

Employer Engagement



Employer engagement initiatives support links between higher education sectors and employers so that the programmes offered at HEIs meet the higher skills needs of employers.

Since 2003 the Government, through its two White Papers on Skills (2003, 2005)¹, has promoted the need for further and higher education to become more responsive to employers. This has resulted in a stronger focus on involving employers in enhancing learning and teaching through, for example, the expansion of Foundation Degrees and closer working with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs).

Leading on from this, the 2006 Leitch Review of Skills emphasises the need to increase the number of employees attaining higher level skills and recommends that a proportion of HE funding be delivered through demand-led mechanisms. Whilst noting that universities are responsible for developing and delivering their own courses, it points out that employers and their SSCs will have to develop direct relationships with universities in order to influence content.

HEFCE, in responding to the Employer Engagement agenda, have made funding available to the HE Academy to pump-prime a number of development projects involving the Subject Centres and relevant SSCs. This will enable the building of longer-term strategic relationships for the benefit of their respective communities and will support HE institutions to respond to identified workforce development needs by developing discipline specific practice.

Resources

The final report of the *Leitch Review of Skills* and supporting documentation is available to download, along with a number of responses to the report, which have now been published, including comments from the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (NESTA), and from EDEXCEL, links to which are available at <http://www.materials.ac.uk/employers/index.asp>

In addition to Leitch, the *Materials Innovation and Growth Team* (IGT) was launched in early 2005 whose primary purpose was to define a Materials Strategy for the UK, enabling the country to optimise the benefits that materials technology can bring. Its approach included representatives from the materials producing and using industries and the Government, and aimed to secure agreement on a shared vision for the future of an industry that employs over four million people in the UK. Importantly, a task group within the Materials IGT focused on recruitment and education of new entrants to the industry and the training of the existing workforce. A link to the full report and a useful summary can be found at <http://www.materials.ac.uk/features/growthstrategy.asp>

¹ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/index.cfm?fuseaction=content.view&CategoryID=6>

How can we help?

UKCME can help by:

- Supporting and helping facilitate interaction between employers and institutions;
- Promoting existing good practice throughout the community;
- Offering resources and advice for employers: <http://www.materials.ac.uk/employers/index.asp>
- Running an awareness-raising workshop in your Department, Faculty, School or College.

Contact Us:

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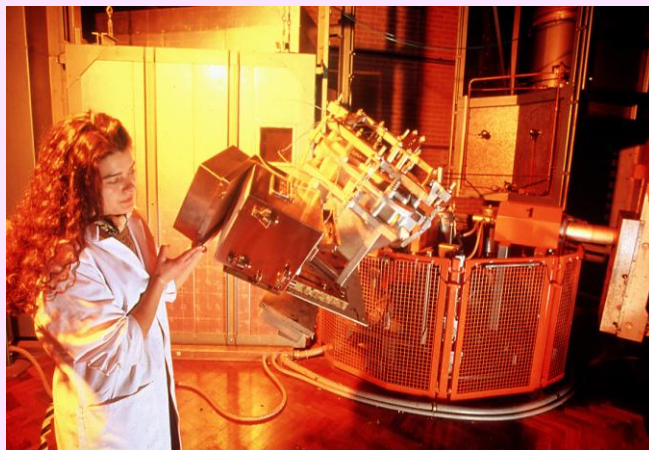
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Higher Education Academy Resources

- The work of the Academy focuses on research, policy debate and support related to current government agendas, with an over-arching primary focus on enhancing the quality of the student experience of work-based learning in higher education. Further details can be found at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/engagement>



- The Engage Project, funded by the HEA, sought to open and facilitate a dialogue between Employers and Engineering, Physical Sciences and Materials Academics in Higher Education. Details of the project are available at <http://engage.lboro.ac.uk/>. A number of useful resources were produced during the life of the project, which culminated in a conference in London in January 2008. A series of case studies of existing successful employer-institution relationships have been detailed, university contact lists for employers created and a guide for employers on how to work effectively with universities developed. Full details and all the outcomes of the project and conference can be found at <http://www.engsc.ac.uk/engageconf/>