

# Study 4: Adoptability Testing

## **Introudction**

AKO national projects are about impacting on practice. In the final study the researchers wanted to establish whether the pedagogical framework could be used to guide course and teaching and so to enhance the degree to which employability capabilities are embedded within the programmes of research intensive universities.

## **Aims**

The aim of this study was to assess the adoptability of the pedagogical framework.

## **Method**

A series of exploratory workshops addressing different aspects of the project objectives and the agreed over-arching design principles for the intervention were used to inform the development of a set of six nationally delivered workshops. Additional and fine grained design principles were agreed to guide the continuous refinement of the set of workshops.

The workshops were advertised within 3 different universities and at 2 national and 1 international conference. After each workshop, evaluation data was collected, participants were invited to comment and the design team wrote a reflection. In addition to analysing the evaluation data, participants' self-reviews and course plans, which they prepared during workshops, were analysed. The workshops were delivered as 2 hour and 3 hour sessions.

## **Findings**

The evaluation data sat approximately at ceiling for all workshops. This is probably because even the initial workshop was the result of at least a year's work and a good deal of trial and error. The evaluation data, therefore, although very reassuring, did not inform continuous improvement. The reflections by the delivery team and a small number of participant informants were valuable and helped in adjusting content, timing and simplifying the structure.

Analyses of participants' self-reviews and plans, showed that the model was understood – this was inferred from the appropriateness of comments under each dimension. Participants were able to produce plans for achievable change. It was also evident that there was a wide disparity in the detail and sophistication of reviews and plans amongst attendees. The project has successfully developed a low floor, high ceiling design. That is participants, irrespective of level of expertise, can access the concepts, use the material and gain from it.

<b>Table 1. Percentage endorsement of the design principles (N=48-72)</b>	
<i>Participants say that:</i>	<i>% Agree</i>
The workshop is accessible to those who have little pedagogical or employability background	92
The workshop is relevant to participants' teaching and learning	96
The workshop adds to the perspectives of those who are experienced in employability and familiar with pedagogical theories	88
The forms and template are easy to use and will be used in the future	87
They are motivated to try out something new	98
They have gained skills in embedding employability in the curriculum	73-92
They would recommend the workshop to others	96

The positive outcomes of the workshops have to be viewed in the light of the recruitment method. All participants were volunteers and so presumably interested in employability and open to changing their practices. It would be interesting to deliver the workshops to a reluctant group of participants.

All workshops were delivered by the same team and led by the same individual. Run sheets and facilitator guides are available but we have no data from other workshop delivery teams. Thus, while we are convinced that participants in the workshops find the ideas adoptable, we do not know whether the workshops themselves can be adopted by others.

Additionally, most participants in the project workshops were active at course as well as session level, and hence the focus of the adoptability testing workshops. However, the project

also trialled workshops that addressed whole institution and whole programme issues. When working at this scale, the challenge is not so much about how to apply the pedagogical framework in teaching, it is about identifying ways to: support the application of the framework; support an employability mindset in others; remove barriers to change; enable facilitatory drivers; ensure coordination and progressive development of capabilities across courses; and attend to equity and individual differences in the student body. We have not had the opportunity to deliver such workshops to staff senior enough to effect institutional change.

Finally, it was not possible to track participants for any length of time and assess whether they put the plans developed in the workshops into action. This is a serious shortcoming.