

A MANIFESTO FOR ENGAGING IN-WORK STUDENTS

The following ideas are intended to provide starting points for developing ideas that engage in-work students, defined in this context as any learner who has to negotiate the parallel process of work and higher education study. These ideas could also form a set of overarching principles to shape co-design approaches between institutions, employers and in-work students.

INFLUENCING PRE-ENTRY INFORMATION & PREPARATION



Collaborate with in-work student alumni to put in place simple support strategies such as holding library inductions prior to the start of official semesters; ensuring that information provided about preparatory work, travel, campus locations, transportation systems and timings is accurate as many in-work students do not have time available to explore ambiguities nor do they wish to stand out.

PLANNING STRATEGIES FOR RESILIENCE



Manage expectations of in-work students, employers and staff by using tools such as continuous process-mapping which help to evidence pressure points across courses; once known, consider common themes and work collectively with students, employers and policy-makers to co-design potential solutions for all stakeholders rather than accepting these as inevitable difficulties of niche provision.

CO-DESIGNING ASSESSMENTS



Adopt an assessment for learning approach which recognises that the majority of the learning for the in-work student is related to workplace impact not to the academic calendar; develop co-design principles which skill in-work students, employers and staff from the outset to negotiate assessment needs effectively as a shared responsibility. Consider longer-term strategies for measuring workplace impact post-study.

MAKING IN-WORK STUDENT VOICES HEARD BY SHARING THEIR EXPERIENCES



Think creatively about ways of making these voices audible and their valuable experiences visible by going beyond the confines of established institutional Student Reps systems which do not effectively engage in-work students; consider re-evaluating committee structures through the lens of the in-work student to enhance inclusivity.

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ENGAGEMENT



Examine assumptions that lack of engagement in the institutional Virtual Learning Environment indicates low interest. Many in-work students are technologically adept but choose to adopt more straightforward means for supporting each other. Work with these experiences to consider the best mechanisms rather than by adopting singular interventions.