Mapping the Jordanian Learner Journey

Full Report

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On behalf of the
Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education, UK

Supported by the British Council and in collaboration with the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI) in Jordan and the Cotswold Research Consultancy

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Preamble

May Abuhamdia
Deputy Director, British Council, Jordan

This report comes as part of the British Council Global Higher Education programme and the strand of enhancing student outcomes. To support this objective, the British Council works with higher education institutions and other relevant higher education bodies to improve the prospects for students and, ultimately, maintain relevance of universities to their local and global contexts.

In Jordan, the British Council has developed a Theory of Change programme that is geared towards enhanced student outcomes. This programme has been defined as the Pathway to Renewed Engagement Through a Partnership Approach to Raising Employability (PREPARE). PREPARE represents all our local tertiary education programming that aims to support Jordanian tertiary education institutions to produce graduates for the global economy.

This report, *Mapping the Jordanian Learner Journey,* is an essential first step in the wider British Council Pathway to Renewed Engagement Through a Partnership Approach to Raising Employability (PREPARE) programme. The key objectives of the programme are as follows:

- An active network of employers, higher education institutions, training providers and government institutions working together.
- Skills development aligns with national and global employment opportunities.
- Graduates have access to and use of relevant and recognised employment-related qualifications, information and skills.
- Current and future employment prospects of young people are increased.
- Businesses improve their competitiveness through having a skilled workforce.
- Youth economic resilience and strengthened national human resource capital.

The programme has identified three key areas that can support the achievement of these objectives:

- the regulatory framework/tools that need to be in place - the National Qualifications Framework
- higher education's role and responsibility in providing employment-ready graduates
- the essential role of partnership between institutions, employers and industry in skills development and work-integrated learning.

This study was focused on higher education's role and responsibility in providing employment-ready graduates. The scope of work was designed to consider higher education from the Jordanian students' perspective. As such, the study placed the students at the centre of higher education and reviewed an 'ideal' student journey incorporating guidance from the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the European Standards and Guidelines for higher education, and by comparing a small sample of public and private universities in Jordan. The journey begins with the information and support received prior to university to inform choices of programmes and institution, and ends with the transition from graduation to employment.

The specific outputs of this report include a gap analysis of the existing systems in Jordan when compared to the 'ideal' learner journey. Key to informing next steps, the mapping provides clear recommendations that are sensitive to and mindful of the context of higher education and employment in Jordan, citing best practice examples to clearly demonstrate the potential of each activity. Finally, the report can also serve as a baseline to measure the impact of future activities and developments.

The key outcome of this report is the allocation of roles and responsibilities for universities, regulatory bodies, employers, parents and students for each stage of the journey. This can effectively inform the development and prioritisation of future activities that can support progress towards the achievement of the wider PREPARE programme objectives.

Professor Thafer Y Assaraira
Chairman of the Higher Education Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission

The philosophy of the Higher Education Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission stems from the vision of His Majesty King Abdullah II pertaining to the need to continuously develop higher education institutions. This development is essential as it can help these institutions keep pace with global advancements while preserving the national identity and the foundations of the Jordanian society, whose renaissance began with the start of the Great Arab Revolution and the establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The Commission has continuously monitored the performance of higher education institutions, especially the quality of teaching and the learning outcomes. This monitoring process is important due to its role in acquiring advanced knowledge that can aid such intuitions in their pursuit of excellence. The Commission's follow-ups have branched out and its work increased to keep up with the activities of higher education institutions, especially when they launch new programs and re-evaluate their existing programs to keep pace with their competitors. This requires expanding the range of accreditation and quality, reviewing courses, attracting students, developing online learning, and enhancing scientific research and programs.

Since the issuance of the National Qualifications Framework System on 17 February 2019 in the Official Gazette, the Commission has designed two plans; the first is strategic while the second is operational, aiming to implement the above framework. In light of this, the Commission approved general descriptions for all levels - academic, professional and technical. Policies and outputs were also drawn up according to which the National Qualifications Framework would be applied. In addition, the Commission will soon be establishing standards for institutional inclusion and housing qualifications. The British Council, QAA and Cotswold Research Consultancy have been valuable partners in supporting our work in this area. This report is a direct result of that partnership and a key step towards meeting the requirements of the labour market. *Mapping the Jordanian Learner Journey* provides a unique insight into the Jordanian learner's experience from pre-*Tawjihi* stage through university, to graduation and employment. It highlights, not only the challenges faced by our learners in Jordan, but also Jordanian best practice. Our international partnership provides a valuable opportunity to share international and national best practice, to inform the development of a platform and identify additional activities to continue progress in addressing the employability of graduates in Jordan.

Executive summary

This report focuses on the study of the learning experience of higher education students through their life cycle from pre-admissions to graduation and employment.

It focuses on the typical university student journey in Jordan (distinguishing between public and private universities where appropriate) and compares this with the typical journey of a university student in the UK. It is important to note that only four Jordanian universities[1] formed part of this exploratory study. A gap analysis of the two journeys assesses the impact on the Jordanian student experience with reference to the *Education for Prosperity: Delivering Results - A National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025* (HRD)[2] and to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG).[3]

Four stages of the journey are compared:

- Transition towards higher education: Pre-arrival and admission
- Transition to higher education: Commencing and preparing to study
- Transition through higher education: Progressing through the learning journey
- Transition out of higher education: Graduation and employability.

The report also outlines the context for the student journey in both Jordan and the UK considering the key stakeholders, processes and practices.

The UK student journey shows universities engaging with students and schools through activities such as open days, outreach visits and talks. Students also have a significant amount of data on university courses and graduate employment to help them choose the course and university at which they wish to study.

UK students have a full managed induction programme and have communication with the university prior to starting.

The courses they study embed employability in all aspects of the course from programme development through to curriculum, delivery and assessment. Stakeholders from industry are involved in these aspects and also in the opportunities students have in placements and internships. Learning outcomes are embedded in all aspects of course development and delivery, including assessments, which involve a range of task types.

Teaching and learning approaches have developed to allow for more student participation and the opportunity to develop soft skills, and academics have been offered training and staff development to support this. This helps ensure students have developed soft skills as well as knowledge when they graduate, through the embedding of their institution's graduate attributes.

The Jordanian student journey shows much less engagement with universities prior to starting their course. Engagement with universities is post-Tawjihi. The centralised admissions system places each student on a programme at university based solely on the grades achieved in the Tawjihi which limits the space, rationale and requirement for Jordanian universities to innovate and create opportunities to develop student experiences

[1] AQACHEI identified - two public (University of Jordan, Hashemite University) and two private (Al Aaliyah University, Princess Sumaya University Technology) - institutions that reflect international best practice.
[2] www.mohe.gov.jo/en/Documents/National-HRD-Strategy.pdf
[3] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

and relationships at the pre-enrolment stage.[4] As a result, students are less informed and less engaged in the process of selecting their programmes and universities.

There is an inconsistent approach to induction and for many students no engagement with their university until the start of the course.

While some courses have links to industry and some employers may be involved in their development, this is not the case for many courses. Where 'soft skills' development is available, it is usually an extra part of the course, rather than embedded in it. This and the lack of graduate attributes in many universities, means students may not be prepared for entering the workplace. While learning outcomes are found in programme development and modules, they are not applied to assessments which tend to be examination focused. Teaching and learning approaches are beginning to become more student centred but staff may lack training to help them develop.

A gap analysis is used to make a number of recommendations to help close the identified gap between graduate skills and employer need, and enhance employability options for graduates to enable them to contribute to the economic development of the country.

A summary of these recommendations is shown below:

- More and consistent engagement with students prior to application to ensure students are able to make informed decisions and build up relationships with potential universities.
- A consistent approach to induction to support students ensuring all students feel prepared.
- More engagement with employers and students in all aspects of a course from programme development through to assessment, to help ensure courses include skills employers need and give students the opportunity to develop and practise these.
- Embedding of employability and an approach to this from the start of the course - linking this to the development of graduate attributes.
- Building capacity in staff through training to enhance teaching skills and enable them to consider employability in the development of curriculum and assessment.
- Developing consistency across the sector through the introduction of a mandatory requirement to follow the quality assurance process including a cycle of quality audits.

These recommendations would build on the initiatives taken so far and the goals for higher education identified in *A National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025* (HRD).

[4] Public universities in Jordan have no autonomy over which students will be admitted to the institution at which grades. The Centralised Admission System places the students on programmes within their institution based on the grades achieved through Tawjihi. Private universities have to agree their entrance requirements for the individual programmes with AQACHEI but have full autonomy over which students are accepted. Students apply directly to private universities.

Introduction

1 This report sets out the higher education landscape in Jordan and focuses on the learning experience of students through their life cycle from pre-admissions to graduation and employment. It considers the key stakeholders, processes, practices and ambitions of the country, and makes a number of recommendations aimed at improving the student journey and experience, with the aim of enhancing employability for graduates. The report is part of the follow up to the Knowledge Exchange Event delivered as part of the British Council PREPARE programme, where an initial gap analysis of the Jordanian student journey was outlined.

2 Working with the British Council in Jordan, Cotswold Research and Consultancy approached the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK (QAA) to conduct an exploratory study to develop a project proposal that maps the student learner journey for those attending Jordanian universities and the impact this has on graduate employability.

3 The key objectives this report seeks to address include:

- a snapshot of the current state regarding the governance of quality and delivery of higher education in Jordan, the parallel systems of quality assurance and licensing and accreditation, their status and connections
- gap analysis for the student experience within the Jordanian quality assurance system
- suggested workable solutions to address identified gaps
- identification of training needs for the quality regulators as well as the institutions.

4 The report sets out the higher education landscape in Jordan and focuses on the learning experience of students through their life cycle from pre-admissions to graduation and employment.

The report:

- considers the key stakeholders, processes, practices and ambitions of Jordan for higher education
- outlines a typical journey of a UK student studying at a university in the UK, a typical journey of a Jordanian student studying at a private university in Jordan, and a typical journey of a Jordanian student studying at a public university in Jordan
- compares these experiences using a gap analysis to assess the impact of these gaps and uses these to make recommendations to help close the gap between graduate skills and employer need
- makes a number of recommendations aimed at improving the student journey and experience, with the aim of enhancing employability for graduates
- aligns recommendations to the National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025 (HRD)[5] commissioned by His Majesty King Abdullah II and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).[6]

[5] *Education for Prosperity: Delivering Results - A National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025*
[6] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

Alignment with ESG

5 The National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025 (HRD) aims to develop an integrated educational system which 'invests in our citizen's education and training to create a generation of forward-looking young people who are equipped with the skills necessary to analyse, innovate and excel.'[7] The strategy states 'University climates are not conducive to positive educational outcomes, as they currently do not encourage students and faculty to modernize teaching and learning processes, engage in open dialogue, exchange new ideas or foster critical thinking.' It sets the context for change including areas relating to the student journey such as admissions, preparedness for university, quality assurance, teaching and learning, programmes, resources and the 'gaps…between educational outputs and the labour market.'[8]

6 The ESG 'are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education'[9] and 'provide guidance, covering the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education'.[10] They are used by institutions and agencies across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and have helped 'contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders.'[11]

7 They recognise:

- the importance of higher education in socio-economic and cultural development
- the growth in diversity
- expectations for higher education to make a 'fundamental shift in its provision' requiring a 'more student-centred approach to learning and teaching, recognising flexible learning paths and recognising competences gained outside formal curricula'.[12]

8 The ESG standards[13] cover the following areas.

1.1	Policy for Quality Assurance
1.2	Design and Approval of Programmes
1.3	Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment
1.4	Student Admission, Progression, Retention and Certification
1.5	Teaching Staff
1.6	Learning Resources and Student Support
1.7	Information Management
1.8	Public Information
1.9	On-Going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes
1.10	Cyclical External Quality Assurance

9 The scope of the criteria, its international recognition and use, make the criteria a useful benchmark for this consideration of the Jordanian student journey. It also complements the consideration of the student journey by focusing on the application of standards across an institution and how an institution meets these standards to ensure the quality of the provision. Students are a key part of the standards.

[7] *Education for Prosperity: Delivering Results - A National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025*, p 4
[8] Ibid, p 32
[9] ESG 2015 Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, p6
[10] Ibid, p 6
[11] Ibid, p 6
[12] Ibid, p 6
[13] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

10 The scope of the criteria, its international recognition and use, make the criteria a useful benchmark for this consideration of the Jordanian student journey. It also complements the consideration of the student journey by focusing on the application of standards across an institution and how an institution meets these standards to ensure the quality of the provision. Students are a key part of the standards.

Methodology

11 This study is informed by qualitative research including desk-based sources such as reports, articles and web-based materials. Further qualitative information was gained from face-to-face meetings held with key stakeholder groups including Ministry bodies such as the national quality authority - Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI) - university staff, students, industry representatives, local professional bodies and recent graduates, some of whom were in employment. A full description of the methodology and the programme are included in the Appendix.

Background and context

12 Jordan is a small country with a growing population of graduates. It is considered an emerging knowledge economy, having relatively high education and literacy rates when compared with other countries in the region with similar incomes.[14]

Key features:

- Jordan's demographic trend is towards a younger population, with almost 70% of the population currently under the age of 30.[15] This has increased the demand for higher education.
- Just over 80% of the country's currently employed workforce is educated to a minimum of secondary school diploma, 40% is educated to bachelor degree level.[16]
- Growth in the highly educated youth population is also adding to the high levels of unemployment in the country. The overall level of unemployment reported for 2018 stood at 15.3%.[17]

13 The government is dependent on this group to contribute significantly to the country's economic development. To support this:

- *The National Employment Strategy 2011-2020* and *The National Strategy for Higher Education and Scientific Research 2007-2012* have been implemented.
- Over the last 20 years there has been a significant drive by the government to invest in and develop the country's higher education sector.
- Jordan [has] adopted a human resource strategy focused on the development of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector (TVET). This strategy aims at minimising the gap between the supply and the labour demand. [18]

[14] European Commission, (2017), p 9, *Overview of the Higher Education System: Jordan*, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiches_jordan_2017.pdf
[15] British Council (2019), p 2, Education to employment intervention mapping report
[16] Dajani Consulting (2019) *Jordan: education, labour market, migration*. Available at: www.seo.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Annex_B_Jordan.pdf, p 22
[17] H. Plecher, (Mar 27, 2018) Statistica - Jordan - Statistics and Facts, www.statista.com/topics/2438/jordan
[18] Dajani Consulting (2019) *Jordan, Education, Labour market, Migration*. Available at: www.seo.nl/uploads/media/Annex_B_Jordan.pdf, p 21

14 Higher education is seen as a key priority for the country as it contributes to the economic development of human capital within Jordan. To this end, there has been an increased number of higher education institutions being established, including private universities.

