UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY SERVICES POLICY

July, 2020

POLICY COVER SHEET

Title	University of Rwanda (UR) Careers and Employability Policy
Approving Authority	Board of Governors
Approval date	22nd July 2020
Effective from	Date of Approval
Guidelines Custodian	Deputy Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement (DVC-IA)

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2. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	Description
CES	Careers and Employability Services
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UR	University of Rwanda

3. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy guides the provision of high-quality careers and employability services available to all University of Rwanda (UR) students. The policy embeds curriculum and graduate attributes to produce fit-for-work graduates. Career education and employability skills training, information and practical support will be given to students in a strategic, systematic, entrepreneurial and creative manner. This is one of the University of Rwanda's key corporate strategic visions, and UR Senior Management is committed to seeing it put into action.

The policy aims to promote the employability and career prospects of Rwandan students by providing students with an innovative blend of practical and soft skills training, careers education, information and guidance programmes, all of which will support students' employability and career objectives.

By providing a professional career guidance service, students at both undergraduate and graduate levels will be able to make better, more informed decisions about their career choices. They can then take steps to realize their goals and develop their capacity to manage the way their career develops throughout their working lives.

By providing this comprehensive approach tocareer guidance training and employability services, all UR students should be able to make a smoother transition from their study programs into the labour market and the workplace.

Vision

To be a leading university that develops highly enterprising graduates prepared and dedicated to building a more just and sustainable society locally, nationally and globally, with appropriate innovations that advance quality of life.

Mission

To support the development of Rwanda by discovering and advancing knowledge and being committed to the highest standards of academic excellence, where students are prepared for lives of service and leadership and transforming communities through finding solutions

4. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy applies to all University of Rwanda students, regardless of how they are studying and learning, (i.e.) open or distance, part-time or full-time, at undergraduate or post-graduate levels of their education. The policy also applies to the teams of academic and non-academic staff who work together to mould highly knowledgeable, skilled, well-behaved and employable graduates.

5. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Career Guidance

The adopted definition for this policy is the one which the OECD, the European Commission and the World Bank have all adopted in their recent career guidance and policy reviews[1].

'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 workplace, 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, advisory or counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals) 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 benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (York and Knight, (2006))[2].

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 are known variously as *soft skills, workforce readiness skills, career readiness skills* - but they all speak to the same set of core skills that employers want.

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[1]http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/34060761.pdf (p10)

[2]https://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/esecttools/esectpubs/Embedding%20employability%20into%20the%20curriculum.pdf

Career Management Skills

These skills are competencies that help individuals identify their existing skills, develop career learning goals and take action to enhance their careers (Neary, S. et al. (2015)).[3]

6. POLICY

Introduction

The Careers and Employability Services (CES) Policy of the University of Rwanda (UR) is inspired by and consistent with the University's vision, mission and objectives. More specifically it aligns with the UR's Strategic Plan (2018-2025)[4], and 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 core motivators for students to pursue a course of study mainly relates to their future career prospects. Career decisions, and the support they get to achieve those decisions, therefore shape their dreams and impact directly on their prospects of employability after graduation.

The UR is cognisant of the increased competition in finding employment in Rwanda and the scarcity of jobs country-wide, and therefore seeks to position its graduates as 'choice number one' for all employers as well as innovative job creators, so that they can hence contribute to the government strategies on youth employment.

Whilst recognising that the quality of its graduates depends on many factors, including the University's admission criteria, the quality of its teaching, assessment and learning, the extra-curricular programme activities it offers, as well as internships/industrial attachments and the quality of living while studying. The University recognises it has a responsibility to produce well-rounded graduates who are ready for work both academically and personally, through its academic programmes, and the embedding of personal self-improvement, and employability skills development.

The UR recognizes the needs that exist, and it will endeavour to develop a strategy to understand how well its graduates succeed in the job market, and the factors that contribute to their successes or failures so as to inform the review of curricula and well as career and employability activities.

The University gives careers education, information and employability skills development, high priority in its mission, and is committed to organizing its operational structure to enable the effective provision of a variety of services necessary to implement this policy, so that all its graduates are able to transit to the world of work quickly and smoothly.

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[3]https://derby.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10545/595866/Understanding%20management%20skills%20Final%20Feb%2020161.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
[4]https://ur.ac.rw/documents/UR%202018-2025%20Strategic%20Plan-.pdf

Employability skills and programs

Goal 1: To embed graduate attributes in all disciplines offered by the University of Rwanda

