

University Specialist Employment Partnerships (USEP)

# **Consultant’s Handbook**

# **November 2021**

Welcome to the USEP Team!

This is a great opportunity to build new skills, make lots of valuable connections and work with employers and contacts that you may not have had the opportunity to collaborate with in the past.

If you find any of the enclosed information confusing, please don’t hesitate to ask your USEP team/representative on campus for clarification and assistance.

**The USEP Team**



# **Overview - Your Role as a USEP Consultant**

As a USEP Consultant you will be co-located on campus, working one on one with students with disability in their final year of study to help them achieve their graduate employment goals.

Students may choose to register with you outside of the university environment prior to graduation (if studying part-time) or after graduation, having built a good relationship with you and now aware of your provider’s expertise in this field.

## **As a USEP consultant you should fulfil the following responsibilities and tasks:**

* Foster high expectations with and for graduates with disability and employers.
* Ensure students are fully prepared for the job-search process by supporting them to:
* prepare high-quality resumes, cover letters and responses to selection criteria
* develop winning LinkedIn and social media strategies
* build confidence in interview techniques
* understand the graduate process, interview platforms and timeframes.
* Offer strategies and ideas to build students’ confidence over time, including the ability to effectively share information about disability if and when required (the ‘how, why and when’ to share information about disability has been identified in research as a primary concern of university graduates).
* Seek opportunities with your university USEP team to build relationships with a range of internal university staff (e.g. wellbeing and mentor program coordinators, Work Integrated Learning coordinators) to collaborate, learn and share expertise and skills.
* Refer students with disability to existing university services where possible and appropriate.
* Organise internships, placements and work experience throughout the year while assisting with applications for work post-graduation for the students you are supporting.
* Build relationships with relevant businesses, negotiate internships and placement intakes, and convert these into employment opportunities.
* Maintain record keeping and data collection for the USEP partnership through surveys and any method prescribed by your host in negotiation with the USEP partnership, meeting Office of Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) privacy requirements and your organisation’s privacy policy. Create networks and contact lists ranging across sectors, industries, specialties, and roles relevant to the student with disability you are working with.
* Communicate with your local university partner to harness their networks, knowledge and resources for your success!

# **Checklist: weeks 1–3**

Coordinate approval processes with USEP partners for logo use on promotional material and order relevant material such as banner, postcards

Order USEP business cards

Update or create a LinkedIn profile

Like [USEP page](https://www.linkedin.com/company/18030102/admin/)

Organise internal staff introductions with University partner

Organise internal staff introductions with Student equity/accessibility team

Organise internal staff introductions with Careers team (including coordinators of work placement and work integrated learning)

Organise internal staff introductions with Student services manager

Organise internal staff introductions with IT support orientation

Undertake university orientation/induction (as per university human resource policies):

Get to know the campus facilities, accessibility and internal programs (e.g. student union services)

Confirm outdoor space/room to meet USEP-eligible students

Coordinate best method of referrals and communication method (e.g. university email: usep@uni.edu.au)

Work with the access/equity and/or careers team to organise work shadowing to understand their role, how they support students and what services they offer

Familiarise yourself with the 2 USEP surveys to encourage student participation

Survey 1: [current USEP students](https://developingemployability.edu.au/usep-student-survey/)

Survey 2: [graduate USEP students](https://developingemployability.edu.au/usep-graduate-survey/)

Familiarise yourself with the [USEP website](https://www.usep.com.au/) and the [USEP toolkit](https://www.usep.com.au/partnership-toolkit/)

Refresh knowledge by completing disability awareness online learning [www.disabilityawareness.com.au](http://www.disabilityawareness.com.au)

# **Format of delivery**

You are welcome to meet with students anywhere on campus. You will also have allocated office space (from the access/equity or careers team) to hold confidential conversations, and this will be your base.