15 However, in recent years, the education system has not been delivering the desired outputs in contributing to the reduction in unemployment. The National Committee for Human Resource Development was commissioned by His Majesty King Abdullah II 'to investigate the evidence and the root causes for this, and to develop 'an integrated, comprehensive, strategic and well-defined system for human resource development.'[19] This has resulted in the *Education for Prosperity: Delivering Results - A National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025* (HRD).

16 The HRD aims to develop an integrated educational system which 'invests in our citizen's education and training to create a generation of forward-looking young people who are equipped with the skills necessary to analyse, innovate and excel.'[20]

17 The strategy states that: 'Most of Jordanian Universities' climates are not conducive to positive educational outcomes, as they currently do not encourage students and faculty to modernize teaching and learning processes, engage in open dialogue, exchange new ideas or foster critical thinking.'

18 It sets the context for change including areas relating to the student journey such as admissions, preparedness for university, quality assurance, teaching and learning, programmes, resources and the 'gaps…between educational outputs and the labour market.'[21]

19 In summary, Jordan has high rates of unemployed graduates, an employer perception of graduates with a lack of relevant skills and students studying courses with oversaturated job markets while there is a shortage of skills elsewhere. There is 'a misalignment between student demand for university qualifications and labour market needs, and the poor preparation of students entering the system'.[22]

Context for the UK student journey

20 In the UK there is a large higher education sector with a range of different sized institutions working in different contexts - regional, national, international - and with a varied range of courses and a diverse student body. UK higher education institutions are autonomous, independent of government and are not accredited. The vast majority of higher education institutions are public with only a small number of private universities.

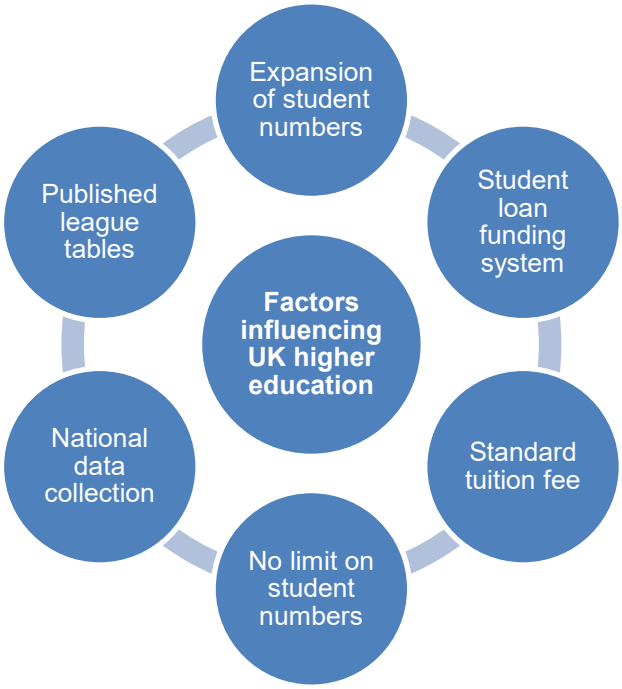
21 Factors which impact on the higher education landscape in the UK include:

- a government-focused expansion in the number of students attending university (50%)
- a student loan funding system, a fee structure where the tuition fee is the same at nearly all institutions and provides a transparent funding system for institutions
- a market where institutions are able to decide on their student numbers on courses (for instance, no cap on numbers)

[19] *Education for Prosperity: Delivering Results - A National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025*, p 16
[20] Ibid, p 4
[21] Ibid, p 32
[22] Ibid, p 177

- collection of data at national level used to develop a number of published league tables and reports on institution performance - this data includes the results of the National Student survey (NSS), Graduate Outcomes Survey and student performance data
- an expectation that graduates will be fit for the workplace at the end of their course in terms of both knowledge and skills.

Figure 1: Factors influencing UK higher education



22 These factors have resulted in the growth of a more competitive sector and led to significant changes in focus in the way universities:

- recruit and interact with potential students before they start
- consider the development of programmes
- consider learning outcomes and graduate attributes
- develop curriculum
- teach and assess students
- train and develop staff.

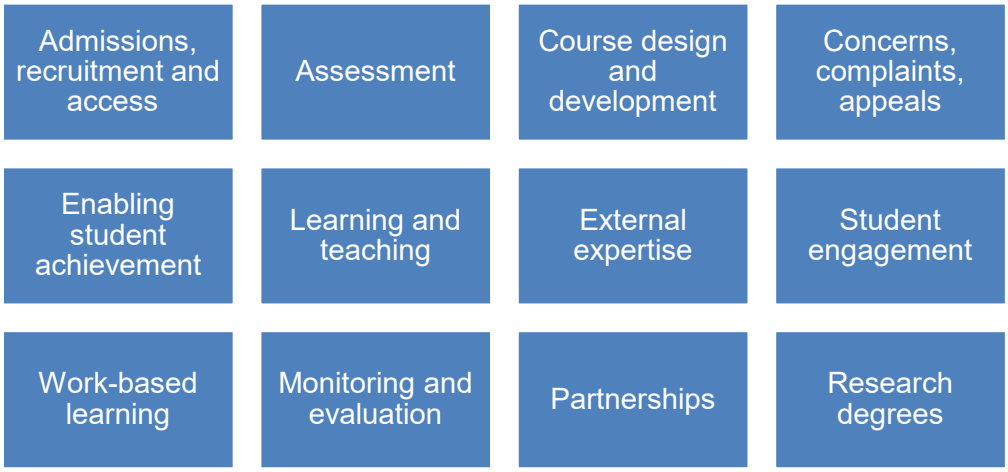
23 The factors above also link to the mandatory components of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education[23] developed by QAA in consultation with the UK higher education sector and which are designed to align with the European Standards and Guidelines. These Expectations are expressed in terms of outcomes which institutions 'should achieve in setting and maintaining the standards of their awards, and for managing the quality of their provision.'[24]

[23] www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
[24] Ibid

Expectations	
Standards	**Quality**
The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant National Qualifications Framework. The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector recognised standards.	Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed. From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

24 These Expectations are linked to Core practices which 'underpin the delivery of the Expectations and result in positive outcomes for students'.[25] Core practices are also mandatory and link to key stages in the student journey including admissions, programme quality, course outcomes, course quality, support and achievement.

25 The Code is supported by Advice and Guidance which consists of sector-developed themes, designed to support institutions in developing and maintaining effective quality assurance practices. A significant number of themes that relate specifically to the student journey are shown below.



26 Further support and focus for institutions are provided by:

- the Qualifications and Credit Framework which provides guidance for institutions on how to use credit when designing programmes leading to higher education qualifications[26]
- Subject Benchmark Statements which outline what a graduate might be expected to know and do at the end of their studies.[27]

[25] www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
[26] www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks
[27] www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

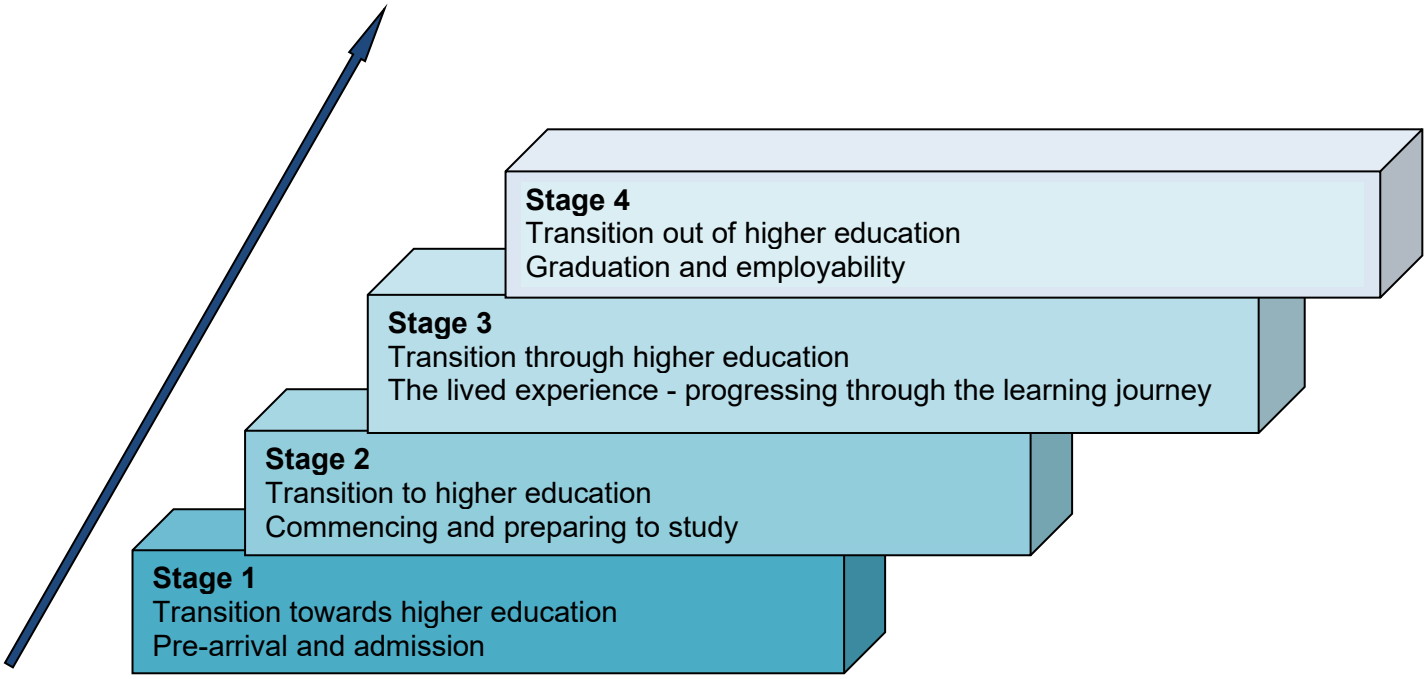
The UK student journey

27 This section considers the student journey from the perspective of a UK university student, a student studying at a public university in Jordan and a student studying at a private university in Jordan. While it may give an overall picture of the sector, it is unlikely to be representative of all students or institutions particularly since the study involved only four universities in Jordan - two private and two public.

Stages of the student journey

28 In terms of the student journey, four transition stages have been identified as below. In the UK, these stages have become key to the increasingly competitive UK market and feed into the various national surveys which contribute to the development of league tables and rankings. All also link to the mandatory requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

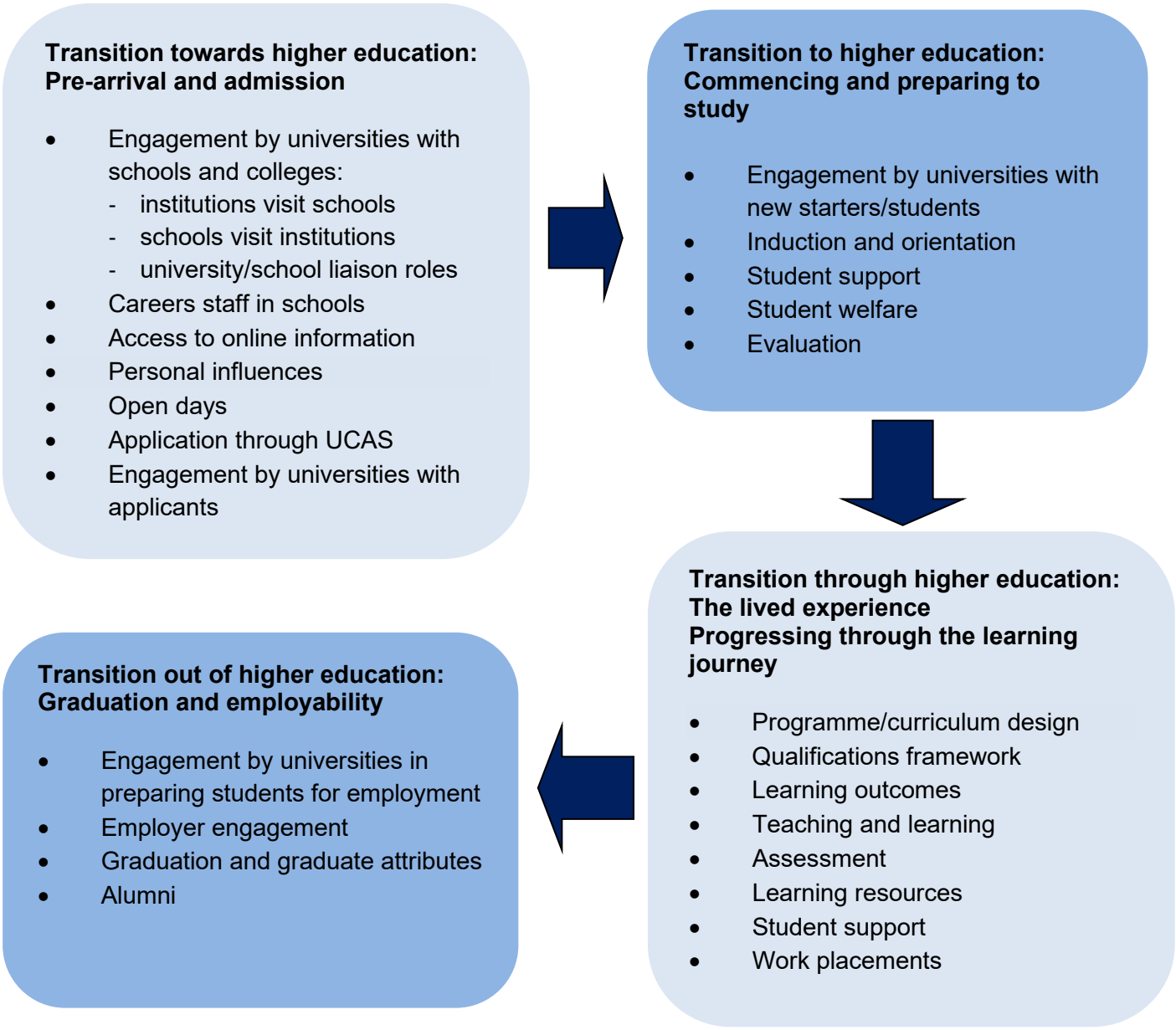
Figure 1: Stages of transition through the student life cycle



(adapted from Bates and Hayes, 2017)

29 The diagram below identifies the key touchpoints and factors in the UK student journey at the four stages. Underneath this is a brief description of these and the impact on the student. The descriptions include reference to best practice.

