# Toolkit for Validation and Review: Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

Introduction  
  
This toolkit has been developed by the QMU Enterprise and Innovation Network in collaboration with the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement and academic colleagues with experience of validation and review. It builds on earlier work by LEAD in developing [a toolkit to support embedding EDI, Decolonising, and Sustainability](https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/resources-for-validation-and-review/) in curricula during the validation and review process.

The [QMU Student Experience Strategy](https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committees-regulations-policies-and-procedures/regulations-policies-and-procedures/student-experience-strategy/#:~:text=The%20QMU%20Student%20Experience%20Strategy%20is%20concerned%20with,students%20at%20our%20partner%20institutions%20around%20the%20world.) for 2021-2026 was produced collaboratively by the University and Students’ Union, involving students and staff. The strategy has five key priority areas, one of which is ‘Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship’ (EEE). A Strategy Delivery Plan has been developed to support translation into practice and is reviewed and revised annually by the Student Experience Committee. Actions listed for EEE are:

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| * Implement the Employability Strategy and Graduate Attributes across all programmes and wider student experience activities. * Support and encourage development of enterprise skills to foster employability and entrepreneurship in graduates. * Encourage creation of ventures with social impact through support and promotion of social entrepreneurship. |

These actions align with the University’s strategic commitment to enterprise and entrepreneurship within the wider picture of prioritising employability.

The terms employability, enterprise, and entrepreneurship can be interpreted differently according to context. This toolkit has been developed to help colleagues better understand these terms and the ways in which they interact, and to identify ways we can further, integrate them into our programmes.

Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

The [QMU Employability Strategy](https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/quality-enhancement-and-external-context/queen-margaret-university-employability-strategy/) for 2021-2026 “outlines the measures that the University will take to create an environment in which students will develop the skills and attributes that they will need to flourish in a rapidly changing labour market.” The Employability Strategy has the following target outcomes:

* **Attractive, Relevant and Market Responsive Academic Portfolio**: this should attract external partners and students, increase the place for work experience within programmes and increase graduate employment.
* **Innovation**: growth in graduate start-ups (number, range, and survival rates), as well as increases in both female staff and student entrepreneurs.
* **Seek out partnership and collaboration**: increased partnership working.

These are reflected in the [QMU Graduate Attributes](https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committees-regulations-policies-and-procedures/regulations-policies-and-procedures/graduate-attributes/).

Many people internationally belong to our community of QMU learners. Our priorities are strongly influenced by Scottish Government policies. Scotland values its place as part of an international community and its policies reflect this. QMU’s Employability Strategy and Graduate Attributes are relevant to all our transnational partners and should also be interpreted in the context of each partner.

There are many different priorities to address during the validation and review journey and this toolkit aims to support colleagues in gaining a rapid overview of EEE. It suggests key questions to consider and provides links to valuable resources.

This supports all programmes in aligning with national and institutional priorities and benchmarks that support student learning and employability. This toolkit also aims to facilitate streamlined and continuous cross-disciplinary learning and will be updated as practices develop.

This toolkit focuses first on Employability, and then on Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, providing:

* Overview
* Rationale
* Key questions for validation and review panels and teams
* References and further reading

The information in this toolkit may be all you need to help you identify existing practices in your programme that support EEE. It may help you to use language that highlights these practices to demonstrate your enactment of priorities relating to EEE. The toolkit may also be used to support further exploration and stimulate ideas for development within your programmes.

The toolkit was developed by QMU Enterprise and Innovation Network members, with support from critical readers – we are very happy to engage in conversations with individuals or teams to support further thinking if that would be of value to you. This network aims to support ongoing thinking and development relating to integration of EEE in curriculum through peer support and discussion. Staff are welcome to join by emailing [RKEDU@qmu.ac.uk](mailto:RKEDU@qmu.ac.uk).

# Support for Employability

## What is Employability?

A commonly used definition of employability in the context of higher education is “a set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes - that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy” (Knight and Yorke, 2003 in QAA, 2018 p. 8).

A key purpose of Higher Education globally is to enable and empower people to develop such achievements (Scandurra et al, 2023).

## Why does it matter?

Internationally, employability is valued by students, employers, and governments, which makes it a priority for higher education (Scandurra et al, 2023). Graduate skills and employability are highly prioritised by the Scottish Higher Education sector – identified as one of its key assets in an analysis for the British Council Scotland (Kemp and Lawton, 2021 p.16). This is driven at governmental levels, to enable people to enter employment and ensure that people have the best skills for current and future workforce needs. Universities Scotland (2024) explains that this focus on employability is embedded in graduate attributes and learning and teaching strategies across courses, disciplines and universities. They list different strategies that support this within curriculum, including provision of appropriate courses, consulting with employers, providing work-based learning in different forms, engaging stakeholders in learning, and encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting start-ups. This is driven through Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreements – commitments universities make relating to government priorities. In this case, universities commit to increasing leaver’s entry to graduate-level occupations and alignment with current and future market needs (Universities Scotland, 2024).

