



# **CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY SERVICE POLICY**

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## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy guides the provision of high quality careers and employability services to all UR students which embed curriculum and graduate attributes to produce a fit for work graduates. Career education, employability skills training as well as information and practical support will be given to students in a strategic, systematic, entrepreneurial and creative manner. The UR senior management is committed to this policy and it is one of the key corporate strategic vision.

## **2. POLICY PURPOSE**

This policy aims to promote students' employability and career prospects by availing to students an innovative blend of practical and soft skills career education, information and guidance programmes, which underpin students' employability and career objectives.

A further purpose of this policy is to provide a professional Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Service to enable students and graduates to make informed decisions about their career choices, take steps to realize their goals and develop their capacity to manage their career throughout their working life.

It aims to provide primary means of enabling UR students to make a smooth transition to work. It is a comprehensive approach that is required to integrate young women and men in the labour market, including relevant and quality skills training, labour market information, career guidance and employment services, recognition of prior learning, incorporating entrepreneurship with training and effective skills forecasting.

### **Vision:**

The University of Rwanda envisions that by 2020, it shall have educated the next generation of Rwandan leaders who are prepared and dedicated to building a more inclusive and sustainably just global society.

### **Mission:**

The University of Rwanda shall support the development of Rwanda by discovering, advancing knowledge and commitment to the highest standards of academic excellence, where all students irrespective of their special educational needs and diversities, are prepared for lives of service, leadership and solutions.

All UR academic services and facilities shall be designed to meet all the needs of its students and staff, facilitate the elimination of all physical, programmatic, and attitudinal barriers, and foster equal and integrated access to all academic, social, cultural and recreational programs.



### **3. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY**

This policy applies to all University of Rwanda students regardless of the mode of delivery and level of education. It also applies to academic and non-academic staff who are to do everything possible to mould highly knowledgeable, skilled, well behaved and employable graduates.

### **4. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

#### **Career guidance:**

The adopted definition for this policy is the one OECD, European Commission and World Bank adopted for their recent reviews of career guidance and policy.

‘Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, public employment services, in the work place, in the voluntary or community sector and in private sector. The activities may take place on individual or group basis, and may be face to face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individual develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness and career management skills, tester programmes to sample options before choosing them) work search programmes and transition services’.

#### **Employability skills:**

A set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (York and Knight, (2006))

Furthermore, employability skills are general skills that are necessary for success in the labour market at all employment levels and in all sectors. These skills have a number of names that include; soft skills, workforce readiness skills, career readiness skills - but they all speak to the same set of core skills that employers want.

#### **Career Management Skills:**

Career management skills are competencies which help individuals to identify their existing skills, develop career learning goals and take action to enhance their careers (Neary, S. et al. (2015)).

## **5. POLICY**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The Careers and Employability Services Policy of the University of Rwanda (UR) is inspired by and consistent with the University's vision, mission and objectives, more specifically the UR's 10-year Strategic Plan (2016-2015), in particular the UR's objective of ensuring that students have the leadership, entrepreneurship and management skills needed to create employment.

The University of Rwanda recognises that one of the drives of students to pursue a course of study mainly relates to their future career prospects. Thus, their career decisions and the support they get to shape their dreams impact directly on the employability prospects upon graduation.

The University of Rwanda is cognisant of the increased competition in employment and scarcity of jobs country wide and therefore seeks to position its graduates as choice number one of all employers as well as innovative job creators and hence contribute to the government strategies on youth employment.

Whilst recognising that the quality of its graduates depends upon many factors - admission criteria, the quality of the teaching, assessment of learning, extra-curricular programmes and activities, internships/industrial attachment and the quality of living while studying - the University recognises its responsibility to produce well-rounded graduates who are ready for work academically and personally through academic programmes, personal development and employability skills embedment.

The university recognizes the need and shall endeavor to develop a strategy understanding how its graduates are doing on job-market and the factors that contribute to their successes or failures so as to inform review of curricula and well as career and employability activities.

The University gives careers education, information and employability skills development, a status of high priority and it is committed to organize its operational structure to enable it to provide a variety of services necessary to implement this policy with a view to ensure that all its graduates transit to the world of work quickly and smoothly.