Figure 2: Key touchpoints in the UK student journey

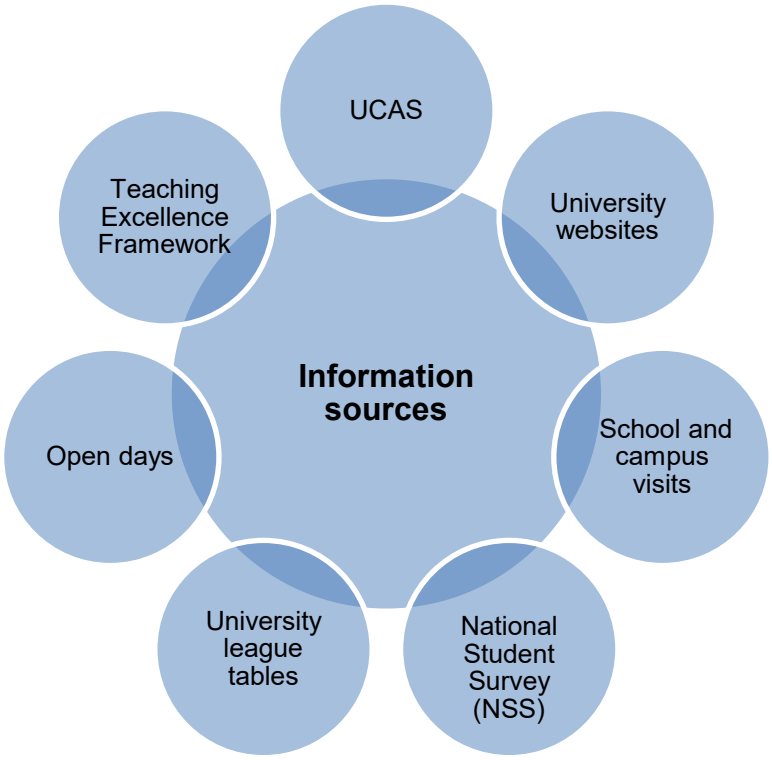


Pre-arrival and admissions

Engagement by universities with schools, colleges and mentor schemes	Students at school are visited by individual universities and visit individual universities with their schools on local engagement days as part of an outreach programme organised by universities. Engagement days include tours of campus and facilities, overview of provision, benefits of studying at higher education and interactive workshops. Students may meet liaison officers from different universities. Students and parents may also have the opportunity to attend recruitment fairs at their schools/colleges at which a number of universities attend and have stands and recruitment materials.
Schools and careers advice	Students can access careers teams in schools and teaching staff for advice on what to study, where, job prospects. Students and parents are invited to talks from universities, employers and subject specialists.
Access to online information	Students and parents can access a range of online information including university websites, UCAS,[28] university league ranking tables, National Student Surveys (NSS),[29] Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF),[30] student and parent forums. League table data includes key performance indicators relating to numbers of students, staff/student ratio, teaching and learning strategy, contact hours, student performance and progression, grades of award, student services, student support and welfare, and employability and career information after graduation.
Open days	Students and parents attend open days for as many universities as they wish. Open days include tours of campus and facilities, as well as information sessions about the university, the range of courses, entry requirements, the staff, curriculum, approaches to studying at higher education, accommodation, student support, welfare, sports and social activities and key performance indicators as outlined above. Enrolment for open days is online and students will then receive further correspondence after the visit.
Personal influences	Students may receive advice on what and where to study from parents and other family members, friends, peers and professionals/employers. Students may be guided by these or may be free to make their own choice.

[28] University and Colleges Admissions Service: www.ucas.com
[29] National Student Survey: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/get-the-nss-data/
[30] Teaching Excellence Framework: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/about-the-tef

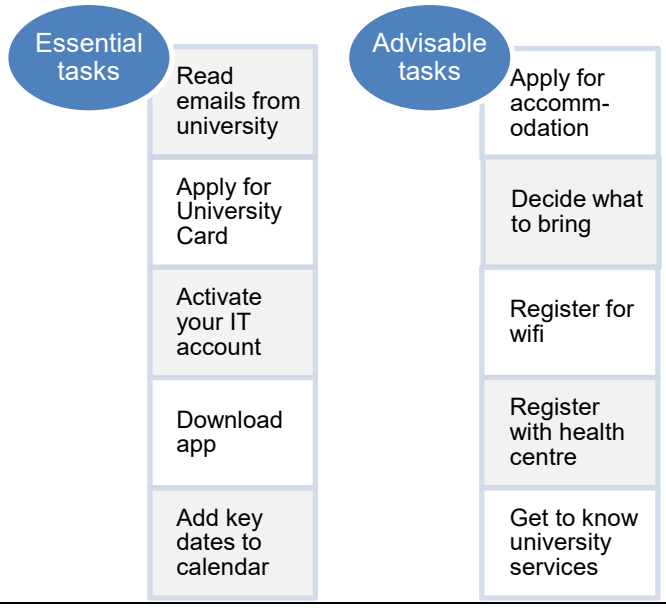
Figure 3: Information sources for students and parents



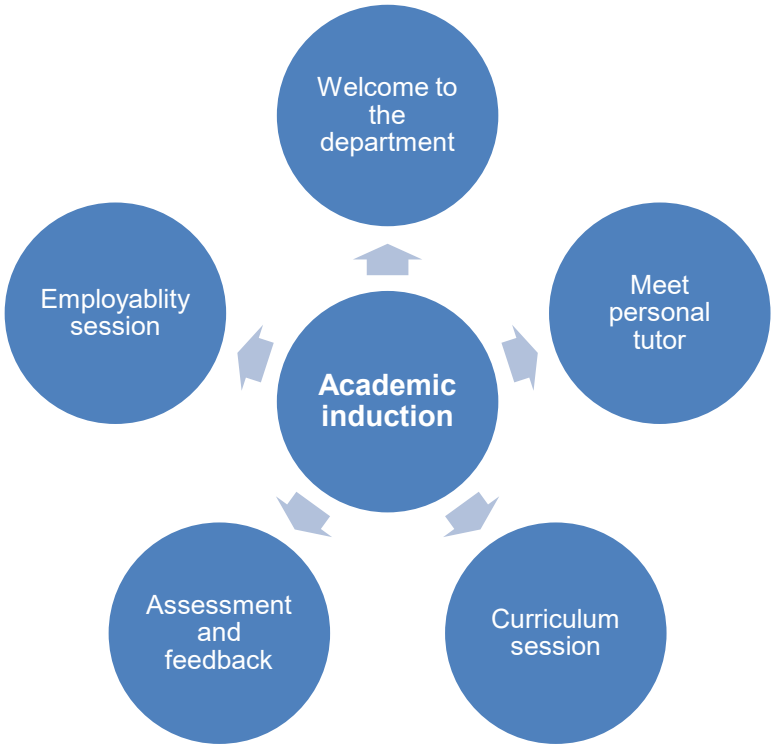
Application through UCAS (centralised system)	Students can find information and advice to support their applications and decision making. They select up to five choices, pay one fee and complete a personal statement on their application form. Training and support on how to write a personal statement is provided at schools, colleges, universities and UCAS. Students also ask their teachers to give a reference to support their application before submitting their application. Higher education institutions make the decision on the application (conditional offer dependent on achieving specific marks/grades at examination, unconditional offer, reject). Institutions have a pre-determined criteria for entry - usually a certain pass mark or point score at A level or equivalent. Entry requirements are published so students know whether their projected grades match the entry requirements.

Engagement by universities with applicants	Applicants receive information about the courses for which they have an offer, and further information about their course, accommodation, support via a number of communications from the university. Applicants may be invited to applicant days at the prospective universities where they have accepted offers. These days contain specific sessions relating to the course, curriculum and may contain taster sessions, meetings with tutors, meeting other offer holders as well as further information about student support, welfare, accommodation and student life. Applicants receive decisions through UCAS and consider which institution to accept as a firm acceptance and which as provisional (the latter is usually a back-up choice). Applicants reject other offers.

Transition to higher education - Commencing and preparing to study

Engagement by universities with new students	Confirmed applicants receive regular communications from the universities prior to and post examination results when students confirm their final acceptance through UCAS. The communications are designed to give information and help students prepare for their arrival. This will include further information about accommodation (types, social group - for example, quiet, gender) students' union, sports and societies, living on campus, studying on campus. Students may also be able to join social media groups to make contact with peers (for example, by course or accommodation). They will also receive information regarding the course, reading lists, potential timetables and induction programmes before they arrive on their first day. **Figure 4: Example of communication before arrival**[31] 

[31] Adapted from: www.exeter.ac.uk/newstudents/beforeyouarrive

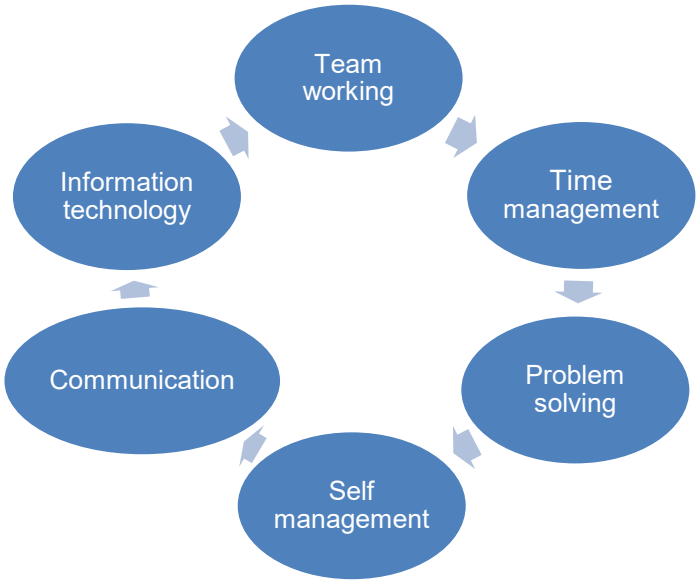
Induction and orientation	All new students receive an institutional induction and orientation which usually takes place up to a week before returning students recommence their studies (known as Freshers' week). This allows new students to acclimatise to the institution, become familiar with their surroundings and meet new people. They will also go on tours of the campus including sports facilities, and receive information about registration, sports and social clubs and activities, support for accommodation, health, welfare, finance and finding work.
Student academic support	New students also have an orientation to their programme of study. The academic orientation covers areas such as programme learning outcomes, overview of content, approach to teaching, guidance on studying, overview on assessment. It introduces students to the academic regulations and the resources available. This is supported by access to a variety of documentation (online) such as handbooks[32] for the course, regulations. Handbooks are structured using university guidelines.[33] Students will also meet their personal tutors/advisors. Events may be organised for course groups to work together on mini projects or to go on course trips/events during this first part of the course. This helps students gain more awareness of their course, peers and tutors. **Figure 5: Components of an academic induction**[34] 

[32] www.southampton.ac.uk/~assets/doc/student-services/BEng_MEng_Aeronautics_Astronautics_Handbook.pdf
[33] www.uos.ac.uk/sites/default/files/course-handbook-guide.pdf
[34] https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/law/newstudents/newundergraduates/academic_induction

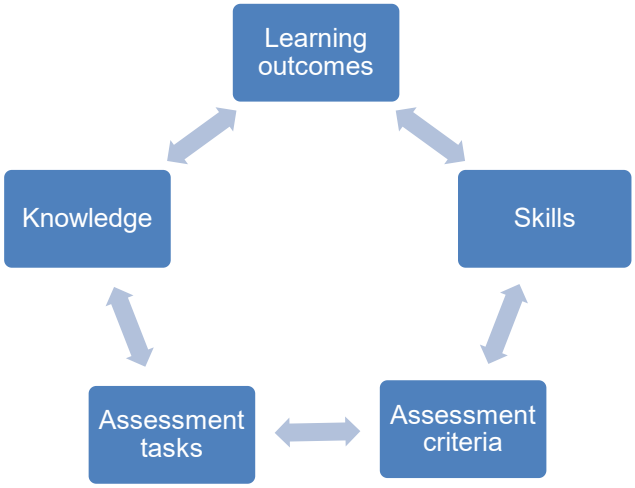
Student support and welfare	Students may also be supported in other ways beyond the first week induction. For example, they may be paired with a 'buddy' - a returning student volunteer who acts as a mentor and support during the first few weeks of the term, or they may be supported by student accommodation wardens. In addition, students are introduced to a range of student services (medical centre, accommodation, special educational needs, students' union) over the first half term to help create a sense of support and belonging and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.
Evaluation	Students are asked to formally give feedback on the induction and orientation they received through online evaluation surveys or face-to-face focus groups. The results of this form part of the institution's monitoring and supports retention and progression.

Transition through higher education
The lived experience - progressing through the learning journey

Programme design	Course are designed and approved taking into consideration the whole student learning experience. The structure of the learning experience is considered - the way in which progression of learning is accounted for in terms of development of skills (study and soft) and development of knowledge of subject material. It ensures that appropriate assessment of learning takes place. It has been developed by contributions from internal and external stakeholders including academics delivering the programme, students, employers and industry professionals and external academics from other institutions. It may include contributions from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).
Qualifications framework	The programme of study should also be consistent with the National Qualifications Framework and should be designed to provide a high-quality academic experience relevant to the student and potential employers. Internal guidance and external reference points such as the UK Quality Code are used in the process of programme design, development and approval and in the development of course content.
Learning outcomes	Students are studying a programme which has been mapped to learning outcomes, made accessible to them to help their understanding of the course and individual components and the relationship between learning outcomes and assessment. Students are made aware of the links between the learning outcomes of individual components of their programme, and assessment.

