



# Insights into Employability

# Introduction

Improving students' employability is a key priority for the University.

Given the increasing financial investment our students make to gain a higher education qualification, we need to ensure that their University experience properly prepares them for a successful transition into the world of work.

Furthermore, our position in university rankings is increasingly important to prospective students both in the UK and internationally and these are partly based on the results of the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey, which captures what graduates are doing six months after graduation.

For these reasons the University is keen to embrace a new approach to employability which recognises the important role played by the MLP, Careers & Employability Division, but which also encourages greater involvement and commitment from students and staff.

The success of this approach will depend on effective partnerships and collaborations with colleagues in Faculties and Schools. Whilst some staff are already very engaged with the employability agenda, we recognise that others may want advice and support in gaining a better understanding.

This publication aims to give staff an insight into some key issues and developments. It provides information about the DLHE survey and examples of excellent employability initiatives being carried out in each of the Faculties; describes how we are meeting the employability challenges of international students and postgraduates, and gives details of an employability event on 30 March 2011.

I hope you find the publication interesting and useful, and would welcome your feedback.

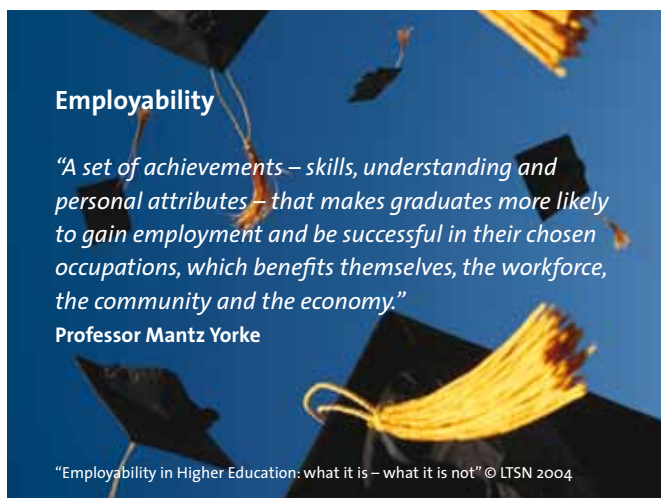
**Jane Ratchford**  
Director – MLP, Careers & Employability Division  
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## Employability & The Student Experience

The Government wants to ensure that all universities treat employability as a core part of their mission and a central element of the student experience.

Following a recent restructure of the PSS, the MLP, Careers & Employability Division is now part of the new Directorate for the Student Experience.

Director for the Student Experience, Dr Tim Westlake, says:  
*"Improving student employability is one of the key priorities of the new Directorate and I am keen to see some of the positive ways in which we currently develop employability, extended to all students. This goal will be part of the Directorate's broader ambition to help make an exceptional student experience a core element of the University's brand."*



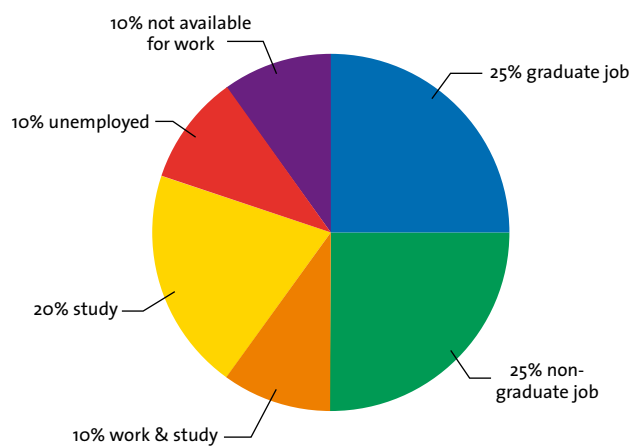
## Key Information Set

Universities will have to publish employability data and average graduate salary information (as part of a Key Information Set for each course) for the benefit of prospective students from 2012, if government proposals are implemented. This information would be derived from the DLHE survey.

