

## Meeting of the Finance, Planning and Resources Committee

4.00 pm on Tuesday, 3 November 2020  
via MS Teams

### Agenda

<i>No.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Presenter</i>
4.	Matters arising: Graduate Outcomes update	123 - 128	NL

**Date of next meeting**  
**4.00 pm on Tuesday, 2 March 2021**

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	INTERNAL
Paper title:	Graduate Outcomes (GO) Project Scope Document
Board/Committee:	Finance, Planning and Resources Committee
Date of meeting:	03 November 2020
Author(s):	Nicole Louis , Chief Customer Officer Sarah Moore-Williams, Dean of the School of Business Rosie Holden, Director of Student Services (Employability, Sport, Wellbeing and Residences)
Sponsor(s):	Nicole Louis, Chief Customer Officer
Purpose:	For Information
Recommendation:	The committee is requested to note the graduate outcomes project scope document.

### **Executive summary**

Following the publication of the 2020 Graduate Outcomes survey in June of this year, where LSBU's performance placed the university in the bottom 50% of HEIs, set against a target in the 2020 strategy to achieve top quartile, this paper sets out the approach to action planning to improve employability and graduate outcomes through initiation of a strategic project, sponsored by the CCO and jointly led by the Director for Student Services and Dean for the School of Business. The project, which will kick off w/c 26<sup>th</sup> October is positioned as part of the overall Student Support strategy deliverable area and will focus on five main areas of action, although these may be refined post-project initiation.

1. Understanding the nuances of the graduate outcomes performance data to provide clear insight informed decisions for targeted interventions
2. Improving employability support which is embedded within the curriculum including professional and common skills development, employer engagement and assessment
3. Expanding opportunities for students to participate in work experience (domestic and international) in an effective way, with embedded support and monitoring of placement quality
4. Designing a structured support programme from LSBU alum for mentoring and guidance of target cohorts
5. Quick wins: Optimisation of the GO campaign to maximise returns and outcomes for the next GO cohort where interventions can still be made

# Improving Graduate Outcomes

## Project Scope & Cross Functional Working Group

### Approach

To improve the performance of graduate outcomes as measured in the annual GO benchmarking survey, the proposal is to initiate a cross functional working group to oversee a clear approach to driving more successful outcomes across courses and subject areas which perform poorly in relation to graduate outcomes. The working group would be jointly lead by a Dean and the Director of Student Services who has direct line management of the central Employability and Placements team. The project will be sponsored by the Chief Customer Officer and overseen by the Group Executive members who are overseeing step-changes in outcomes across GO, NSS & Portfolio Review (Pro-Vice Chancellor Education, Pro-vice Chancellor H&SC, Chief Customer Officer, Provost)

The project team will focus on five particular areas of work:

6. Understanding the nuances of the graduate outcomes performance data to provide clear insight informed decisions for targeted interventions leading to improvements
7. Improving employability support which is embedded within the curriculum including professional and common skills development, employer engagement and assessment
8. Expanding opportunities for students to participate in work experience (domestic and international) in an effective way, with embedded support and monitoring of placement quality
9. Designing a structured support programme from LSBU alum for mentoring and guidance of target cohorts
10. Quick wins: Optimisation of the GO campaign to maximise returns and outcomes for the next GO cohort where interventions can still be made

### Analysis to Prioritise Interventions

#### GO Data Drill Down

Currently available detailed GO data analysis is at the very highest level (school) and is internally and externally benchmarked. Our starting point for targeted interventions will need to consider GO analysis at subject and course level to identify the courses (or subjects) whose performance has had the greatest impact on institution wide GO outcomes in terms of below benchmark performance. Within this analysis, we would look at both the GO % outcome and cohort size, prioritising the 'bottom 20' courses or subject areas with the largest cohorts... As a comparator, we would also propose to focus on the top 20 courses or subject areas in terms of GO success, excluding these where the cohort size is too small to be meaningful. We would exclude from this benchmark pre-registration courses in the Institute of Health and Social Care which by their nature, lead to direct graduate level employment.

