

**LifeSkills**

Created with  **BARCLAYS**

# **H.E. Careers & Employability Services' Use of Resources**

## **Summary report**

**Jane Artess  
Claire Shepherd**

For further information, please contact:  
Jane Artess  
International Centre for Guidance Studies  
University of Derby  
Kedleston Road  
Derby  
DE22 1GB  
Tel: 01332 592994

ISBN: 978-1-910755-05-1

## Background

LifeSkills created with Barclays has developed an impressive array of resources which support the teaching of employability, career education, to give young people the skills to get work ready. At present these resources have been targeted at 11-19 year olds. This research set out to find out what resources would be appropriate to those at university or leaving university.

The research comprised the design and launch of an online survey aimed at careers and employability practitioners in higher education (HE) during May 2015.

Higher education providers (HEPs) have a well-established interest in supporting the employability and career development of students and graduates, not least because graduate employment is one of five key performance indicators,

*UK Performance Indicators provide comparative data on the performance of HE providers in widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015)*

Graduate employment is also a key metric provided to prospective students, to help them to decide which course and institution to apply for, and is included in the Key Information Sets on course web-pages and on the Unistats website. Employability is therefore of key strategic importance to institutions of higher education in the UK.

Higher education providers include universities, Colleges of higher education, and Colleges of further education at which some courses are provided at HE level. The HE sector in the UK is diverse and complex, providing courses with a specific vocational orientation, such as Medicine or Engineering, and courses with a broad vocational focus, such as Business Studies, and also including courses where there is very little direct relationship with the labour market, such as Sociology.

It is estimated that in 60 - 70 per cent of jobs secured by graduates in the UK, the particular subject discipline was not relevant. Graduate level skills and learning are clearly sought by employers, but for many roles the subject content of the degree is not what wins the graduate his/her job. Employers are reported to be seeking graduates for their ability to handle large amounts of complex information, critically evaluate sources, be creative problem solvers, etc., and have well developed 'employability skills' including the ability to communicate well and succeed in teams. Consequently one of the HE careers and employability services' goals are to support the development of a broad range of generic, non-subject-specific skills in students.

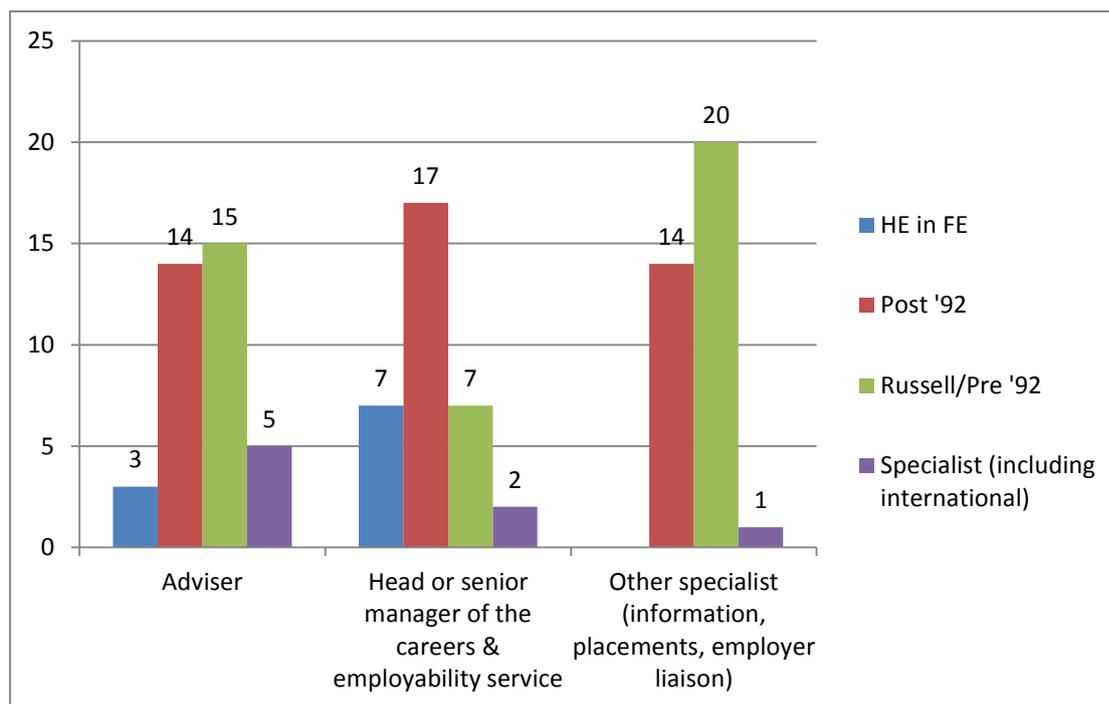
HE careers and employability services draw upon a wide range of resources to support employability skills development in students. This research aimed to document what is currently in use, and importantly to identify what kinds of resources careers and employability services would welcome, and whether there are any consistent patterns by type of institution.

## Research sample

The online survey attracted 124 responses, from the types of institution shown in Figure 1. Institutions were categorised as belonging to one of four types: HE in Further Education (FE); Post-92 or relatively new HE institutions; Russell Group and other Pre-92 institutions; and Specialist institutions where mainly one type of subject is provided (e.g. agriculture). There were a very small number of respondents from outside the UK, and these have been included in the category of Specialist institutions for reporting purposes.

Amongst respondents who provided their job role, 31 per cent described themselves as heads or senior managers of careers & employability services, 38 per cent were described as advisers and a further 31 per cent ascribed themselves as being in roles within other specialities (such as information, placements, employer liaison, etc.).

**Figure 1: Number of respondents, by job role and type of institution**



## Summary of findings

- Careers & employability services in higher education in the UK are able to access a wide armory of resources to support the development of employability skills in students. Many resources accessed are produced externally; others are produced within the institution and are aimed to fulfil specific employability resource needs.
- The challenges faced by students around the employability skills they need to develop include labour market information around the relevance of their degree and competition in the market, staying resilient, selling their transferable skills.
- There is evidence that careers & employability services are reaching out to students earlier in the student journey, significantly during the first and second year of study as well as maintaining contact with final year students.
- Resources in use are predominantly delivered to students in online and electronic formats or via group-based or one-to-one interactions. The majority of careers & employability services offer employability materials to students in hard copy and maintain careers libraries. A minority of services do not provide this, which suggests the move to online delivery systems may replace hard copy materials over time.

## Recommendations

- A good proportion would welcome help to develop students' employability skills. For the respondents who identified a requirement interview preparation came out as the strongest area for development with specific examples including: , examples of the following were suggested:
  - Interactive, practice interviewing software
  - Virtual occupations where students could 'try out' their career ideas
  - Tools to support students with self-reflection and recording of personal and career development
  - Materials on enterprise education
  - Resources which are attractive to 'dis-engaged' students (or those who have not yet turned their attention to prospective career/further training opportunities).
  - There appears to be evidence that FE colleges may have greater need for more and better resources than other types of institution.
  - Majority of respondents are interested in signposting to new material to add to their suite of resources

## Reference

Higher Education Statistics Agency. (2015). *UK Performance Indicators in Higher Education*, Cheltenham: Higher Education Statistics Agency. Available from: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis> [Accessed on May 28th 2015].