The employability skills needed internationally are influenced by context. QMU graduate attributes reflect a wide range of the skills described in the literature as valuable across many countries (Hasanuzzaman et al 2023). Teams participating in validation and review will need to explore the needs of their own programme in their local, national and international contexts.

## Key guidance and question prompts for teams and validation and review panels

The validation and review guidance notes advise that you communicate with the [Careers & Employability Service](mailto:careers@qmu.ac.uk) to ensure that appropriate support is embedded in your programme. They can also support the design of new programmes when exploring demand and seeking stakeholder involvement and can direct you to useful resources.

There are existing key questions in the validation and review checklists to support discussion between programme teams and panel members regarding ways in which Employability is addressed. It would be valuable to reflect on these questions during programme review and design.

The overarching question addressed is:

*Does the Programme prioritise employability across programme and module materials, learning outcomes, curriculum content and assessment design?*

Some indicative follow-up question prompts for both Teams and Panels to consider are suggested below.

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|  | **Yes** | **No** | **Where?** |
| Is there sufficient evidence of demand for the Programme? Please consider evidence of consultation with prospective students, the Careers and Employability Service, employers, or other evidence as appropriate. |  |  |  |
| Does the Programme satisfy the requirements of the [University’s generic graduate attributes](https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/committees-regulations-policies-and-procedures/regulations-policies-and-procedures/graduate-attributes/)?  *(QMU internal Panellists only)* |  |  |  |
| Are arrangements for Personal Development Planning and/or Career Development Planning clearly articulated and appropriate in the context of your programme? |  |  |  |
| Has there been consideration of the local, national and international context for employability in relation to the programme? |  |  |  |
| Do students have opportunities to engage in authentic assessment? |  |  |  |

## References and further reading

Engender (2016) ‘Unblocking the Pipeline: Gender and Employability in Scotland’, Edinburgh: Engender, Available at: [https://www.engender.org.uk/resources/Unblocking-the-Pipeline---Gender-and-Employability-in-Scotland.pdf](https://www.engender.org.uk/resources/Unblocking-the-Pipeline---Gender-and-Employability-in-Scotland.pdf#:~:text=Scottish%20Government%20de%EF%AC%81nes%20employability%20as%20%E2%80%9C%27the%20combination%20of,employment%20and%20to%20move%20on%20in%20the%20workplace.%E2%80%9D) (Accessed 23 September 2024)

Kemp, N., and Lawton, W. (2021) ‘Section 7 Distinctive Asset 5 A focus on graduate skills and employability,’ in: ‘Strategic analysis of the Scottish higher education sector’s distinctive assets: an update.’ British Council Scotland. P. 74.

National Union of Students and Confederation of British Industry (2011) ‘*Working towards your future Making the most of your time in higher education*’, CBI. Available at: [cdc\_academics\_cbi-nus-employability.pdf (ucd.ie)](https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/cdc_academics_cbi-nus-employability.pdf) (Accessed 23 September 2024)

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Tushar, H., and Sooraksa, N. (2023) ‘Global employability skills in the 21st century workplace: A semi-systematic literature review’, *Heliyon*, 9(11): e21023. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10637906/#bib12> (Accessed 23 September 2024)

Universities Scotland (2024) ‘*Giving graduates the skills they need*’, Available at: <https://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/bite-size-briefings/giving-graduates-the-skills-they-need/> (Accessed 23 September 2024)

A range of resources are hosted on the Enterprise and Innovation Network QMU SharePoint site.

# Support for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

## What are Enterprise and Entrepreneurship?

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA, 2018) produced guidance for UK Higher Education on enterprise and entrepreneurship education. This guidance defines enterprise as:

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| “the generation and application of ideas, which are set within practical situations during a project or undertaking. This is a generic concept that can be applied across all areas of education and professional life. It combines creativity, originality, initiative, idea generation, design thinking, adaptability and reflexivity with problem identification, problem solving, innovation, expression, communication and practical action” (QAA, 2018 p.7). |

The guidance explains that education can support the development of an enterprising mindset along with skills that enable them to identify a need, come up with ideas and translate these to action. This then supports employability.

The QAA (2018) goes on to define entrepreneurship education as:

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| “the application of enterprise behaviours, attributes and competencies into the creation of cultural, social or economic value. This can, but does not exclusively, lead to venture creation” (QAA, 2018, p.7). |

It is important to note that the word entrepreneurial does not always relate to starting a business. Sear and Norton (2021) authored Advance HE’s ‘Essential frameworks for enhancing student success: Enterprise and Entrepreneurship - A guide to the Advance HE Framework for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education.’ In this they explain that enterprise and entrepreneurship education “add value to the learner’s journey, whether they are interested in self-employment, starting their own venture or being enterprising when working for someone else in the private, public or voluntary and community sector” (p.2). This emphasises that learning to be enterprising and entrepreneurial can support people across a spectrum of employment types.

Advance HE (2019 p.4) has developed a valuable framework for enterprise and entrepreneurship education. In a guidance document, it is explained that each can be viewed as a state of being or a behaviour of being (Sear and Norton, 2021).

