



Australian
National
University

ANU Employability Framework

Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)

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Introduction

The University's commitment to developing a student employability framework has been set in the ANU Learning & Teaching Strategy and has been articulated as a specific goal with corresponding actions (ANU Learning & Teaching Strategy, Goal 7).

The rationale for this work reflects our responsibilities as Australia's national university and is driven by the reality that the support our students experience in developing their employability is not as effective as it could be.

A university degree contributes significantly to an individual's employability but does not guarantee employment - GOS and GOS-L results tell us as much. We know from our GOS, SES and SELT results that despite a high fulltime employment potential of an ANU degree, our students experience a more difficult transition to the workforce compared to the sector. Concerningly, both our undergraduate and postgraduate students also report a 10% lower level of career readiness than the sector average and just over half of all ANU students feel that their degree prepares them for work, with results trending consistently downwards over the past five years. Our positions on global university rankings point in a similar direction, creating a real and considerable risk for the University (TLDC 3/2023, Item 7).

The National Priorities Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) has enabled us to address some of the urgent challenges, particularly in the resourcing of our careers services, and to undertake foundational work in our digital infrastructure as well as testing and extending pedagogical concepts for employability. In combination with the ANU Graduate Attributes and the correlating work on the Curriculum Framework, these initiatives are laying the groundwork for a long-term approach to employability across the University. However, to ensure we can capitalise on these initiatives, we need a cohesive narrative and enabling structure to connect the many elements of good practice and experience across the University, make it clear to students how and where we support their employability development and allow us to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our work and our compliance with legislation relevant to the scope of the Employability Framework, including but not limited to the Fair Work Act 2009 and WHS Act 2011.

Sponsored by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning & Teaching and governed by the Learning & Teaching Committee (LTC), a Working Group was formed in August 2023 to develop an ANU Employability Framework together with a set of recommendations for implementation. The Working Group Report on the ANU Employability Framework captures the comprehensive work that has led to this paper and is provided as a supplementary document to give more detail for each element of the Framework.

The Employability Framework presented here has been designed as an enabling structure and guiding tool for the entire University community to create a supportive environment for our students to develop their employability. It articulates our sphere of influence and subsequent responsibilities as a University across four key domains to support our students in developing the "knowledge, skills, behaviours, attributes and orientations that will enable them to be successful not just in their future employment but as socially responsible citizens and potential leaders." (ANU Learning & Teaching Strategy: 15)

The Framework will act as a roadmap for LTC to help prioritise the first steps from a University perspective and link employability into strategy. It will also act as a guide for teams in Colleges, Schools or central areas when developing work plans or specific projects to help recognise and design effective leverage points to improve the support for student employability. Perhaps most importantly, it is the starting point for deeper conversations and collaborative actions across the entire ANU community and our partners about what employability looks like for our students and ourselves as facilitators now and into the future.

Employability at ANU

The student employability landscape at ANU is characterised by a rich variety of learning experiences, support programs and highly committed staff, both in curriculum and outside of it. There are many direct engagement points through designated authentic learning experiences and interactions with central and local careers & employability teams. Students also have a large number of indirect touchpoints that provide often highly influential but not always well-connected forms of employability support, including:

- educators and course advisors providing incidental career guidance and are often seen as a role model and source of information on potential career pathways,
- peer support teams, e.g. Academic Skills peers in Residential Halls who often find themselves in unanticipated career guidance conversations,
- statements on University websites and marketing materials regarding employability support and typical career pathways, setting student expectations,
- student clubs and societies organising events with employers or alumni.

The devolved nature of ANU and the current lack of a University-wide employability framework has resulted in localised approaches and often very discipline-specific language in relation to employability. To some extent this is natural and sensible. It becomes problematic where:

- the scale of programs and/or demand outstrips local resources and growth is limited,
- students may not recognise that a certain learning experience contributes to their employability and may miss those opportunities,
- staff are limited in their ability to collaborate and generate efficiencies,
- low cross-campus visibility of engagement and agreements with external partners for authentic learning activities, especially internships and placements, results in inefficiencies and reputational risks,
- lack of standard processes leads to compliance risks and limited ability to monitor and evaluate efforts as well as student safety during WIL.

