



Oakswood College

Empowering Through Education



Student Employability

Policy and Framework

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Oakwood College
Empowering Through Education

(Trading name of Oakwood Group Ltd)

Student Employability Policy & Framework

Foundation Year to Level 6

Document Control & Version History

Document Title	Student Employability Policy & Framework
Document Type	Academic Policy and Framework
Policy Owner	Head of Academic Affairs
Accountable Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Approved By	Academic Board
Approval Date	18 March 2026
Effective From	18 March 2026
Review Cycle	Annual
Next Review Date	18 March 2027
Applies To	All students, academic staff, Programme Leaders, Student Services staff, placement providers, employer partners, and staff involved in employability, careers education, work-based learning, and graduate outcomes initiatives
Version	1.0
Supersedes	New Policy
Related Policies	Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access Policy Framework; Student Attendance and Engagement Policy; Student Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Policy; Community and Outreach Policy; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy
Related Appendix	Appendix A: Student Employment Recognition Award (SERA)
Document Location	Oakwood College Policy Repository
Regulatory Reference	Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration; UK Quality Code for Higher Education; Office for Students Student Outcomes and Progression Expectations; Equality Act 2010

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Executive Summary

This document sets out the Oakswood College Employability Framework, a progressive model for embedding employability development throughout the student lifecycle from Foundation Year through to Level 6 (final year undergraduate). The framework aligns with OfS Condition B3 (Access, Success, Progression), Advance HE guidance, QAA Quality Code expectations, and sector best practice, whilst reflecting Oakswood's commitment to student success, community engagement, and partnership with employers

This framework defines employability as:

"The development of knowledge, skills, experiences, behaviours, attributes, achievements and attitudes which enable students to make successful transitions into work, further study and enterprise, benefitting themselves, employers and their communities"

1. Introduction and Context

1.1 Purpose

The Oakswood Employability Framework provides a structured, whole-institution approach to developing graduate outcomes and preparing students for employment, further study, or enterprise. It ensures that employability is embedded throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum, considered at every stage of the student journey.

1.2 Strategic Alignment

This framework supports Oakswood College's strategic aims by:

- Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning through active, work-related pedagogy.
- Strengthening employer engagement and industry partnerships.
- Improving graduate outcomes and student success metrics.
- Supporting widening participation and social mobility through inclusive career development.
- Promoting student wellbeing, resilience, and emotional literacy through career confidence-building.

1.3 Key reference documents:

- OfS Condition B3: *Access, Success, Progression.*
- OfS Condition B2: *Ensuring a high-quality academic experience for those students and that those students succeed in and beyond higher education.*

- Advance HE. (2024). *Framework for Embedding Employability in Higher Education*.
- Advance HE. (2020). *Embedding Employability in Higher Education: Framework Guidance*.
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). (2018). *UK Quality Code: Advice and Guidance – Work-based Learning*.
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). *The Quality Code for Higher Education*.
- Oakswood College. (2026). *Employability and Careers Strategy Presentation*. Internal document.
- Oakswood College. (2026). *Job Shop Proposed Model*. Internal document.
- University of Manchester. (2024). *Factsheet: Embedding Employability in the Curriculum*.

1.3 Governance and Oversight

Responsibility for implementation and monitoring of this framework rests with:

- **Academic Board:** Strategic oversight and annual review of framework effectiveness
- **Head of Academic Affairs:** Overall accountability for embedding employability in academic programmes
- **Programme Leaders:** Curriculum design and module mapping to employability outcomes
- **Employability and Careers Team:** Co-curricular delivery, employer engagement, Job Shop coordination.
- **Quality and Standards Committee:** Monitoring of graduate outcomes, employer feedback and KPIs

2. The Oakswood Employability Framework

2.1 Definition and Scope

Employability at Oakswood encompasses seven interconnected dimensions, adapted from the Advance HE Framework for Embedding Employability in Higher Education:

1. **Knowledge** – Subject expertise, industry awareness, professional and regulatory knowledge
2. **Skills** – Transferable skills (communication, teamwork, problem-solving, digital literacy, enterprise)

3. **Experience** – Work-related learning, placements, volunteering, live projects, extra-curricular activities
4. **Behaviours** – Professionalism, work ethic, time management, adaptability, ethical practice
5. **Attributes** – Confidence, resilience, emotional literacy, cultural competence, self-awareness
6. **Achievements** – Academic qualifications, awards, portfolios, recognised contributions
7. **Attitudes** – Curiosity, ambition, reflective practice, commitment to lifelong learning

Students studying remotely may not be eligible to access the full suite of employability initiatives under this Framework, given that most initiatives are delivered on campus. However, Oakswood College takes an individualised approach to all students and students studying remotely, can choose to attend specific in-person sessions, as well as having access to online tutoring/coaching, activities, events and resources.

