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Good Practice Guide for Students: How to prepare for online careers and recruitment fairs



QAA

Acknowledgments

This report is an output from a Collaborative Enhancement Project supported and funded by QAA. The Inclusive Futures Project Steering Group would like to thank :

- Dr Kerr Castle, QAA for the ongoing guidance provided in delivering the QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project, Katie Thomas and Gemma Woods, Group GTI for their support.
- Careers Service staff, students and employers involved in the design and delivery of the Project at London Metropolitan University, University of Greenwich, University of Hertfordshire, Kingston University, University of Roehampton, University of West London and University of Westminster.
- Laurie Smith, London Met graduate; freelance graphic designer. Icons by 'Flaticon.com'. Flat quote boxes by 'Freepik.com'.

Good Practice Guide for Students: How to prepare for online careers and recruitment fairs

Introduction

Welcome to the Good Practice Guide for Students which will support you to navigate and manage your experience of online recruitment fairs. This short guide has been produced as part of a QAA-funded Collaborative Enhancement Project, which focused on creating a toolkit to enable students from underrepresented backgrounds to develop confidence and competencies needed for securing graduate level employment.

The labour market is changing rapidly with employers increasingly choosing to recruit students online. A report published by The Institute of Student Employers (ISE) in March 2023¹ based on early employer recruitment plans stated that half of their employer members 'expected that their recruitment would be mainly virtual over the next five years.' Seven London-based universities², GTI's targetjobs, and QAA collaborated with a shared mission to prepare students for graduate employment resulting in a toolkit of preparatory careers resources complemented by an Inclusive Futures online Careers Fair. [The Virtual Careers Fair Toolkit](#) was created in response to industry reports, anecdotal feedback and evaluations that suggest students from underrepresented groups do not feel confident participating in virtual careers events and applying for jobs with employers they meet. The toolkit helps to equip students to navigate these changes effectively.

The toolkit is designed to be inclusive and relevant to all students and graduates, particularly those from underrepresented groups. A strong emphasis on how students felt about their careers was paramount to this project. The world of work is rapidly evolving, and with employers increasingly choosing to recruit students online, it is essential that students are equipped with the necessary skills, tools and resources to navigate this process effectively. The ISE recommends that companies should ensure that their 'onboarding process is inclusive' and 'provides students with the tools and knowledge to enter the workplace comfortably' (ISE, how do students feel about their Futures Careers, July 2022³).

This Good Practice Guide for Students aims to provide you with an overview of the toolkit's key features, which will help you prepare for your early recruitment experiences. It includes useful resources and tips to untangle some of the complexities around applying for graduate jobs, communicating with employers, and following up with applications. The toolkit can be used before any online recruitment fair regardless of which university you attend.

¹ [ISE report March 2023](#)

² Inclusive Futures Consortium (Universities: Hertfordshire, Greenwich, Kingston, London Metropolitan, Roehampton, West London, Westminster)

³ [ISE report July 2022](#)

Features of the Toolkit



VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS ACTION PLANNER

Publication date: 12 Sep 2022

Format: DOCX
Size: 0.32 MB

[Hide details](#) ^

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Check out our Introductory video: [‘What will students get from the virtual careers fair toolkit?’](#)

You can download our [‘Virtual Fairs Action Planner’](#) to record information as you go.

The toolkit is divided into six sections:



1. PREPARING FOR THE VIRTUAL FAIR

– Helpful bitesize tips and suggestions.



2. COUNTDOWN TO THE FAIR

– Preparation checklist 30-mins, 15-mins, 5-mins before you attend a virtual careers fair.



3. DURING THE FAIR

– How to talk to recruiters & Questions to ask employers.



4. APPLYING FOR JOBS WITH THE EMPLOYERS YOU HAVE MET

– Breaking down your applications into chunks & links to CV, cover letter, interview support.



5. BUILDING A NETWORK

– Flow chart with techniques on how to grow your network after a fair.



6. STAYING RESILIENT AND SECURING EMPLOYMENT

– Reflection & setting SMART goals after a fair.

Our toolkit also has interactive FAQs relating to:

- Group talks and workshops
- Small groups or 121s with employers
- Technical help during a fair.

How were students from seven universities involved?

- Co-designed and co-created the resources for the toolkit with careers staff
- Filmed, edited the promotional and introductory videos that feature on the toolkit and the online Careers Fair platform
- Provided essential feedback regarding their practical tips for graduate employability for both the toolkit and the complementing Inclusive Futures Fair

What did the students say?

“The Inclusive Futures Fair is working towards bringing inclusive employers to the demographic. To show students and graduates from all backgrounds that there are opportunities in different companies.”

“Be very focused on networking, and socialising with employers and also people that are doing the same career path as you.”

