

## DkIT EMPLOYABILITY STATEMENT

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## 1 Version Control and Change History

<b>Version Control</b>	<b>Date Effective</b>	<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Amendment(s)</b>
1	08/10/2021	Academic Council (AC:DOC:177:10:01)	Initial approval of the DkIT Employability statement.

# DKIT EMPLOYABILITY STATEMENT



## INTRODUCTION

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) is the leading higher education institute in the North Leinster-South Ulster region and has earned an international reputation for first-class teaching, outstanding research, and innovation. DkIT graduates are highly employable.

Over 94% of our graduates are in employment or further studies within a year of graduation. For over 50 years, we have produced leaders in business, industry, the public sector, and not-for-profit organizations. Our graduates achieve intellectually, professionally and personally and are highly sought after by employers. We attribute this success to the value we place on employability as an institute, ensuring our programmes provide an education of the highest standard.

Providing learner-centred graduate-focused higher education and craft apprenticeships to approximately 5,200 students across four Academic Schools of Business & Humanities, Engineering, Health & Science, and Informatics & Creative Arts, we are placed to meet the changing needs of society and the economy. More than half of DkIT's courses offer work placement opportunities, providing students access to a professional setting in their chosen field. Grounded in practice, our graduates possess the work ethic and resilience to cope in a changing, technology-enabled world.

Employability is built into our Strategic Plan 2020-22, promising existing and prospective students an educational experience guaranteeing they will fulfil their career potential. We are committed to meeting the expectations of government on graduate skills, employability and economic

growth. That is why we have rolled out our bespoke **Employability Model** and **Graduate Attribute & Employability Mindsets Framework**; to ingrain the skills, attributes and qualities affording our graduates a lifelong opportunity to chart their way to their careers, even the ones that do not yet exist.

## **Our Promise**

This **Employability Statement** outlines our embedding employability directive; seeking to strengthen our educational and student services provision through employability best practice development institute wide. It outlines a model of employability best practice and promises to continuously evolve.

We recognise the importance of facilitating opportunities for students to excel personally and professionally both within and outside of their programmes of study. That's why at DkIT dedicated employability and career development initiatives are supported through curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Students' personal and professional development is at the heart of all that our expert lecturers, professional staff, and the *Careers Services Centre* do, in addition to the excellent relationships maintained with alumni and employers. Our commitment to developing our staff will put DkIT at the forefront in delivering a transformative employability experience.

The institute's mission is to serve the needs of this region by continuing to drive and inspire globally connected educational, economic, social and cultural development. To our community of students, staff, employers and alumni we state our continuing commitment to graduate employability, employers and the development of the region.

## **WHAT IS EMPLOYABILITY?**

Employability enables graduates to secure and sustain lifelong fulfilling work and employment. At DkIT employability is connected to every aspect of the student experience. As a student at DkIT you will gain both disciplinary excellence and develop career management skills to ready you for lifelong career success.

We understand the importance of valuing employability as a personal state that graduates occupy, and graduate attributes are all about creating the best possible personal state that a graduate occupies upon meeting the job market. Students opt for a higher education to take part

