Putting Data at the Centre

2025 | LEVERAGING DATA STRATEGICALLY IN HIGHER EDUCATION CAREERS SERVICES

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01.

Foreword by Naomi

In an era where data is reshaping every facet of higher education, careers services are uniquely positioned to lead the way institutionally in delivering a joined up, seamless student journey by further developing and understanding the rich data landscape in which they operate.

At GTI, we believe that empowering student services teams with the right tools and intelligence is essential to driving student success. Our aim in platform provision is to partner with universities to support outstanding experiences and outcomes for all students regardless of background, ethnicity, gender or any other factor that may create systemic inequity.

As systems and data specialists we believe that our knowledge and support can and should contribute to positioning Careers and Professional Services leaders at the forefront of university wide data initiatives, helping Universities to meet their strategic goals by improving student journeys and optimising resource use.

I am excited to share some thoughts and insights through this report which not only highlights the strategic importance of data but also provides a roadmap for action. Whether you're just beginning your data journey or looking to advance it, I hope the insight and tools provided here will help you take the next step towards delivering your vision for student support and success.

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If you have any questions, thoughts or comments – I'd love to chat. **Get in touch on** naomi.oosman-watts@groupgti.com

02.

Introduction

University Careers Services across the world are facing increased scrutiny to demonstrate impact, deliver tailored support, and prepare students for a rapidly evolving labour market. At the same time, resources remain limited, and student needs are growing in complexity.

In this whitepaper we want to share with you an overview of the data landscape, focusing specifically on quantitative data generated by effectively leveraging your student journey management platform(s), in your Careers Services and more broadly across student services. From the reasons why data capabilities should be at the heart of your service strategy to ways in which data can help transform your student journey and service delivery – we hope this document provides actionable insight and prompts for further discussions.

We want to help empower you, as data focused leaders, to understand what building an outstanding partnership with data progressive technology providers looks like. Furthermore, through our new data maturity model for Careers Services our aim is to support you and provide you with the tools to assess the current state of your data management, usage, and analytics, and then define a pathway for progression towards advanced data capabilities.

03.

Leading Data Informed Services

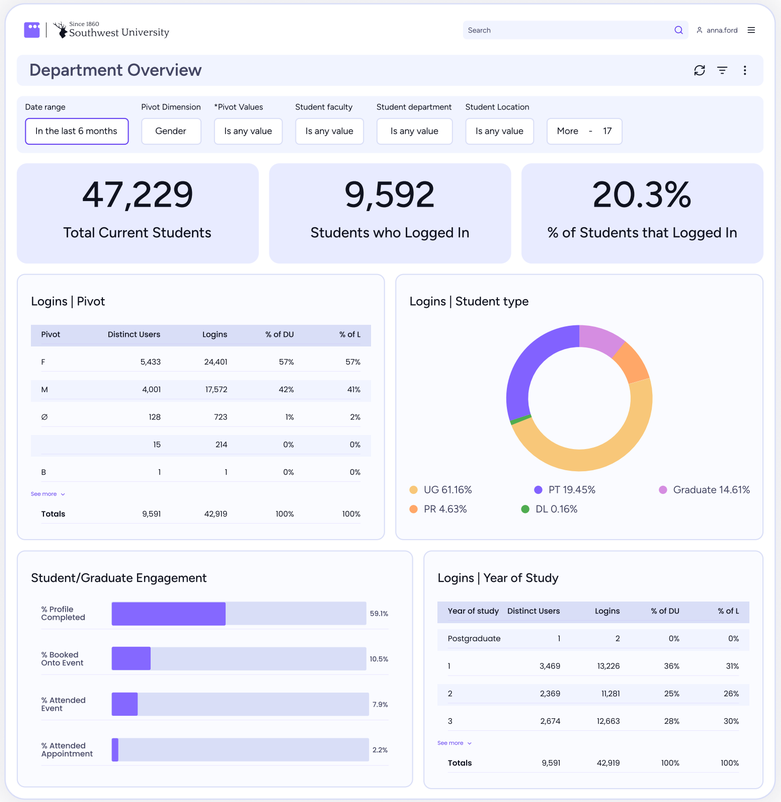
1. Enhancing service resilience by demonstrating impact

In challenging budgetary circumstances for the whole of the Higher Education sector, demonstrating continued impact on student success and student outcomes to secure budget and retain it has never been more important.

