# 15. The use of Career Readiness data in strategy, planning and monitoring

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Building on our first case study (Chapter 9) which explored the importance of the institutional ecosystem in introducing and embedding Careers Registration throughout Manchester Met., the case study below offers further detail about the establishment and use of Careers Readiness data as a corporate lead indicator and in multiple management processes.

### Collecting our data

We collect our Career Readiness data at online enrolment each academic year. This is embedded in our online enrolment process along with some other statutory questions. All students must respond in order to complete online enrolment. In January each academic year, we are contacted to indicate whether we would like any changes applied to the questions currently in the system. In June each academic year we are asked to user test our questions where we go into the online enrolment interface and ensure we are content with how the questions are presented.

The Careers Data and Insights team have direct access to the responses as soon as they come in and they go into the system and extract them. In order to align with other data pulls from this system we choose a census date each year where we extract the first set of responses available, this is around one month after our first semester starts to ensure we allow time for as many students as possible to enrol. In February each academic year we undertake another pull of the data to ensure we capture any

later enrolments such as out post-graduate taught January provisions. We do one final pull at the end of each academic year to capture any additional enrolments that have taken place since the January pull.

Once our data is available, we then make it available to our users via a number of formats. Please see more information on this in our first case study within this book (Chapter 9).

### Understanding the relationship between Career Readiness and Graduate Outcomes

At Manchester Met, our Career Registration data is a Lead Indicator for our Graduate Outcomes Key Performance Indicator, and this is predominantly why this dataset is embedded into the wider institution. As explored in our previous case study, prior to CR being a leading indicator this dataset was very much an internal careers dataset; it was great at indicating to careers colleagues how students were feeling or what work experience they would like to gain. But when we connected the data with other key institutional datasets, such as our Graduate Outcomes data, it told a bigger story that colleagues in the wider institution wanted to hear. We explored the relationship between career readiness and many other datasets but the first relationship we analysed was with the Graduate Outcomes survey, due to the nature of the survey being an important Key Performance Indicator for our institution (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2022) and its close alignment with our Careers Service. The results were staggering and instantly indicated a strong correlation.

| Career Readiness Category | GO Prospect Score |
|---|---|
| Not Started | Circa 55% |
| Some Ideas | Circa 65% |
| Want Experience | Circa 75% |
| Ready to apply | Circa 80% |
| Succeed | Circa 90% |

Table 15.1: Relationship between Manchester Met Career Readiness Categories

and the Graduate Outcomes Prospect Score- Percentage going on to a positive graduate destination 15 months post-graduation (using the Guardian League Table methodology), UKFTFD only, 2019/20-2021/22

## *Embedding Career Readiness as a Lead Indicator, and embedding this in our new Education Strategy*

Once we understood the above relationship and had shared the story across the institution, and crucially got the strategic buy in from senior leaders in our institution, we then formalised it as the official Lead Indicator for the Graduate Outcomes Key Performance Indicator.
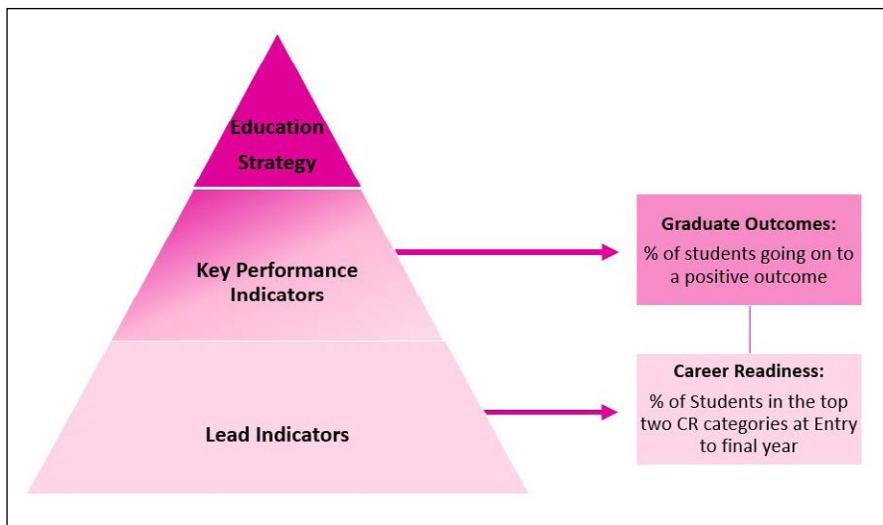


Figure 15.1: Embedding Career Readiness as a Lead Indicator for our Education Strategy

As mentioned in our other case study, out Graduate Outcomes Key Performance Indicator is a lagging one, as indicated in figure 15.2 our Career Readiness is a leading indicator for this. To explain, we found that if our Lead Indicator (% of students in the top two career readiness categories at Entry to final year) goes up, this is a positive indicator for our KPI (% of these students going on to a positive outcome), please see figure 3 below to further explain and please note this does not take

into account other factors which can impact our KPI such as the labour market the graduates are going into or whether they had any work experience prior to graduation.
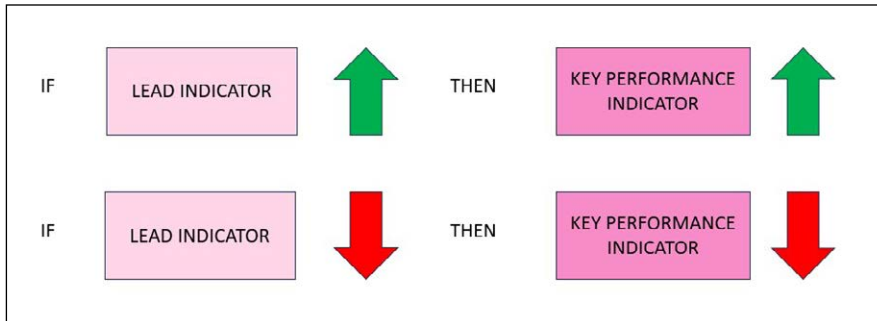