Below is an illustration\* of how the employability data might be presented:

### Newtown University Botany Studies BSc Employment/study six months after leaving course

**Employment and study** – For those in employment, 25 per cent were in graduate jobs



**Average full-time salary** £16,000

**Professional bodies that recognise this course** The Council of Botanists – please see [www.botanist.org.uk](http://www.botanist.org.uk)

\*Illustration adapted from HEFCE: "Public information about higher education", Annex E. [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10\\_31/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10_31/)

# Graduate Destination Data

## The Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE)

DLHE is a national survey, which UK universities are required by Government to conduct, on the destinations of graduates six months after graduation. It focuses primarily on undergraduates and postgraduates from the UK and EU. At The University of Manchester, it is conducted biannually by the MLP, Careers & Employability Division and returned to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

The target rates of response set by HESA are very high: 80% of all UK full-time and Research Council funded students; 70% of UK part-time students, and 50% of EU full-time and part-time students. With 9,000 graduates surveyed, The University of Manchester has the largest return.

The percentage of Manchester graduates in employment six months after graduation is comparable to other Russell Group universities; a significantly lower percentage of students, however, enter further study. The reason for low levels of Manchester students entering further study requires further investigation.

## What data is collected and how?

The DLHE survey is designed by HESA and covers topics such as: employment circumstances six months after graduation (eg work, further study, travel, unemployment, etc.); occupation; industry; salary; reasons for taking the job; how they found out about the job; questions about further study, and more.

Collecting the data is a significant undertaking for the University. While some responses are received by post and online, the majority are obtained on the telephone. Over several weeks, teams of trained students and staff ring up graduates throughout the EU in the evenings to collect the data.

## How is the data used?

HESA distributes DLHE data very widely and it appears on sites such as Unistats which is provided by UCAS for prospective applicants to universities. Newspapers and media outlets such as The Guardian and The Times purchase the data for use in the production of their university league tables. For the purpose of university league tables the data is presented differently in each and often without much interpretation or analysis.

## What are the issues associated with the DLHE data?

Although DLHE provides a useful mine of data, its methodology and findings are controversial within the sector. Some of the issues include:

- Six-months after graduation is an early census date. The survey does not take into account, for example, whether graduates have a deferred place on a graduate training scheme or for postgraduate study. Longitudinal studies do take place, but the sample sizes are considerably smaller and they receive less media attention.
- Occupations are grouped into nine major categories, the top three of which are classified as 'graduate level'. Yet many of our graduates engage in 'non-graduate' employment, even though the jobs are an essential first step to a graduate career (eg 'Classroom Assistant' or 'Runner' in television production).

- While possible to compare institutional data, it is difficult to benchmark Faculties and Schools against other universities, because the discipline composition of faculties and schools varies across universities.

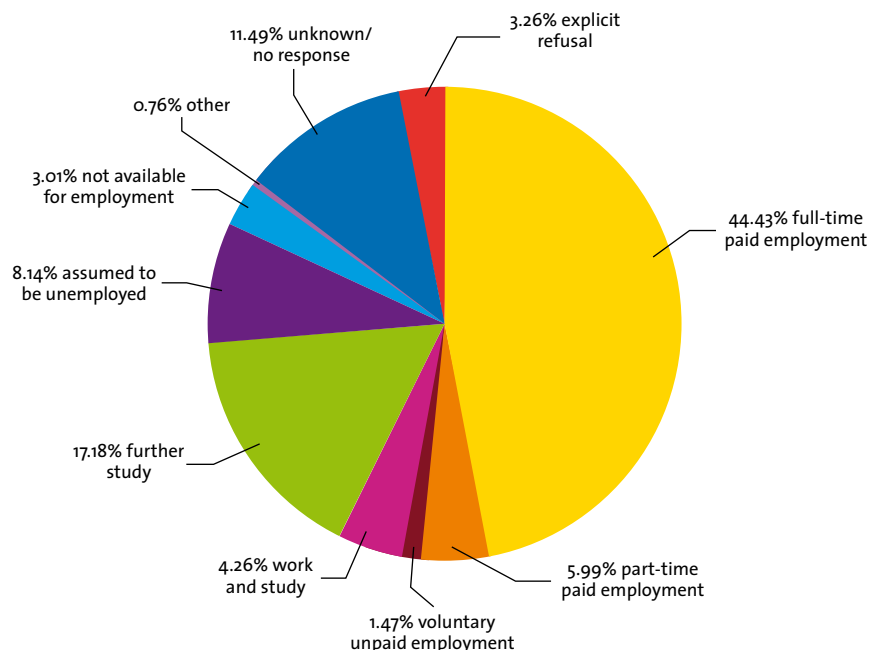
## What can university colleagues do to help?

