

EMPLOYABILITY SCAN (ESCAN) IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Assessing programs' commitment and capacity for employability qualities

INTRODUCTION

- ➡ What employability outcomes does your program intend for its graduates?
- ➡ How aligned are your program curriculum and courses with the skills needed for the workplace?
- ➡ How important are employability experiences and skills to your faculty?
- ➡ How engaged are career services professionals, employers, and alumni in your program?
- ➡ How well do your graduates achieve employability outcomes?

Assuring graduates are prepared for the changing world of work has become a [critical outcome in higher education](#).¹ While employability goals and outcomes have always been an emphasis in some types of postsecondary education, their relevance and expectations are not universal across programs and institutions. Given the dynamic pace at which the world of work is evolving, all postsecondary programs need to more reliably prepare students so they are not only ready for their first job, but are provided a foundation for a lifetime of engaged employment and participation in the changing workplace of the 21st century.

The purpose of the Employability Scan is to assist programs in evaluating their effectiveness in preparing students for employment. At the [Quality Assurance Commons \(QA Commons\)](#),² our vision is that **ALL** graduates are prepared for the changing world of work, and our mission is to close the gap between higher education and employability. Our focus is on those [qualities and skills employers identify](#)³ as most needed - the [eight Essential Employability Qualities \(EEQs\)](#).⁴ Your institution shares a commitment to ensuring graduates are ready for the workforce and modeling how educators and employers can work together for student success, with the aim to strengthen the Kentucky workforce. To further these mutual ends, we are partnering on a series of employability initiatives including the Employability Scan.

The Employability Scan (EScan) is a first-step, diagnostic inventory to provide programs the opportunity to begin exploring their commitment and capacity to address the employability needs of its students.

¹ <http://bit.ly/CHECareerReadyEducation>

² www.theqacommons.org

³ <http://bit.ly/CEWWorkplaceBasics2020>

⁴ <http://bit.ly/QACGraduateProfile>

COMPONENTS & PROCESS

Components

The EScan engages a department in a four-part process to be completed in 7-10 weeks.

The EScan begins with a broad **survey of program faculty and departmental leaders** to gather information about perceptions and practices relevant to employability. The survey invites program faculty, leaders and staff perceptions regarding the extent to which their program emphasizes work-relevant learning opportunities, employability outcomes, and connections to employers. It asks how it assists students in developing their employability including engagement with career planning and services, as well as practices linked to assuring graduates attain employability outcomes.

