review; and
- examples of good practice which highlight the nexus between employability – career development – Work Integrated Learning.

Through this research project in 2016, we have identified the global appetite to increase collaboration between academics and career practitioners; including globalized research initiatives.

The final Project Report will be physically released for the 2017 NAGCAS Annual Conference in Sydney – the outputs of the research project will be shared with the sector at the conference – at either a plenary or within a concurrent session context.

As the research processes engage both academics and career practitioners – the outcomes will be of real and lasting value at various levels of university faculties, Learning & Teaching departments, and across university careers services. Phase 1 of the project has indicated that government and industry activity also influence good practice in these related fields and it is projected that these stakeholders will also find value in this project.

Timeframes & Communications

At present, the institutions from South Africa, The Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, and the US have confirmed they will engage in the semi structured interviews via Skype during May 2017.

During June, July and August – the analysis of all transcripts from Phases 1 and 2 will occur. These months will also see the drafting of a Literature Review – and the Final Report.

The project will conclude at the end of August 2017 – as per GCA funding requirements.

The Report will be available in hard copy and electronic format for distribution at the 2017 NAGCAS Conference in Sydney in November 2017.

Ongoing Communications will be facilitated via a website dedicated to employability research and practice <http://developingemployability.edu.au/employability-global-context/> currently being maintained and developed by a National Senior Teaching Fellow for Employability in Australia – Professor Dawn Bennett. Dawn is a key member of the project team.

Research outcomes will be in formats suitable for publication in related journals. It is also proposed to submit articles to Australian media outlets – e.g., *The Australian* newspaper.

Project Team

Martin Smith, Director, Graduate Career Development & Employability, University of Wollongong (**Chief Investigator**)

Dr Alan McAlpine, Manager, Careers & Employment, Queensland University of Technology (**Project Investigator**)

Prof Dawn Bennett, National Senior Teaching Fellow- Employability, Curtin (**Project Investigator**)

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