The most important way in which colleagues can help with the survey is to promote it to their new graduates and to encourage them to complete the survey.

*"The most effective way we found to improve the return rate on the DLHE survey was for our Head of School to write a letter to our recent graduates just before Christmas at their parents' home. We remind them that the Careers Service and we are still there to help them and that the DLHE survey matters to us."*

**Professor Bill Lionheart, School of Mathematics**

## The University of Manchester – Undergraduates o8/09



For further information and results by faculty, visit [www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/staff/dlhe](http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/staff/dlhe) or contact Andrew Whitmore, Assistant Director of the MLP, Careers & Employability Division, at [andrew.whitmore@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.whitmore@manchester.ac.uk)



### Faculty of Life Sciences: Industrial and Professional Placements

Up to 25% of undergraduates within the Faculty of Life Sciences (FLS) take up the opportunity of a one-year industrial placement. The students undertake pure or applied research and development projects in an industrial or research setting. They complete a scientific report and undergo an examination, which together contribute 10% to their overall degree mark.

The students are evenly split between the UK and the rest of the world and most placements are salaried. Students pay 50% tuition fees to the University, which helps to finance the administration of the programme. It is managed by Dr Liz Sheffield, Senior Lecturer and Senior Advisor for FLS, and is supported by two research-active placement officers and one full-time administrator. All students are visited at least once by a member of the Faculty.

The placements programme is competitive; students are required a mean mark of at least 60% in the first year to apply. If unsuccessful, students are encouraged to pursue summer internships or become PASS leaders or student ambassadors in order to develop their employability skills. Approximately 30 students receive vacation studentships and grants, which are bursaries to fund 6-8 week summer research projects.

A handful of students per year interrupt their studies and source their own industrial placements. A student recently secured an opportunity at a hospital-based research lab in the US which resulted in a co-authorship on an article published in the journal Nature.

Liz Sheffield says: *"It wouldn't be fair on our undergraduates if we didn't offer them the possibility of industrial experience. It's so competitive out there and virtually every recruiter requires work experience on the CV."*



Christopher Crooks on placement at the Bimini Biological Field Station in the Bahamas carrying out shark research and conversation.

### Faculty of Humanities: Careers Education in MBS

The Manchester Business School (MBS) offers a number of careers education modules. One entitled 'Business Information Systems Project' is a 30-credit, year-long compulsory course for final year BA Accounting, Management and Information Systems students and is jointly delivered by MBS and the Careers Service.

The course uses a combination of teaching methods, including lectures, case studies and simulation games. Perhaps the most useful learning takes place in the students' interactions with a client organisation and their involvement in a team to produce a project which is completed on time and to an agreed specification. Examples of projects are developing databases and websites for local charities.

The course begins by looking at the general career opportunities for graduates from this degree and then moves on to the skills needed for job applications and a career in IT. Visiting speakers give talks on aspects of managing projects and working in their companies.

During the year, each team of students works intensively with their client organisation. In the second semester, weekly tutorials act as clinics to discuss issues, problems and progress in the team projects.

The course provides practical skills in team working, project management and a range of other skills. Senior Lecturer, Dr Chris Westrup, says:



*"One aim of the course is for students to understand the importance of developing work-related and career management skills so as to be able to respond to future changes in patterns of work and in the industry. The team project element of the course helps improve our students' employability a great deal."*

The module is assessed through group reports, group presentations and individual essays. Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with the course consistently achieving an overall rating of excellence.

### Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences: The Manchester Leadership Programme

Academic Schools in the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences (MHS) have embraced the Manchester Leadership Programme (MLP) to help boost students' employability. The MLP consists of an academic 'Leadership in Action' unit and up to 60 hours of volunteering. Most MHS students who are on the MLP complete the online version of the unit.

A large increase in student numbers in 2010/11 has been in the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, where over half of all 2nd years (111 students), are taking part. Dr Jason Hall, Director of Undergraduate Teaching & Learning, says: "Employers indicate that they value leadership skills highly and we are hopeful that the MLP will enhance our students' prospects in the pharmacy job market."

