Senate 12.03.2026
Paper Code: SE2025.48

Queen Mary University of London

Senate

Paper Title	**Employability and Graduate Skills Strategy**
Outcome requested	To **note** the draft Employability and Graduate Skills Strategy
Points for Senate members to note and further information	SET has received the attached draft Strategy and endorsed its priorities and objectives, requesting that further detail is developed to clarify the management and governance mechanisms that will ensure the strategy is delivered successfully. The strategy was developed in collaboration with multiple stakeholders across academic and professional service units and will be supported with a review of the operating model which will conclude before SET receive the updated version in May.
Questions for Senate to consider	At this stage there are no questions to consider
Regulatory/statutory reference points	The strategy will be key in the next Teaching Excellence Framework exercise.
Strategy and risk	The strategy will be key in improving KPI 8 Graduate Outcomes
Reporting/ consideration route for the paper	No further consideration at this point
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Queen Mary University of London Employability and Graduate Skills Strategy 2026-30

Context

Queen Mary's Strategy 2030 vision is to open the doors of opportunity through excellence in education and research. This strategy commits QM to support all our students to obtain the careers to which they aspire. We recognise that the diversity of our student body means many of them face significant barriers to doing so, but as a result have more to offer society and industry. While our graduates often achieve the graduate level employment they seek eventually, it takes many of them slightly longer to do so than expected.

Our relationships with industry tell us that many employers are degree agnostic: it is the knowledge, skills and behaviours that Queen Mary students develop as a result of their learning and experiences at university (Graduate Attributes) that will make them employable and to stand out. Central to this are their Graduate Skills: their practical, demonstrable abilities, including, but not limited to:

- Communication (writing, presenting, listening)
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Creative problem-solving
- Reflection and goal setting
- Analytical reasoning

In an ever-changing environment we accept the responsibility to help our students identify the gaps in their Graduate Skills and develop them through active reflection on their learning and work experiences.

Since the publication of Strategy 2030, the wider economy and context within which QM operates has changed. This includes:

- The rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI), impacting the wider economy and graduate job market in unforeseen, and unforeseeable, ways.
- More than half of students now work nationally, up from 42% in 2020.[1]
- Record graduate job applications. In 2024, average UK employers received 140 applications per graduate job: a 59% increase on the previous year.[2] This has coincided with more students working part-time than ever before whilst studying.[3]
- An increasingly competitive student recruitment market, particularly for overseas students.
- A government focus on lifelong learning, skills and employability, and better articulation of the work of universities, their local communities and further education.

[1] [1] More than two-thirds of full-time students now undertake paid work during term time, major survey reveals - HEPI

[2] Record graduate job applications | ISE

[3] More than two-thirds of full-time students now undertake paid work during term time, major survey reveals - HEPI

- Regulation more sharply focused on student outcomes, including student employment, salaries, and reflections on students' ability to apply the skills they learned at university to the workplace.

Our commitment to support our students remains the same: to achieve the Strategy 2030 vision within a changed, and ever-changing, environment.

Our response

At Queen Mary, we know that education is about equipping our learners with meaningful, future-focused Graduate Attributes that align with the world of work and reflect their needs.

Within our first strategic period (2019-2025), we achieved much. This included being the first Russell Group to launch apprenticeships, scoring consistently well on graduate careers, and achieving a Silver overall, and in Student Outcomes, in the 2023 TEF exercise.

Queen Mary aims to deliver an outstanding, inclusive, world class education and student experience - delivered through its four pillars of excellence in education, student engagement, the learning environment and employability. This education and associated experiences are designed to support every student to develop the confidence, competencies and professional experiences to thrive in highly skilled employment, enterprise or further study.