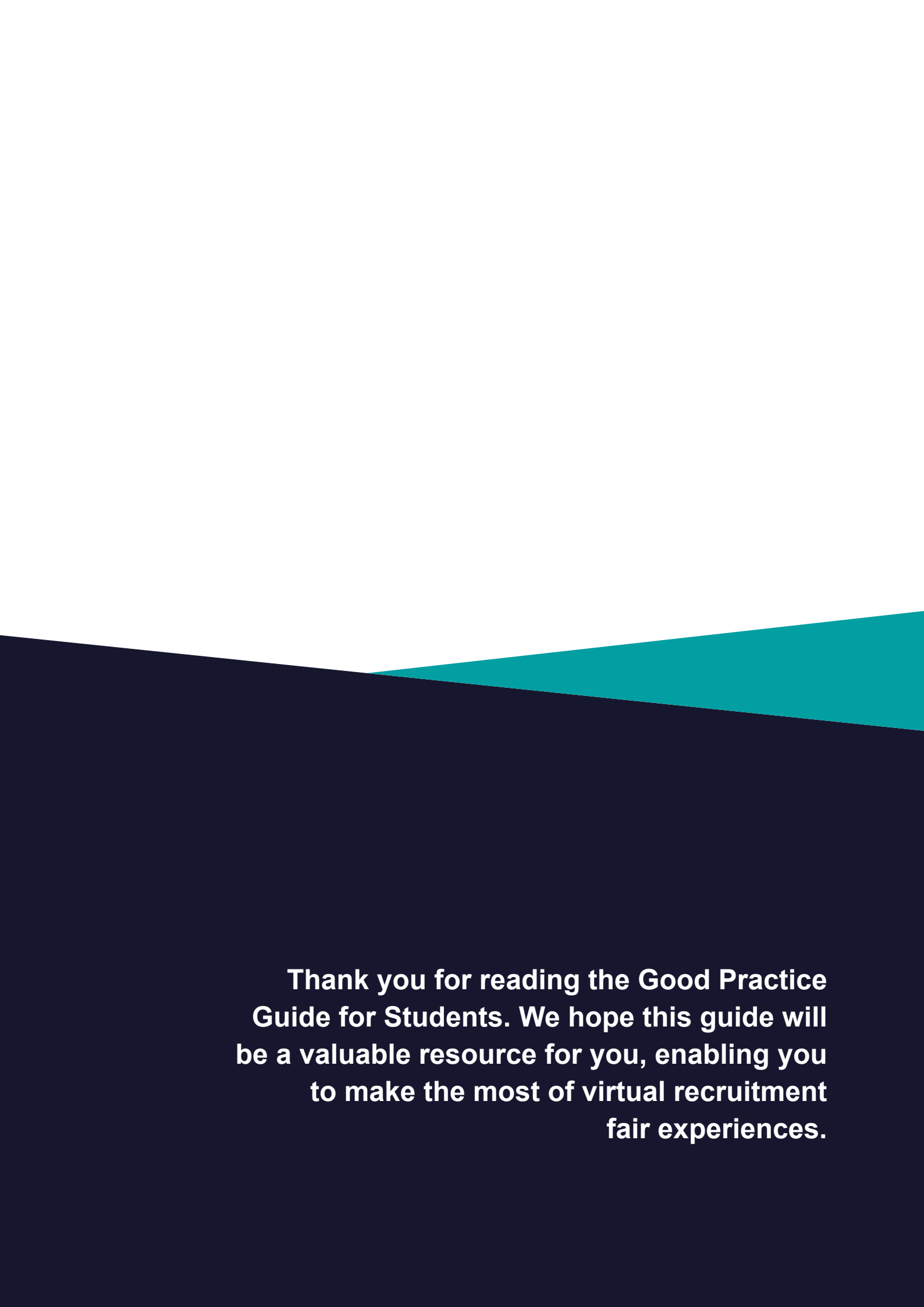
“Start early, start on time, and don’t be discouraged with the amount of ‘Nos’ you get, I would tell my younger self not to be discouraged, so keep trying.”

Your next steps after events and professional development

- Add your Careers Fair attendance to your CV and LinkedIn profile – what skills did you use during the event?
- Look at the 'After the Fair' section of the toolkit to remind you of the next steps.
- Follow up 'professionally' with any employers you communicated with during the Fair or applied to afterwards.
- Book an appointment with your university Careers Adviser to reflect upon your experience and seek help with your employer follow up.
- Give feedback to your University Careers Service – please send any thoughts or suggestions to your University's Careers Team.
- Post your comments on LinkedIn and build your online profile.

Top tips for your next online fair

- Become familiar with the platform that is being used
- Book multiple appointments with employers and with those you are not familiar with.
- Turn on your camera and be professional when meeting with employers.
- Make contact with the Careers Adviser on the day of the Fair with any queries.
- Consider being a coach or student mentor to other students
- Plan For the Fair a week in advance using the [toolkit and action planner](#).
- Pre-virtual Fair, plan the questions you would like to ask employers.
- Become familiar with Fair platforms in advance of the day of the event.
- Attend any pre fair webinars or workshops in advance of the Inclusive Fair Day.
- Reach out to your University's Careers Team in advance of the Fair to ask any appropriate questions.



**Thank you for reading the Good Practice
Guide for Students. We hope this guide will
be a valuable resource for you, enabling you
to make the most of virtual recruitment
fair experiences.**