



Scottish Registered Charity, no. SC019883

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION




EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY

2022 - 2024

CONTEXT



Under the current structure and priorities of the Students' Association (2021), 'Employability and Careers' falls under the remit of the Director of Student Development and Activities and the Director of Education, but there is a sustained lack of continuity in the Students' Association in these areas. This ultimately leads to the Association not knowing how to interact with students on the employability front. Frequently, elected officers and School Presidents are eager to coordinate employability events and skill building demonstrations, but lack support and long-term focus. Therefore, this document outlines what the Association wants to achieve through efforts regarding employability within the next three years (2022-2024) and why. The Students' Association will work in partnership with the University of St Andrews, the Careers Centre and ESMG working groups to reach the goals outlined in this strategy. Ultimately, this strategy will achieve more value and support for students working or engaging with the Students' Association, a greater sense of focus for the Association's staff and officers, a more comprehensive understanding and focus within the student body on employability, reduced pressure and anxiety within the student body regarding career or educational transitions, and a better representation of student needs to the University of St Andrews.



PURPOSE

The purpose of this strategy is to streamline the processes and efforts put forth by the Students' Association – in conjunction with the University – in order to foster student development, while simultaneously positioning the Association as a central component facilitating students' explorations of their own attributes and skills. The Students' Association has a commitment to help students navigate the working world after their time in St Andrews ends. We, as an Association, want all students' St Andrews experience to be one that equips them with the skills to put their education to good use, whatever form that may take. The strategy is important to showcase available options and support avenues for students, while collecting resources from University departments and relevant student groups to ensure that all motivations are student focused. This strategy can support the work of the Careers Centre and the University in helping students determine future steps in their academic and professional lives, building on existing work to forge meaningful links between current students, alumni and broader employment networks.

PURPOSE

While the University frequently consults the Students' Association for feedback and input, low engagement and a disjointed employability approach limits the scope of support that the Association can provide to students on this front. The Director of Education, the Director of Student Development and Activities and the Employability Officer tend to struggle to fulfil their remits without wider support and strategic guidance. The strategy is needed so that there are clearer goals on how best to support students. The Students' Association is a support system for the students of St Andrews and having an Employability Strategy demonstrates this care and investment in students' futures.

The utmost purpose of this strategy is to benefit the student body. This predominantly includes students who are not yet thinking about skills related to employability, students who do not know what the term 'employability' means, students who are engaged with the Students' Association, but do not understand how that links to employability, students who do not want to engage with the University due to previously negative experiences, students who are anxious about their career paths and are looking for extra support, and students who use the Association as their main contact and gateway to University services. We want all students to understand how to develop their employability skills, at whatever point in their student journey, and however engaged they are in activities beyond their immediate programme of studies.

**THE FOLLOWING PAGES
HIGHLIGHT THE KEY AIMS THAT
THE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION
WILL WORK TOWARDS BETWEEN
2022 AND 2024. THESE FALL
UNDER THREE KEY PILLARS:**

COLLABORATION

OPPORTUNITY

LONGEVITY



COLLABORATION

PSC PATHWAYS

Through the Professional Skills Curriculum, CEED can create specialised pathways for student groups to engage in. In previous years, the uptake of this has been low, primarily due to unfamiliarity by students. The Students' Association aims to work alongside CEED to better incorporate these specialised pathways into Union Subcommittees and student groups. This will, in turn, lead to more realised skill building opportunities and benefit the Association's student volunteers in their personal development.

GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

While the Graduate Attributes Scheme is a University led initiative, the Students' Association aims to support the Scheme through its links. Students are currently more aware of the Volunteering Portal than the Graduate Attribute Scheme. Working to create a more accessible Graduate Attributes platform and effectively publicising the opportunities that come with engaging in the Scheme will better benefit the student body and provide more clear transferrable skills from co-curricular activities at university to the application process.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The creation of this partnership serves to stimulate the Careers Centre and Students' Association to work more closely to jointly accomplish their goals. Students engage highly with the Students' Association, while the Careers Centre has the capabilities to provide expertise in the careers and employability realm, so this partnership will be mutually beneficial. A key objective is to mitigate the 'one-track future' mindset and offer a wide breath of opportunities, that are integrated into the Career Centre's model of advice.



ACTIONS

The Partnership is to be reviewed and edited on an annual basis, while also being accessible to representatives and students at large to view and understand what the partnership involves each year.