The MLP is also compulsory for all 80 third year students in the School of Dentistry. A new model for assessing the unit was developed whereby 40% of the assessment is completed by the MLP Team and 60% by the School. Dr Anthony Roberts, Director of Undergraduate Education, says: "The MLP is truly a win-win scenario whereby the contribution of our students is formally acknowledged to the benefit of themselves and the wider community."

The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work plans to introduce the MLP into the new BNurs and the BMidwif programmes (460 students) from 2011/12. In the same academic year the MLP will also be offered to a new intake of Nursing students from Singapore.

The Head of the School of Medicine, Professor David Thompson, has met with the MLP Team to explore ways in which the MLP might be brought into the revised MBChB in order to increase take-up – currently 25 students from the School are on the programme.

The MLP is also well supported by the School of Psychological Sciences and 66 students from the School are on the MLP this year. Dr Christine Rogers, Director of Undergraduate Affairs, says: "The MLP not only provides our students with a means of recognising and rewarding voluntary work but also offers a great opportunity to work with students from different disciplines and to learn from some influential leaders in our society."



MLP Dentistry student volunteering in a clinic in Vietnam.

### Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences: School of Mathematics

The School of Mathematics has introduced several initiatives in order to bolster the employability of its students.

Calculating Careers is a one-day event, consisting of an exhibition, presentations, workshops and alumni panels. Typically attended by



Calculating Careers 2010 © Professor Nick Higham, School of Mathematics.

400 Maths students, it runs annually and is coordinated jointly by the School and the Careers Service.

Traditional recruiters of Maths graduates such as accountancy firms and actuarial consultancies, as well as employers in other sectors such as technology, manufacturing and engineering, take part.

Dr Louise Walker, Director of Undergraduate Studies says: "Calculating Careers has become an important event in our calendar. It helps our students understand the process of finding a job and the steps needed to improve their chances. One week in advance of the event, we hold a talk on how best to prepare for it and we encourage all students to attend."

Professor Bill Lionheart, who spearheaded many of the School's initiatives, set up a 'Careers Wiki' – a website with careers news, information and advice which students who have accepted offers to study at Manchester are also entitled to access.

Academic Advisors participate in lunchtime briefings by Careers Consultants from the Careers Service. "We don't pretend for a moment to be qualified careers advisors," says Louise Walker. "Yet it is important for academics to be aware of what skills employers are looking for, to signpost our students appropriately and to help them prepare for the workplace."

# Improving the Employability of International Students

When considering The University of Manchester as a study destination, international students carefully weigh up their employment prospects (according to International Barometer surveys conducted by the International Graduate Insight Group).

Securing graduate-level work in the UK after graduation can be challenging, partly because of complex legal requirements of employers. It will prove even more difficult with the likely abolition of the two-year, Post-Study Work Visa in 2011. As a result, demand for work experience during studies is expected to increase.

## Key strategies to enhance international students' employability prospects

Employers across the globe look for previous work experience, commercial awareness, language fluency and a host of transferable skills. It is important to encourage students to gain relevant experience during their studies, and to make the most of their time at university, and of what is available through the careers service, so that they can understand the graduate job market and what it means to be employable.



Careers staff meeting leading graduate recruiters in China.

Ms. Yixiong Yin, Pearson's Marketing Manager for Greater China and University of Manchester graduate says: "International employers demand a good understanding of their business and often fluent English to enter high-profile graduate programmes. Putting on a suit and feeling the part is one thing, but it is also really important that students do not come across as 'student innocent' about their experience, strengths, weaknesses and what they can offer."

Here are some ideas for students to pursue:

- Dissertations and projects in collaboration with local organisations;
- Industrial placements, internships and volunteering;
- Opportunities to develop English language skills, through, for example, student societies.