- The University will adopt and avail graduate attributes and their descriptors to all schools.
- Employability attributes will be integrated into modules of all programmes using The Commonwealth of Learning's Employability Model[5].
- The UR Directorate of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (DTLE) will develop different tools that 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 the acquisition of graduate attributes, and to explicitly support students to track, assess and document their achievements as well as appreciate the relevance to the world of work of the knowledge and skills acquired in a particular subject/discipline throughout their course of study.
- All academic staff will be assigned ~~with~~ a number of students' mentees to support in developing personal development plans, create, build and maintain e-portfolios. The staff mentors will act as frontline help to their mentees on all matters concerning their academic studies, the graduate attributes and the world-of-work. The UR's schools will work closely with the staff at the Careers and Employability Services to ensure this collaboration and coordination is fully achieved.
- All 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 of Rwanda as a whole.
- The Career and Employability Services teams, in collaboration with the Schools, will develop and provide systems and information to enable students to record and assess their progress, and to gather their experiences in terms of working to attain each, specific graduate attribute.
- Through the Centres of Excellence, academic staff will be encouraged through competition to introduce and use innovative teaching models that help embed academic, personal development and graduate attributes. The winning teaching models, or approaches, will be used to showcase best practice for others to use as appropriate.
- Through the Resource Centres for Special Needs Services located on each campus, the staff will ensure The R Centres will ensure all students regardless of any special need or disability will be enabled to use their full potential and skills to find employment.

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[5]http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/3251

Employability and extra-curricular activities

Goal 2: To provide a range of opportunities to students throughout their life cycle at UR with a view to producinghigh-quality, more readily-employable professionals

Currently, students at UR engage in extra and co-curricular activities without seeing their relevance to any future employment they may have. Among the reasons suspected as to why some students are reluctant to engage in these activities is because of other competing demands on their time. Recognising the importance of such extra-curricular activities for enhancing employability skills, the university proposes supporting greater student engagement in extra-curricular activities through:

- Heightening students' awareness of the value of participating in extra-curricular programmesto broaden their experience, and develop their employability skills through programs such as;
  1. a refined University induction program with a particular emphasis on extra- curricular activities;
  2. conducting Student Forums to reflect and give feedback on howextra-extra-curricular activities support skills development,working in partnership with UR to promote more meaningful engagement with extra-curricular activities;
  3. equipping Guild Councils and class representatives through specific training 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 Services (CES), in collaboration with the Guild Council and UR's academic departments, will work to identify and signpost extra-curricular opportunities. An annual catalogue of extra-curricular activities will be published.
- The CESstaffwill work collaboratively with the Guild Council, UR Schools and Students'Welfare Department to develop a system of recognition of engagement in such employability-enhancing extra-curricular activities.
- The Career and Employability Services staff/ unit? will regularly engage with employers, policy makers and employment agencies to gauge their perceptions of the importance of extra-curricular activities foremployability so they can thenmake improvementsas necessary(i.e.) through advocacy, policy influencing etc.
- Creating and maintaining a career portal on the UR's website where extra-curricular opportunities will be posted.
- Carrying out regular research on the value of extra–curricular importance for employability skills development, as they are contextualized and integrated into the UR system.
- The CESstaff will work closelywith the UR's Alumni Office to provide opportunities to graduates to network withprevious UR UR alumni, as well as other alumni networks, both in and outside Rwanda wherever possible, so that the alumni can actively voice and endorse the link between extra-curricular activities and fulfilling theirgraduate attributes.

- Improvements in current availability of sports fields and venues, in equipment and the relevant management of these activities to boost engagement in extra-curricular sports and fitness.
- The establishment andadministration of creative programmessuch asdebateandpublic speaking competitions, drama productions, poetry and essay competitions, etc., with awards or for the winners.

Employability skills development

Goal 3: To produce well-rounded graduates who are ready-for-work academically and personally through complementing their academic curriculum with personal and employability skills development

- Careers counsellors will deliver high-quality careers education and employability skills trainingsessions as part of all student programmes.
- Students will be able to access one-on-one or group-based advice from CES on a range of areas to develop their skills in career planning and management. Examples include: Interviewing Skills & Practice, CV writing/enhancement, Cover Letter/Expression of Interest letter writing, developing and using personal development plans.
- CESwill develop and provide key information to help all students – both prospective students as well as those already studying at the university, to learn more about career options for all disciplines/courses so they can be more explicit about their personal career pathways,and where andhow to access additional information and/or the skills needed to underpin their choices to support their potential for employability.
- CES will endeavour to make high-quality, up-to-date labour market information available through collaboration with the government agencies such as the Rwandan Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA), and other agenciesresponsible forcollecting and disseminating such information.
- CES will also encourage and work with other UR departments to establish 'incubation centres' that nurture students' innovative ideas, and develop entrepreneurship skills with the objective of jobcreation.
- A compulsory mentorship program will be established by assigning a group of students to an academic staff mentor. This will be complemented by an additional mentorship program in which high-level professionals and leaders from the wider community engage in student mentorship as part of a 'giving back to the community' program.
- Regional and international student exchange programswill be established to broaden UR students' academic and social experiences as well as to inspire them to be more active as global citizens and employees in the future
- Career planning and management will befurther promoted through increased use of social media amongst the student population. Examples of the tools and SM to be used include e-Portfolios, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and employability blogs.

- Through the organization of high school leavers' fairs, and 'Open Days' for UR Schools/Departmental, prospective students will be able to learn about the courses offered by URso that they can then make more informed choices of what and where to study.
- Summer camps (held on each UR campus),involving professionals from international organizations, governmental institutions, research institutions, and so on, will provide participating students with opportunities to practise their skills in leadership, creativity, critical thinking and social skills
- Prospective students wishing to take up a University place in the future, will be able to join some study classes as part of their career exploration (This would be arranged and managed in collaboration with the students' schools and school principal or a school careers guidance officer, if available.