Figure 15.2: Lead Indicator and Key Performance Indicator Relationship

## Getting buy-in from Senior Leadership

Having a senior leadership who are well-versed in the language of careers registration, and genuinely understand its potential and limitations, has been a strategic objective for the careers team at Manchester Met for the last few years. In our experience, this makes the difference in terms of top-level buy-in and places the Careers Service directly in the heart of university-wide decision-making – which, at Manchester Met, is the University Executive Group (UEG). This has enabled us to present findings to the senior leadership at scheduled points in the academic year, and to ensure that it is now included in the core data pack used at every programme-level Educational Annual Review (EAR).

## Using Career Readiness for Planning

Once we have collected the data out of the online enrolment system, there are a number of steps we take with this data to inform planning for the upcoming year. Please see listed examples below.

- Refer lists of students who said they want certain types of work experience to the relevant teams:

- - Provide the Sandwich Placement team with a list of Level 5 (penultimate year) students who indicated they want to undertake a sandwich placement.
  - Provide the Jobs4Students team with a list of all students who would like on campus work experience.
  - Provide the Enterprise team with a list of students who are interested in Entreprenurial activity.
- Identify Level 6 (final year) students with No prior Work Experience and ask if they would like to book a one-to-one session with one of our qualified careers advisers.
- Identify Level 6 students with No prior Work Experience and promote the Jobs4Students (J4S) internship scheme to them.
- Provide each Faculty with a list of all Personal Tutors, which students they are personal tutor to and what the students' career readiness category is so that the students career readiness category can be discussed within personal tutor conversations.
- Identify areas (this could be certain groups of students or students from certain subject areas) where the lead indicator has gone down year on year and target with specific interventions.

### *Using Career Readiness to address Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion*

With Career Readiness now well-known and understood across our institution, as well as our Lead Indicator being well established, in 2024/25 academic year we plan to use this data to inform our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) practice. As part of our recent Access and Participation Plan submission to the Office for Students, the Careers Differential Outcomes workstream has committed to reducing attainment gaps that exist amongst certain groups of our students. We are analysing how our lead indicator, the percent of students in the top two career readiness categories, varies for different groups of students such as those who are of White ethnic origin or Black ethnic origin or Asian ethnic origin or whether they are a first-generation student or a non first-generation student. Once we have understood these gaps, we then wish to target specific students who are at risk, due to a lower proportion being in the top two career readiness categories and aim

specific initiatives that our group is running this academic year at them. Some examples of these personalised initiatives include:

- Diversifying the population engaging with our Mentoring scheme as well as our two annual internship schemes.
- Identify which students want particular types work experience and aim these specific interventions at them.
- Develop a bursary scheme to support students who are facing financial barriers.
- Run a student campaign aimed at increasing awareness of our offer with personalised communications to different types of students.

### *Using Career Readiness to evaluate effectiveness of interventions across the institution*

As our lead indicator is now well established as part of our institutional education strategy, we are able to use it as an evaluation method of interventions. Below are three separate examples of the kind of statistics we produce when evaluating interventions in this way. This is based on a theory of change model (Weiss, 1995) where we look at students who took part in an intervention, compare them to those who did not take part, we analyse their career readiness prior to the intervention and compare it to their career readiness post that intervention and finally we analyse the direction of travel also termed at the 'change year on year' in career readiness.

### Example intervention evaluations using Career Readiness as a Lead Indicator

*Jobs 4 Students Evaluation*
- J4S Level 6 UKFTFD (UK, full time, first degree) students in 2022/23 have 30.0% in the top two career readiness categories; this is 5.9 percentage points higher than the institutional average.
- Prior to the intervention, 4.3% were in these categories; this is an increase of 25.7 percentage points.

- 36.4% of these students saw an increase in their career readiness between 2022/23 and 2023/24, 5.4 percentage points higher than the institutional average.

*Mentoring Evaluation*
- Mentored Level 6 UKFTFD students in 2022/23 have 45.5% in the top two career readiness categories; this is 21.3 percentage points higher than the institutional average.
- Prior to the intervention, 0.0% were in these categories; this is an increase of 45.5 percentage points.
- 51.0% of these students saw an increase in their career readiness between 2022/23 and 2023/24, 20.0 percentage points higher than the institutional average.

*Digital Services Evaluation- Asked a Question in Career Hub*
- Level 6 UKFTFD students who asked questions in 2022/23 have 28.6% in the top two career readiness categories; this is 4.5 percentage points higher than the institutional average.
- Prior to the intervention, 4.9% were in these categories; this is an increase of 23.6 percentage points.
- 38.0% of these students saw an increase in their career readiness between 2022/23 and 2023/24, 7.0 percentage points higher than the institutional average.

We are now in a position where a number of colleagues across our institution provide us with a list of students who have undertaken a certain initiative, and we can complete the above statistics for them.

## References

Manchester Metropolitan University. (2022). *Our strategy: Our ambition for the future*. Manchester-Met-Strategy-Booklet-2022.pdf

Weiss, C. H. (1995). Nothing as practical as good theory: Exploring theory-based evaluation for comprehensive community initiatives for children and families. In J. Connell, A. Kubisch, L. Schorr & C. Weiss (Eds.), *New approaches to evaluating comprehensive community initiatives* (pp. 65-92). The Aspen Roundtable Institute.