### **5.2 Employability skills and programs**

**Goal: Embed graduate attributes in all disciplines offered by the University of Rwanda**

- University will adopt and avail graduate attributes and their descriptors to all schools
- The University directorate of teaching and learning enhancement will develop different tools that will help schools and departments to integrate, teach and assess graduate attributes in a harmonized manner
- Each department shall develop teaching, learning and assessment strategies that contribute to acquisition of graduate attributes and explicitly support students to track,



assess and document their achievements as well as appreciate the relevance of the knowledge and skills acquired in a particular subject/discipline to the world of work throughout their study.

- All academic staff will be assigned with student mentees and they will among others help the mentees develop personal development plans, help them build and maintain e-portfolio and act as their frontline help on all matters pertaining to linking their academic, graduate attributes and the world of work. The schools will work closely with careers and employability services to ensure this is achieved.
- College principals and campus leadership will ensure that close working relationships between schools and careers and employability services are established and maintained for the benefit of students and the university at large.
- Career and employability service in collaboration with schools shall develop and avail tools and information that will enable students to record and assess their progress and experience in attaining graduate attributes.
- Through centres of excellence, academic staff will be encouraged to come up with innovative teaching models that embed academic, personal development and graduate attributes. The winning models will be used to show case best practices for emulation.
- Through Resource centers for Special Needs Services on each campus, ensure that employability of students with disabilities and other special needs, their special needs, capacities and potentials are also embedded attributes of University of Rwanda graduates.

### **5.3 Employability and extra-curricular activities**

**Goal: To provide a range of opportunities to students throughout their life cycle at UR with a view to produce quality and employable professionals**

Currently, students engage in extra and co- curricular activities without linking it to its relevance to employability and most of them are reluctant to engage in these activities due to other competing demands. Cognisant of the importance of the extra –curricular activities in promoting employability skills, the university will promote students’ engagement in extra –curricular activities through:

- Heightening awareness of students on the value of extra-curricular and wider students experience in developing employability skills through such programs as,
  1. a refined model of induction program with a particular emphasis on extra-curricular activities
  2. forums for students to reflect and give feedback on the importance of extra-extra-curricular activities in skills development and partner with the university to guide meaningful students’ engagement in extra-curricular activities
  3. equipping guild councils and class representatives to help their fellow students appreciate the link between extra-curricular activities and employability skills acquisition as well as monitor and report on students’ engagement in such activities



- Career and employability service in collaboration with guild council and academic departments will work together to identify and to signpost extra-curricular opportunities. Annual catalogue of extra-curricular activities will be published
- Careers and employability service will work collaboratively with guild council, schools and students' welfare department to develop a system of recognition of engagement in employability- enhancing extra-curricular activities.
- Career and employability service will regularly seek perception of employers, policy makers and employment agencies on the importance of extra –curricular activities in employability and do the needful ( advocacy, policy influencing, etc.)
- Create and maintain a career portal where all extra-curricular opportunities will be posted
- Regularly research on extra-curricular importance in employability skills development, contextualize and integrate in UR system.
- Careers and employability service will work with the alumni office to provide opportunities to network with alumni. Among others, alumni will endorse through their voice the link between extra-curricular and graduate attributes.
- Enhancement of sports field, equipment and relevant management of such in order to boost extra-curricular activities.
- Establishment and administering of students' competition in different aspects like debates, drama, poems, essay competitions, etc., with awards given to the winners.

#### **5.4 Employability skills development**

**Goal: to produce well –rounded graduate who are ready for work academically and personally through complementing curriculum with personal and employability skills development**

- Careers counsellors deliver high quality, careers education and employability skills trainings as part of curriculum programs
- Students will access one on one or group advice on a range of support to develop skills in careers planning and management, such as, interviewing skills & practice, CV writing/enhancement, cover letter writing and developing and using personal development plans.
- CES develops and avails key information set that help students and prospective students know career options for all disciplines/courses and be explicit about career pathways and how to access additional information and skills necessary to underpin their choices and accelerated employability.
- CES endeavours to avail high-quality and up to date labour market information through collaboration with government agencies that are responsible to collect and disseminate such information.
- CES shall encourage and work with other departments to establish incubation centers to nurture students' innovation ideas and develop entrepreneurship skills with the objective of job-creation.