Guiding principles to our approach

Whilst our strategic objectives may change in response to the external environment, these guiding principles will inform how we iterate our approach:

1. **Co-created and collaborative**: actively work with our students, staff and partners, including local employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, to leverage our global links, shape our provision and provide opportunities for students.
2. **Based on experiential learning**: students undertake an engaged learning process where they 'learn by doing' and reflect on the experience. 'Learning by doing' is a key component of our Active Curriculum for Excellence (ACE) pedagogy and ensures that students have an engaging, up to date education and access to opportunities to apply their learning in workplace contexts
3. **Reflective:** we ensure our students can articulate what a Queen Mary education and experience means for them, including the skills they have acquired through grounding in a solid knowledge base, and that they embody our graduate attributes in the world of work.

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Our strategic objectives

Objective 1: Employability and Skills embedded in the curriculum:

We know that the best way for our students to develop their Graduate Skills is as a direct part of their studies. Their circumstances often mean that accessing extra-curricular opportunities is not feasible. Graduate Attributes and employability are embedded in our degree programmes through our Employability and Skills Framework. Skills and career learning are assessed and credit bearing where appropriate.

Ambition: All programmes will have embedded the Queen Mary Employability and Skills Framework by 2028.

Objective 2: Meaningful experiential learning opportunities for all our students.

We know that the best way for students to test and enhance their Graduate Skills is through opportunities to apply them in workplace contexts. Our undergraduate and postgraduate taught students will apply their learning to real-world contexts through a range of experiential learning activities, rooted in ACE's 'learning by doing' approach and authentically assessed where appropriate.

Ambition: All students will have access to a range of experiential learning opportunities as part of the ACE delivery of their programme by 2028.

Objective 3: Employer, alumni, local and global partnerships at scale.

We know that the relationships we have with employers, industries and government are key to ensuring our graduates are fit for the modern workplace. We will provide opportunities for our alumni and employers, both local and global, to engage with our students, to broaden their employment opportunities, guiding our delivery via School Industrial Advisory Boards. We will work with our partners to capitalise on governmental and national Skills agendas and funding opportunities. We will harness the support of our global alumni and employer partners for careers mentoring, where appropriate.

Ambition: By 2030 we will have created more opportunities for students through deeper relationships with external partners and global alumni that contribute to our curriculum and positive student outcomes.

Objective 4: Professional skills and careers education for students.

We know that developing skills for the workplace is only half of the battle. Many of our students do not have access to support, guidance and opportunities through their own family and networks and as a result it can take them longer to get into graduate level employment. We will provide individualised, coherent career management support for our students and graduates that instils confidence and encourages commercial awareness and aspiration.

Ambition: By 2028 careers education will be embedded into the curriculum in every taught academic programme.

Underpinning these four objectives will be a robust evaluation and delivery plan.

We will utilise near to real-time dashboards to inform action and measure the impact of interventions through:

- **Use of employability dashboards, bringing together metrics that impact employment outcomes:** analyse participation, attainment, placement uptake, portfolio completion, skill self-efficacy, career-readiness progress, and award progress across student demographics.
- **Exit data:** capture whether students are in highly skilled work or further study when they leave QM to inform GOS nudging and our targeted graduate support offer.
- **Longitudinal tracking**: monitoring progress through the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS), including highly skilled and graduate voice questions, Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO), employer feedback, LinkedIn insights.[4]
- **Evaluation and impact**: publish annual Employability Impact Report based on on-going monitoring and evaluation; theory of change and mixed methods evaluation.

Our Strategic Objectives lead on from our commitment in the Active Curriculum for Excellence that students will 'learn by doing'.



[4] https://statics.teams.cdn.office.net/evergreen-assets/safelinks/2/atp-safelinks.html; Graduate Outcomes survey questions

Objective 1: Employability and skills embedded in the curriculum

Every academic taught programme will integrate the Queen Mary Employability and Skills Framework into each level of study. The Framework is in line with our Principles of Programme Design and Active Curriculum for Excellence (ACE) and outlines the steps to embed employability and skills within the curriculum. Five core principles underpin the Employability and Skills Framework, while categories provide structure for embedding employability into the curriculum through education activities. These categories are skills and graduate attributes surfacing, employer engagement and experiential learning, career management skills and reflective practice.