Teaching and learning	Students receive a more student-centred approach to teaching and learning than previously found in many higher education institutions with a variety of teaching methods and approaches being used. They attend lectures, seminars and tutorial groups and are encouraged to participate more and work in a number of ways including group work, presentations. Their programme includes development of academic and soft skills (communication, IT, time management) as part of their academic credits. It also includes an employability component to enable them to develop work-based skills. Many of their lecturers have undergone formal in job-training in aspects of classroom-based skills (management, use of resources) achieving a certificate qualification (for example, Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education). Students have access to virtual learning environments to support their studies with online materials, recordings of sessions and discussion forums. **Figure 6: Skills development** 
Learning environment and resources	Students are taught in a variety of locations (on and off campus). They have access to appropriate physical resources for specialist courses (for example, laboratories, studios). Learning resources are physically available in libraries as well as online.
Work-based learning/work placements/ internships	Learning may also take place in work-related settings (for example, offices, factories, hotels) for parts of some courses (placement years, semesters or weeks, internships, volunteering) for which students receive academic credit. These settings and hosts are managed by teams in the universities and students, academics and employers have clear guidelines about the scope of work-based learning undertaken, their roles, responsibilities and assessments.[35]

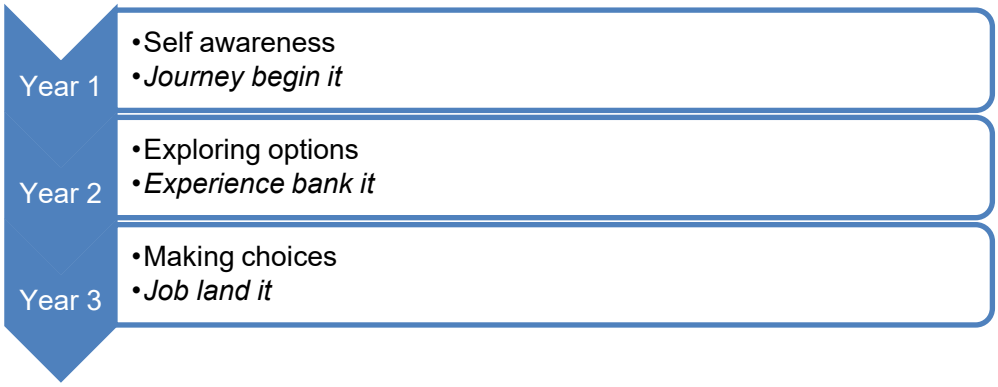
[35] www.swansea.ac.uk/media/Mentor_Handbook.pdf

Assessment	Student assessments are linked to programme and module learning outcomes and they are asked to complete a range of assessment types depending on the course, for example, coursework, presentations, case studies, portfolios, digital projects as well as examinations. The assessment briefs they receive give clear outlines of the tasks, guidance on content, submission arrangements and clear published assessment criteria linked to the module/course outcomes. The assessed work is moderated internally (for example, by a second marker) and externally moderated (by external examiners) prior to mark approval at an examination board. External examiners are involved in the approval process of assessments prior to publication and the moderation of the submitted work. For some courses external examiners may be from industry or have industry experience. **Figure 7: Learning outcomes and assessment** 
Student support	Students receive academic support throughout their studies from personal/academic tutors, study skills and achievement tutors, library and IT staff as well as student mentors. They also receive pastoral support from student services (for example, accommodation, medical, special educational needs, finance, legal advice and support, jobs, careers).
Student representation	Students are encouraged to participate and contribute to their programmes through, for example, the selection of student representatives selected at course, programme and department level. They are able to be part of a committee structure and a key component of the institution's quality assurance process.

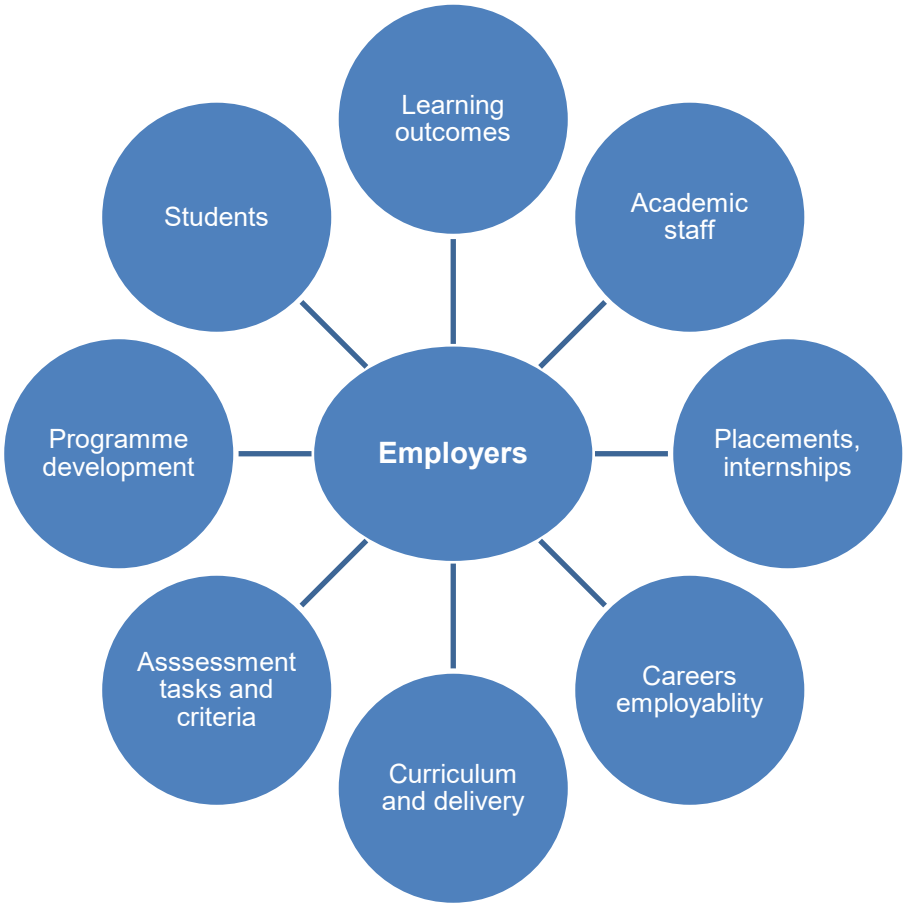
Evaluation	Students are asked to give feedback on their experience annually. This may be at module level and course level. Feedback may be through online evaluation surveys or face-to-face focus groups and formally through the student representation process. Final-year students are encouraged to participate in the National Student Survey (NSS). The survey covers the following core aspects of the student experience: • teaching • learning opportunities • assessment and feedback • academic support • organisation and management • learning resources • learning community • student voice • students' union. Optional sections are available for institutions to choose to be included. Areas include: • personal development • careers • work placements • course delivery • student services. Within each section there are a number of core questions for students to answer. Examples are shown below. **Sample questions from the NSS** *The teaching on my course:* 1. Staff are good at explaining things. 2. Staff have made the subject interesting. 3. The course is intellectually interesting. 4. My course has challenged me to achieve my best work. *Careers:* 1. I believe I have improved my career prospects. 2. Good advice is available for making career choices. 3. Good advice is available on further study opportunities. The results of the NSS are a key component of the quality assurance process nationally. The NSS feeds into the surveys and data used to compile league tables and is used by prospective students and parents. With its focus on the whole student experience, it provides potential students, parents and institutions with a significant amount of information. 'In England, all providers registered with and regulated by the OfS will be expected to participate in the NSS as an ongoing condition of registration.'[36]

[36] www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/b8c6c8bb-e527-455c-b19d-6da11b4ac9f5/nss-2020-launch.pdf

Transition out of higher education: Graduation and employability

Engagement by universities in preparing students for employment	From the first year, students have the opportunity to develop soft skills such as communication skills, time-management, team-working, investigative skills and problem-solving as well as the development of skills to support independent learning. These are embedded throughout the programme.[37] These skills often form part of their course in modules and credited assessment work. These are included in the learning outcomes of modules related to study and employability skills. They also have the opportunity to develop more specific employability skills in their subject area where this is relevant (for example, lab-based work, events management, media, advertising, law). These may link to placement work, internship or volunteering and may have work-based outcomes. Students also have support in developing a curriculum vitae (CV), preparing for interviews, identifying potential areas of interest career-wise as well accessing employment-related resources. Final-year students may have access to career mentors (from an identified relevant service or industry) to provide support, feedback and guidance on CV development as well as offer work placement days to gain experience and insight. Students may also participate in volunteering and community projects established and recognised as part of the students' union (sometimes with academic credit) to encourage take up of opportunities and development of skills. **Figure 8: Embedded employability offer University of York[38]** 

[37] www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/framework-embedding-employability-higher-education
[38] https://corporate.jobteaser.com/en/blog/inspiring-the-new-generation/counsel/university-york-optimises-student-journey

Employer engagement	Employers' contributions are embedded throughout the courses offered from programme and course development, through to curriculum and assessment. They have developed ongoing links with universities and academic staff. They are also involved in the offerings of internships, placements and work experience and play a role in the delivery and assessment of students. Employers also give talks, attend recruitment fairs, host visits and support employability and careers teams in their offerings to students. **Figure 9: Role of employers** 
Graduation and graduate attributes	Students in some institutions may be made aware of their institution's graduate attributes. These outline the characteristics of a student graduating from their institution. These are published and made known to all staff and students. Graduate attributes are different to level descriptors found in the National Qualifications Framework in that they are designed to gain understanding of the potential and the skills developed during the university journey. Graduate attributes indicate the balance of knowledge, social responsibility and learning, and the skills required for the workplace. Some explanations are shown below followed by some examples.

Graduate attributes[39] are:

*descriptive of what it means to be a **graduate** of a **higher education** institution - not just in terms of skills and abilities, but also in terms of attitudes and approaches - how you approach learning and knowledge, your own development, and the world around you*

skills, abilities and attributes that mean different things in different contexts and disciplines

they are unique to every student – yes we might identify some common areas that we want our students to develop, but students will have their own starting points, progress and experiences in these areas while at the University which will shape them as individuals

they are not simply taught but developed through meaningful experiences and the processes of learning and reflection

Sample graduate attributes one[40]

Problem solving and analytic ability
Interpersonal skills and networking
Global citizenship
Flexibility and adaptability
Effective communication
Creativity and innovation

Sample graduate attributes two[41]

Academic literacy
Research literacy
Critical self-awareness and personal literacy
Digital and information literacy
Active citizenship

Alumni	Students receive communication from their university after graduating as part of the alumni support. This may involve them becoming ambassadors (for example, for recruitment, employability) and to support any fundraising activities. Students will be encouraged by their university to contribute to a national survey on graduate employment which feeds into the KPIs used to develop graduate performance data and university league tables.[42]

[39] www.ed.ac.uk/graduate-attributes/what
[40] www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/jobs/Documents/GraduateAttributes.pdf
[41] www.brookes.ac.uk/staff/academic/academic-advising/academic-advising-in-practice/developing-graduate-attributes/
[42] www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk

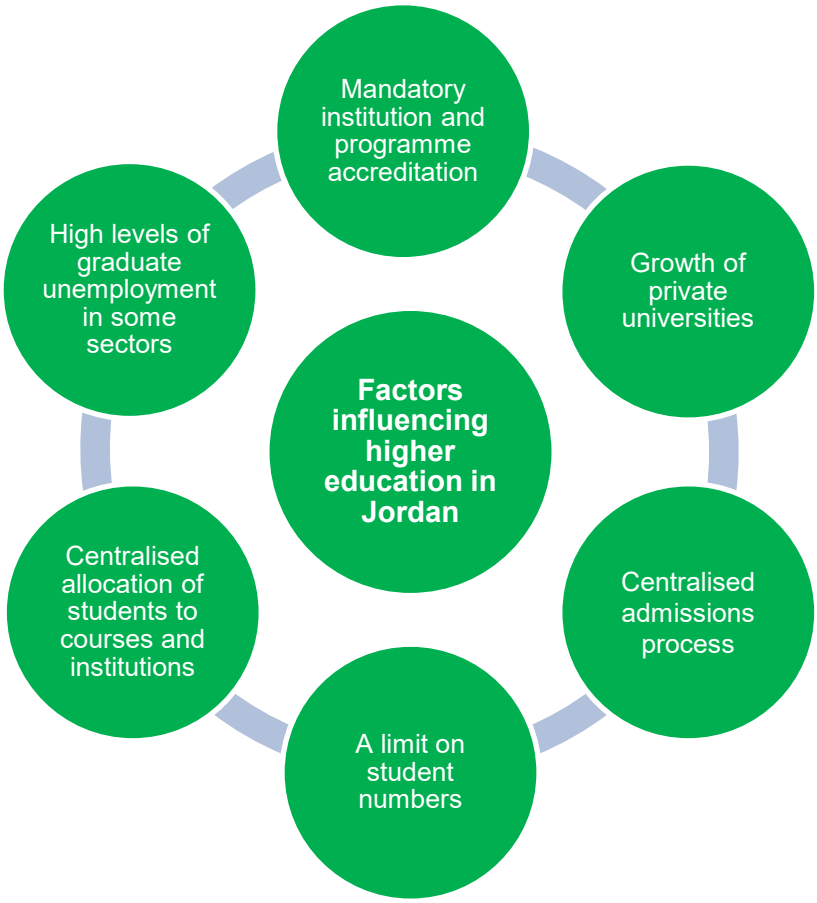
Context for the Jordanian student journey

30 In Jordan there are 39 universities - 10 public, 16 private, two on special law, one regional, and 10 university colleges. This exploratory study involved four universities - two private and two public. The responses from stakeholders suggested that the experience of the student learner journey at a private university and a public one is different so where the journeys are significantly different, the differences are outlined and described below.

Factors which impact on the higher education context in Jordan include:

- a government focus on creating a fairer and more equitable system of admissions in higher education
- the growth of private universities
- a national centralised admissions policy and criteria approved by the Ministry of Higher Education
- an upper limit on the number of students universities can accept on programmes
- different processes for applying to a private or public university and decision making on offers
- a high level of graduate unemployment in some sectors
- mandatory institution and programme accreditation through AQACHEI
- non-mandatory adherence to a quality assurance process/code
- approval of the Jordan National Qualification Framework (JNQF) managed and overseen by AQACHEI.
- the publication of the HRD strategy and reference to the higher education sector.

Figure 10: Factors influencing higher education in Jordan



31 The context shows a number of positive initiatives such as the development of the JNQF and mandatory institution and programme accreditation. As shown above, AQACHEI is responsible for programme and institution accreditation. To further strengthen accreditation, in 2018, AQACHEI introduced a two-stage programme accreditation process: initial accreditation being the first stage which is quantity-based; and the final accreditation after two years, which is quality-based. It is planned that this two-stage process will be a legislative and consequently mandatory requirement for all programmes from January 2021. AQACHEI is also responsible for ranking the institutions as well as being the regulator for quality assurance.

However, there are factors which may prevent progress taking place at the speed hoped for. For example, while institution, programme accreditation and ranking are mandatory, quality assurance is not, as noted in the HRD.