# **Ideas for starting the conversation:**

* Provide an overview of USEP, why it exists and details such as when you are available on campus
* Discuss mutual expectations, best ways to communicate
* Check/discuss quality of resume/CV, cover letter, references, experience, volunteer work
* Check/discuss graduate intakes in chosen field; check/discuss knowledge of graduate portals, including state graduate portals
* Check/discuss engagement with careers team so far
* Check/discuss career planning including sharing information about disability and experiences so far and concerns for the future
* Check/build/discuss student’s disability confidence and openness to talking about disability in job interviews; work together to develop strengths-based statements and confidently request workplace adjustments to enable best performance
* Discuss individual needs for modifications, adjustments and supports; educate on workplace modification and build a plan for requirements (if any) that need to be considered
* Explore student’s experiences; organise internship/unpaid placement and build reference and skill base while applying for graduate work; consider [Australian Network on Disability (AND) Stepping Into/PACE](https://www.and.org.au/students-jobseekers/) program opportunities, to avoid duplication of effort
* Directly market in addition to accessing advertised vacancies; engage with the careers team and let them know the student’s chosen field, cross-reference for current relationships in that field and approach alongside careers staff member if appropriate
* Educate students about state and federal initiatives for people with disability

# **Measurable data and surveys to complete**

Please have students and graduates complete the student survey before or early in the USEP experience. This has been ethics approved. There are 2 surveys – while the student is engaged in university and for those that register post studies.

Survey 1: [current USEP students](https://developingemployability.edu.au/usep-student-survey/)

Survey 2: [graduate USEP students](https://developingemployability.edu.au/usep-graduate-survey/)

<https://www.usep.com.au/surveylinks/>

This research data is a component of a broader study relating to student employability: Curtin University (HREC HRE2020-0079)

# **Suggested guide for approaching larger employers**

The university you are working with may have existing relationships with graduate employers. For this reason, positive communication with the careers team is essential. Also check if the employer is a member of the [Australian Association of Graduate Employers (AAGE)](https://aage.com.au/), [Australian Network on Disability (AND)](https://www.and.org.au/) or any other relevant peak body (details follow later in this handbook). A warm referral based on the suggestions listed below is the best possible scenario. Here are some ideas to get you started:

## Research the business

* Do they have an equity or diversity policy?
* Look for any relevant memberships.
* Look for any sponsorship of relevant events, press releases or partnerships that promote inclusion.
* Do they have any disability-specific programs?
* Do they have an accessibility/disability action plan?
* Establish who the right person (decision maker) is to talk to (i.e. diversity manager, human resource manager) and approach them directly; LinkedIn is helpful for this. Don’t get stuck at reception!

## First phone call

* Note you’ve read their inclusion/access plan.
* Explain how you can help them achieve their equity goals by expanding them to include graduates with disability from your university.
* Using strengths-based profiles, suggest students who you know would love to work there (keep brief).
* Be prepared with dates to arrange a time to meet to get to know each other and discuss what you’re doing alongside your university.

## First meeting with an employer

* Is the business interested but not disability confident? Introduce [JobAccess](https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/home) to assist the organisation to build a plan for employing people with disability, in the case that they do not have a plan. (Call 1800 464 800 and let JobAccess know you are an employment consultant who is consulting with a business with more than 100 employees who would like help to set up inclusive hiring processes.)
* Share information about online training related to disability awareness. [www.disabilityawareness.com.au](http://www.disabilityawareness.com.au)
* Is this business a member of [AND](https://www.and.org.au/)? If yes, they have inclusion and diversity on the radar and would welcome contact.
* Do not offer wage subsidies. You have a pool of talented upcoming graduates with disability seeking graduate careers who will enhance the workplace. If necessary, funding may be provided for essential training.
* Example of advice you can provide about practical funding usage to an employer who asks whether funding is attached:

Dependent on your employee and any specific access needs in the role, there is the potential for modifications of workplaces and funding of specialised equipment via JobAccess. This ensures the individual has the right equipment and environment to reach their maximum potential, and that the workplace is disability confident and welcoming.

* Suggest/request an informal ‘meet and greet’ with the student/graduate; facilitate the connection and build student networks and confidence, either one on one or a via a ‘meet the employer’ group.
* Suggest mentorship arrangement and/or internship.
* Follow up on JobAccess employment plan and application for graduate role and modifications and adjustments as required.
* Suggest accessing workplace modification funding (if needed); explain how you can work with them to facilitate the process and teach them how to manage it on an ongoing basis.

<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employment-assistance-fund-eaf>

* Help the business to build a successful flow of great graduates with disability starting and succeeding with them each year.