The five core principles are:

Within education activities:

- **Self-reflection** is key to enhance the development of Graduate Attributes. Learners must be supported to develop self-awareness, to reflect on learning and experiences, and to practice articulating their knowledge, skills and attributes.

- **Feedback** is essential for building confidence: Education activities will give learners opportunities to apply skills and receive ongoing feedback, with particular emphasis on formative activities to build confidence prior to higher stakes assessments.

Within curriculum design:

- **Progressive development** of skills and graduate attributes: A holistic, scaffolded programme-level approach is essential to support learners' progressive development of skills and graduate attributes across the years of their course.

- **Graduate Attributes and Skills** are made explicit from the outset of their programme. Our Graduate Attributes will be refined as part of the Curriculum Framework. The Graduate Attributes and transferable disciplinary skills developed through each module and across programmes are mapped and clearly signposted on QMplus, within module learning outcomes, within module handbooks and other learning materials. By graduation, every student will be able to articulate and evidence the Queen Mary Graduate Attributes that have been developed as a result of their grounded learning and experiences at university. Each Graduate Attribute will be supported by discipline-related skills that reflect the language used by employers.

- **Experiential learning:** All learners will have the opportunity to apply their learning to real-world contexts. All programmes will require learners to apply their academic knowledge and undertake 'learning by doing' as outlined in the ACE approach.

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Objective 2: Learning by doing for every student

Our ACE approach states that all students will 'learn by doing' as part of our pedagogy. In line with the Employability and Skills Framework, Queen Mary undergraduate and postgraduate taught students will apply their learning to real-world contexts through engaging with meaningful experiential learning. At Queen Mary, we define 'meaningful ' experiential learning as structured opportunities where students apply their academic knowledge to authentic problems and contexts, supported by preparation and reflection and authentically assessed where possible. The spectrum of experiential learning activities beyond our core pedagogy includes global or London-based placements, internships, live briefs, simulations, field trips, entrepreneurship activities, civic or research projects embedded into our programme curriculum.

Where possible these experiences will align with our university's civic mission, reflecting mutually beneficial collaborations with local businesses and the East London community in support of tackling issues important to our local communities and economy.

Objective 3: Employer, alumni and sector partnerships at scale

We will provide opportunities for our alumni and employer partners, who live all over the world and are leaders in a vast array of fields, to co-design curricula and engage with our students to broaden their employment opportunities.

We will establish an employer engagement infrastructure and processes that will maximise our external relationships, recognising most graduate roles are degree agnostic. This infrastructure will support the development of a coherent pipeline from discovery → experience → recruitment through:

- **Faculty/School Industrial and Employer Advisory Boards** to codesign curricula and projects. All Schools/Institutes will have an Industrial or Employer Advisory board, which will include relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies where possible and be chaired by an external member, who will meet with The Principal twice a year to ensure alignment with Strategy 2030.
- **A menu of mutually beneficial ways employers can actively contribute to curriculum delivery,** for example, as guest lecturers, capstone assessment sponsors, experiential learning partners, student start-up mentors or field trip hosts.
- **Inclusive talent pathways** with SMEs, startups, public sector and large employers, prioritising underrepresented sectors and groups and filling relevant skills gaps.
- Alumni and business partner **mentoring at scale**; including global and enterprise mentoring and reverse mentoring for staff by recent graduates.
- **Student enterprise activities** delivered in partnership with external funders and entrepreneurs. These can include incubator/accelerator pathways, founders-in-residence, students providing entrepreneurial training to members of the public or consultancy to real-life clients and a venture studio with challenge funds,.

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Objective 4: Professional skills and careers education

We will provide individualised, coherent career management support for our students and graduates that instils confidence and encourages commercial awareness and aspiration.

In line with our mission of opening the doors of opportunity, we will target our wrap-around professional skills and careers education first of all to our widening participation cohorts, as defined in our Access and Participation Plan, developing more digital resources to ensure no student is without support if they need it.