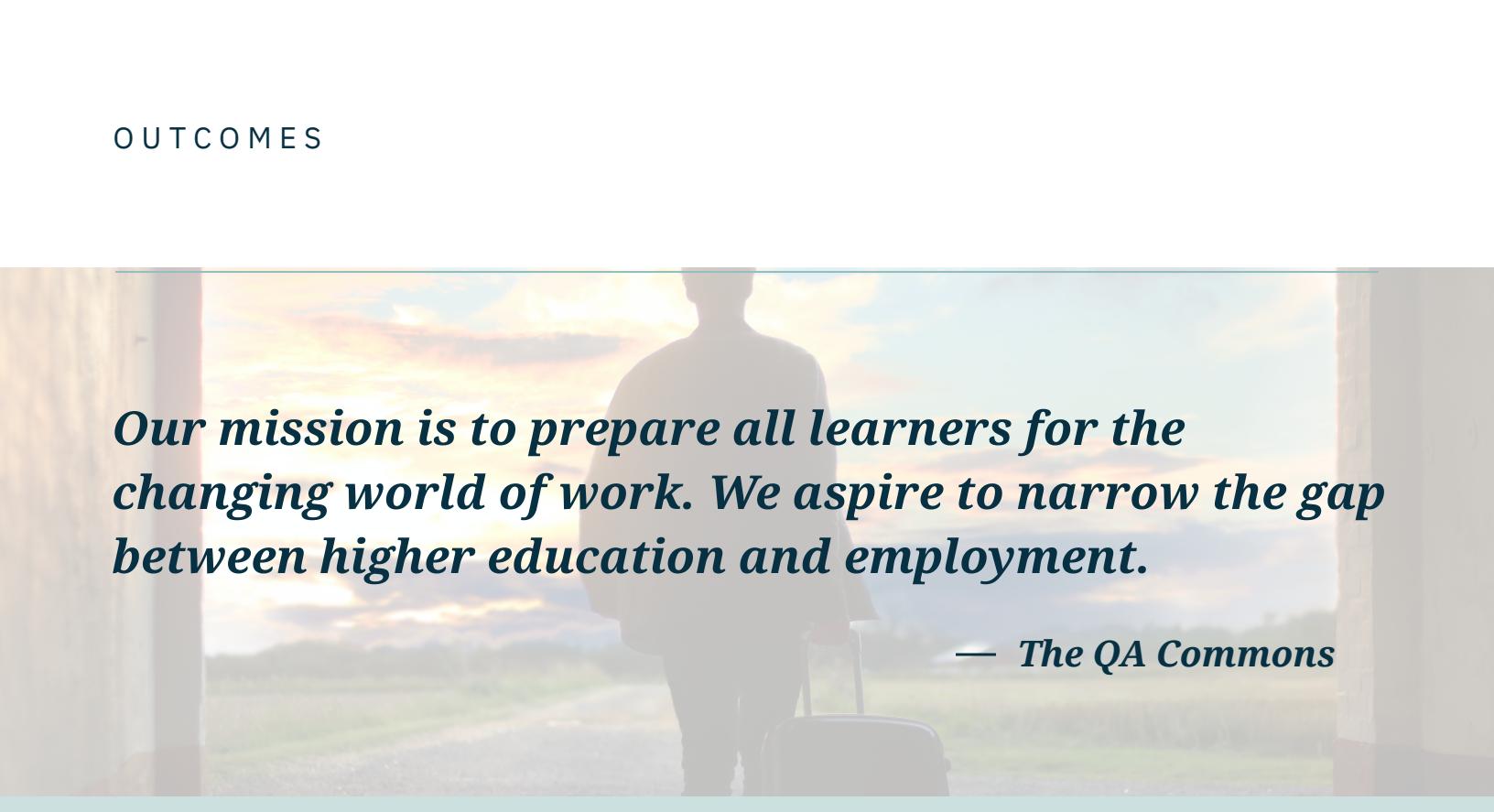
Survey results are compiled into an aggregate report for the department. **Program faculty and department leadership then meet to discuss aggregate survey data** and develop a collective understanding of results. Discussion involves the identification of program strengths, ideas for improvements, points of convergence, and the discovery of opportunities to enhance the connection between education and employability.

The documentation of insights, conclusions and opportunities from the department discussion are then compiled in a **short Executive Summary Report**.

A **department action plan**, focused on where the program is relative to employability outcomes and where it wants to go, can also be produced.

Process





Our mission is to prepare all learners for the changing world of work. We aspire to narrow the gap between higher education and employment.

— ***The QA Commons***

Outcomes

The EScan has multiple uses. **The main goal is to provide feedback to the program to promote reflection and build self-awareness that leads to improvement with regard to student employability.** The EScan may also be incorporated in regular program reviews, in proposals for new program development, or in quality improvement and curricular enhancements.

For those wishing to deepen their work with the QA Commons, the EScan can serve as a foundation for the development of a portfolio for review in the QA Commons Essential Employability Qualities Certification process (EEQ CERT). Certification focuses not only on employability learning outcomes (Category 1) but the integration of career services (category 2), relationship with employers (Category 3), connections to current students and alumni on career readiness (Category 4), and transparency of employability information on the departmental website (Category 5).

Our goal in undertaking this process is to support each program in demonstrating the ways in which it is successfully preparing graduates for the changing world of work.

sharing best practices and promoting the University's role in the region's and state's economy.

INSTRUCTIONS & TIMELINE

Tasks

The EScan process involves a range of department and QA Commons tasks during a 7-10 week timeframe.

