



# FOCUS ON: GRADUATE SKILLS

## What did we want to know?

With debate on apprenticeships and skills high on the agenda in higher education, Focus On: Graduate Skills was relevant and timely. This project built on our previous work, including the Graduates for the 21st Century Enhancement Theme. We identified relevant topics in ELIR Outcome Reports and our Thematic Report on Employability and Graduate Attributes.

You can find ELIR Outcome and Thematic reports on the QAA Scotland website. Search for Enhancement-led Institutional Review.

We consulted Scottish higher education institutions and students' associations who identified the following priority areas:

- **Readiness for Employment:** How can we most effectively embed skills inside and outside the curriculum, including digital skills, for graduates from all disciplines?
- **Equality and Diversity:** How can we support students from all backgrounds and with all characteristics to develop skills that will help them to secure and sustain success to the workplace?
- **Global Perspective:** How do we ensure that all Scottish graduates are enabled to live and work in a global society, and that the Scottish sector is informed by global developments?



# SHARING PRACTICE AND SHAPING STRATEGY

## What did we do? Our events...



### Sharing practice event

This event was designed to enable colleagues to share ideas and practice, and to provoke debate and reflection around graduate skills development in higher education in an open and supportive environment. It was attended by around 100 delegates including staff and students from institutions in the UK and around the world, along with representatives from sector bodies.



### Shaping strategy summit

This event was an opportunity for a multi-stakeholder dialogue on the future of graduate skills in Scotland; our approach in an international context; the future challenges we face; and our readiness as a sector to meet these challenges and take action. We were joined by 60 delegates including institutional policymakers, international speakers, sector agencies and representation from the Scottish Government.

## What did we learn?

Delegates at these events said that HEIs should:

### Work in partnership

- Advocate for students by promoting a clear, compelling and confident vision and narrative about Scottish higher education's contribution to the national skills agenda
- Continue their commitment to working with students as partners by including students in the design, delivery and evaluation of skills development opportunities inside and outside the curriculum
- Do more to engage business and the local community
- Work to create a continuum of skills development with greater connections between school, further and higher education

### Promote diversity

- Develop skills for life not just for work by developing intrapreneurial and entrepreneurial mindsets
- Encourage the development of skills for sustainability and social enterprise

### Ensure flexibility

- Consider flexibility in curriculum design to encourage work-based skills development
- Commit to institutional strategies and processes that allow for flexible and agile approaches to skills development
- Review approaches to pedagogy and institutional culture to build skills in confidence, resilience, digital literacies and metaskills

You can read more about these events on our website, including Wakelet presenting Tweets, photos and links from the events.  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/focus-on](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/focus-on)

# Focus On: Graduate Skills

## SHARING PRACTICE



@visualminutes @QAAScotland  
www.morethanminutes.co.uk

Visual Minutes by Chris, Claire & Rowan

# GENERATING NEW INSIGHTS

## What did we learn?

As part of Focus On: Graduate Skills, QAA Scotland commissioned two research reports on the views of current students, graduates and employers about the skills students develop in Scottish higher education institutions.

### Focus On: Graduate Skills Research Reports

Students' Views



Graduate and Employer Views



The projects present a positive picture:

- Most students agreed their experience had equipped them with a broad range of skills and 77% of graduates and 80% of employers expressed the view that students had the skills needed to prepare them for the workplace
- 81% of graduate respondents felt their HE experience had enabled them to develop digital skills
- Students felt comfortable in their ability to understand cultural differences, and to interact and communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds

These reports ask Institutions to consider how they might:

- increase the availability, range and flexibility of work-related learning experiences in all disciplines
- review the availability, promotion and flexibility of international experiences and placements
- offer greater recognition for the development of digital skills
- support students in career development and foster greater awareness of employer expectations
- minimise barriers to participation among relatively disadvantaged groups

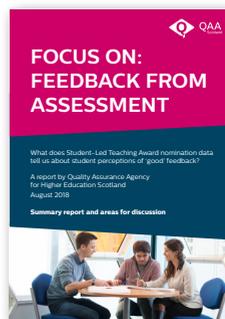
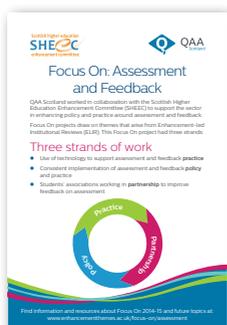
For full reports and summaries visit the QAA Scotland website, and search for Focus On Graduate Skills.

# PREVIOUS FOCUS ON PROJECTS

## Are you using our resources?

- Assessment and Feedback (2014-15)
- Collaborative Activity (2015-16)
- Institution-led Review (2016-17)
- PGR Student Experience (2016-17)
- Feedback from Assessment (2017-18)

Visit our website to access these resources. Search for Focus On.



## Share your success!

Let us know if you are using these resources from these projects.

## QAA SCOTLAND FOCUS ON

QAA Scotland Focus On projects help higher education institutions and students' associations work on topics emerging from Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR).

Focus On projects last one academic year and link these outcomes with developmental activities, resources and events which the whole sector can get involved in. We try to focus on the most practical things we can do, that are timely and helpful, and can help colleagues make a difference in a short space of time.



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