Student Employability Survey

With universities under increasing pressure to justify the additional financial burdens being taken on by students and their parents, graduate employability becomes an ever more important measure of a course’s value. Appropriate measures that an institution can put in place to track and develop employability skills amongst its students can therefore prove crucial.

The Student Employability Survey (SES) is an online questionnaire used by undergraduate and postgraduate students to assess their skills and their attitude to the world of work. The purpose of the SES is to identify the areas where a student is weak in order to put in place remedial action, helping to increase their chances of finding work in their chosen field.

Background

The SES has been developed in partnership with Exemplas (part of the University of Hertfordshire Group – see overleaf for details) to assess and then improve students’ skills. Key elements of the approach adopted are to explore students’ attitudes to employment and to identify how they can bring out and optimise their latent skills.

Development of the SES was based on the research work of the Council for Industry and Higher Education, and informed by the UCLan Employability Framework, as well as many years working with prospective employees and employers of all sizes and from all sectors.

SES can be provided as part of a bespoke service or a standalone tool. Please see overleaf for contact details to find out more.

There are three stages to the SES process:

• **Stage 1** – Completing the SES.

• **Stage 2** – Analysing the findings of the SES. This can be done at any level, from a whole institution down to individuals or groups of students. Exemplas can provide assistance with this work.

• **Stage 3** – Designing and implementing a programme to deliver employability skills to an individual or group of students. The size and nature of the support provided is determined by the findings of the report. Again, Exemplas specialises in this kind of work on behalf of institutions.
1 Completing the SES

The SES uses a web-based survey with questions organised into the following areas:

- About you
- Your current learning
- Your job ambitions
- Personal skills
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem-solving
- Research
- Project planning & evaluation
- Innovation
- Social & cultural awareness
- Subject skills
- Work experience/extra-curricular activities
- Reflection
- Career development
- Business skills
- Sector skills
- Support from your institution

Explanation is provided for each question, should a student be uncertain what it means. Students are encouraged to complete the survey in groups, ideally as part of their course/curriculum, but the survey can also be completed by students individually in their own time.

The SES can be carried out (and ideally should be carried out) at three key stages in a student’s career: when they first join the university, midway through their studies, and in their final year (preferably well before they leave). This enables any employability issues that they have (mindset/attitude and skillset) to be identified early so that interventions can be put in place. It also allows the university to track progress over the course of their university career and to assess the effectiveness of intervention programmes.

Extra questions can be added, eg relating to a particular employability or careers development initiative that a university has been running.

2 Analysing the findings

Since the survey’s findings can be broken down across a whole institution, within a school or department, at year group level, at course/degree level, or by individual students or groups of students, it is possible to create a highly cost-effective programme that targets a particular group of individuals to provide support tailored to their specific needs. For instance, the survey might identify that a group of students from a specific geographical area have weak communication and problem-solving skills. Based on that information, we would tailor a programme of workshops for that group to address those skills.

Instead of a university offering broad, untargeted support to all students, the SES enables it to provide specific support to much smaller groups of students who really need it. This more effective intervention is significantly cheaper and offers much better outcomes for students.

For more information, please contact us on 01223 350555 or at info@pearson.co.uk.

Exemplas has over 20 years of experience in helping organisations to change, grow and prosper by delivering advice, support, information and training solutions. The Exemplas Group also has an extensive record of successful higher education sector contract management, working in partnership with university clients to maximise the impact of funding and deliver robust, accountable value for money at strategic and tactical levels.