When prioritising interventions at a subject level, we will consider the current OfS guidance in relation to Condition of Registration B3 and target subject areas with positive GO outcomes which fall between the 35%-50% level which the OfS categorise as being 'of concern'. Whilst this OfS categorisation

currently applies to provider level outcomes, it would be sensible to apply our focus at subject level in advance of this monitoring requirement coming in to place.

We would also require the analysis to interrogate GO performance against different student demographic profiles to provide insight on any other notable variances including race, gender, (dis) ability etc., to help prioritise horizontal interventions across subject levels.

#### Understanding the Labour Market

In addition to interrogating GO performance outcomes, it will be important to understand the local labour market and how this impacts graduate level opportunities. The GO benchmark analysis is not regionalised and the opportunities for employment in specific professional areas directly linked to university degrees could be an influencing factor. Once the subject / course level GO analysis is complete, we would look to understand any changes in employer demand for the roles most closely associated with these areas of study.

### **Improving Employability Embedded Within the Curriculum**

#### Course Evaluation

Focusing on the bottom 20 courses / subject areas, we will initiate a review of the curriculum at individual course level to identify how we can enhance graduate outcomes through embedded employability. This will consider the development of the core skills required within the professional discipline, the development of common skills that support positive graduate outcomes, the opportunity for employer related projects, the opportunity for placement based work experience and the assessment framework (potentially using the TESTA model). The course level review will be set against a best practice criteria relevant to the course / subject area.

#### Peer Review

Whilst Course Directors and Heads of Divisions would be asked to self-evaluate the curriculum through the lens of embedded employability, this should be enhanced with peer review, ideal from Course Directors who represent courses with the most successful graduate outcomes.

#### Engagement with Employers

The future employability model needs to ensure that we have deeply establish links between industry and specific employers for all courses, but as an immediate priority, for those courses and subject areas which are performing poorly in relation to GO. The employer engagement model in place at the University Technical College is a good example of how formal industry partnerships can advance and distinguish a curriculum, as well as create richer opportunities for students. The project will need to evaluate the current approach to employer engagement across the targeted subject areas and courses, make recommendations for improvement as well as to help establish formal partnerships, leveraging LSBU's industry or alum network. Consideration should also be given to how employer panels could be established as a mechanism to review and enhance the curriculum for specific subjects, to ensure that the focus on skills development is contemporary with the needs of the sector. The panels could be used to support curriculum development across the wider group.

#### Course Re-design

Following each course evaluation, a clear set of actions for curriculum enhancement or course re-design will be identified and these should be fed into course management process. Graduate Outcomes will be available within the Course Management Report being developed by the central

planning team to support end of year course evaluation. We should consider how the review sits alongside or as part of the annual end-of-year course evaluation process undertaken within each school.

## **Expanding Opportunities for Placement & Work Experience**

### Placement Operating Model & Resources

The current LSBU placement model is a mix of central and local delivery. Where there is a professional requirement embedded within the course, we have good placement management and support delivered by course teams who organise, monitor and quality control placement delivery, supported by student administration (examples Health and Social Care and Education). For all other areas, the provision is ad-hoc with pockets of good practice and some embedded specialist resources (i.e. School of Business) and pockets of weak practice with no dedicated resource.

Often it is the case that students are required to source their own placements and are not provided with any support to take up the placement. In these cases, placement monitoring is inconsistent. The central placement team in Student Support has two placement officers which means that the central resourcing model has not been designed or resourced to deliver the scale of placements or work experience that we would want LSBU students to have access to. A previously stated claim is that all LSBU under-graduate students would have the ability to participate in a placement or work experience as part of their study, however the current resourcing model is not designed around this ambition. It will be important for the project to identify the future target operating model for placement and work experience support and the resource requirements associated with this model. In Place – Placement Management Software

LSBU has invested in placement management software called 'In Place' with the central team providing training and support to schools on the use of the software, combined with targeted support to specific schools based on a presumed priority. It will also be important for the project to identify how we are going to embed the use of In Place and make the use of the software compulsory to help improve the management and monitoring of placement take-up.