- **Careers education will be progressively integrated into the curriculum**: year by year scaffolded sessions within modules will reflect the EAST model (Explore career options, Acquire experience, Showcase skills and experience, Transition towards next steps). This includes entrepreneurship and intraprenuership education embedded where appropriate.
- **Targeted coaching and bespoke extra-curricular interventions**: for groups underserved in the labour market (e.g. targeted work-integrated learning, mentoring or networking programmes).
- **AI-augmented services accessible 24/7:** CV/cover letter drafting support, interview practice, psychometric test support, , ethically governed and human checked. **A targeted skills award for students underserved in the labour market:** by providing them with an opportunity to develop and gain recognition of their skills and experiences. We will repurpose our award-winning Student Consultancy Project to become a targeted skills award, providing student participants with meaningful work experience, an introduction to professional networks, professional development training, reflective support and a recognised award.

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Three-year delivery plan

Milestones

2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Objective 1: Graduate attributes and disciplinary skills to be surfaced and communicated to students at a modular and programme level in all taught programmes. **Objective 2**: Undertake a mapping exercise of existing learning by doing activity within the curriculum to establish a baseline. **Objective 3:** Establish Industrial and Employer Advisory Boards in all Schools and Institutes; Develop a a menu of mutually beneficial ways employers can actively contribute to curriculum delivery. **Objective 4:** Redesign the Student Consultancy Project to become a targeted Graduate Skills Award, helping those who achieve it to articulate their offer to employers; Conduct an audit and gap analysis of careers education currently being delivered in the curriculum, sorting by programme and level. This will serve as a baseline to expand in-curricular careers education delivery going forward. Create a new employability dashboard, bringing together metrics that impact employment.	**Objectives 1 and 2**: 50% students on taught programmes are undertaking learning by doing. **Objective 3**: Review and establish a coordinated employer, alumni and sector partnership infrastructure to oversee school and institute level partnerships. Establish a baseline of number of partnerships. **Objective 4**: First cohort of students awarded a targeted Graduate SkillsAward. 60% of students who successfully complete the skills award are from target groups or within our access and participation plan. 60% of programmes have careers education delivered within the curriculum. School-based employability data being reviewed, action plans established and monitored via new governance structure to ensure accountability.	**Objectives 1 and 2**: 100% of students on taught programmes are undertaking learning by doing. **Objective 3**: An increase in the number of employer, alumni and sector partners contributing to in-curricular delivery/programme design or extra-curricular opportunities. **Objective 3:** Alumni or business partner mentoring at 1,000 matches p.a., growing to 5,000 matches p.a.by 2030. **Objective 4:** Of students awarded the targeted skills award, 80% are from target groups or within our access and participation plan. 100% of taught programmes have careers education delivered progressively within each year of the curriculum.

Establish governance, oversight and reporting of the strategy to deliver a coordinated approach and accountability.		

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Measures of Success (KPIs)

Graduate Outcomes (GOS)	Participation and Attainment	Engagement and Partnerships	Quality and Satisfaction
• Highly skilled employment or further study (overall and by discipline) • **Graduate voice**: Improvement in performance on all GOS graduate voice questions. • Median salaries and underemployment rates (where available)	• % students completing the **Experience Guarantee** • % modules with authentic assessment mapped to attributes • Skills Award/Portfolio completion rates ('Student Consultancy Project) • Narrowing of outcome gaps (e.g., by POLAR, IMD, ethnicity, disability status, domicile)	• Employer designed projects; live briefs per programme per year • Number and diversity of partners; repeat partnerships year on year • Alumni and business partner mentor matches and satisfaction	• Student evaluations of employability learning • Staff engagement with CPD • External recognition (accreditations, TEF narratives, awards)

Five-year targets (illustrative, to be baselined 2025/26):

- +10pp uplift in highly skilled employment/further study (overall); no gaps >5pp between student groups.
- 90% programmes with capstone and two or more authentic assessments, delivered in partnership with an employer, aligned to graduate attributes.
- 80% of students completing at least one recognised in-curricular work experience; 50% gaining two or more.
- 90% of participating students completing the targeted skills award as part of the Student Consultancy Project