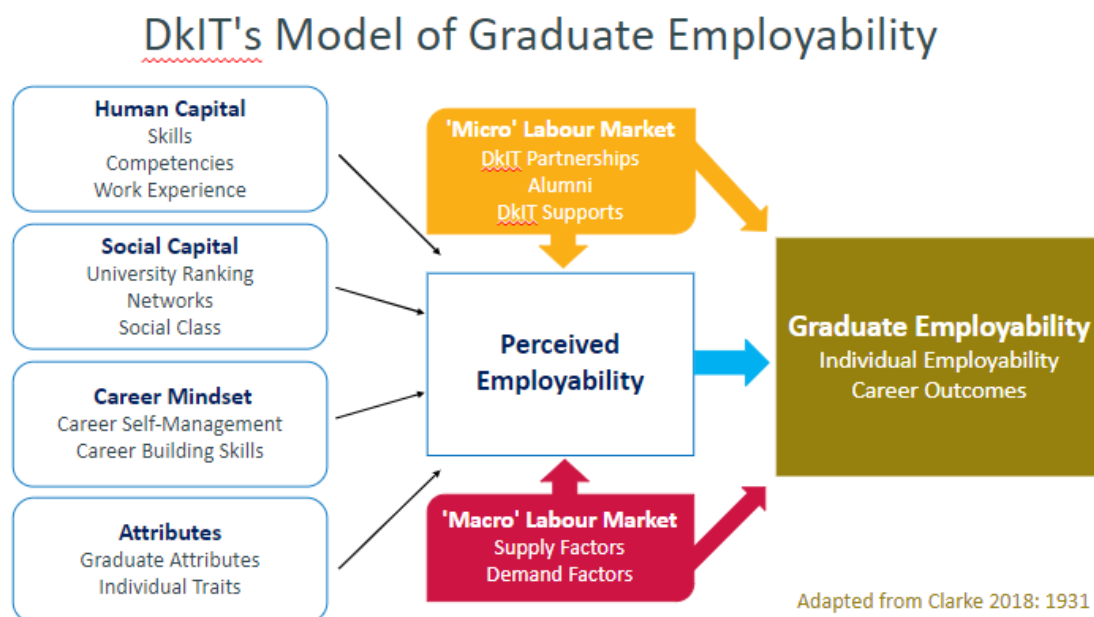
in building a life beyond their degree, and that life includes developing attributes facilitative to employability.

The employability and graduate attribute development ambition is key to fulfilling this promise to its graduates by Dundalk Institute of Technology. We have developed an **Employability Model** bespoke to DkIT and an evidence-based **Graduate Attribute & Mindsets Framework** to guide them.

## The DkIT Employability Model

To understand how DkIT graduates greet employment, we charted a process model. This model aims to shape how we think strategically as an institute about employability and guides our advice to students.

Our model makes explicit a range of factors influencing employability—not just our skills and knowledge, but also our attributes, personal circumstances, career mindset, upbringing, economic context, and our social networks, online and offline.



Human Capital refers to '*What We Bring*', Social Capital refers to '*Who We Know*', Career Mindset refers to '*How We Do*', and Attributes to '*Who We Are*'. Central to how these factors interact to bring about employment successes, is *Perceived Employability*; how employable we feel and perceive our job readiness. How the economic context affects the perception of employability is represented by the 'Micro Labour Market'; the DkIT Partnerships, Alumni and Supports available

to graduates in their immediate context, and the ‘Macro Labour Market’; the supply and demand factors at play in the labour economy more broadly.

DkIT’s employability vision purports to make a positive impact right across this employability process. Our mission is to develop graduates with the in-demand skills, institute-standing, career building mindsets, and graduate attributes required to progress in a modern workplace. What’s more, our graduates will be facilitated by embedded employability initiatives showing them how to acknowledge their value and communicate it to employers.

## **Our Graduate Attributes & Mindsets Framework**

At DkIT employability and graduate attributes go together. Graduate Attributes are the core abilities and values a higher education institute community agrees all its graduates should develop. For us, they are also the abilities employers deem necessary for today’s knowledge workers and graduate success, and represent a synergy between attributes developed by the Institute and singular qualities or characteristics whose combinations are unique to the individual.

Dundalk Institute of Technology’s Strategic Plan promotes the development of a graduate attribute framework to help all graduates adapt to a successful future. They are the abilities graduates should embody to be agents of social good and contributing citizens within the communities and societies they reside and beyond. Focusing on Graduate Attributes through a lens of employability in Higher Education prepares students to transition into all these roles and more.

## **Attribute-led Employability**

In contemporary job markets, jobs require fast-moving, innovative, and often transformative working mindsets. Graduate Attributes lend themselves to required employability as a state of mind or maintaining work-readiness through continued professional development or training. A successfully integrated graduate attribute framework will help graduates to see their employability as a work in progress throughout their life.

There are many stakeholder perspectives to take account of when discussing what constitutes a graduate attribute or the attributes of greatest employment value. Stakeholders include society, industry, employers, management and funding bodies, university policy makers, students, and lecturers. That’s a truly diverse group of perspectives. At DkIT we have consulted this wide range of stakeholders and the consensus is that when twinned with innovative pedagogy, these graduate-attribute initiatives will produce outstanding graduates.