The Employability Framework provides the structure to manage these touchpoints and challenges in a more consistent and effective way.

Definition of employability at ANU

Employability is quite literally the ability to be employed and "belongs" to an individual. It is a lifelong, iterative process of successfully combining knowledge, skills, behaviours and mindsets with opportunities and managing changes in personal and external circumstances to achieve, grow and sustain employability. The key elements of this interpretation - career literacy, professional literacy and lifelong learning - are specified in our definition of employability.

The ANU Graduate Attributes are an important part of our undergraduates' employability and are explicitly referenced in the definition. While the spirit of the Graduate Attributes translates well to the postgraduate space, no specific graduate attributes have been developed for postgraduate coursework programs to date. For HDR students, the Vitae Researcher Development Framework is currently used and has informed the ANU HDR Career Development and Industry Engagement Strategy.

Finally, our values and mission as Australia's national university are reflected in the specific reference to socially responsible and ethical global citizenship.

An employable graduate from the ANU

- ✓ *can use their combined knowledge, skills, behaviours, and mindsets to succeed in their future employment as socially responsible, ethical and global citizens and leaders,*
- ✓ *demonstrates - when completing an undergraduate program - insights into Indigenous People's Knowledges and perspectives, a capability to employ discipline-based knowledge in transdisciplinary problem-solving, and expertise for critical thinking,*
- ✓ *demonstrates professional literacy through applying and extending their disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge and skills in professional contexts in alignment with their level of experience and the professional standards and behaviours expected in their respective work environment,*
- ✓ *demonstrates career literacy through a commitment to and capability for lifelong learning and career development, supporting their capability to maintain their employability in alignment with their individual value system, wellbeing and personal circumstances and confidently manage disruptions and innovation in their working futures.*

ANU Employability Framework: A four domain model

The ANU Employability Framework has been designed as a four-domain model to capture the areas within our sphere of influence.

The curricular and non-curricular domain are the areas where students develop and practice the knowledge and skills that can positively affect their employability.

The partnerships and organisational capability domain are the areas that enable employability learning through providing effective and efficient resources for students to engage with professional contexts and their future careers.



Underpinning the model are Guiding Principles that lay out the concepts and foundational understandings that the Employability Framework is based on. The Working Group report describes each principle in greater detail.

Guiding Principles

- University-wide commitment
- Distributed and shared responsibility
- Reflecting ANU values and Graduate Attributes
- Equitable access
- Lifelong learning mindset
- Informed by relevant data
- Integrated across student lifecycle

Domain 1: Curriculum

The academic curriculum is a key lever for the University as the place where students progressively develop and practise discipline-specific and general academic knowledge and skills which provide the foundation for their professional literacy and employability. It is also the place where – unlike the non-curricular domain – all students are captured equally from the day they enrol to the day they graduate.

The major touchpoints for employability within this domain are:

- opportunities for authentic learning and assessment
- linkages between program / course design and industry input through a variety of mechanisms
- consistent communication of the link between learning outcomes, assessments and transferable skills to help students better understand their progression pathway and future career opportunities
- curriculum-embedded careers education to develop students' capability to translate their knowledge and skills to the professional environment.
- incidental and planned employability-related advice provided to students at critical decision-making points such as changing programs, courses or electives, deciding on further study or discussing thesis topics

Domain 2: Non-curricular activities

This domain includes co-curricular and extracurricular activities as both contribute significantly to the development of students' employability and professional literacy.

Co-curricular activities are an important extension of the curricular domain in that they provide a highly valuable space for students to experiment and develop skills in areas outside of their academic discipline and without the pressure of assessments. The key difference is that the University provides some form of support of this space, as opposed to extracurricular activities that are not directly supported.

Extracurricular activities sit outside of the learning environment managed and supported by the University, however there is considerable potential to facilitate a smoother experience for students.

A University-level commitment to strong support for non-curricular activities can help to address barriers to participation in traditional WIL opportunities such as internships which have been shown to be challenging to access for some student groups.