Partnerships with employers

Goal 4: To engage with employers, professional bodies and business leaders through establishing and maintaining strong, positive links for the purpose of promoting greater graduate employability through:

- Connecting with national, regional and international institutions with regard to student internships, placements, volunteer opportunities, job shadowing and job opportunities.
- Collaboration to organize career fairs and enterprise programs with a view to supporting students to develop their entrepreneurship skills, and toobtain information and advice on business-funding opportunities;
- Collaboration with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to organize student innovation and entrepreneurship competitions;
- Offering guest speaker programs, where speakers from different sectors, industries and professionals can inspire and give insights on a range of issues to help promote greater employability skills among UR students;
- Establishing employer forums where students, academics, university management and employers meet to discuss key issues at stake with regard to student employability so as to inform the UR's curriculum and policies.
- Creation of the University job portal, inviting and encouraging employers to post up opportunities for students and alumni, and encourage and facilitate employers wishing to conduct on-campus recruitment opportunities, at Job Fairs or Career Open Days.
- Work with other national, regional and international universities to collect and provide information on postgraduate opportunities, admission requirements and procedures for undergraduates and other opportunities for the UR postgraduate students.
- Provide networking events (e.g. breakfasts, dinners, road shows, and so on).
- Work with professional bodies such as Institute of Certified Public Accountants Rwanda (ICPAR) to ensure that students know the requirements for membership and can thus better prepare their applications.

- Use a special type of campaign called "the ambassadors' program" among students to increase their involvement with employers for enhanced communication, adaptability and mobility within the changing workplace.
- Implementation of mechanisms to research the kind of part-time jobs, volunteering and community participation that students can engage in during the academic year, or during vacations and, in particular, to work closely with local authorities and non-governmental organizations to promote aculture of volunteering among students, especially during holiday periods.
- Involvement of students with disabilities and/or other special needs,in all employment - awareness activities and opportunities (i.e.) at career fairs, guest speaker programs,employer forums,on-campus recruitment programs,networking events andwhen connecting with institutions. (it is especially important to involve those students who use alternative modes and/or assistive devices which may be unknown to employers, and to ensure their needs in the job market and their capacities are clarified on the URjob portal.

7. SERVICE DELIVERY

The UR shall establish a CES Quality Management System (QMS) by regularly receiving feedback from students, alumni, employers and other stakeholders. They will do this through the collection of evidence and data, including basic information as level of usage and types of services preferred by students and others.

- A Marketing and Communication Strategy shall be developed and implemented to promotethe understanding, commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders(both internal and external) in order to promote greater employability among URstudents;

- The University staff, whether in the CES, in academic departments or in administrative services,will interact and work with students in an open, impartial manner, focussing on what is in the best interests of the student, in accordance with the UR's professional ethicsand Code of Conduct;

- A standardized process, with a CES office at each college that provides these services to users, will be established once this Policy document has been approved by the University's Senior Management.

- Guidelines and information necessary will be developed and made available to all key stakeholders of this Policy document to ensure that a quality service is provided to all careers and employability clients and partners;

- Students will be made aware thatthey have the ultimate responsibility for their own futures and must therefore give adequate attention to the process of their career development, including building greater self-awareness and skills development where needed, and

aacquiring a better understanding of work opportunities, and how to make effective career choices and transitions;

- Different tools for the exploration of current career pathways, and of self-discovery will be developed forstudents to use;

- Ahigh-quality, informative and attractive CES webpage will be developed and regularly and systematically maintained to ensure the information it displays is factually true and relevant;

- CES staff are supported, developed and provided with appropriate internal and external professional development opportunities to be able to deliver their work to the desired standard;

- CES staff will be encouraged and enabled toprovidehigh-quality customer care services to both students and staff, thereby creating and maintaining theUniversity's good reputation;

- The strengthening ofappropriate internship supervision (in the field) through physical and face-to-face contact between interns and academic supervisors will enhance the students'appropriate skills for future employment;

- There will be an emphasis on proper academic staff facilitation during administration of all internship programs.

8. Review of the Policy

This Policy will be reviewed regularly by the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement (DVC-IA) at the University of Rwanda at intervals of no longer than three years. The Policy may be reviewed in the interim in the event of changes to legislation, and to ensure its continued effectiveness.

9. Management/Implementation Authority

The office of the DVC-IA will be in charge of the implementation of this Policy, on an annual basis, as it oversees the implementation plan for all CES activities for the University of Rwanda.

10. Communication and Dissemination of the Policy

This policy will be widely disseminated to all relevant persons, using diverse means of communication that include UR website. Briefings will also be held with staff, students, employers and other stakeholders to communicate the UR management's commitment to

this policy, its purpose, how it will be implemented and how stakeholders can make best use of it.

This policy shall come into effect on the date of its approval by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Rwanda.

Prof. Philip Cotton

Vice Chancellor-University of Rwanda

11. REFERENCES

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