



ESSEX INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

# Employer Engagement Strategy 2012-2015

## 1.0 Background

1.1 This strategy sets out the College's values and aims with regard to its development of work with Employers. This is in recognition of Government policy drivers and local needs including funding strategies, reports and legislative initiatives and the general agreement in higher education that there are key benefits for the student, college and employer by collaboration.

1.2 The purpose of this strategy is that it:

- Will provide an understanding of how the College currently engages, and intends to engage with employers over the 3 year duration of this strategy.
- Can gauge the success, or lack of it, and determine which are the better methods of employee engagement that suit the needs of the students of the college
- Challenges staff to translate collective values into collective practice
- Provides clarity of purpose and practice for all stakeholders
- Promotes consistency and a shared vision of good practice across the College
- Provides staff with a series of guidelines to inform developments in employer engagement

### **Benefits for the College**

- Improves teaching and learning of non-vocational as well as vocational programmes
- Improves number and quality of applications from prospective students, given the high priority placed on their future employability
- Provides opportunities for sponsorship, work placement opportunities, content for enquiry and problem-based learning activities, as well as networking and research contacts for staff and students.

### **Benefits for students**

- Provides a work-relevant and challenging curriculum and the opportunity to develop soft skills and business acumen
- Enhances graduate employability, particularly where prior relationships between employer and student have been built, for example through placements



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### **Benefits for employers**

- Provides opportunities to promote work-relevant curriculum content
- Raises profile and helps secure a source of employable highly educated and vocationally aware graduates (of the College)

### **Types of Engagement**

The College intends to engage with employers in 7 key areas, and as time progresses, these will be of equal input and value.

1. Work related Learning
2. Employability Modules
3. Employers in the Lecture Room
4. Employer Advice on the Curriculum
5. Work Based Learning
6. Mentoring
7. Sponsorships and Scholarships

#### **1. Work Related Learning**

Learning at College based as closely as possible on real work situations and encompassing teaching methods such as case studies, projects, study visits and simulated work environments.

### **Benefits for Students**

- Application of discipline theory and knowledge to practical problems
- Development of problem solving and decision making skills
- More challenging and energising curriculum
- Wider range of relevant experiences to draw on for job interviews and easier transition into the workplace

### **Benefits for the College**

- Creates the conditions for students to encounter challenging situations in a controlled manner.
- Teaching environment can be structured to enhance the learning, improve reflection or focus on particular learning outcomes and assessment tasks in ways not possible within the workplace
- Provides realistic experiences that could not logistically be made available in sufficient numbers in actual work places.



## **2. Employability modules**

Modules specifically addressing employability issues that could include student identity, the nature of the graduate labour market, career choice, self-efficacy, self-awareness, skills development, job seeking, enterprise and entrepreneurship and critical exploration of the concept of 'career'.

Employability modules can be combined with content on Personal Development Planning, lifelong learning, study skills, work placement preparation or reflection and professional development.

### **Benefits for Students**

- Opportunity to focus exclusively on inter-relationship between qualification, self and future plans
- Time is set aside within the curriculum for employability issues
- Future plans can be explored in dialogue with College and the Careers Advisory Service (CAS)
- Opportunity to reflect on own ideas as part of a structured process

### **Benefits for the College**

- Natural opportunity for employer/alumni presentations
- Intellectual space for employability-relevant aspects of the qualification to be drawn together
- Team teaching with CAS and/or other departments and services within the College

## **3. Employers in the lecture room**

Outside speakers working with academics to deliver lectures or assess activities.

### **Benefits for Students**

- Understanding of how skills and knowledge are used in the work place
- Information from the 'coal-face' about opportunities within a sector
- Insider's view of competitive business environment
- Current knowledge of developments in a sector

### **Benefits for the College**

- Theory augmented by relevant experience
- Industry standards to assess student work
- External expertise in skills training
- Teaching variety



#### **4. Employer advice on the curriculum**

For in-depth dialogue between the College and selected employers.

##### **Benefits for Students**

- Curriculum informed by a culture of relevance
- Increased access to placements, prizes etc.

##### **Benefits for the College**

- Sounding-board for new ideas
- Confidential employer and industry insights
- Feedback on module content and delivery
- Discussion of research opportunities
- Set curriculum discussions within a wider context
- Provides a structure for maintaining durable relationships at a senior level
- Possible financial contributions

#### **5. Work-based learning**

A range of activities that take place within a work setting, including: placements, work experience and some forms of volunteering, providing scope for application of subject understanding and exercise of graduate level skills.

##### **Benefits for Students**

- Improved motivation to study
- Practical application of their subject area
- Experience of dealing with ill-structured problems
- Helps them decide what they do/don't want to do when they graduate
- Greater confidence
- Development of interpersonal skills and enhanced employability
- Accumulating experience which may be desirable/essential for work or further study

##### **Benefits for the College**

- Placements enable the College to offer learning experiences not available 'in-house'
- More attractive offer to some potential applicants
- Increasing applications from prospective students looking for qualifications that include work-based learning.
- Improved employability and employment of their graduates



## **6. Mentoring relationships**

A long term relationship between a more experienced person (in employment), and a student, to help the latter develop in their understanding of the world of work.

### **Benefits for Students**

- Individual personal attention
- In-depth insight into a particular organisation, its culture and area of work
- Role model and encouragement
- Networking opportunity that may assist with finding a job
- Helps students understand what employers are looking for
- Advice on knowledge and skills employers require and how to demonstrate them

### **Benefits for the College**

- Powerful means of building links with alumni and involving them in the life of the College
- Offers alumni a non-financial way of contributing to the College
- Mentoring can run alongside normal timetable commitments
- A flexible and time efficient way of linking students to the workplace that does not require days or weeks of off-campus attendance

## **7. Sponsorship and scholarships**

The provision of financial support for students towards study costs, often including opportunities for paid work placements as part of the course or during vacations/holidays.

The provision of financial support to the College for academic prizes and awards, equipment, facilities or events.

Scholarships are often used by companies to attract more students to a specific qualification discipline in order to secure a supply of suitably qualified future applicants.

### **Benefits for Students**

- Additional funds and work placements/vacation opportunities
- Opportunity to demonstrate academic achievement through competing for prizes

### **Benefits for the College**

- Kudos from endorsement of the courses by external bodies
- Improved ability to attract high calibre applicants
- Funds for added value extra-curricular events
- Companies involved with sponsorship and scholarships also tend to lend their support to education by attending open days and generally supporting the College in other ways.