The major touchpoints for employability within this domain are:

- activities that facilitate skills development and exploration of alternative pathways,
- connection of suitable non-curricular activities back into curriculum or recognition pathways,
- activities and tools to improve understanding of how non-curricular activities develop transferable skills,
- staff providing support to develop employability skills and literacies.

Domain 3: Partnerships

As an enabling domain, Partnerships cuts across all other domains, but the key distinction is the focus on the partnership element that facilitates employability development as opposed to the focus on pedagogical design and curriculum integration of employability development in the first domain.

Typical topics in this domain relate to how successful partnerships can be developed and maintained, both internally and externally. This may include legal agreements, financial models or engagement strategies.

Comprehensive and reliable visibility of current and planned engagement points with internal and external partners is critical from a reputational and efficiency perspective. During consultations, staff have repeatedly identified the lack of a University-wide system to capture and manage relationships as a major barrier to effective partnering. The solution requires both a digital infrastructure and governance approach including the development of guidance materials.

The major touchpoints for employability within this domain are:

- activities where partners provide or enhance a specific learning activity, for example hosting interns or contribute to a panel discussion,
- short-term initiatives with partners, for example speed networking events run in collaboration with a student society or one-off sponsorship agreements for a careers fair,
- long-term engagement strategies, for example MoU or agreements with industry partners,
- digital solutions and governance structures to manage partnerships across the University, ensuring high visibility and reliable data capture.

Domain 4: Organisational capability

The level of organisational capability enables or restricts the capacity of the University to support its students in their employability development and meet its responsibilities to students, staff, industry partners and government. Consequently, this domain is the central element of the Employability Framework as an institutional support structure.

On a practical level, this domain is where most of the work related to administrative efficiencies takes place. IT systems and infrastructure, policies and procedures, data management and evaluation, training and resources and communication are all elements in this domain that create and support the employability ecosystem.

The major touchpoints for employability within this domain are:

- interaction with IT solutions to access, manage and analyse reliable information related to employability and careers,
- employability data analysis and reporting cycles as well as development of new data sources through internal research projects,
- amendment or design of appropriate governance and training documents such as policies, procedures or guidelines,
- communication opportunities to promote initiatives and create consistent employability narratives such as newsletters, websites, events or marketing campaigns.

Conclusion

The Employability Framework is designed as a comprehensive and enduring support structure that stretches across the entire University. Three elements are key to its successful implementation and continuation, and a set of detailed recommendations has been developed by the Working Group to enable this process.

Firstly, we need to recognise, connect and extend current good practice. The consultations across the University leading up to this point have shown a rich set of examples of programs and practices supporting students in their employability development. Going forward, we need to ensure that we not only map and capture the many varied support practices but develop a University-wide cohesive narrative of how these practices support employability and make it easy for students to find and engage with the offers. We also need to ensure we make it easier for staff to exchange ideas, concepts, and formats. The Strategic Learning & Teaching Grants are an important contributor in this area as are the recently strengthened ANU Careers & Employability team who are partnering closely with teams in the curricular and non-curricular domain and develop organisational capability by connecting staff with current practice and initiatives through Communities of Practice for WIL and Employability.

Secondly, we need to create a solid foundation to track and evaluate how our efforts are having the intended impact. The ability to collect, analyse and share relevant and reliable data in a way that helps staff to continue what is working and adjust what is not yet working is critical and needs good governance and a commitment to a positive culture of evaluation across all domains. A number of IT and data infrastructure projects enabled by the ANU NPILF Pilot Program are already contributing to this element.

Finally, to ensure that the current and future recommendations can be implemented, the Employability Framework needs a mechanism that connects this program of work to strategy at the University level as well as local levels and, through appropriate governance structure and delegations, enables decision-making on prioritisation, evaluation, setting of future direction and resources.

It is recommended that under the sponsorship of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning & Teaching, LTC provide the governance and oversight of the ANU Employability Framework including enabling the implementation process and regular monitoring of progress against agreed milestones.