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|  | **Enterprise** | **Entrepreneurship** |
| **State of being** | An enterprise: a business or venture. | An entrepreneur: someone starting a business. |
| **Behaviour of being** | Enterprising: “attributes, behaviours and skills of someone who makes a positive, proactive and sustained difference to an organisation in its development and management” (Bridge and O’Neil, 2017 in Sear & Norton 2021 p.4). | Entrepreneurial: behaviours and skills used in different contexts and roles. |

## Why do Enterprise and Entrepreneurship matter?

Importantly, the behaviours of being enterprising and entrepreneurial have been identified as key employability skills for a wide range of roles. They are of relevance across the full range of QMU programmes and disciplines, even where they may not seem to be immediately relevant. For some programmes, the focus may be on helping students understand how they would be intrapreneurial within a wider organisation, such as the NHS Clinical Entrepreneurship Programme (2024). For others there may be more emphasis on ventures of different types (e.g. social enterprises, business start-ups and so on).

Internationally, entrepreneurship education has been identified as a key strategy for increasing employment, through job creation as well as developing key capabilities valued by employers (Ayob, 2019). This is evident in Scottish Government policies that focus on delivering better economic growth and international competitiveness. In their Strategy for Economic Transformation (Scottish Government 2022) one of the transformational programmes of actions relates to stimulating entrepreneurship.

Universities are involved in the programme of actions through the Scottish Government’s (2023) Entrepreneurial Campus Blueprint. This aims to “establish Scotland as a world-class entrepreneurial nation founded on a culture that encourages, promotes and celebrates entrepreneurial activity in every sector of our economy.” Higher Education Institutions have been given the key objectives of ensuring that every student and researcher receives education relating to enterprise and entrepreneurship, and normalising entrepreneurship as a valid career path for everyone. As for employability, these objectives are reflected in the Outcome Agreement between universities and the Scottish Funding Council, albeit the current approach to Outcome Agreements will be adjusted in 2024-25 with the introduction of the SFC’s Outcomes Framework and Agreement Model.

For students to recognise skills they are developing as enterprising and entrepreneurial and identify the relevance of these skills within their career development, it is important that programme teams use this language where appropriate.

## Key question prompts for teams and validation and review panels

Questions have been developed and added to the validation and review checklists to support discussion between programme teams and panel members regarding ways in which Enterprise and Entrepreneurship are addressed within the course. It would be valuable to reflect on these questions during programme review and design.

The overarching question addressed through these existing key questions is:

*Does the Programme prioritise Enterprise and Entrepreneurship across programme and module materials, learning outcomes, curriculum content and assessment design?*

Some indicative follow-up question prompts for both Teams and Panels to consider are suggested below:

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|  | **Yes** | **No** | **Where?** |
| Are there areas within the curriculum where students are encouraged to develop enterprising and entrepreneurial skills, mindsets and behaviours, and is this language used to describe them? |  |  |  |
| Are there examples in the programme of the potential for entrepreneurial career paths being discussed and normalised? |  |  |  |
| Are there any approaches/ practices/ examples that could be shared across QMU and (where applicable) our international partners? |  |  |  |

## References and further reading

Advance HE (2019) ‘*Essential Frameworks for Enhancing Student Success. Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education. A focus framework aligned to the Employability Framework*’, Available at: <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/advance-he/Framework%20for%20enterprise%20and%20entrepreneurship%20education_1573034408.pdf> (Accessed 23 September 2024)

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Ayob, A.H. (2019) ‘Entrepreneurship education, institutions and student entrepreneurship: a cross-country analysis’, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education,* 51(5)745-763. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2019.1673701>

Kornelakis, A. and Petrakaki, D. (2020) ‘Embedding employability skills in UK higher education: Between digitalization and marketization,’ *Industry and Higher Education*, 34(5) Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422220902978>

NHS Clinical Entrepreneur Programme (2024) ‘*Social Enterprise and Intrapreneurship*’ Available at: <https://nhscep.com/social-enterprise-and-intrapreneurship/> (Accessed 23 September 2024)

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Tuffee, R. and Little, J. (2023) The Entrepreneurial Campus. The Higher Education Sector as a Driving Force for the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem’, Scottish Government. Available at: [entrepreneurial-campus-2023-ross-tuffee-professor-joe-little-higher-education-sector-driving-force-entrepreneurial-ecosystem.pdf (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2023/06/entrepreneurial-campus-higher-education-sector-driving-force-entrepreneurial-ecosystem/documents/entrepreneurial-campus-2023-ross-tuffee-professor-joe-little-higher-education-sector-driving-force-entrepreneurial-ecosystem/entrepreneurial-campus-2023-ross-tuffee-professor-joe-little-higher-education-sector-driving-force-entrepreneurial-ecosystem/govscot%3Adocument/entrepreneurial-campus-2023-ross-tuffee-professor-joe-little-higher-education-sector-driving-force-entrepreneurial-ecosystem.pdf) (Accessed 23 September 2024)

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