The way we are achieving this curriculum development is by introduction of an institute-wide **Graduate Attributes Framework**. Our Graduate Attribute Framework – **The PCs Framework**, denotes four key capstone graduate attributes of precedence: *P - Practical*, *C - Communication Skills*, *C- Collaborative Skills*, and *C- Confidence*. The sub-attributes that make up each capstone, such as *Technically Skilled*, *Creative*, *Emotionally Intelligent*, *Operationally Savvy*, or *Professional Confidence*, were each carefully researched to ensure they authentically reflect the DkIT graduate body. At DkIT we are committed to developing graduates who possess the necessary attributes to bring practical solutions to a complex world. Our graduates are excellent communicators, collaborators and confident changemakers. When added to a robust set of intersecting employability-focused **Mindsets** including a *P - Positive Attitude*, *A - Adaptability* and *R - Resilience* our graduates are on **P-A-R** with the best and brightest any competitor can offer.

## DkIT Graduate Attribute Framework



The PCs Graduate Attribute Framework and PAR Mindsets

## Embedded Employability in the Curriculum

Our Graduate Attribute Framework will be developed through our Embedded Employability initiatives to deliver programmes and student career services that nurture a range of in-demand skills and competencies across all disciplines. Embedded in a multi-dimensional, and experiential curriculum, as well as in other institutional processes and provisions, a full picture of modular

content across programmes ensures that students are exposed to the widest variety of employability practice that DkIT can offer.

Some of our programmes have received *DELTA Teaching Excellence Awards* from the *National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education*, and our staff are many times winners at the *Annual Teaching Hero Awards*. Our ethos is one of shared best practice, allowing staff to contribute to resource development and review and draw from one another's strengths. The *Centre for Excellence in Learning & Teaching* provides routes to professional qualification and assessment strategy training. At DkIT the resources are in place for staff to review their assessment and learning enhancement practices, to connect learning outcomes with graduate attributes, employability skills, and to engage in formative and summative feedback to empower students to become career-directed learners.

## **CAREERS & EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES**

Our Careers & Employability Centre prepares graduates for their future, helping them combine the academic with professional, community-based, field-based and inter-professional learning. Whether one-to-one, in-class session, or employability themed groups, the Centre is staffed by a team of dedicated careers and placement practitioners enthusiastic and ready to help students plan their graduate career pathways. At DkIT we prioritise helping our students become graduates who reach their full and professional potential.

### **Career Resources**

The Centre facilitates all major supports to enhance a career management mindset: career guidance one-to-ones, career workshops, career clinics, job listings, career talks and invited guest speakers, and the annual *Careers Fair*.

A suite of career development resources and tools are available to all students and staff on the DKIT Virtual Learning Environment, providing accessible and up-to-date resources.

A designated purpose online portal - *Careers Connect* enables students, graduates and employers to engage with a whole host of employability services and bookings: job search, company research, CV workshops, mock interviews, postgraduate information, news of external careers events, and placement preparation.

### **Placement**

Dundalk Institute of Technology places an emphasis on the importance of work placement for all programmes where possible. Academic learning is connected to the workplace through work-based learning opportunities or partnering with industry. These activities are seen to promote self-efficacy and better academic performance on practical assessments. The Careers &



Employability Centre under the dedicated Placement Office centrally manages the undergraduate student work placement process, ensuring that students are prepared to maximise the quality of the industry placement experience.

Over 50% of our programmes offer placements either through organised work placements, self-select placements for part-time students or the *ERASMUS+* programmes. Professions-led programmes like Nursing & Midwifery, Veterinary Nursing Medicine, and Social Care coordinate their placements within their regulatory guidelines. The Centre works closely with all DkIT's industry partners to provide employability training, and a range of work placements to expand students' skill sets and individual networks.

### Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular

We encourage students to manage their careers in terms of what they value, how they feel, what they prioritise, and how their work relates to their personal lives. Our Graduate Attribute & Mindsets Framework advocates for relevant work experience as key to any graduate's or apprenticeship-led pathway or curriculum whether formal or informal, that is: placements, casual work, volunteering, sports and clubs.

For the most ambitious we hold our annual *DkIT Elevate Awards* to evidence-base the employability skills development and celebrate students who contribute substantially to the DkIT community as Student Ambassadors, Clubs and Societies Officers, Student Representatives and through discipline-specific engagement such as Coder Dojo or H2o Heroes. With over 65 student-led clubs and societies, we strive to create a space where all students can reach their lifelong potential.