The Association will work with CEED to create PSC pathways for each Subcommittee. This should begin with the consultation of Association Councillors.

The Association will work directly with CEED and the University to include the Volunteering Portal into the Graduate Attributes Scheme to more efficiently and effectively convey the skills attained through students' time volunteering.

In addition, the Association's Sabbatical Officers and School Presidents will introduce this scheme in a more frequent manner, through regular inclusions in all-student correspondence, whilst making trainings on the Scheme's benefits more accessible to all students, rather than only Association Councillors.

The Students' Association will also work with the University to investigate the possibility of LinkedIn Attribute Badges - further incentivising the recognition of student development and skill building.



OPPORTUNITY

NETWORKING

Student feedback indicates that a gap between staff, students and alumni exist. The Association aims to work collaboratively with the University to build upon pre-existing systems and create a casual environment where students, alumni and staff can get to know each other. Whilst benefitting students' co-curricular development, networking will make use of Union space, benefit the Union commercially and financially and build upon goals outlined in the 2021-2022 Students' Association and Careers Centre Partnership Statement.

SUBCOMMITTEE EMPLOYABILITY

The Students' Association has the resources to provide more for students who choose to engage with it through unpaid student volunteering opportunities. While this notion contains a series of strands, this strategy primarily aims to target creating a more streamlined approach to allow students to more accurately and easily gather and transfer the skills and knowledge acquired while volunteering at the Students' Association.

'PRACTICAL' JOB OPPORTUNITIES

'Practical' job opportunities, such as careers in theatre, stage production, lighting and sound design, etc. are of interest to some St Andrews students but are not fully realised. Progression of this realisation will begin with an increase in advertising training opportunities for these career paths through Union Subcommittees and societies. This will provide more clarity on how to get involved with technical based student activities, increase engagement and aims to ultimately reflect positively on the student experience at the University.



ACTIONS

Alongside an increase in marketing, the Association will explore the benefits of hosting a hands-on Subcommittee “give it a go” session.

The Association also aims to work closely with the Music Centre, the Byre Theatre and Museums on this strand for wider University engagement.

The Association will work directly with the Careers Centre to support on campus internships relating to ‘practical’ job opportunities.

The Association, through its Sabbatical Officers, aim to provide reference letters to employers on behalf of all elected student officers directly line managed by that Sabbatical Officer. This act has the potential to not only value the time put in by student volunteers, but it can also make a direct impact on the students’ future.

Awards provided on behalf of the Association are to be reviewed annually, in order to best support and reward student volunteers.

In creating a series of networking events, the Association aims to liaise with School Presidents, Schools, the Careers Centre and the Development Office to make these a regular fixture.



LONGEVITY

CAREERS WEEK

In order to best and most effectively benefit students, the Students' Association aims to continue and expand upon its annual Careers Week – highlighting the possibilities, opportunities and pathways students can access upon entering the work force. In organising this Week, the Association aims to take a “student led, staff supported” outlook – working closely with professionals from Careers Centre.

GETTING IN TOUCH

Engagement on Facebook has steadily declined annually, as other social media platforms have become more popular and user-friendly. The target demographic for this strategy (predominantly unengaged students) does not partake in the employability opportunities offered enough, especially in lower years. The Association intends to vary its approach to social media marketing – covering a wide variety of platforms, in order to aim employability efforts across a wider target market.

STAFFING

The Director of Student Development and Activities (and to an extent, the Director of Education) is the single point of contact – and therefore failure – for all aspects of student development in the Students' Association. This is not a sustainable model and therefore jeopardises the services provided for the student body. This manifests itself as a substantial reason why students do not feel supported in areas such as entrepreneurship, volunteering and employability.



ACTIONS

The Association will voice support of the Principal's Office in the purchase of LinkedIn Learning for the University, therefore creating more varied platforms of careers-based engagement for students.

The Association aims to increase employability publicity on LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and other relevant platforms.

The Association's Sabbaticals, staff, and officers aim to lobby the Board of Trustees to employ a permanent member of staff to facilitate continuity on Association student development efforts and liaise directly with the University, promote opportunities and support students.

The Association intends to support Careers Week by programming a variety of events during the week and implement careers and employability support mechanisms and resources for students to access.



CONTRIBUTORS



This strategy is a result of a culmination of nine months of collaboration and feedback donated by the student body and student representatives of the University of St Andrews.

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