



Green Gown  
Awards 2017



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Finalist's case study



## Leeds Trinity University

### Employability

Industry-relevant work experience  
for every student

#### About the project

##### Summary

Leeds Trinity University is the only university in the country to offer and embed compulsory professional work placements into every single undergraduate degree programme, and this innovative practice is directly contributing to a strong performance in employability. 97% of Leeds Trinity graduates are employed or in further study within six months of graduating, making the university the highest performing university in Yorkshire and Humberside.

But at Leeds Trinity University, we believe that employability is about more than simply getting a job. It's about developing fully round individuals, developing students as citizens, and contributing to the world around us. As well as 11 weeks of degree-relevant, industry experience for 1,500 students in their first and second year – where 15% of placements are undertaken within the third sector; working with charities, environmental organisations, health, food and more – students are also developed through professional learning modules, live employer projects and employability workshops, which are all embedded into the curriculum.

##### Project partners

Support from more than 2,500 businesses across the country is absolutely crucial to the success of professional work placements at Leeds Trinity. Businesses commit to submitting a brief; mentoring and supporting students during placement; and remain engaged with the University after the placement. This includes provision of valuable feedback to inform curriculum, contribution to work-based learning modules, entrepreneurship modules and the University's business network. Without their in-kind support, the programme wouldn't be possible.



Leeds Trinity  
University

##### Profile

A small university with a big reputation, Leeds Trinity University is renowned for producing highly employable graduates.

- Higher Education
- 3,715 FTE students
- 450 staff

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## The results



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### The problem

51% of students nationally decline work placements offered by universities, yet employers value industry-relevant experience as one of the most important factors when employing university graduates.

### The approach

Leeds Trinity University pioneered the inclusion of compulsory professional placements for every single undergraduate student. Every year, 1,500 first and second year students undertake blocks of five and six weeks extended work experience, in addition to the 1,000 teacher training placements provided for students. The University encourages organisations to offer a specific project for students to get involved with; something they can support to significantly support the business and/or have an impact within the organisation or community. Example placements include Revive Leeds; a social enterprise dedicated to reducing landfill waste; the Leeds Real Junk Food Project which utilises surplus food for events and outside catering; Hyde Park Source; an environmental charity aiming to improve health and wellbeing by improving the natural environment in urban areas; and many more.

### Our goals

- To provide every single student with meaningful, industry-relevant, professional work experience as part of their degree
- For 15% of work placements to be within the third and public sector, having an impact in the community
- To increase graduate recruitment from Leeds Trinity within six months of graduating (DLHE)
- To make a positive contribution to the local economy and business community in West Yorkshire
- To help students understand themselves and their role in the world

### Obstacles and solutions

To build effective relationships with employers	All external relationships and student opportunities are absolutely home-grown at Leeds Trinity. A central placement team, who are supported by placement coordinators for each area, build relationships face-to-face, at meetings, through phone calls, emails and events with every single placement provider. Each placement offered is bespoke; aiming to meet the needs of the employer, and utilise the skills of the student.
To gain academic	With a whole-university approach to professionalising our students, work placements and employer engagement is embedded into the curriculum at Leeds Trinity University. Driven by

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<p>support from across the University</p>	<p>the Vice-Chancellor and Executive Management Team and delivered by a central placement team, the team is supported by placement coordinators in each academic area and 50 academic and teaching staff across the University. This approach, and particularly the commitment from academics, was recently recognised by the Higher Education Academy, which suggested the institution as a benchmark within the higher education sector for other universities moving towards this model.</p>
<p>To engage students with the placement programme and prepare them for the experience</p>	<p>The support offered to students in preparation for their professional placements is outstanding. This begins in their first semester when they are offered one-to-one support from their departmental placement adviser – a member of staff with extensive knowledge and expertise in the area – to discuss placement options. In semester one, a two-day placement-preparation conference provides the opportunity for students to meet with employers, talk about their career paths, attend workshops, and discover the type of graduate skills that companies are seeking. In their second semester, all first year students attend a two-week Placement Launch Programme which includes live employer challenges, professional workshops, conference days and personal development workshops; preparing students fully for their placements and shifting their mind-set from a student to a professional.</p>

## Performance and results



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- 97% of students at Leeds Trinity University were employed or in further study, within six months of graduating according to the 2016 Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey
- Of the 1,576 placements (not including teacher training placements) undertaken in 2016-17, 94% of employers felt that students met or exceeded expectations. 96% said they would recommend the student to another organisation. And 62% of students secured further work as a direct result of their placement.
- Graduates from Leeds Trinity University are almost twice as likely as other graduates to remain in the Yorkshire and Humber region after graduation – and make a significant contribution to the Leeds economy.
- Of the 5,000 businesses on the University business database, 2,500 remain actively engaged with the University; attending networking events and talks on campus; contributing to advisory boards or groups; providing lectures and workshops for students; or offering professional work placements.
- The impact on students is incredible – particularly those working in the third sector. Two years ago, student Tom Donegan had his placement at Leeds-based homelessness charity Simon on the Streets. After his graduation in 2016, Tom joined their team as Admin, Communications and Volunteer Coordinator and now works with the University (through our project to support Volunteer Coordinators), and encourages current students to get involved with the charity.

## The future

### Lessons learned

- Delivering professional placements has played a significant part in increasing employment after graduation, with 97% of 2016 students being employed, or in further study, within six months.
- 11% of 2016 graduates are now working with their placement provider, 98% at professional level
- Professional placements support the reputation of the University – both within the higher education and business sector alike. Last year, the University received a Quality Assurance Agency recommendation for best practice in commitment to professional placements and was shortlisted for a NUE Award 2016.
- Other opportunities often emerge from professional placements – both for students (with 62% gaining further employment in 2015-16 as a direct result from their placement), but also Leeds Trinity. The University builds effective relationships to continue working with businesses through professional learning-through-work modules, higher and degree apprenticeships, Employer Advisory Boards and Leeds Trinity Business Network (LTBN). The LTBN itself encourages businesses to pledge support to the third sector and community.

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### Top 3 learnings from implementing your project

1. Students chose Leeds Trinity because of our commitment to employability
2. Businesses want to engage with universities to develop industry-relevant curriculum
3. Professional work placements have a direct impact on employability

### Sharing your project

Earlier this year, Leeds Trinity University was featured in local newspaper, the Yorkshire Evening Post, for its innovative work to engage employers and embed employability into the curriculum.

Within the higher education sector, the Higher Education Academy showcased Leeds Trinity in a consultancy project, highlighting the institution as a case study of best practice and suggesting a benchmark for other universities, and this year, Leeds Trinity was featured in Guild HE's published report on Active Citizenship and Global Citizenship, which included case studies about our work with third-sector internships and international volunteering placements as the first University to partner with Cricket Without Boundaries. And we delivered presentations at HE conferences on innovative ways of improving employability through external engagement, including the importance of providing meaningful experience for students. The institution was also awarded a 'Diversity in the Community' Award by the Yorkshire Society for our work in the business sector and the community impact this has.

### What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

To be shortlisted as a finalist in the Green Gown Awards 2017 is a testament to the hard work of the entire team at Leeds Trinity University – right from the Vice-Chancellor and Executive Team, to the academic teaching staff and central placement team who provide the one-to-one support required for each professional work placement. We are absolutely honoured to be shortlisted for this award.

### Further information

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W: <http://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/student-life/careers-and-employability/professional-work-placements>

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