## Example text for an email to an employer you know:

*Hi Betty*

*[Susan’s] resume is attached. She’s a final year [university] [accounting] student. I’ve met her personally and like her attitude – she’s pleasant and motivated.*

*She’s engaged in a project I’ve been working on that’s in trial at [university] as she wants advice and support about how to work with future employers to make sure the workplace is set up for success with her [medical condition]. [Susan] has done really well at university with the right equipment available and in place. In practical application in work, this means having a sit/stand desk, working in a building with an elevator and limiting manual lifting tasks/handwriting. The negotiations for implementing this are fairly straightforward, and equipment can be funded to enable best performance when the time comes.*

*Before that, though, [Susan] is keen to do some extra work experience in addition to the upcoming coursework placement to make her applications stronger. As you’ll see on her resume, it would be much more competitive if she were to have demonstrable experience in real-world accounting when going for graduate interviews. She’s asked if we can help with this, and I think it’s an excellent idea. Is it possible that she does a placement with you? There’s an insurance product for work experience and internships we can put in place.*

*With thanks in advance*

# **Useful links, contacts and resources**

## Employment portals and websites

* Seek: <https://www.seek.com.au/>
* Indeed: <https://au.indeed.com/>
* LinkedIn: <https://linkedin.com>
* LinkedIn – The Student Job Hunting Handbook Part 2  
  <https://university.linkedin.com/content/dam/students/global/en_US/site/img/StudentPublishMicroSite/pdfs/LNK_MM_JobSeeker_eBook_StudentEdition_Sec2_FINAL.pdf>

## Graduate programs and portals

* State government: check each department website for graduate placement criteria, intake and vacancies
* GradConnection: <https://au.gradconnection.com/>
* GradAustralia: <https://gradaustralia.com.au/>

## Internships/work experience programs

* AND’s Stepping Into program: <https://www.and.org.au/pages/stepping-into...-programs.html>
* AND’s PACE Mentoring program: <https://www.and.org.au/pages/mentoring.html>

## General

* Pathways to Employability: <https://abilitykey.com/pathways-to-employability>
* Education to Employment: <https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/educationtoemployment>
* GradAustralia – disability: <https://gradaustralia.com.au/disability>
* ADCET – student section: <https://www.adcet.edu.au/students-with-disability>
* Big Meet: <https://www.thebigmeet.com.au/>
* JobAccess: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au>
* National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (NAGCAS): <https://www.nagcas.org.au/>
* Australian Association of Graduate Employers (AAGE): <https://aage.com.au/>

# **Finding disability-confident employers**

Many businesses that have acknowledged a commitment to inclusive practices have a disability or accessibility action plan developed and registered with the Australian Human Rights Commission. Check this list to see if any are located in your area or are large organisations, like banks, which have a national focus. <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/action-plans/register-disability-discrimination-act-action-plans>. You can also use the list to encourage potential employers who may not yet have disability equity on their agenda. Present these industry-related examples and explain the benefits (i.e. to remain competitive, community focus, better represent customers).

# **What’s happening around the world?**

You are a part of a program that has not been set up in the same manner anywhere else. However, it’s vital to learn what others are doing and incorporate this into your practice.

Here are some examples of international efforts to improve graduate employment outcomes for students with disability.

* USA – Workforce Recruitment Program: <https://www.wrp.gov/wrp>
* USA and Canada collaboration – Lime Connect: <https://www.limeconnect.com/>
* USA Fed-Ed funded initiative – DREAM (Disability Rights, Education Activism, and Mentoring); has presentations and webinars: <https://www.dreamcollegedisability.org/>
* Ireland – Association for Higher Education Access & Disability: <https://ahead.ie/graduate>
* Ireland – Support for students and graduates with a disability: <https://gradireland.com/careers-advice/equal-opportunities/support-for-students-and-graduates-with-a-disability>
* UK – example of employer engagement: <https://myplusstudentsclub.com/>
* USEP (Australia) – examples of implementation: <https://www.usep.com.au/current-partnerships/>

# **USEP Social Media**

* LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/usepau/>
* Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/USEPau>
* USEP website blog: <https://www.usep.com.au/news/>

# **Sharing what you learn with your Disability Employment Services (DES) provider and others**

* Convene regular organisation team meetings. What’s happening in diversity and inclusion for USEP consultants? Take some of your learnings back with you.
* Speak with your university to see who else is delivering USEP and connect with other USEP Consultants delivering the program for additional support, sharing of ideas and discussion of any DES-related issues.