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Roles, Responsibilities and Governance

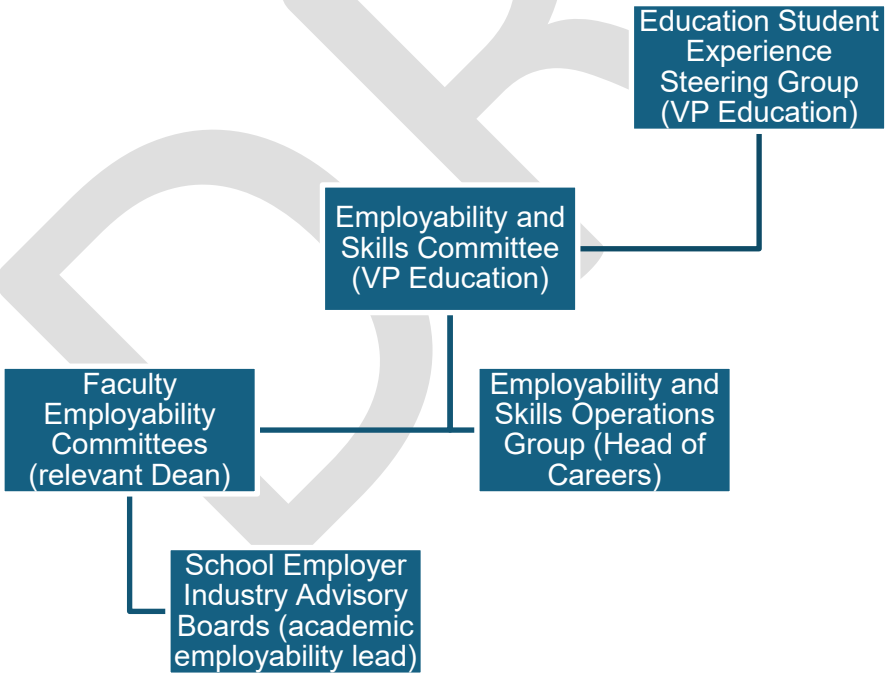
Employability and Skills Committee (VP Education to chair): oversees delivery; includes students' union, HR (employer perspective), alumni, employers. Reported via Education and Student Experience Enabling Plan

Faculty Employability Committees (relevant Dean to chair) monitor delivery of School and Institute Action Plans and Partnership Agreements.

School Employer and Industry Advisory Boards (school academic Employability Leads to support an external chair) ensure delivery of Action Plans, sign off partnership agreements, ensure alignment of curriculum with employer needs via the Queen Mary Employability and Skills Framework, oversee placement activities.

Employability and Skills Operations Group (Head of Careers to chair) develop a coordinated approach to PS operational support for delivering strategy's objectives. This includes bringing together teams that support employer engagement across the university and establishing and overseeing an employer engagement infrastructure and processes that maximise external relationships.

Senate (via Education Quality and Standards Board): owns standards for curriculum embedded employability and assessment.



Operational support provided by:

Department/team:	Operational support provided:
Careers	• Delivers careers education within the curriculum, targeted extra-curricular coaching and interventions, AI-augmented employability services, targeted skills award for students underserved in the labour market. • Develops School Partnership Agreements, providing bespoke consulting and data analysis to schools to support targeted actions both in and outside curriculum. • Contributes to feeding employers into the curriculum and delivering extra-curricular alumni and business partner mentoring programmes at scale.
Queen Mary Academy	Provides CPD for educators including support with curriculum design (e.g. 'learning by doing'), inclusive, authentic assessment and enhancement.
Planning	Develops employability dashboards and supports evaluation and reporting.
Development and Alumni	Contributes to sourcing alumni for employer engagement, partnerships and mentoring activities both in and outside the curriculum.
Governance and Legal Services	Provides support with processes and timelines involved in any curriculum change activity.

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