2.2 Four Capital Domains

To operationalise this definition, the framework groups these dimensions into four interlinked domains and international best practice:

Domain	Description
Human Capital	Subject knowledge, digital skills, technical competencies, work-related skills, industry awareness, and continuous professional development
Social Capital	Professional networks, mentoring relationships, alumni connections, employer engagement, peer learning communities, and social media presence (e.g. LinkedIn)
Psychological Capital	Confidence, resilience, goal orientation, emotional literacy, self-efficacy, positive mindset, and capacity for reflective practice
Career Management Capital	Self-awareness, opportunity analysis, career decision-making, application skills (CVs, interviews), entrepreneurial mindset, and transition planning

These four domains inform curriculum design, co-curricular activities, and the progressive development model across levels.



2.3 Graduate Soft Skills Profile

Embedded within the four capital domains are core **soft skills** (also known as transferable skills, essential skills, or employability skills) that employers consistently identify as critical for graduate success. The Oakwood Graduate Soft Skills Profile specifies twelve key skills that are developed progressively from Foundation Year through to Level 6, which are set out below:

Soft Skill	Foundation / Level 4 Development	Level 5 / Level 6 Development
1. Communication (verbal, written, presentation, discussion)	Basic written communication; clarity in speech; group discussion participation; email etiquette	Professional report writing; persuasive presentations; adapting style for different audiences; confident public speaking
2. Teamwork and Collaboration	Contributing to group tasks; listening to others; sharing responsibilities	Leading teams; managing conflict; facilitating collaboration; recognising team dynamics and roles; ensuring inclusion
3. Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking	Identifying problems; basic analytical approaches; asking questions; interrogating ideas	Complex problem analysis; evaluating evidence; generating innovative solutions; applying frameworks to real-world issues; reaching reasoned judgements
4. Time Management and Organisation	Meeting deadlines; prioritising tasks; using planners and calendars	Managing multiple competing priorities; planning long-term projects; balancing work, study and personal commitments
5. Digital Literacy	Using MS Office, email, VLE; basic online research; digital communication etiquette; online safety; social media & IT acceptable use; responsible use of AI	Professional use of LinkedIn and social media; data analysis tools; sector-specific software; digital project management; sophisticated use of AI

6. Adaptability and Flexibility	Responding to feedback; adjusting to change; willingness to try new approaches	Thriving in uncertainty; pivoting strategies when needed; embracing continuous learning; managing transitions
7. Resilience and Emotional Regulation	Coping with setbacks; seeking support when needed; maintaining effort; recognising achievements	Bouncing back from failure/adversity; managing stress effectively; supporting others; maintaining wellbeing under pressure
8. Self-Awareness and Reflection	Identifying strengths and weaknesses; reflecting on learning experiences	Deep self-knowledge; articulating personal values; linking reflection to action; continuous self-improvement
9. Initiative and Enterprise	Taking responsibility; proactive engagement; completing tasks independently; seeking clarity when unsure	Identifying opportunities; entrepreneurial thinking; calculated risk-taking; driving projects forward
10. Leadership and Influence	Volunteering for roles; contributing ideas; taking responsibility in group work	Inspiring and motivating others; delegating effectively; ethical leadership; managing stakeholders
11. Professionalism and Work Ethic	Punctuality; meeting commitments; appropriate conduct; respectful behaviour	Professional standards and codes; ethical decision-making; managing professional relationships; workplace etiquette; inclusive behaviours
12. Networking and Relationship Building	Building peer relationships; engaging with tutors; initial contact with employers; recognising potential networks	Building and maintaining professional networks; using LinkedIn strategically; relationship management; mentoring others

How Soft Skills Are Developed:

- **Curriculum:** Embedded in module learning outcomes, group projects, presentations, case studies, and reflective assignments
- **Co-Curriculum:** Job Shop workshops, employer panels, mentoring, volunteering, placements, and extra-curricular activities
- **Assessment:** Formatively through feedback and Career Passport reflection; summatively through Employability modules and professional practice elements
- **Recognition:** SERA Award criteria include demonstrated competence across the soft skills profile

Students are encouraged to evidence their soft skills development through the Career Passport, building a portfolio of examples for CVs, application forms and interviews

3. Progression by Academic Level

The framework adopts a staged approach, recognising that employability develops progressively as students advance through their studies

3.1 Foundation Year (Year 0 Entry)

Purpose: Transition and readiness for higher education and work

Focus Areas:

- Self-awareness and personal effectiveness
- Basic employability habits (punctuality, communication, teamwork)
- Digital literacy and study skills
- "Learning to learn" strategies and academic behaviours

Curriculum Integration:

- Study Skills and Academic Skills workshops explicitly map to employability outcomes (organisation, written and oral communication, problem-solving)
- Embedded reflective tasks (learning journals, simple Personal Development Plans)
- Introduction to professional behaviours and workplace expectations

Co-Curricular Activities (Job Shop Support):

- Introductory workshops: "What is a graduate job?", CV basics, labour market awareness
- Virtual tours and short employer tasters
- First contact with Job Shop: orientation to Career Planning and Development zone

Key Outcomes by End of Level:

- Basic employability habits established (punctuality, communication, teamwork)
- Initial self-awareness and career curiosity developed

- Digital and study skills foundations in place
- First exposure to higher education and workplace environments
- **Soft skills profile:** Foundational communication, teamwork, time management, digital literacy, adaptability

3.2 Level 4 (Year 1 Undergraduate)

Purpose: Foundations – embedding broad employability skills in the curriculum

Focus Areas:

- Transferable skills development
- Engagement with employers and career exploration
- Building confidence and "career curiosity"

Curriculum Integration:

- Core "Employability and Professional Skills" workshops mapped to framework domains:
 - Self-awareness and personal skills
 - Digital skills (including professional use of social media)
 - Team-working and communication
 - Introduction to industry knowledge and professional contexts
- Active, problem-based learning with real-life business examples and case studies embedded in core subject modules
- Guest speakers and industry practitioners contributing to module delivery

Co-Curricular Activities (Job Shop Support):

- Assessment "by engagement": students required to attend minimum number of:
 - Guest speaker talks
 - Employer panels ("Meet Employers" zone)
 - Campus tours or external visits
 - Workshops on employability themes
- Introduction of Career Passport – a personal record of employability activities and reflections
- Group mentoring sessions and "Ask an Employer" panels

Key Outcomes by End of Level:

- Core transferable skills developed and evidenced
- Initial engagement with employers and professional networks
- Career Passport established with first reflections
- Foundation of professional identity begun
- **Soft skills profile:** Enhanced communication (written/verbal), problem-solving, teamwork, self-awareness, digital literacy, professionalism

3.3 Level 5 (Year 2 Undergraduate)

Purpose: Development – strengths-based approach and work-related learning

Focus Areas:

- Identifying and developing personal strengths
- Gaining work experience (placement, internship, project, volunteering)
- Building professional identity and sector knowledge
- Deepening employer engagement

Curriculum Integration:

- "Employability and Professional Skills 2 / Career Development" module including:
 - Strength's profiling and values clarification
 - Opportunity analysis and labour market intelligence
 - Industry knowledge and professional standards
 - Social and psychological capital development (networking, resilience, confidence)
 - Structured reflection on work-related learning
- Optional or mandatory credit-bearing work-based learning component:
 - Work placement (minimum 4–12 weeks)
 - Live consultancy project with external client
 - Structured volunteering aligned to programme outcomes
 - Compliance with QAA Work-based Learning guidance

Co-Curricular Activities (Job Shop Support):

- Career Passport updated with:
 - Refined CV and LinkedIn profile
 - Mock interview experience
 - Evidence of at least one work-related experience (part-time work, volunteering, placement, project)
- Themed employability events:
 - Sector-specific employer panels
 - Entrepreneurs Gallery showcasing student and alumni enterprise
 - Leadership and professional development workshops
- Access to "Professional Development" zone: tailored mentoring, networking events with industry experts

Key Outcomes by End of Level:

- Clear understanding of personal strengths and career direction
- Substantive work-related learning experience completed and reflected upon
- Updated Career Passport demonstrating progression
- Professional networks established (employers, alumni, peers)
- **Soft skills profile:** Advanced problem-solving, resilience, adaptability, leadership, initiative, professional networking, time management under pressure

3.4 Level 6 (Final Year)

Purpose: Transition – consolidation, career launch and graduate identity

Focus Areas:

- Career decision-making and transition planning
- Advanced application skills (assessment centres, interviews, negotiation)
- Professional networks and enterprise pathways
- Graduate identity and lifelong learning mindset

Curriculum Integration:

- "Professional Practice and Career Readiness" strand embedded into capstone modules:
 - Final-year projects, dissertations, consultancy assignments
 - Explicit assessment of professional behaviours (project management, client interaction, presentation, ethical practice)
 - Integration of industry-standard tools, software and methodologies
- Industry advising of curriculum through Programme Advisory Boards
- Guest lecturers and industry practitioners teaching specialist topics

Co-Curricular Activities (Job Shop Support):

- "Dream Jobs in Action" programme:
 - Targeted 1:1 career coaching
 - Mock assessment centres and interview practice
 - Application reviews and feedback
 - Sector-specific career events
- Business Expo / Graduate Employer Fair on campus (Meet Employers zone)
- Alumni engagement: "Success Story Project" – current students learn from recent graduates' transitions
- Enterprise pathway for aspiring entrepreneurs:
 - Business Incubation Centre support (mentoring, workspace, progress reviews)
 - Enterprise skills workshops and pitch competitions
 - Access to start-up funding and business networks

Key Outcomes by End of Level:

- Clear career plan or further study application in progress
- Competitive applications (CV, cover letters, portfolio) ready for graduate market
- Professional network established (LinkedIn, industry contacts, alumni)
- Enterprise plan developed (for those pursuing self-employment)
- Graduate identity and confidence in place for successful transition

- **Soft skills profile:** All twelve soft skills at graduate level – confident communicator, effective team leader, strategic problem-solver, resilient and adaptable, professionally networked, entrepreneurial mindset

4. The Oakswood Job Shop Model

The Oakswood Job Shop is the central co-curricular hub for employability support, organised around three interconnected zones that align with the four capital domains

4.1 Job Board and Meet Employers Zone

Purpose: Connecting students with opportunities and employer networks (Social Capital)

Activities:

- Live job board with vacancies, placements, internships, volunteering roles
- Employer visits to campus (guest lectures, workshops, recruitment events)
- Career fairs and employer exhibitions
- Panel discussions with industry professionals
- Employer challenge activities and live briefs
- Company tours and site visits

Access: Open to all levels; progressively more targeted opportunities at Levels 5–6

4.2 Career Planning and Development Zone

Purpose: Building self-awareness and career management skills (Career Management Capital)

Activities:

- Career coaching (1:1 and group)
- Career consultation and advice
- Career decision-making support
- Career Tools Kit:
 - CV and cover letter development
 - Interview preparation and mock interviews
 - Application form support
 - LinkedIn and professional social media guidance

Level-Specific Focus:

- Foundation/Level 4: Self-awareness, options exploration, "what can I do?"
- Level 5: Career decisions, work experience planning, strengths identification
- Level 6: Graduate roles, further study applications, transition planning

4.3 Professional Development Zone

Purpose: Skills development, mentoring and enterprise (Human and Psychological Capital)

Activities:

- Workshops (sequenced by level):
 - Foundation/L4: "Starting out" – time management, communication, teamwork
 - L5: "Building your professional brand" – networking, resilience, leadership
 - L6: "Succeeding in assessment centres" – advanced selection techniques, negotiation
- Mentoring Programme: pairing students with industry mentors and alumni
- Entrepreneurship Mindset Programme (Business Incubation Centre pathway)
- Networking events with industry experts
- Success Story Project: alumni and current students sharing experiences

Resources:

- Access to workshop rooms and collaboration spaces
- Digital resources: newspapers, magazines, online career libraries
- Alumni network and professional contacts database

5. Embedding Employability: Principles and Practice

5.1 Curriculum Embedding

Employability is most effective when embedded throughout the curriculum, not treated as a separate "bolt-on" Oakswood will ensure:

Pedagogical Approach:

- Active and collaborative learning (problem-based learning, group projects, case studies)
- Real-life, work-related examples and scenarios in lectures and assignments
- Reflection embedded in assignment briefs (linking theory to practice, identifying skills development)
- Assessment alignment: assignments designed to develop and evidence employability skills

Industry Engagement:

- Collaboration with industry and community partners in curriculum design
- Guest speakers delivering course content (not just career talks)
- Industry visits and employer-led workshops integrated into modules
- Real clients and live briefs where appropriate

Resources and Support:

- Subject specialist tutors trained in employability pedagogy
- Module handbooks explicitly mapping learning outcomes to employability skills
- Canvas VLE resources including career planning tools and industry insights
- Academic and IT skills sessions supporting work-ready competencies

5.2 Assessment of Employability

Employability will be assessed through a combination of:

- **Formative assessment:** Reflective portfolios, Career Passport entries, peer feedback, tutor coaching
- **Summative assessment:** Employability modules at Levels 4, 5 and 6; professional practice elements in capstone projects; group project contributions
- **Assessment by engagement:** Attendance and participation in co-curricular activities (logged in Career Passport)
- **External recognition:** SERA Award (Student Taking Active Role) based on portfolio, CV and interview with selection committee

5.3 Inclusive Practice

The framework is designed to support all students, recognising diverse starting points, backgrounds and aspirations:

- Foundation Year provides supported transition for students without traditional entry qualifications
- Strengths-based approach at Level 5 affirms individual talents and builds confidence
- Multiple pathways at Level 6 (employment, further study, enterprise) respect different goals
- Accessible co-curricular offer (on campus, online, flexible timing) supports students with caring responsibilities or part-time work commitments
- Consideration of cultural competence, emotional literacy and wellbeing throughout framework

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Academic Board	Strategic oversight, annual review of framework effectiveness, approval of amendments
Head of Academic Affairs	Overall accountability for embedding employability; liaison with employers and franchise partners; reporting to Board of Governors
Programme Leaders	Curriculum design and mapping; ensuring employability learning outcomes in modules; coordinating guest speakers and industry input



Module leaders	Delivering employability-infused curriculum; facilitating reflection; assessing employability skills; signposting to Job Shop
Employability, Careers & Support Team	Managing Job Shop; coordinating employer engagement; delivering workshops and 1:1 support; maintaining Career Passport system; reporting on co-curricular engagement. Building and maintaining employer partnerships; arranging placements, visits, panels; supporting Business Incubation Centre
Students	Engaging actively with curriculum and co-curriculum; completing Career Passport; seeking work experience; reflecting on development; taking responsibility for own employability
Quality & Standards Committee	Monitoring KPIs (graduate outcomes, engagement data, employer feedback); reviewing annual employability report; recommending enhancements

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Enhancement

7.1 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The effectiveness of the framework will be measured through:

Graduate Outcomes:

- Graduate Outcomes Survey results (employment, further study, highly skilled employment rates)
- Destinations data at 6 months and 15 months post-graduation
- Salary benchmarking where data available

Engagement Metrics:

- Career Passport completion rates by level
- Attendance at Job Shop events and workshops
- Uptake of 1:1 career coaching
- Participation in work placements, live projects, volunteering
- Business Incubation Centre applications and start-up success rates

Employer Feedback:

- Employer satisfaction with placement students and graduates
- Number and quality of employer partnerships
- Repeat engagement rates (employers returning for multiple activities)

Student Feedback:

- Module evaluation feedback on employability elements
- National Student Survey (NSS) questions on career support and development
- Internal surveys on Career Passport and Job Shop services
- Focus groups and Student–Staff Liaison Committee input

7.2 Annual Review Process

The Employability and Careers Team will produce an Annual Employability Report for Quality and Enhancement Committee and Academic Board, including:

- KPI dashboard with trends over time
- Analysis of graduate outcomes by programme
- Summary of employer engagement activities
- Student feedback themes and actions taken
- Recommendations for curriculum or co-curricular enhancements
- Action plan for following academic year

7.3 External Reference Points

The framework will be reviewed against:

- Advance HE Framework for Embedding Employability in Higher Education
- QAA Quality Code guidance on work-based learning and student engagement
- Office for Students (OfS) and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics
- Sector benchmarking data (HESA, DLHE, Graduate Outcomes)
- Employer skills surveys (CBI, UKCES, sector bodies)