## **Alum Mentoring & Guidance**

LSBU does not have a formal mentoring programme which leverages the support of alum or employer sponsors, but pockets of good practice may exist in the university where relationships with alum have been leveraged by academics to support students. The visibility, scale or impact of any informal mentoring arrangements is unknown. As part of this project, we will more tightly define specific requirements for alum support and mentoring directly focussed on areas of study and student cohorts where we are seeking to improve graduate outcomes. Support will be provided by the Alumni & Relations team working in close partnership with the Employability and Placements team.

## **Continuous Improvement of the GO Survey Campaign**

Building on the approaches taken during the first and second GO survey campaigns, we need to continue to identify ways to improve the effectiveness of the survey returns through engagement with alum, guidance to students focused on preparedness to complete the return, plus tactical interventions around short term employability and training. Increasing the proportion of students who complete the return will also be important

## Summary of High Level Project Deliverables & Boundaries

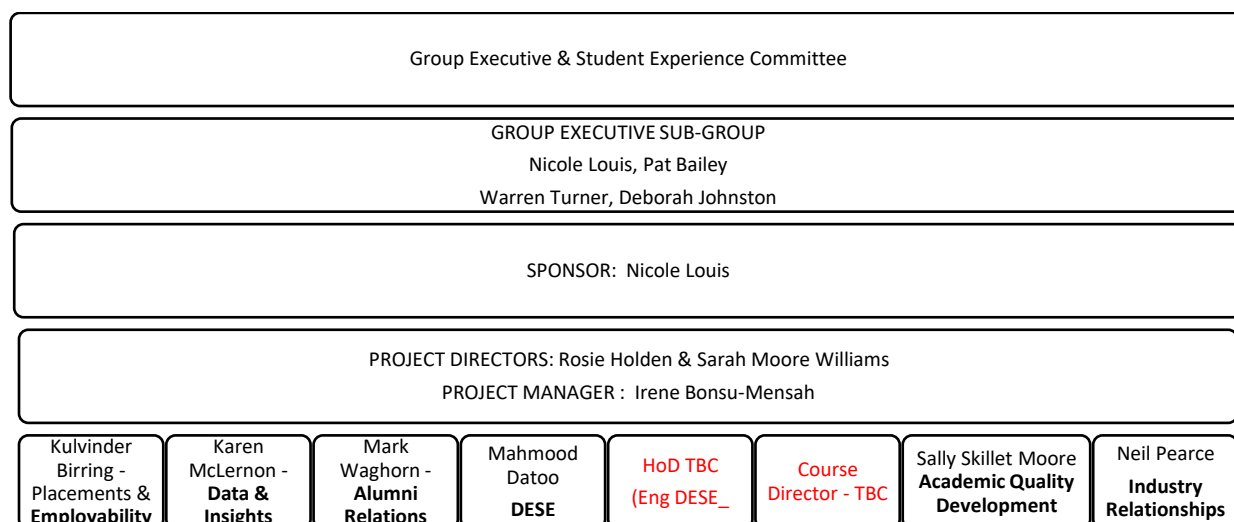
### Near Term Actionable

1. Detailed analysis driving insight and recommendations for GO prioritisation to achieve KPIs including identification of the most important courses for priority intervention in order to influence GO
2. Interventions & action planning for high priority courses, possibly focussing on Levels 5 & 6
3. Embedding the use of In Place as compulsory across all schools / courses / subjects
4. Near term programme of alumni support for priority cohorts

### Mid Term Actionable

1. Implementing required enhancements to course provision focussed on deeply embedding employability
2. Target operating model for university wide placement, work experience sourcing including approach to large scale B2B cultivation
3. Design of longer term model for alumni support including scope for mentoring programme

## Project Structure & Governance



### Next Steps

- Analysis requirement given to central planning – w/c 12<sup>th</sup> October or w/c 19<sup>th</sup> October
- Project initiation meeting w/c 26<sup>th</sup> October
- Agreement on near term action plan post initiation meeting

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