## International internships – School of Law

*"We have been focusing upon boosting international internship opportunities and have developed over 30 opportunities in Malaysia and Singapore this year. I feel that the key is to start off relatively small, by making the most of overseas academic visits and simply asking the question. The internships were initially developed through consultation with a senior lawyer and the head of a public law school in Malaysia and the Director of the Singapore Law Society Pro Bono Department. We have now gone on to develop further links with a major Northern law firm with offices in Singapore and hope to build on this with other firms. Such internships have enormous value to both our international and UK students, building their confidence, commercial focus and exposure. As we move forward, our prospective international students will increasingly look at what we offer in a global study market and such experience opportunities are a huge attraction."*

**Dinah Crystal OBE, LLB – Director of External Relations and Clinical Education and Academic Head of Undergraduate & Postgraduate Admissions, School of Law**

## Local internships – Manchester Business School

*"On Manchester Business School's Specialist Masters in Global Business Analysis, students carry out an unsalaried internship of between 6 and 12 weeks, producing a business report which constitutes one third of their overall mark. The majority of students are international from countries as diverse as China, Nigeria, India and America. The internships are a true win-win situation: students gain all-important work experience whilst client organisations benefit from the constructive analysis and consultancy that is applied to significant business issues. Intensive support is delivered to ensure students are able to sell their skills and abilities during the recruitment process however the benefits are wide-ranging."*

**Jane Washington – Specialist Masters Careers Liaison Team, Manchester Business School**

## Key resources for international students

- Careers website: [www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/international](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/international)
- Careers blog: <http://manchesterinternationalcareers.wordpress.com>
- The International Advice Team for visa information and support:
  - tel: 0161 275 5000
  - [www.manchester.ac.uk/studentnet/crucial-guide/academic-life/immigration](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/studentnet/crucial-guide/academic-life/immigration)

For further information, contact Amanda Conway, Head of International Career Development, the MLP, Careers & Employability Division, at [amanda.conway@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:amanda.conway@manchester.ac.uk)



# Improving the Employability of Postgraduates and Research Staff

## Hit the ground running – the challenge for Masters postgraduates

Major employers advertise and often fill their most prestigious jobs before Christmas, a year in advance of start dates. It can be overwhelming for Masters postgraduates to research career options, meet employers and apply for jobs within the first two months of a demanding new course.

The MLP, Careers & Employability Division delivers induction talks in all Faculties, and has also produced a planning tool to help Masters students focus their career actions, which can be downloaded from the careers website.

Elizabeth Wilkinson, Head of Postgraduate Career Development at the MLP, Careers & Employability Division, says: *“We would welcome the chance to work with Schools to help set postgraduates’ expectations before they arrive. With the impending changes to work visa regulations for international students, it will be even more pressing to help them think realistically about where they are likely to find work at the end of their course.”*

## What do PhDs and Research Staff want to do?

A recent survey of 1,045 PhD researchers and 531 research staff at The University of Manchester reveals that nearly 70% are aiming at a post-doctoral research or academic role as a next step; as a long-term career plan, over 60% aspire to some form of academic role, with three quarters of humanities researchers aiming at an academic career.

It is encouraging to see our researchers inspired by their research and academia in general. However,

- an Arts and Humanities Research Council survey in 2006 showed only 38% of its PhDs in permanent academic roles, 3-6 years after graduating;
- a Science and Technology Facilities Council survey in 2010 showed only 15% of its PhDs in permanent academic roles, 6-9 years after graduating;
- a Vitae survey published in 2010, “What do researchers do? Doctoral graduate destinations and impact three years on”, found that only 44% of UK PhDs were still working in Higher Education, three and a half years after graduating.

The challenge, therefore, is to get the right balance: to encourage researchers who have the potential to become academics to think strategically about their careers and to aim high, but also to support the majority of PhDs, who will not become academics, to build the foundations for alternative careers.

All PhDs and Research Staff should be encouraged to attend Pathways – our flagship careers event in June showcasing a wide range of career possibilities for researchers.

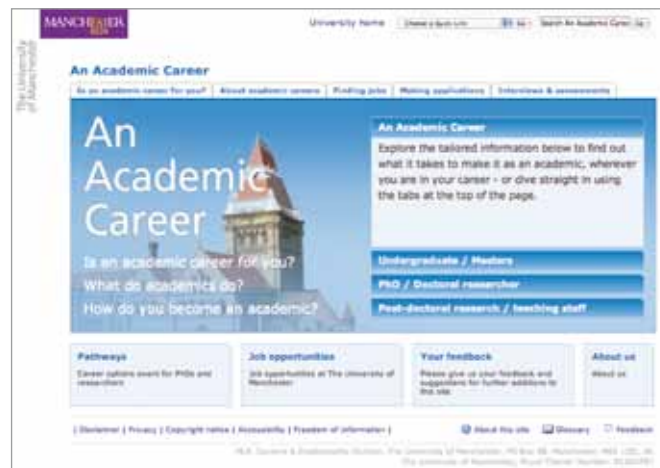
### Pathways: Career Options for PhDs and Research Staff 10th, 13th, 15th June 2011

