

Three steps to engaging students on their education-to-employment journey



One of the biggest shifts in Higher Education in recent years has been the challenge universities are facing to improve the employment outcomes of their graduates. For example, the Teaching Excellence Framework includes as one of its key criteria, “Evidence of longer-term employment outcomes and progression of graduates including into highly skilled employment.” The Office for Students, in the third of its four strategic priorities, states that, “We need to be sure that universities and colleges are doing all they can to secure positive outcomes for their students not just when they graduate but for years into a profoundly uncertain future”. Students themselves are also increasingly citing future employability as being very important in their university choice, and this is reflected in the conversations student recruitment teams are having with school leavers.

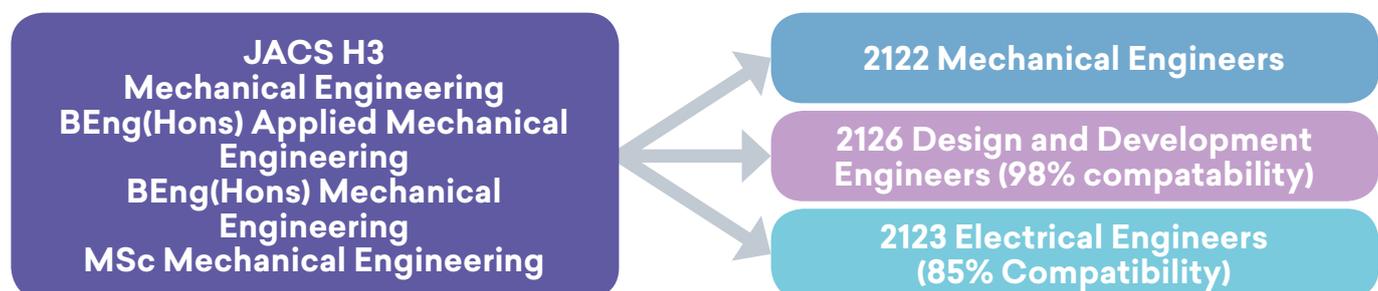
Along with a number of other external pressures – such as the Augur Review and the Graduate Outcomes Record – it is clear that universities are having to up their game to help their students achieve better employment outcomes. But how can this be achieved? Below are three steps that show how the use of good data can help your university do this.

1 Assess your current course areas

A fundamental part of improving employment outcomes lies in being able to show your cohort the range of possible careers that relate to the subject area they are doing or thinking of doing, along with employment demand associated with those occupations. By doing this, you can offer potential students a compelling reason to study at your university, and clear direction to those who do enrol, so that they are more motivated to complete their studies.

However, to be able to communicate meaningful data to students on employment demand, it’s important to have a clear mapping of programmes to occupations to then allow you to extrapolate relevant data. This can be done by mapping JACS/HECoS codes to related occupations in one of two ways: either to occupations, which are themselves classified by the Government under Standard Occupation Classifications (SOC codes), or to skills and then to the occupations that are most relevant to those skills. This second method is more complex, but it does allow for more diverse results, which may suit less vocational academic fields.

Just to give one example, the graphic below shows how Mechanical Engineering (JACS H3) can be mapped to three different occupations. One of these is Mechanical Engineers, which has 100% compatibility, but there are also other occupations that have a high compatibility, such as Design and Development Engineers and Electrical Engineers. In other words, by mapping your courses in this way, it is possible to come up with a “basket” of compatible occupations or skills, and having carried out this process, you are then in a much better position to understand the link between your provision and employment possibilities.



2 Link programmes to the employment landscape

Having mapped courses to a basket of occupations or skills, you can then map your provision to economic demand - either in your region or beyond - using Labour Market Insight (LMI). There are a number of metrics that can be gleaned from robust structural LMI as well as Big Data Analytics, which can enable your institution to engage prospective students and then guide them on their education-to-employment journey to sustainable, graduate-level employment. For example, the data can be used to answer the following questions:

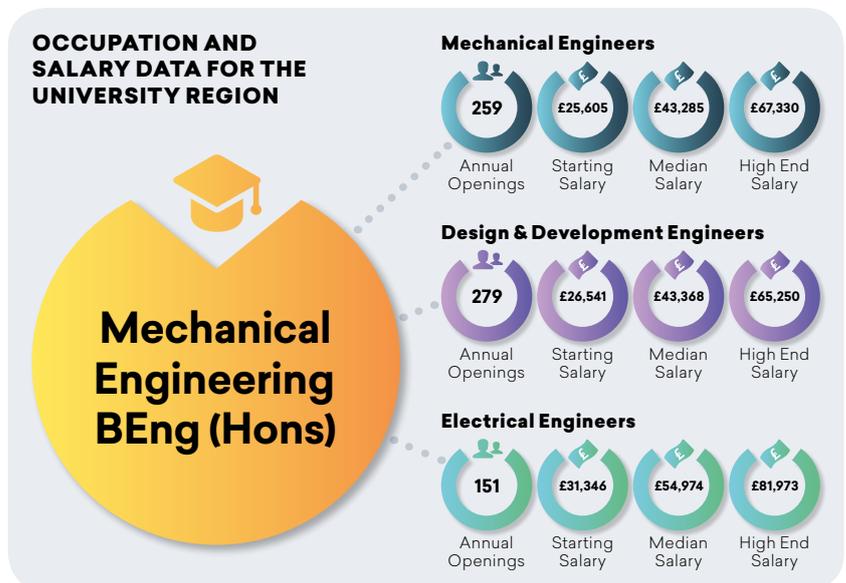
- **Job Openings:** How many current and projected openings are there for these occupations?
- **Salary Insight:** How much do these jobs pay at entry, median and upper-level?
- **Required Skills:** What are the hard and soft skills that are being demanded by employers?
- **Employers:** Which employers are currently hiring for these occupations?

By being able to answer these sorts of questions using solid data, you can really begin to help young people better understand their options, presenting your institution as a place that can help them achieve their career aspirations.

3 Communicate

The real value in completing Steps 1 and 2 is not in simply understanding how your courses relate to various occupations or skills, and how they ultimately relate to employer demand, interesting though this might be. Rather, it is in how this understanding can then be translated to present a career vision to your cohort. This is not about saying “doing this course will get you into that career,” but more about giving people good insight into the career options available to them, so that they can make more informed choices, and see clearly how enrolling on a course at your university can improve their employment outcomes. The key lies in communicating this message, and we have a number of data-driven online solutions, including a careers portal, an API and an infographics generator, which can help you achieve this. In particular, these tools can help you:

- **Promote** your university as a pathway to a sustainable graduate-level career, by using the data in very visual ways in your outreach activities, schools liaison and social media.
- **Connect** prospective students to your courses by integrating the careers data into your website, and then embed it into course pages and your student intranet.
- **Guide** your students into a sustainable career by giving them ongoing insight about available occupations related to their degree.



By using good LMI to engage your cohort in these ways, you can present them with a compelling careers vision, encouraging their enrolment in your courses, motivating them to continue in their studies, and guiding them on their education-to-employment journey into sustainable graduate employment.

To discuss how we can help you, contact us using the details below.