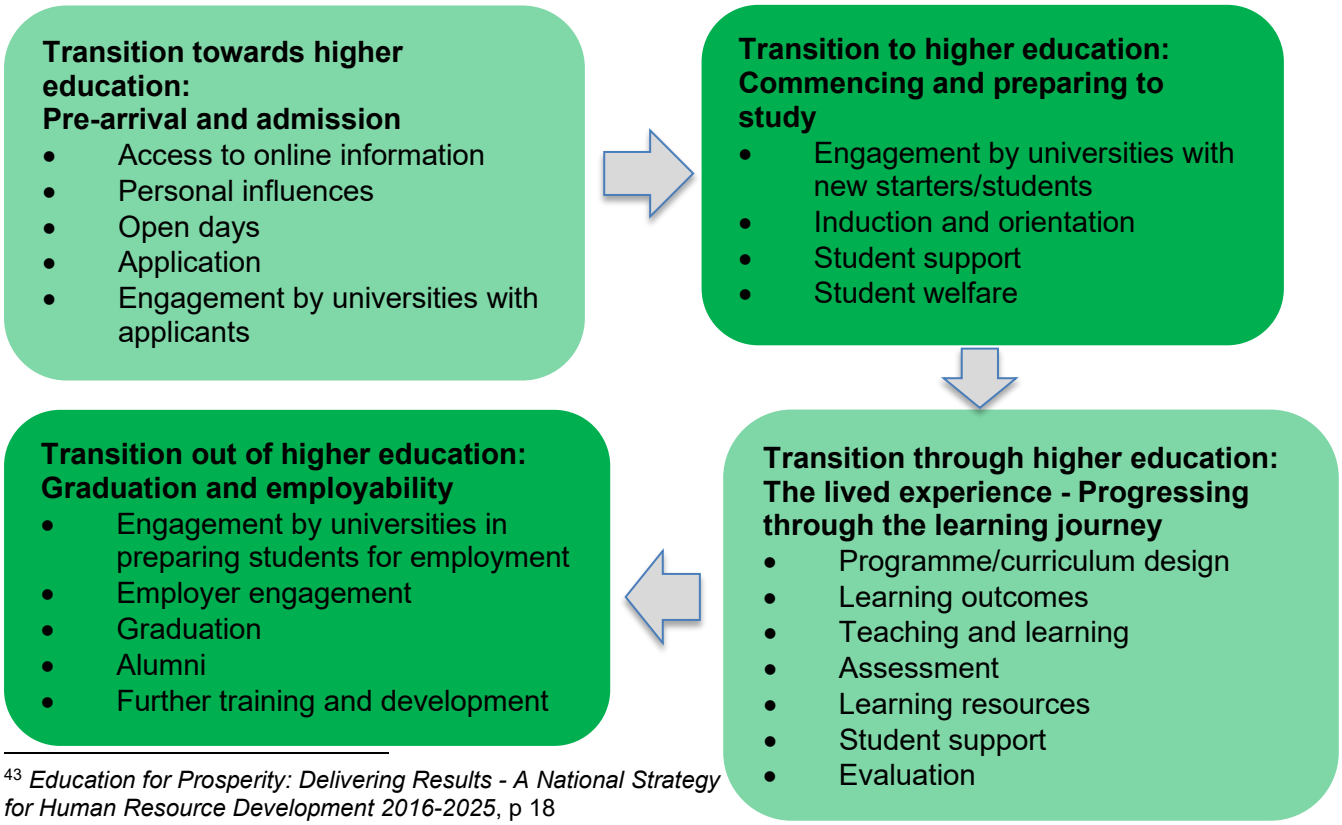
'Quality assurance measures are not routinely enforced to ensure continuous monitoring, evaluation, and enhancement of the system.' [43]

This limits the authority of AQACHEI considerably.

32 This different approach to programme accreditation and quality assurance and the absence of enforcement by the regulator, reduces the impact of the quality assurance process and means institutions are under no obligation to comply. Consequently, only a small number of universities are currently following the quality assurance process which affects the student journey as it means a lack of consistency in the standards and quality.

The Jordanian student journey

33 The diagram below identifies the key touchpoints and factors in the Jordanian student journey through both a private and a public university at the four stages. Underneath this is a brief description of these and the impact on the student.



[43] *Education for Prosperity: Delivering Results - A National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025*, p 18

Pre-arrival and admission

	Private universities	Public universities
Engagement by universities with schools, colleges and mentor schemes	Students have no direct engagement with universities while at school or college.	
Schools and careers advice	Students (or parents) have little access to information providing advice and guidance while at school. They do have some awareness of certain job markets being saturated (for example, engineering).	
Access to online information and recruitment material	Students and parents can access university websites and brochures and leaflets published by private universities. They can contact marketing and recruitment teams.	Students and parents can access university websites though no promotional materials appear to be available.
Open days	Students and parents can attend open days at private universities to find more information about courses.	Public universities do not have open days so students do not have the opportunity to visit the campus before applying.
Influencers	Students are heavily guided by parents who may choose the course and the institution. Choices tend to be influenced by cultural influences and stereotypes (for example, high achievers applying for courses such as medicine or engineering). Some students may not be interested in the course for which they have applied.	

	Private universities	Public universities
Application	Students apply direct to the institution usually after they have received their scores on the Tawjihi. The scores they achieve are used to determine whether they can attend university, which university they can attend and which course they can study. The type of Tawjihi taken is also a determiner. Private universities are involved in the decision-making process relating to applicants, though they are required to abide by the admissions policy and criteria set by AQACHEI. Decisions on the number of students universities can accept are taken centrally which can influence the decision the applicant may receive. Some students may have to take an entrance test before being accepted. Students receive the decisions made by the universities which are sent directly to applicants.	Students apply through the Unified Admission Coordination Unit and students have no direct contact with the institution. Students typically apply after they have received their scores on the Tawjihi. The scores they achieve are used to determine whether they can attend university, which university they can attend and which course they can study. The type of Tawjihi taken is also a determiner. Students are able to specify preferences for the institution at which they wish to study and the programme. There is no guarantee they will get their choice of institution or programme of study. They can choose up to 30 preferences. Final decisions where applicants are placed are made centrally, not by the institutions. Aside from the applicant's high school certificate grades, other criteria are also considered. For example, special consideration is given for applicants from remote or underprivileged schools (widening access agenda). An exceptions process has quotas allocated to members of the armed forces or Ministry of Education, or staff and employees working at universities. Students are informed of their institution and course just before the start of the semester.

Commencing and preparing to study

	Private universities	Public universities
Engagement by universities with new starters/students	Some communication prior to course start.	No communication until start of semester due to the selection and admission process.
Induction and orientation	Students attend an institutional induction and orientation. Includes a familiarisation of the facilities such as the library, accommodation, transportation, student affairs and careers and jobs office. Students also meet heads of departments and receive their timetables of study.	Some institutional induction and orientation take place although it may not be consistent across institutions. It includes a familiarisation of the facilities such as the library, accommodation, transportation, student affairs. Students also meet heads of departments and receive their timetables of study. Some students may only experience an induction on registration/enrolment. For most students the first day is the first time at the university.
Student support and welfare	Students are supported by administrative staff if required to enrol/register on the programme and supported by student affairs departments or offices. Other support services include academic guidance, counselling, medical and careers guidance. They also receive leaflets and student information outlining support available as well as information about the institution, programmes and alumni.	Students are supported by administrative staff if required to enrol/register on the programme and supported by student affairs departments or offices. Other support services include academic guidance, counselling, medical. There is no specific careers guidance at induction and little exposure to the labour market at the early stage in the journey.

Student academic support	Students meet heads of departments and receive their timetables of study and student handbooks. Other support is available, for example, learning support office for students with additional educational needs and study skills support. There is an Academic Advisor system to help develop talents and capabilities to improve performance and behaviour. There is no specific support for English.	Students receive their timetables and meet staff. There is no specific support for English for students on courses taught in English and some students may not know their course is taught in English

The lived experience progressing through the learner journey

	Private universities	Public universities
Programme design	Students are taught from a curriculum which the university has responsibility for designing. There is a clear process for internal development and before development there is consideration of strategic fit, acceptance by AQACHEI, staffing and resourcing. Planning and design are the responsibilities of academic members of faculty with contributions from other academics. Employers are involved in some specific courses but this is not a requirement. Students are not involved.	Students are taught from a curriculum which the university has responsibility for designing. There is a clear process for internal development and before development there is consideration of strategic fit, acceptance by AQACHEI, staffing and resourcing. Planning and design are the responsibilities of academic members of faculty with contributions from other academics. Employers are not involved in the design of programmes or content. The students are not involved either.

	Private universities	Public universities
Learning outcomes	Modules act as building blocks to the whole and there is consistent use of learning outcomes across the programme shown through mapping matrixes. It is not clear how learning outcomes are used at module level or in the delivery of sessions, though some courses are making links.	Modules act as building blocks to the whole and there is consistent use of learning outcomes across the programme shown through mapping matrixes. It is not clear how learning outcomes are used at module level or in the delivery of sessions.
Teaching and learning	Students are taught by staff with high levels of qualifications in their subject area. More expertise is needed in how to develop knowledge and skills particularly for the needs of adult learners. Staff receive some initial staff development to introduce the basics of teaching and assessment - usually limited to one or two days though some institutions may offer more. Students attend lectures, seminars and tutorials. The approach is predominantly teacher-led and tends to focus on theoretical, highly-specific content with not many opportunities for practical work or skills development. On some courses teaching is more practical and participative. In some cases, students do receive more student-led sessions where they can be active contributors. With regard to soft skills - for example, where students are required to problem solve, investigate and propose solutions - these tend to be available as additional options	Students are taught by staff with high levels of qualifications in their subject area. More expertise is needed in how to develop knowledge and skills particularly for the needs of adult learners. Staff receive some initial staff development to introduce the basics of teaching and assessment - usually limited to one or two days. Focus tends to be on administrative matters rather than pedagogy. Students attend lectures, seminars and tutorials. The approach is predominantly teacher-led and tends to focus on theoretical, highly-specific content with not many opportunities for practical work or skills development. Students do not generally experience learning that reflect real world experiences and settings. With regard to soft skills - for example, where students are required to problem solve, investigate and propose solutions - these tend to be available as additional options and not core parts of the curriculum.

	Private universities	Public universities
	and not core parts of the curriculum, though they may be referred to implicitly in content. Where courses are taught in English, additional support in technical or academic English is generally not available.	Where courses are taught in English, additional support in technical or academic English is generally not available.
Learning resources	Students are taught in campus-based locations (on and off campus). They have access to appropriate physical resources for specialist courses (for example, laboratories). Learning resources are physically in libraries as well as online.	
Work-based learning	Some work placements/internships are available though it is difficult to find appropriate employers. Greater clarity is needed in terms of the guidelines regarding the scope of work-based learning undertaken and the roles and responsibilities of the university, the students and the employer. Assessments are not generally aligned with the nature of the work/internship, though some project work has been introduced to close the gap.	Some work placements/internships are available though it is difficult to find appropriate employers. Greater clarity is needed in terms of the guidelines regarding the scope of work-based learning undertaken and the roles and responsibilities of the university, the students and the employer. Assessments are not generally aligned with the nature of the work/internship.
Assessment	Assessment strategy forms part of the programme design process. Students are assessed primarily through examinations. Assessments tend to focus on assessing knowledge and theory but not skills and do not refer explicitly to learning outcomes, though this is now being considered. Students' work is assessed internally but there is no moderation by external examiners.	Assessment strategy forms part of the programme design process. Students are assessed primarily through examinations. Assessments tend to focus on assessing knowledge and theory but not skills and do not refer explicitly to learning outcomes. Students' work is assessed internally but there is no moderation by external examiners.

	Private universities	Public universities
Student support	Students receive academic support throughout their studies from personal/academic tutors, study skills and achievement tutors, library and IT staff as well as student mentors. They also receive pastoral support from student services (for example, accommodation, medical, special educational needs, finance, legal advice and support, jobs, careers).	
Student representation	Students are represented formally via a student representation system and may be involved in the university committee structure.	Students are not generally represented formally via a student representation system or involved in the university committee structure or other aspects of the quality assurance process.
Evaluation	Students are asked to formally give feedback on their experience on a regular basis and at the end of their course to the institution. The competency test is intended to evaluate the performance of an institution and its ranking.	Students are asked to formally give feedback on their experience at the end of their course to the institution. The competency test is intended to evaluate the performance of an institution and its ranking.

Graduation and employability

Engagement by universities in preparing students for employment	The development of careers guidance officers through initiatives such as the King Abdulla Fund for Development (KAFD) has enabled universities to offer careers support and advice. This could be utilised more effectively and given more prominence to engage students, staff and employers more. Academic staff may be expected to provide careers guidance but may not have the training, knowledge or skills needed. New initiatives are being developed to support career planning and students can attend annual open days and events at specially organised careers weeks in some institutions. Students can access support from year one and throughout, culminating in preparation of CVs, writing applications and cover letters. Students can attend workshops providing training of key skills such as time management, communication and organisation skills, though students may not be aware of these as they are outside their course programme. These may be offered at different stages of the course. Private universities tend to have activities available early on. Students are encouraged to participate in student activities and clubs and other extra-curricular activities provided by advisors and the Students' Union (SU). In some institutions, the SU supports and promotes volunteering opportunities.

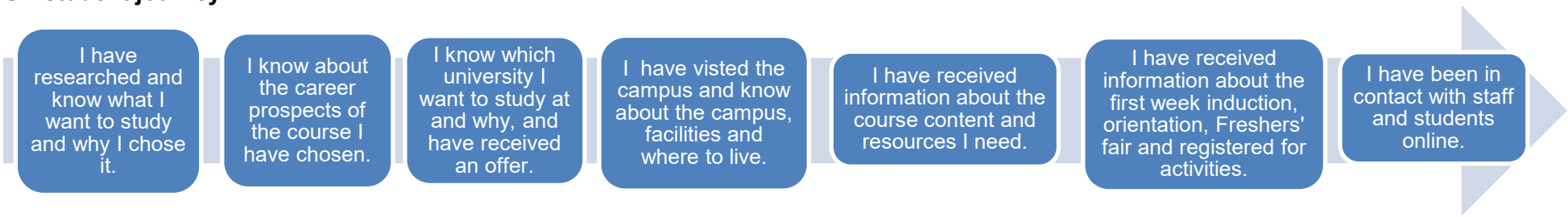
	The recent development of the JNQF provides level descriptors to inform students and employers of the value of the qualifications awarded and their relevance to the workplace in terms of knowledge. These could be further supported by the development of a graduate attributes' framework which currently does not exist to identify what specific skills and knowledge a graduate might have by the end of their course.
Employer engagement	Some students can take internships within university departments and business development support. Most of the opportunities are not credit bearing and are seen as 'add-ons'. They are not embedded in the curriculum so engagement is dependent on the student. Some students experienced difficulties being placed on relevant internships and placements.
Alumni	Some alumni associations have been developed and alumni are used to meet current students and talk about employability opportunities.
Graduation	Students receive a certification of qualification and attend a graduation ceremony.
Competency test	Students are required to complete a competency test designed to show the performance of the institution. The relationship between the test and the course they have studied is not clear. It appears to be a tool for evaluating performance of a university and is used to inform the rankings.

Gap analysis/Comparison of the Jordanian learner journey and the UK learner journey

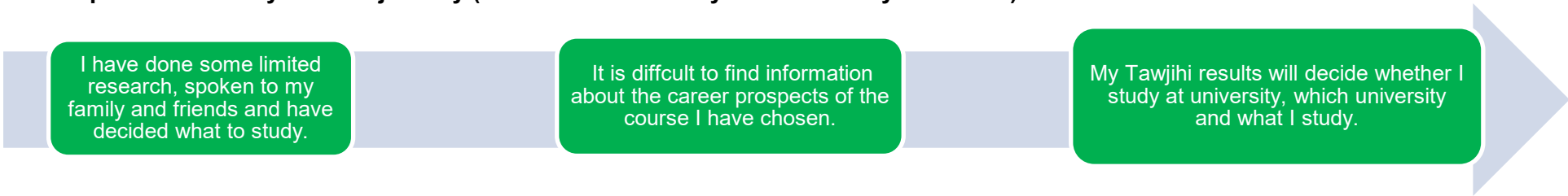
34 The diagrams on the next pages compare the student experiences of each stage of the student journey and highlight where there are gaps. The impact of these gaps is outlined in the points that follow each stage of the journey. These are followed by visuals to support enhancement.