- A compulsory mentorship program is established by assigning a group of students to an academic staff mentor. This is complemented by another mentorship program where high-level professionals and leaders engage in students' mentorship as part of their giving back to community.
- Regional and international students exchange programs are established to broaden students' academic and social experience as well as to inspire them to be global employees
- Build on increased use of social media among youth to promote careers planning and management through use of eportfolio, LinkedIn, Facebook, twitter channels and employability blogs.
- Organize high school leavers fairs, schools/departmental open days to allow prospective students to learn about courses offered and make informed choices
- Organize summer camps to provide students with insight into leadership, creativity, critical thinking, social skills by involving professionals from international organizations, governmental institutions, research institutions, etc.
- Upon request, allow prospective students to sit in University classes as part of their career exploration.

### **5.5. Partnerships with employers**

**Goal: To engage with employers, professional bodies and business leaders through establishing and maintaining positive and strong links for the purpose of promoting graduates' employability through:**

- Connecting with national, regional and international institutions with regard to students' internships, placements, volunteering, job shadowing and job opportunities;
- Collaboration to organize careers fair, enterprise programs with a view to support students develop entrepreneurship skills and get information and advice on business funding opportunities;
- Collaboration with private sectors and non-governmental organization to organize student innovation and entrepreneurship competition;
- Guest talk programs, where speakers from different sectors, industries and professionals inspire and give insights to students on a range of issues aimed at promoting employability skills among UR students;
- Establishing employer forums where students, academics, university management and employers discuss issues at stake with regard to students' employability to inform curriculum and university policies;
- Creation of the University job portal and encouraging employers to post opportunities for students and alumni (within one year);
- Encouraging and facilitating employers to conduct on campus recruitment
- Working with Universities to collect and avail information on postgraduate opportunities, admission requirements and procedures to UR undergraduates and other opportunities for UR postgraduate students;



- Preparation of other networking events (e.g. breakfast, dinner, road show, etc.);
- Working with professional bodies to ensure that students know what it takes to secure membership and get ready for that;
- Employment ambassadors program among students is established to increase students' involvement with employers for enhanced communication, adaptability and mobility within the changing work place;
- Put in place mechanisms to know and recognise the kind of part-time jobs, volunteering and community participation, students engage in during schooling period or in vacations and in particular work closely with local authorities and non-governmental organizations to promote the culture of volunteering among students, especially during holidays;
- Involve students with disabilities and other special needs in all employment awareness activities and opportunities (Careers fair; Guest talk programs; Employer forums; On-campus recruitment programs; Networking events or connecting with institutions; and others), especially those who use alternative modes and/or assistive devices that are unknown to common employers and ensure that their needs on the job market and capacities are clarified on the University job portal.

## **6. SERVICE DELIVERY**

UR shall establish CES quality management system by regularly receiving feedback from students, alumni, employers and other stakeholders through collection of evidence and data including such basic information as level of usage and types of services preferred by students and others.

- Marketing and communication strategy shall be developed and implemented to enlist, understanding, commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders (internal and external) with a view to promote employability among our students;
- The University staff, whether in the careers and employability service, in academic departments or in administrative services shall behave towards students in a way which is impartial, focused on the best interests of the student, in accordance to professional ethics and code of conduct;
- A standardized process, which each college CES office is aware of and demonstrates when approached by all service users, shall be established;
- Different guidelines and tools will be developed and availed to ensure that quality service is provided to all careers and employability clients and partners;
- Students have to understand that they alone have responsibility for their own futures and hence give adequate attention to the process of their own career development, including self-awareness, skill development, an understanding of the opportunities available to them and how to make effective career transitions;

- Different tools for career exploration and self-discovery will be developed and students encouraged to use them;
- An up to standard careers and employability service webpage will be developed and maintained;
- CES staff are supported, developed and provided with appropriate internal and external professional development opportunities to be able to deliver to the desired standard;
- CES staff to put emphasis on providing customer care services to both students and staff while creating and maintaining institution's good reputation;
- Strengthening proper and better internship supervision (at the field) through physical and face to face contact between interns and academic supervisors. This will enhance the right skills among university students;
- Emphasizing proper academic staff facilitation during administration of internship programs.



**Professor Philip Cotton**

**Vice Chancellor, University of Rwanda**