WEEK 1 EScan Onboarding Webinar for department chairs

WEEK 1 Department identifies coordinator or small team to lead Employability Scan process

WEEKS 2-3 Department invites full-time and part-time faculty in the program to individually complete the Employability Scan Survey (survey in field for 12-14 days); send 2 reminders to promote participation (optimal for 50% RR). Individual responses should be treated confidentially.
(see Appendix A for Invitations and Reminders)

WEEK 3 Department sets meeting time to discuss programs' survey results

WEEKS 4-5 De-identified individual surveys compiled in a summary report produced by QA Commons and returned to Departments EScan coordinator

WEEKS 5-6 Department holds meeting [recommended 90-120 min] to discuss aggregate results using a discussion protocol
(see Appendix B for Discussion protocol)

WEEKS 6-7 Department documents areas of convergence and divergence in responses, describes insights, identifies key strengths and areas of opportunity for the program and synthesizes in the Department Executive Summary Report
(see Appendix C for Executive Summary Report template)

WEEKS 7-8 Department produces Action Plan to prioritize needs and next steps (*optional*)
(see Appendix D for Action Plan template)



Final Considerations

The Employability Scan survey will be only as helpful as the extent to which faculty and program staff feel comfortable providing their candid feedback and the program is open to evaluating its effectiveness in preparing students for employment.

In addition, QA Commons has created an [EScan participant portal](#),⁵ with access to these materials and additional resources. The QA Commons also posts extensive resources on its public [resources](#)⁶ page.

The QA Commons



eeqcrt@theqacommmons.org

www

www.theqacommmons.org

Don't forget the appendices on the following pages!

To access the participant portal, go to the bottom of www.theqacommmons.org and login with EScan / Appraisal20!!

⁵ To access the participant portal, go to the bottom of www.theqacommmons.org and login with EScan / Appraisal20!!

⁶ www.theqacommmons.org/resources

The below verbiage can be found/copied on the EScan participant portal. To access the participant portal, go to the bottom of www.theqacommons.org and login with EScan / Appraisal20!!

EScan Survey Invitation & Reminders

Program Participation in EScan Announcement (optional)

Departments are advised to inform faculty about the program's participation in the EScan, describing purpose and goals, and to announce that a survey invitation is forthcoming.

Survey Invitation

The invitation is the first contact to full and part-time faculty. It introduces the survey's purpose and provides a link to access the survey. Departments should send a version of the invitation below to program faculty.

Dear {name}:

All postsecondary programs need to more reliably prepare students so they are ready for their first job and are provided a foundation for a lifetime of engaged employment and participation in the changing workplace of the 21st century. To explore our programs' commitment and capacity to address the employability needs of our students, we are participating in a project with the Quality Assurance Commons for Higher and Postsecondary Education (QA Commons).

The mission of the QA Commons is to prepare all learners for the changing world of work, narrowing the gap between higher education and employment. The QA Commons' has developed a framework for Employability and helps college and university leaders and their faculty more clearly understand the rapidly changing needs of employers by building a culture that supports graduate employability as a priority outcome. We are delighted your program was selected to participate.

The goal of this project is to implement an Employability Scan (EScan). The first step is for all faculty in our department to complete the EScan, which is a survey to gather information about perceptions and practices relevant to employability. The survey will take about 25-30 minutes to finish.

The survey is at: <http://bit.ly/qacescan>

Your participation is voluntary, though we hope you will respond. Results will be aggregated and individual responses will not be disclosed. Should you have any questions about this project please contact [name of departments EScan coordinator].

Thank you very much for considering this important request. We expect that the information you and other faculty provide will help identify areas of strength and improvement, as well as provide a foundation for an action plan and a portfolio for EEQ Certification.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX A CONT'D

Survey Reminders

A version of the two emails below should be sent to program **faculty 4 days** after the invitation, and **2 days before survey close**.

Reminder 1 *(send 4 days after invitation)*

Dear {name}:

You were recently sent an e-mail inviting you to complete a survey to explore our programs' commitment and capacity to address the employability needs of our students. This survey is a key component of the Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education (Kentucky CPE) and Quality Assurance Commons Employability Scan (EScan) project.

If you have not yet completed the survey, please do so as soon as possible. The survey will take about 25-30 minutes to finish.

The survey is at: <http://bit.ly/qacescan>

The link above is unique to our department. Your participation is voluntary, though we hope you will respond. Should you have any questions about this project please contact [name of departments EScan coordinator].

We expect that the information you and other faculty provide will help identify areas of strength and improvement, as well as lead to constructive discussions about employability and strengthening our local workforce.

Thank you for your consideration.