- Academic and non-academic career discussions with PhD-qualified panellists
- The chance to practise interviews and assessment skills
- “How to find a job” for researchers – advice and access to employers

For full details, visit: [www.manchester.ac.uk/pathways](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/pathways)

## An Academic Career – New resources for aspiring academics

An Academic Career, the first careers website aiming to support aspiring academics, has been launched: [www.manchester.ac.uk/academiccareer](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/academiccareer)



Many academics across the university contributed to the site. Video interviews from staff in each Faculty, from Research Associate to Professor, give a real taste of the life and work of an academic today.

Supported by Roberts funding, and developed by the MLP, Careers & Employability Division, the site aims to be positive but to ask challenging questions of would-be academics: What do they really want from a career and is that a good match for a career as an academic? Have they got what it takes to make it in this competitive career?

With outlines of typical career pathways, how to find jobs and funding, and information on academic CVs and interviews, and suggested actions they can take to get their career on track, we hope this will prove an invaluable resource for anyone considering academia as a career.

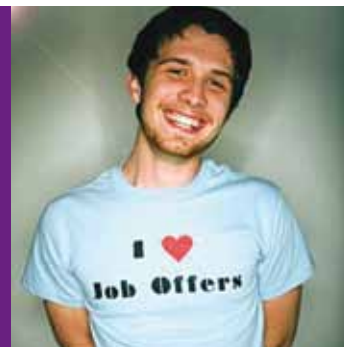


For more information, contact Elizabeth Wilkinson, Head of Postgraduate Career Development, MLP, Careers & Employability Division, at [elizabeth.wilkinson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:elizabeth.wilkinson@manchester.ac.uk)

You are invited to attend:

# Employability Event

Wednesday, 30 March 2011  
1.30pm-4.15pm (preceded by lunch)



We hope you will join us for an Employability Event aimed at University of Manchester staff. The event is a great way for all colleagues to improve their understanding quickly on:

- the employability landscape, with views from students and graduate recruiters;
- graduate destinations data and its impact on league tables;
- successful employability initiatives led by academic schools.

The programme appears below and is designed to accommodate colleagues who cannot attend the full event due to time considerations. You are welcome to sign up for all, or part of, the event.

## Programme

**12.00pm-1.30pm**                      **Meet the MLP, Careers & Employability Division over Lunch**  
**Jean MacFarlane Building**

An opportunity for University colleagues to network with division staff over an informal lunch and learn about a range of employability initiatives, including services for international students, postgraduates, the Manchester Leadership Programme, student placements and graduate internships.

**The rest of the event will take place at University Place**

**1.30pm-2.50pm**                      **Views of Graduate Employability**

Institutional view	Professor Rod Coombs – Deputy President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, The University of Manchester
The Graduate Labour Market	Charlie Ball – Deputy Director of Research, HECSU
Employers' view	Carl Gilleard – Chief Executive, Association of Graduate Recruiters
Graduates' view	Video of a graduate interns working a local SMEs
Students' view	Sarah Wakefield – General Secretary, University of Manchester Students' Union
Careers Service view	Jane Ratchford – Director, MLP, Careers & Employability Division

**2.50pm-3.05pm**                      **Coffee Break**

**3.05pm-3.35pm**                      **Graduate Destination Data**

An overview of the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey – what it is, how its results are presented in the media and how it affects our rankings in league tables. Presented by Andrew Whitmore – Assistant Director, MLP, Careers & Employability Division.

**3.35pm-4.05pm**                      **Examples of Good Practice in Academic Schools**

Successful employability initiatives led and organised by Academic Schools. Presented by:  
Dr Louise Walker – Director of Undergraduate Studies, School of Mathematics and  
Dr Liz Sheffield – Senior Lecturer and Senior Advisor for the Faculty of Life Sciences.

**4.05pm-4.15pm**                      **Close and Evaluation**

Organised by the MLP, Careers & Employability Division of the Directorate for the Student Experience.

**Register today at: [www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/employabilityevent](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/employabilityevent)**