## INDUSTRY-PARTNERED SUCCESS

At DkIT we encourage our programme teams to work with relevant stakeholders. Relevant professional bodies and recent graduates are often involved in designing curricula ready for industry. The participation of professional regulatory accreditation bodies ensures not only those statutory requirements are met, but that our graduates are work ready from day one.

### Accredited Programmes

Whether students aspire to be engineers or veterinary nurses, many DkIT programmes are accredited by regulatory and professional bodies. An additional assurance to aid our graduates meet the highest industry standards. The benefits of accreditation to employability are several:

1. Eligibility to register with a regulatory professional body
2. Eligibility to register with a non-regulatory professional body
3. Exemption from or progression to specified professional exams

4. Assurance that the programme is endorsed by the relevant professional body
5. Placement integration is enabled and programme learning outcomes are highly informed.
6. Additionally, DkIT provides annual accreditation reports to QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland), an independent state agency responsible for promoting quality in education and training services in Ireland.

## **Industry Networks & Entrepreneurship**

Employability success in today's dynamic business environment depends on innovation, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach. That's why DkIT provides learner-centred graduate-focused higher education and craft apprenticeships to meet evolving labour demand to approximately 5,200 students across four Academic Schools of Business & Humanities, Engineering, Health & Science, and Informatics & Creative Arts.

Our new *MBS in Entrepreneurship & Marketing* aims to produce independent minded, self-reliant graduates ready for emerging fast-evolving roles. Add to this The *Lifelong Learning Centre* is a specific-purpose part-time *Springboard+* programme provider designed to generate upskilled graduates to meet fast-emerging industry needs. DkIT is fast becoming an unequivocal leader for higher education and craft apprenticeships.

DkIT is strategically positioned mid-way along the Dublin-Belfast Corridor. The ability to engage with an industry critical mass puts the Institute in a very advantageous position. The proposed Connected Health & Wellbeing Innovation & Learning Hub, *dConnect*, is a step change project that will transform the entrepreneurial, research and innovation landscape with major social and economic impact leveraging the world's fastest-growing opportunity markets in e-Health.

## **Regional Development Centre & Corporate Partnerships**

Based at the heart of the DkIT campus, the *Regional Development Centre* (RDC) transforms the way research, business and industry work in partnership to achieve success. The RDC has supported in excess of 315 Applied Research projects with industry, supported in excess of 1350 Entrepreneurs through development programmes, and incubated over 200 Companies.

Our *New Frontiers* and *Corporate Partnership Programmes* working with companies like *STATSPORTS*, *ABP Food Group*, and *Fintech Corridor* cluster boasting *PayPal*, *State Street*, and *Aphix Software* means that DkIT is perfectly placed and ready to meet emerging technology transfer, the changing needs of employment and grow our economy.

DkIT also forms a core part of the *Northeast Regional Skills Forum*, which is part of a national programme for developing employees' skills. Among these is the *Northeast Further and Higher Education Alliance* (NEFHEA), whose members collaborate on course design to ensure students keep pace with regional needs. We are ready to support companies with graduates across the region to achieve national and global success.

## CONCLUSION

DkIT's commitment to employability promotes effective and capable graduates with the capacity to translate their skills, attributes, and mindsets into a career conducive to a life of personal and professional fulfilment. By acknowledging within our DkIT graduate attributes framework the skills and mindsets most requested by employers, our graduates will meet the challenge of today's dynamic labour market head-on. At DkIT we provide all the career development resources, learning and professional supports necessary to empower our graduates to embark on a fulfilling career journey that will satisfy their pursuit of meaningful work as well as the broader needs of society. We look forward to an exciting future for the Institute, its graduates and employers going forward as we celebrate 50 years this year.

The priorities identified in this strategy will also be actioned and achieved through policy and process directives arising from:

1. The DkIT Strategic Plan
2. The DkIT Education Strategy
3. The Academic Council, the University Management Team and the Governing Authority
4. The Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements.

*Cognisance will also be taken of:*

1. Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025
2. Government Action Plans for Education
3. Irish Survey of Student Engagement