Transition towards higher education: Pre-arrival and admission gap analysis

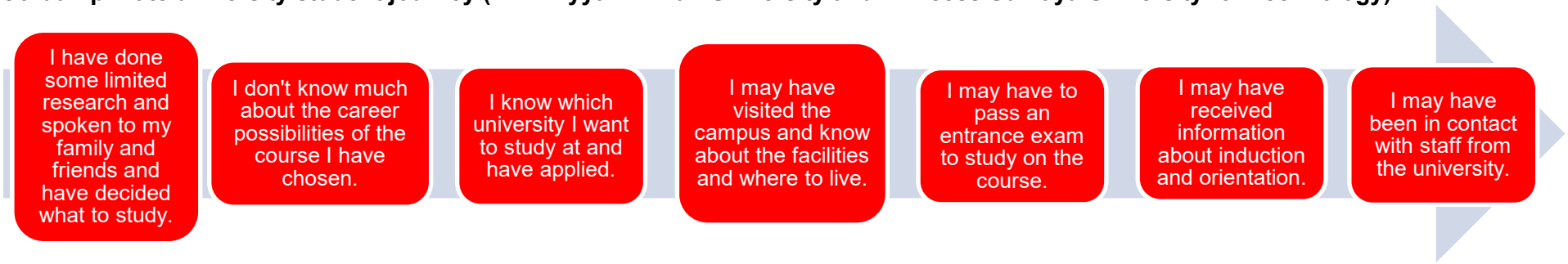
UK student journey



Jordan public university student journey (Hashemite University and University of Jordan)



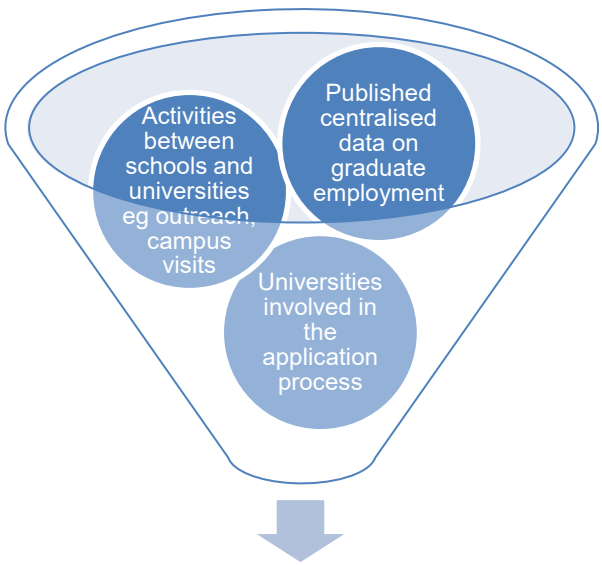
Jordan private university student journey (Al-Ahliyya Amman University and Princess Sumaya University for Technology)



Impact on the student journey

- The lack of engagement with universities prior to admissions, and the limited information about careers and the jobs market mean students and parents have limited access to impartial information.
- There is minimum consideration of the job market at this stage due to the lack of information.
- This lack of choice and information may also mean students choose courses they may not be interested in or wish to study as they may not be aware of alternatives.
- Parents are a significant voice in the decision-making, but they also have limited access to information and consequently rely on word of mouth, reputation and public opinion and recommend courses which carry cultural and social status when advising their children.
- Public schools may offer limited careers advice, but it is not clear how this is structured or links to universities or institutions which can provide information on labour trends.
- The centralised application and admissions process may disincentivise universities from becoming involved at this stage of the student journey.
- This may also mean universities have no need to engage with schools or students to recruit. This impacts on the culture of the universities and the relationship with, and perception of, the student and hinders change.
- The limited engagement with the universities means students may not be clear what to expect from a course, or the qualities or requirements of different institutions.
- While private universities do receive direct applications, the central capping on student numbers may mean they may not feel the need to engage with potential applicants at this stage.

Figure 11

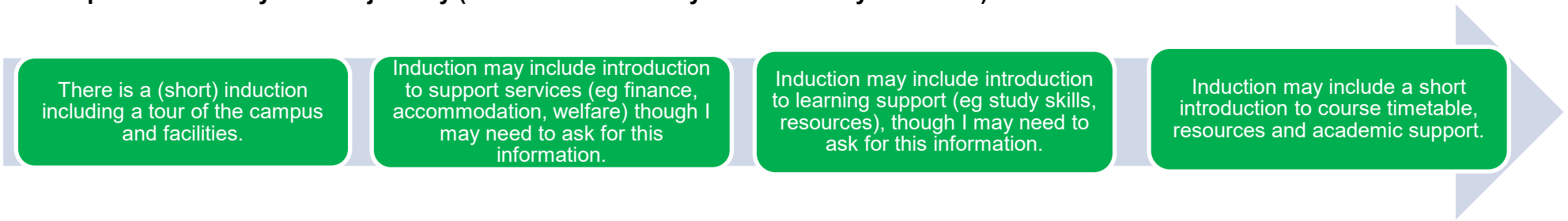


Informed university decision making

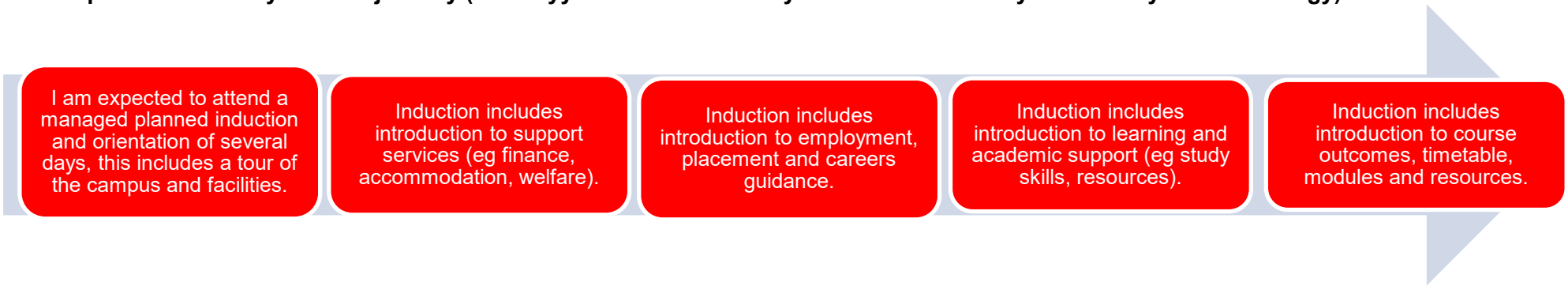
Transition to higher education: Commencing and preparing to study gap analysis

UK student journey

Jordan public university student journey (Hashemite University and University of Jordan)



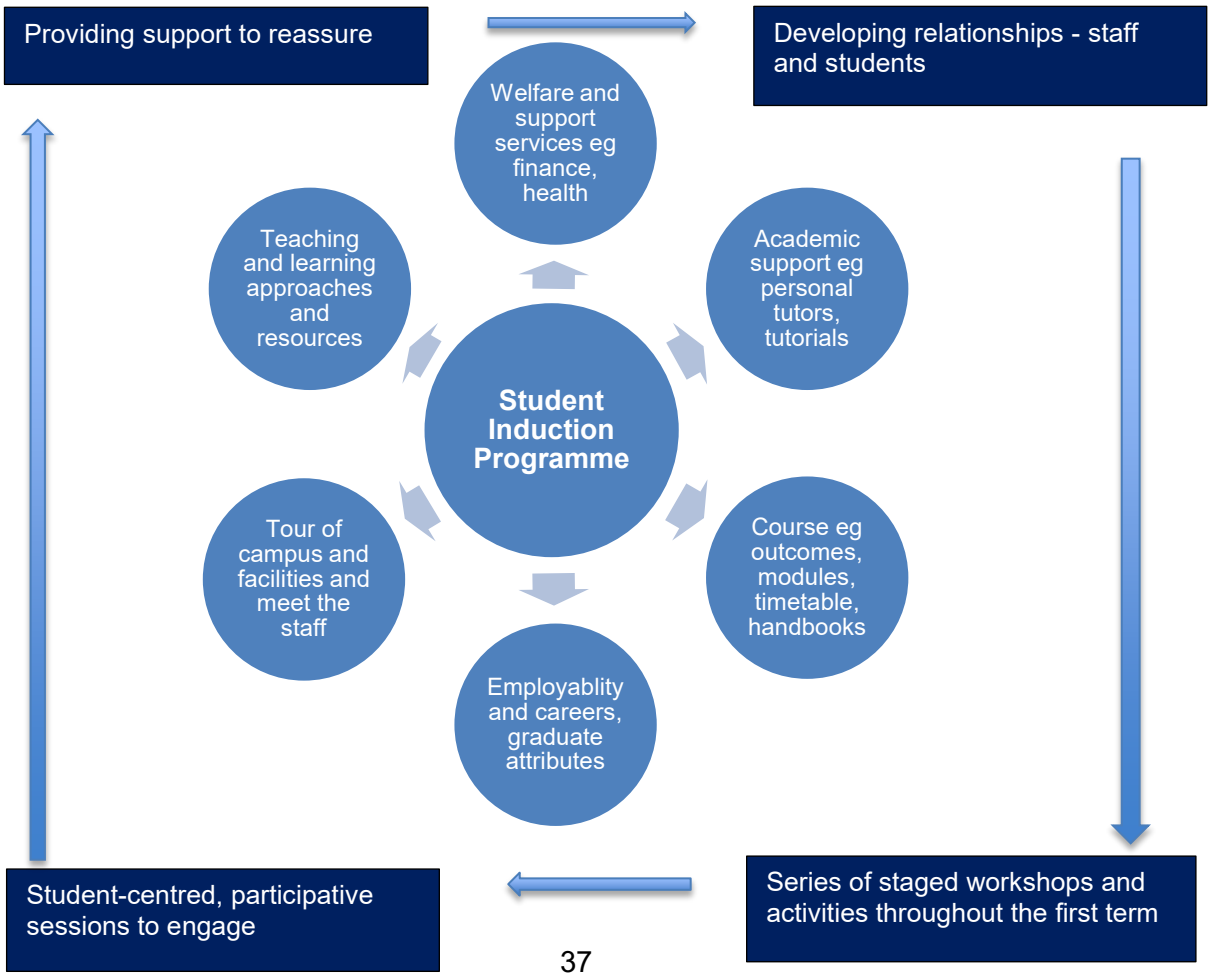
Jordan private university student journey (Al-Ahliyya Amman University and Princess Sumaya University for Technology)



Impact on the student journey

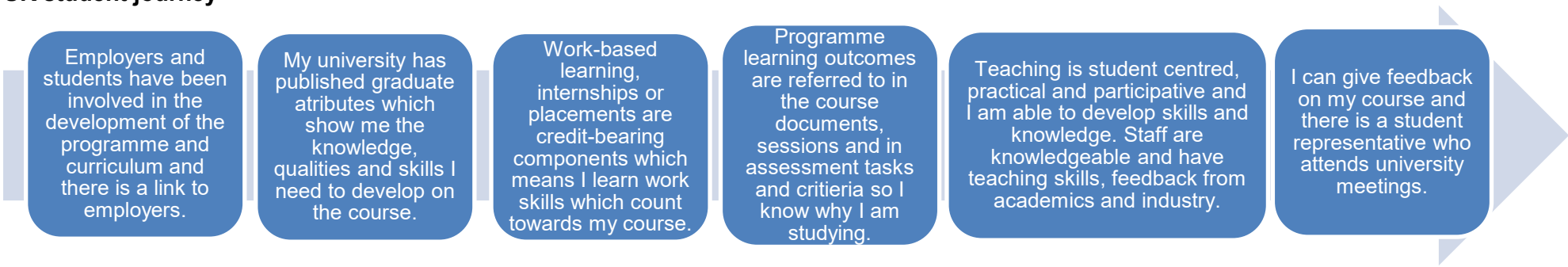
- Not having a relationship with students before they arrive means there is a missed opportunity to engage students in the university, the course and all aspects of university life.
- Consequently, there may be little contact with key staff and other new students which could potentially help reassure applicants before they start.
- A good orientation is seen as a key component of engaging students, encouraging them and supporting them as they start their university life.
- A full, planned and managed induction give institutions an opportunity to develop a relationship with students, build trust and provide reassurance and support at what can be a stressful time. Not using this time means students can feel disengaged and disconnected from their course and this can impact on retention.
- The inconsistent approach to induction across the sector means some students may be disadvantaged at the start of their university life.
- Induction needs to include all aspects of student life including careers and employment as this reinforces that these are an important part of the university course.
- Developing induction workshops which are student centred help to engage students, encourage participation and build confidence.