Reminder 2 *(send 2 days before survey close)*

Dear {name}:

This is the last reminder you'll receive about completing a survey to explore our programs' commitment and capacity to address the employability needs of our students. This survey is a key component of the collaboration between the University, the Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education (Kentucky CPE) and the Quality Assurance Commons. Th Employability Scan (EScan).

If you have not yet completed the Employability Scan survey, please do so as soon as possible. The survey will take about 25-30 minutes to finish.

The survey is at: <http://bit.ly/qacescan>

Your participation is voluntary, though we hope you will respond. Should you have any questions about this project please contact [name of departments EScan coordinator].

We expect that the information you and other faculty provide will help identify areas of strength and improvement, as well as lead to constructive discussions about employability and strengthening the Kentucky workforce.

Thank you for your consideration.

The below verbiage can be found/copied on the EScan participant portal. To access the participant portal, go to the bottom of www.theqacommons.org and login with EScan / Appraisal20!!

EScan Department Discussion Protocol

Departments should schedule a 90 to 120 minute meeting to discuss aggregate survey results 2 weeks after the survey close date.

A simple report of aggregate survey responses will be sent to the department EScan coordinator. This report should be provided to faculty with instructions to review in advance of the meeting. Departments may wish to focus on topics of greatest interest to the department and invite faculty to review these results more thoroughly. Consider inviting reflection on the following prompts corresponding to survey topics. These prompts can also be used to structure the discussion.

Career & Employability Practices (Items 1-4)

1. Which practices do results show are **most important** to the faculty in your program? How does this compare to what you value? Does this match what your program offers?
2. Is there general agreement about what your program has in place?
3. What instructional practices and outcomes are most emphasized? Do results about what is emphasized in courses reflect what students in your program should experience? What is underemphasized? Is this okay?
4. What are program faculty doing the most related to career-related activities? What activities are underemphasized?

Essential Employability Skills & Student Preparation (Item 5)

5. Review the Essential Skills ranked by the importance to the program. Does this match what the program claims for graduates? Are there mismatches between what is important and estimations of graduates' preparation? Why might this be the case?

Evaluation of Best Practices for Employability (Items 6, 9)

6. What practices are most consistently evaluated? Are the practices rated "excellent or good" or that the program does well reflective of program emphasis? Which practices are rated low and is this a concern?

Program Employability Needs (Items 7-8, 10)

7. Is there agreement about what would most help your program more effectively address employability qualities? What could the program do better to enhance student preparation for employability?

Department Discussion Agenda

- Invite faculty to share their overall impressions of aggregate results. What results surprised you? What results are of greatest interest or concern?
- Shift to the topics and prompts of greatest interest to the program and use the relevant prompts to guide discussion.
- End the meeting by synthesizing program strengths and ideas for improvements, points of convergence, and opportunities to enhance the connection between education and employability. Ask for recommendations about what the program should address in the near term and later.
- Identify how the Executive Summary Report will be produced.

The below verbiage can be found/copied on the EScan participant portal. To access the participant portal, go to the bottom of www.theqacommons.org and login with EScan / Appraisal20!!

EScan Executive Summary Report

The EScan Executive Summary Report provides a concise synopsis of key observations from the Department Discussion. It also draws conclusions about the issues that need to be addressed and what the department would like to do in terms of next steps.

EScan Executive Summary Report Template

(suggested length 2-3 pages)

- I. What were the key observations from the department discussion of EScan results?
- II. What conclusions has the department drawn about its employability practices and outcomes?
- III. In light of observations and conclusions, what are key forms of evidence to document the programs' practices and graduate outcomes for employability?
- IV. What does the department wish to address in the near term?
- V. What will be most challenging for the department to address related to career and employability outcomes? What might help make this more possible?

The below template can be found on the EScan participant portal. To access the participant portal, go to the bottom of www.theqacommons.org and login with EScan / Appraisal20!!

EScan Action Planning Template

The Executive Summary report may conclude with a need for Program action. EScan departments have the option to create an Action Plan to help achieve their goals.

Components of the EScan Action Plan include:

- A description of the goal to be achieved
- Tasks/steps that need to be carried out to reach the goal
- People in charge of carrying out each task
- When tasks will be completed (deadlines and milestones)
- Resources needed to complete the tasks
- Measures to evaluate progress

Goal: _____

Task

Person Responsible

Due Date