Figure 12: Components of an induction programme

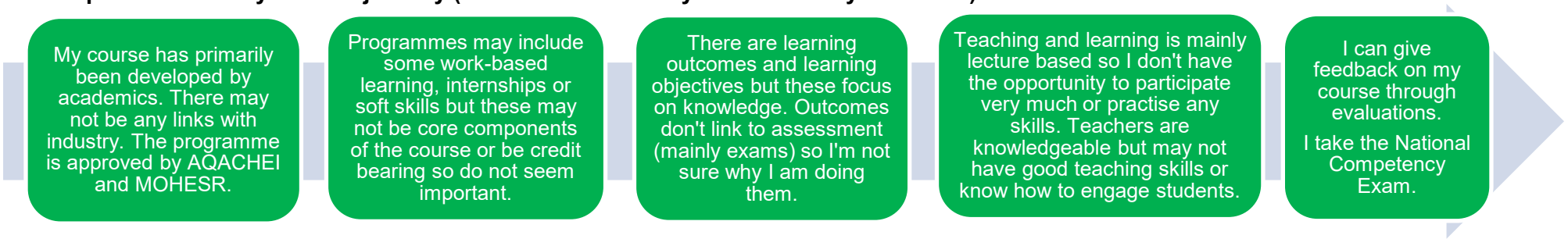


Transition through higher education: Progressing through the learning journey gap analysis

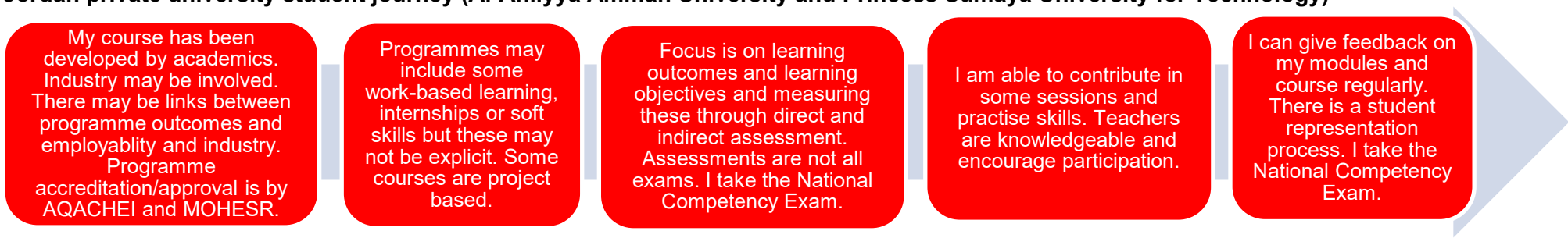
UK student journey



Jordan public university student journey (Hashemite University and University of Jordan)



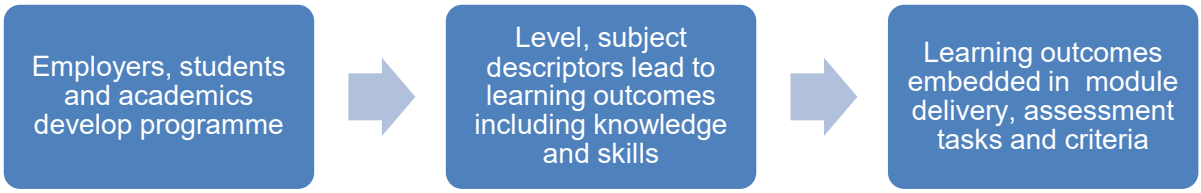
Jordan private university student journey (Al-Ahliyya Amman University and Princess Sumaya University for Technology)



Impact on the student journey

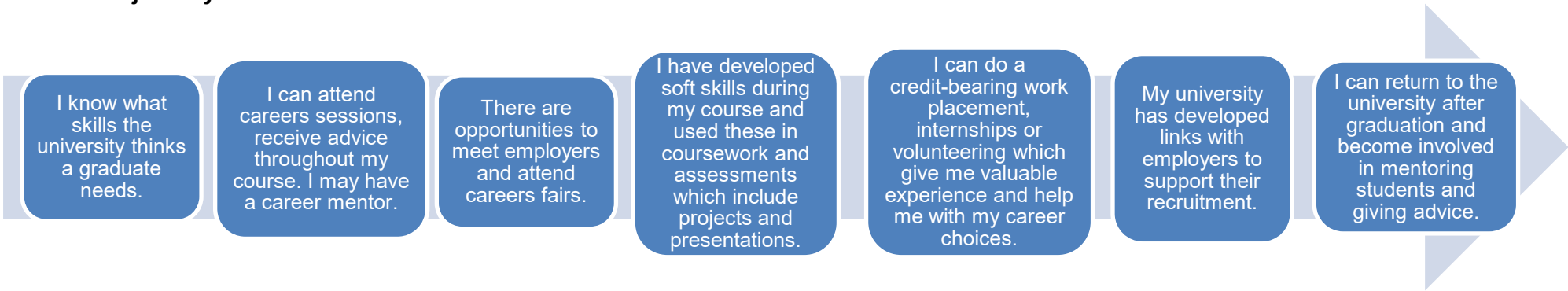
- The lack of requirement for programme development to include contribution from employers and industry representatives can result in development of knowledge-based courses with little reference to employability or soft skills. This can result in the gap employers identified in graduates.
- The lack of explicit reference in learning outcomes to soft skills means these skills are not highlighted to learners, suggesting they may not be noticed or they are not important.
- Learning outcomes should be referred to when developing assessment tasks and criteria. This reinforces the relationship between the curriculum and assessment and helps the learner understand the relevance and requirements of assessments. The National Competency Exam does not link to the course or learning outcomes.
- Overreliance on examination-based assessments and a focus on knowledge rather than skills may result in students having little opportunity to practise skills and be assessed in a meaningful way. This restricts potential opportunities for the development of real-life tasks linking to the workplace.
- A wider range of assessment tasks and types gives students opportunities to develop skills such as teamwork and presentations as well as to do more project-based tasks to prepare them for the workplace.
- The lack of clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities in placement and internship activities may result in opportunities to make these meaningful and developmental are lost.
- A focus on knowledge when employing academics and a tendency to deliver sessions in traditional modes such as lectures means students may have little opportunity to participate and develop real-world skills.
- The lack of staff development in practical teaching skills may result in lower quality teaching which can affect student engagement and learning.

Figure 13: Relationship between programme development and outcomes

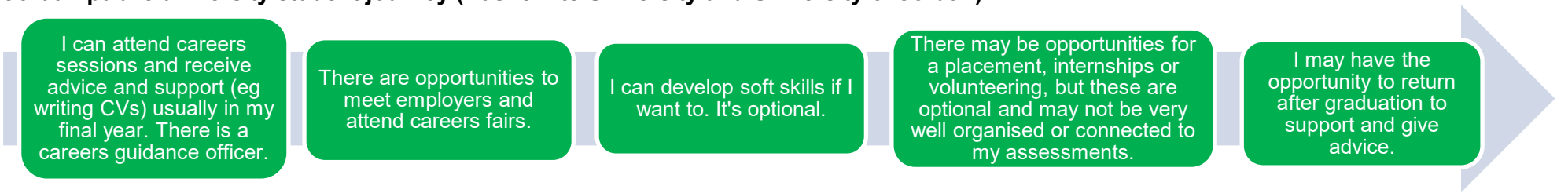


Transition out of higher education: Graduation and employability gap analysis

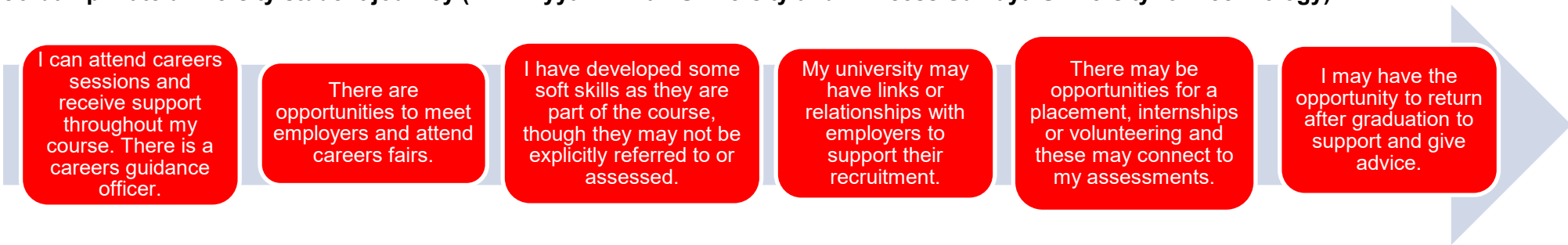
UK student journey



Jordan public university student journey (Hashemite University and University of Jordan)



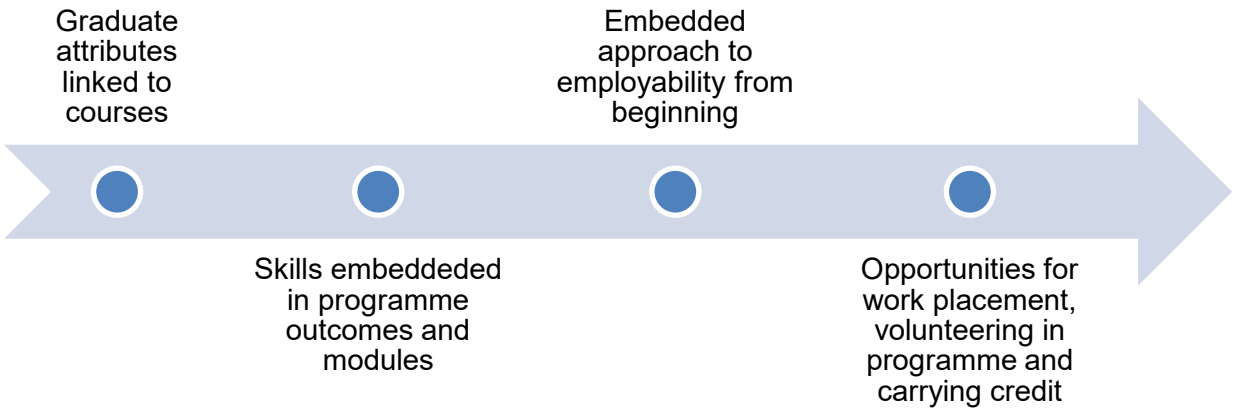
Jordan private university student journey (Al-Ahliyya Amman University and Princess Sumaya University for Technology)



Impact on the student journey

- The inconsistent approach to the development of skills for the workplace impacts on the student journey and could affect employability prospects.
- Employability could be integrated into programmes and specific modules from the very start of the course to highlight the importance to students and to ensure careers guidance is embedded in the course.
- The lack of a graduate attributes framework in institutions means the importance of developmental graduate-level skills required by employers is not considered in programme development and delivery.
- This results in soft skills being seen as 'add-ons' and not as an integral part of the course.
- Not making skills a key part of programme development, delivery, content and assessment means students do not have the opportunity to prepare for the workplace and develop the skills employers need.
- Currently there is a lack of incentive for universities to embed skills and work opportunities when developing courses which results in the perception that they are not important.

Figure 14: Key components to support employability



Recommendations

35 Through an analysis of data and information, both as a desk-based exercise then during a set of site visits, the authors have been able to compare the approach of UK institutions against the approach of Jordanian institutions to a series of common transition stages.

36 This gap analysis has identified a number of areas where relevant stakeholders might take action to better align the local higher education landscape with ESG criteria. Alignment has also been made with the Human Resource Development Strategy (HRD) where appropriate. Recommendations align with the stages of the student journey and then consider the regulatory framework. Colours are used to indicate short-term (blue), medium-term (green), long-term (red). These are based on the level of notice and preparation for change. AQACHEI has a key role to play in the implementation of the recommendations, as do universities working in collaboration.

Transition towards higher education: Pre-arrival and admissions

Negative impact:

A *Limited access to information about university courses and the job market results in impartial information and a reliance on other non-data-based influences. Students have little or no relationship with universities prior to the start of their course or after their examination results*

Action	Stakeholders	ESG standard	HRD goal	Potential impact
1 Encourage public universities to develop course prospectuses and make these available on websites and in published form as required. Private universities already have some materials mainly for the international market and could support this.	AQACHEI and universities	1.8	HE 1.1 HE 1.3	Start to enable parents and students to consider choices based on more information. Starts to build a culture within particular public universities of promoting their offering to potential students and engaging with them prior to arrival.
2 Work with public universities to help them establish links with schools, provide outreach activities at schools and offer open days, and ensure parents are involved. Advise and develop guidance on what open days might involve and use the experiences of private universities to support this.	AQACHEI and universities	1.8	HE 1.1 HE 1.3	Developing programmes where students interact with universities while still at school will help students gain an understanding of university study and life, potentially increasing their knowledge to help inform their decisions.

3 Provide funding for schools to develop careers advice and guidance and build up banks of resources, materials and links, and to enable them to offer careers events involving employers, universities and parents to attend.	Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Labour	1.8	HE 1.1 HE 1.3	Extends the currently limited information available and introduces the link between universities and employers so that this becomes part of the conversation when thinking about university and what to study.

B Negative impact

Public universities have no involvement in the decision-making process at application stage. This lack of engagement at the start of the student journey misses an opportunity to start to engage with prospective students and build up a potential relationship with them. This has a negative impact on the students in terms of preparing them for university study and may create a culture within the universities themselves that it is not their role to be involved at this stage.

Action	Stakeholders	ESG standard	HRD goal	Potential impact
4 Involve public universities in the selection of applicants allowing them to take ownership of and accountability for students at the start of their journey.	Ministry of Higher Education	1.4	HE 1.1	Along with open days, this starts the engagement with students before their first day at university, helping develop relationships and involving staff prior to the students' arrival. This may also help universities consider their approach to recruitment, particularly for oversubscribed courses, and enable them to suggest to students alternative courses. It may enable and encourage them to develop a strategy for capping numbers on courses.

Transition to higher education: Commencing and preparing to study

C Negative impact

There is an inconsistent approach to student induction and orientation. This includes the length of induction, the areas covered in induction and the approach taken to delivering induction sessions. A lack of clear relevant information and a failure to start to build relationships with students can have a negative impact on students' confidence and mood, while a failure to understand aspects of the course can affect initial motivation, performance and retention.

Action	Stakeholders	ESG standard	HRD goal	Potential impact
5 Require all universities to offer an extended induction which is planned and managed. This should include: institutional induction, student services, learning support and an academic induction including employability. This approach may require a review of the structures for the provision of support to students to ensure a consistent and coherent approach and service is offered.	Universities	1.6	HE 1.1 HE 2.5	A full induction gives students time to acclimatise to their new environment and being away from home. Being given information about key aspects of student life helps them start to manage their student life and develop some independence. It also allows them to start to develop relationships with both staff and other students. Introductions to courses are an opportunity to engage students in programme structures and content, outcomes and highlight the links between these.
6 Students should be asked to evaluate the induction programme to enable the universities to review and enhance the support as well as indicate areas for further work.	Universities	1.1 1.9	HE 2.5	Asking for feedback at this stage highlights that the student voice is important. It may encourage students to develop confidence in being involved in student representation. It enables the universities to review their provision and make changes for future programmes.

7 Build in English language support to help develop academic, technical and professional English and skills.	Universities	1.6	HE 2.5	English proficiency is key to student success and supporting students in acquiring English for specific, professional and academic purposes can help to improve student engagement, performance and workplace opportunities.

Transition through higher education: Progressing through the learning journey

D Negative impact

The lack of involvement with employers in programme development, curriculum and assessment design can result in the development of knowledge-based courses with little reference to employability or soft skills. Failure to include these explicitly in learning outcomes impacts on the opportunities to develop and practise these skills which employers need.

Action	Stakeholders	ESG standard	HRD goal	Potential impact
8 Include engagement with employers and students as key components of programme development as part of the programme accreditation process.	AQACHEI Universities	1.2	HE 2.1 HE 2.2 HE 2.3	Employer and student contributions can help make courses relevant to the workplace and reduce the current gap.
9 Involve employers and other stakeholders in the development of learner outcomes, curriculum and assessment and in delivery.	Universities	1.2	HE 2.1 HE 2.2 HE 2.3	This would guide the curriculum design and delivery and indicate the nature of graduate output. It should help to ensure that employability skills - the skills employers need such as communication, problem solving, teamwork, working independently and initiative taking - are incorporated and integrated into the curriculum and learning outcomes and that these skills are recognised and assessed appropriately.

E Negative impact

Learning outcomes are used in programme development and in module documentation but there is no explicit link between outcomes and assessments. This may result in students perceiving a disconnect between what is taught and what is assessed.

Assessment tends to be assessment based with a focus on examinations and content rather than skills and assessment tasks based around these. This misses the opportunity to give students practise in more real-life activities such as projects or presentations for which they could receive academic credit. The National Competency examination is also disconnected from the programme and learning outcomes.

Action	Stakeholders	ESG standard	HRD goal	Potential impact
10 Capacity building in assessment development and equipping staff with a range of assessment tools to enable staff to develop assessments which demonstrate skills and abilities as well as knowledge.	Universities	1.3 1.5 1.6	HE 2.3 HE 2.5	Using a wider range of assessment types and linking them to real life and the workplace gives students the opportunity to develop transferable skills such as report writing, presentations and teamwork.

F Negative impact

A focus on knowledge when employing academics and a lack of focus on development of teaching skills may impact on the quality of the teaching and learning taking place and reduce links to industry and real-world activities.

Action	Stakeholders	ESG standard	HRD goal	Potential impact
11 Universities develop a qualification in teaching at higher education to equip teaching staff with a range of teaching skills and strategies and pedagogy to enable them to take a more creative approach to curriculum and learning design and delivery.	Universities	1.3 1.5	HE 2.3 HE 2.5	Developing teaching skills to support teacher knowledge can help with engagement of students and encourage active participation and development.
12 Universities review staff development and implement approaches to allow academic staff to build networks and develop links with industry/employers to pilot	Universities	1.5	HE 2.1 HE 2.2 HE 2.3 HE 2.5	Developing and establishing links could benefit the programme in terms of curriculum, assessment and delivery leading to more explicit reference to the

an arrangement where industry specialists are seconded to or invited to universities to deliver specialist input to students.				workplace for students. Staff would also be supported in this approach.

Transition out of higher education: Graduation and employability

G Negative impact
An inconsistent approach to embedding employability in the curriculum, the lack of a graduate attributes' framework and the inconsistent approach to the development and practice of key skills for the workplace contributes to the perceived gap in graduate performance and employers' requirements.

Action	Stakeholders	ESG standard	HRD goal	Potential impact
13 Universities to be mandated to fully utilise the potential of the KAFD Careers project, maximising its potential and raising its profile so students, staff and employers are aware of its development.	KAFD Employers	1.2 1.3	HE 2.2 HE 2.3 HE 2.5	The KAFD is already in place in institutions. With more understanding of its role and a raised profile in careers and employability provision in universities, more coherent support across institutions would give students access to more support and guidance. Incorporate a greater emphasis on relationship with employers.
14 AQACHEI to develop with employers and industry and student representatives and the four universities involved in this study, a Graduate Attributes Framework, Subject Benchmark Statements and skills matrixes, and pilot their use in the institutions.	Universities AQACHEI	1.2 1.3	HE 2.2 HE 2.3 HE 2.5	Pilot to support institutions in developing graduate attributes to influence programme development and delivery and bring together key stakeholders.
15 AQACHEI to build on current practice existing by setting up a pilot group of external stakeholders and the four	Universities AQACHEI	1.2 1.3	HE 2.2 HE 2.3 HE 2.5	A 'whole' approach to employability linking to graduate attributes and developed with external stakeholders would help

universities in this study to develop an embedded institutional approach to employability.				institutions understand their role in employability and highlight to students its role in their programme.
16 AQACHEI to set up a partnership collaboration pilot with the four universities that contributed to this study with the aim of establishing a number of pilot projects to enhance employability. These could focus on areas such as careers guidance, employer engagement, volunteering/placements as well as approaches to teaching and learning.	Universities AQACHEI	1.2 1.3	HE 2.2 HE 2.3 HE 2.5	This would also establish a collaborative approach to developing more work focused activities to be included in programmes and encourage the sharing of good practice. It could also help students gain more practical experience.
17 To work with institutions on reviewing labour market information and develop a reliable, robust and accessible dataset.	Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Labour	1.7	HE 2.4	To help inform prospective students and other stakeholders about higher education options and increase the information currently available. This would encourage universities to collate and monitor graduate data at specific periods after graduation in order to judge the success of programmes supporting the workforce.

Regulatory Framework

The context for reviewing the Quality Assurance regulatory framework for universities is set out in the HRD strategy:

'Quality assurance measures are not routinely enforced to ensure continuous monitoring, evaluation, and enhancement of the system.' (p18). The recommendations below support the move to mandatory adherence to a regulatory framework for all institutions.

Action	Stakeholders	ESG standard	HRD goal	Potential impact
18 Require all universities to engage with quality assurance policies and processes.	AQACHEI Institutions	1.1	HE 2.1 HE 2.4	Helps develop consistency of national standards and quality across the sector and

				encourage enhancement. Helps develop stakeholder contributions.
19 AQACHEI is recommended to introduce formal training for all experts (reviewers/auditors) involved in accreditation and quality assurance.	AQACHEI	1.1	HE 2.1 HE 2.4	Ensure staff are fully prepared for their role, understand the process and their responsibilities and are able to communicate these to stakeholders.
20 AQACHEI revise the licensing, programme accreditation and quality audit manual to ensure it accurately reflects the context in which it is being used. Confirming the status of the handbook and developing a timeline to allow institutions to prepare for implementation of the mandatory quality assurance process. This would involve setting realistic goals for implementation (e.g. by the end of year 1- meet the minimum requirements and indicated policies are being developed, year 3 - policies are implemented). This would also allow for capacity building and staff training.	AQACHEI	1.1	2.1	Helps ensure that there is a coherent quality assurance process which includes a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of an institution. Helps ensure standards and quality are being consistently met.
21 The Ministry consider introducing a cyclical programme of quality audit that incorporates all providers over a given period of time.	Ministry of Higher Education	1.9	2.3 2.4 2.5	To enable a consistent approach and ensure that institutions monitor and review programmes regularly and adapt to the needs of students and society. This would enable institutions to share good practice and enable AQACHEI to identify and publish themes emerging from audits as well as enable stakeholders to be better informed.

Figure 15: The Jordanian student journey

Next steps

37 As can be seen, the recommendations suggest adopting a collaborative approach to implementation. The development of communities of practice whereby groups of practitioners from different institutions engage with each other to develop a shared meaning and effective practice could bring significant benefits to the higher education sector in Jordan overall, as well as individual institutions, and have a positive impact on the student experience. Developing these communities brings other benefits such as providing a support network, accelerating professional development, breaking down institutional silos and building capability. Asking the four institutions involved in this study to be involved in the development of communities of practice would help ensure a more coherent offer and experience for students and enable the pilot to be monitored and evaluated.

38 The current system for ranking universities is based on a number of criteria including student performance in the competency test. While reviewing and exploring ranking criteria, some thought could be given to including factors such as the development of skills, student support and employability. Extending the indicators would incentivise institutions to consider their approach to these areas and the development of a more student-centred approach. This might be linked to institutional accreditation.

Conclusion

This report has outlined key touchpoints and milestones in the student experience of UK and Jordanian students at both public and private universities and considered these in the contexts of their respective higher education landscapes. It has outlined where the gaps in those experiences are and the impact of these on the student experience and on the success of higher education in fulfilling its role in contributing to Jordan's economic development.

Based on this the authors have proposed a number of recommendations and aligned these to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and to the National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025 where applicable and appropriate. The recommendations aim to support the changes already proposed by the Ministry and help support the work of AQACHEI in managing the regulatory framework across all institutions.

The report indicates that, while there are a number of challenges facing the higher education sector in Jordan, the desire to realign and repurpose policy and processes around the student life cycle is a positive step. This can provide benefit to all stakeholders - students, academic and administrative staff, employers, ministry officials and agencies responsible for higher education. The impetus and vision steered by His Majesty King Abdullah II resulting in the *Education for Prosperity: Delivering Results - A National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025* (HRD) has helped the ministry drive change forward. This report recognises the positive steps already taken by the Ministry, particularly the formation of AQACHEI, which has the opportunity to play a key role in the higher education landscape and help develop real effective change.

The alignment of the recommendations with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) helps support the desire to gain more international recognition for the sector and provides some clear targets to help support this. Alignment of the recommendations with the HRD also indicates ways in which the sector can help meet the aims for the higher education sector.

The recommendations also aim to support AQACHEI in the creation of an environment involving all stakeholders in the development and delivery of programmes to help ensure

students and parents are informed of their options and institutions create graduates able to meet the needs of the labour market and make a contribution to the economy and country as a whole.

Building on the recommendations will require buy-in from a range of stakeholders and there may be some key challenges to helping capitalise on the initiatives already taken. However, establishing a level playing field where all stakeholders are involved and working together as partners will help support the significant initiatives already taken and move the higher education landscape towards meeting the priorities set out in the HRD.

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Meeting with Hasemite University staff and students (2019) *Notes of meeting with Hasemite University staff and students 15 September 2019,* Hasemite University Zarqa City

Meeting with Princess Sumaya University of Technology staff (2019) *Notes of meeting with Princess Sumaya University of Technology staff 16 September 2019,* Princess Sumaya University of Technology, Amman

Meeting with graduates (2019) *Notes of meeting with youth 17 September 2019,* British Council Offices, Amman

Meeting with AQACHEI (2019) *Notes of meeting with AQACHEI staff representatives 17 and 18 September 2019,* AQACHEI Offices, Jordan

Appendix

Methodology

This project forms part of an exploratory study undertaken to better understand the component parts of the student learner journey in Jordan and focuses on the employability skills and the preparedness of graduates - in particular, the subject areas of engineering and information technology (IT). The study considers the learner journey in both public and private institutions of higher education to identify any key areas of similarity or difference and indeed any good practice that can be shared to enhance the student experience.

This study is informed by qualitative research including desk-based sources such as reports, articles and web-based materials. Further qualitative information was gained from face-to-face meetings held with key stakeholder groups including Ministry bodies such as the national quality authority - Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI) - university staff, students, industry representatives, local professional bodies and recent graduates, some of whom were in employment.

Meetings were held between 15 and 18 September 2019. Four universities were included in the study - two of which were public universities and two that were private - thus enabling a more balanced picture of the student experience to be formed and allowing for comparisons to be made across the sector as a whole. Table 1 lists the universities included in the study and includes the number of enrolled students in 2017-18 (second semester).

Table 1: Universities included in the study

University	Region	Public/private	Enrolled no. (2017-18)*
Al Ahliyya Amman University	As Salt City	Private	6,148
Princess Sumaya University of Technology	Amman	Private	2,732
Hashemite University	Zarqa City	Public	21,040
University of Jordan	Amman	Public	38,622

** Data provided by British Council - September 2019*

To preserve the confidentiality of individuals and institutions, reference is made to meetings with students or staff and assigned a number in the footnote. The university meetings included academic and administrative staff in senior roles, current students and graduates from three of the four universities and a separate meeting comprising a student and recent graduates. In all cases, universities had included representation from their respective careers offices, which are a relatively new addition to the student support infrastructure in Jordan. Meetings held with students provided insights into their learning journey and overall experience, and how the programme was preparing them for the world of work. All meetings formed a key part of the exploration of the practices, processes and support within the higher education institutions. Meetings held with recent graduates provided further insights into their higher education experiences and, in particular, the skills developed to prepare them for their current employment. Subject areas and disciplines that students and graduates were undertaking or had undertaken are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Subject areas and disciplines undertaken by students and graduates

Civil Engineering	Architectural Engineering	Computer Science
Software Engineering	Engineering Science	Network Information Systems
Mechanical Engineering	Materials Engineering	Network & Security
Bio-medical Engineering	Mechatronics	Medicine
Electrical Engineering		Pharmacy

Meetings held with employers had representatives from: engineering, including the Jordanian Engineers Council, and Associate Consultant Engineers; the Information Technology Association of Jordan (Int@j) Sector Skills Council; Solutions for renewable energy and President for Sector Skills Council for energy and water; Skills for Employment and Social Inclusion Programme (SESIP) for Jordan; and a professional from the financial sector. The discussion provided insights into the skillset that they expected graduates to have, and where there were gaps. Outcomes of the discussion with this group yielded no major surprises as these form common conversations within the higher education sector in the UK also.

A meeting with AQACHEI was also held to understand the accreditation processes in-country, and to understand the role AQACHEI has in the sector and what, if any, oversight it has of the student learner journey within universities and the sector as a whole.

In addition to meetings, universities were asked to complete surveys to provide some background to the areas of exploration within this study. However, the responses lacked in detail and were therefore deemed to be of little additional value to this study.

The approach taken has provided relevant insights into the learner journey, processes and practices in the Jordanian higher education sector. It has further enabled analysis of the qualitative data and triangulation of content. Table 1 provides detail on the higher education institutes involved in the study and contributors at the face-to-face meetings organised by the British Council.

Members of the QAA team have worked in higher education as lecturers and senior managers for several years. They bring an in-depth knowledge and practical experience of the student learner journey and student experience in a UK setting, which this study uses as a benchmark and comparator to further inform and support the recommendations made in this report.

Limitations

In Jordan, there are 39 universities - 10 public, 16 private, two on special law, one regional, and 10 university colleges.[44] Only four universities (two public and two private) formed part of this exploratory study, and is therefore not statistically significant as the sample size represents only 13% of all universities in the country. Survey responses also provide very limited information and as such lack real value for this study.

The meetings and discussion with various stakeholders provided helpful insights; however, as the visit took place over a short time frame, the team had very limited time to gain any significant depth into the student journey. Each university meeting was scheduled for approximately three hours or less, reducing the time for exploration with individual stakeholder groups, thereby limiting insights and information gathering. On a couple of occasions faculty staff were present in the meeting with students, which also called into question the transparency of the responses given by students. In one case the team were

[44] British Council (2019) Higher education system in Jordan

able to set up a separate meeting with students which revealed some interesting facts and insights into their experiences as part of their learner journey at the institution.

The meeting with employers provided some valuable insights about the skills, or lack of skills that graduates brought with them and their suggestions of where key gaps exist. However, once again, time was limited to explore more fully the detail with the group. In addition, and perhaps a key limitation of this study, the focus has been on ICT and engineering primarily. This therefore provides only a snapshot of the Jordanian student learner journey.

Despite these limitations the team undertaking this study found a consistency of messages delivered across the stakeholder groups they met. All information gained has been carefully triangulated throughout and therefore the team is confident of its findings as it relates to the student higher education journey in Jordan, and employability outcomes.

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