Having a comprehensive and effective data strategy in place gives you the necessary insight to clearly quantify the impact your service has including:

- Engagement levels with activities from one-to-one appointments to employability focused event. This can be segmented to suit the audience you are presenting the data to; for example, slicing by year and subject of study for an academic audience or by domicile location for a presentation to your recruitment team.
- Progression through the different career readiness stages, showing year on year impact
- Level and type of engagement with employers and/or employer facing schemes
- Successful graduate outcomes including type of role, salary, employment destination.

Clear, visually attractive insight is often key to ensuring that decision makers and senior stakeholders can understand the difference your service is making to the student on their career journey.



Let us know if you would like to see some examples of dashboards and a run through of how these are working for institutions across the world.
Get in touch with Naomi: naomi.oosman-watts@groupgti.com

2. Delivering on access and equity goals

Data segmentation allows Careers Services to align with university-wide access and equity goals. For instance, grouping students by indicators such as first-in-family status, regional background, or language spoken at home can reveal participation gaps that are not visible in aggregate data. These gaps can then be proactively addressed through targeted initiatives, messaging or broader strategic considerations.

Creating dashboards to track engagement by demographic groups helps to ensure fair access to employability resources. This data can also be combined with other systems and plugged into institutional data ecosystems or business intelligence tools.

This is particularly useful in light of recently announced structural reforms in the tertiary education system in Australia, in particular, the new approach to equity funding for higher education.

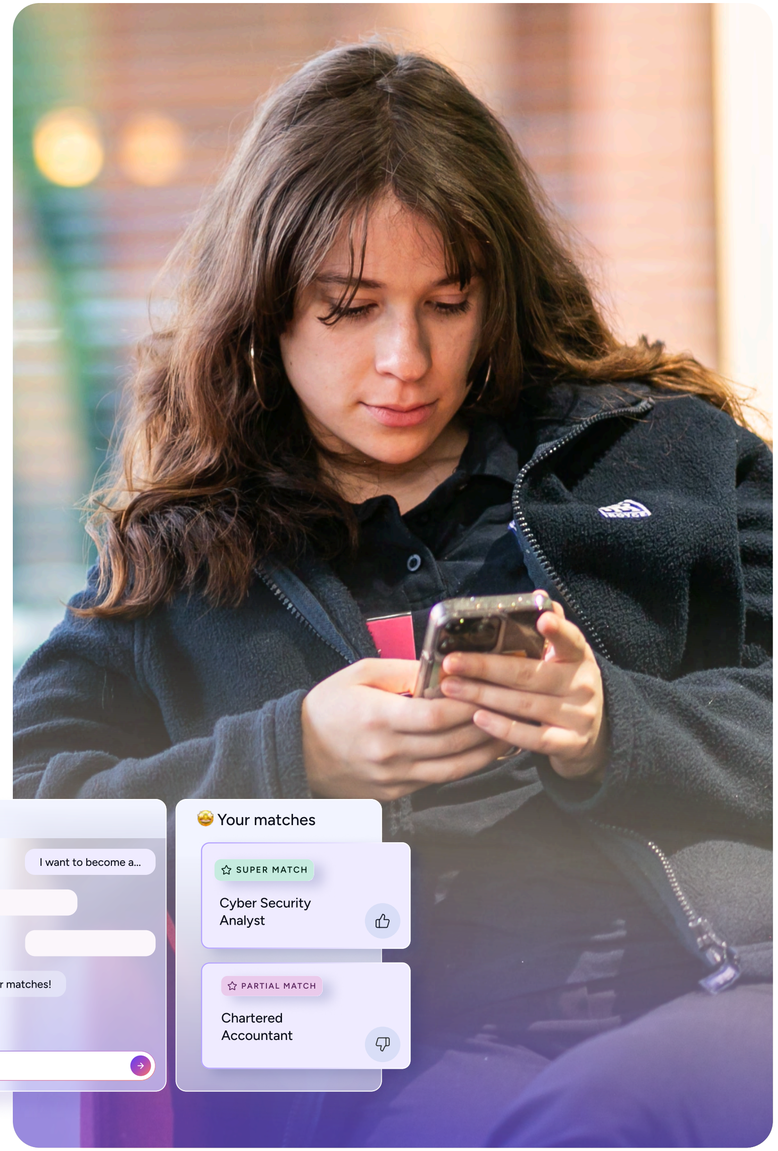
Detailed in Chapter 3 of the Universities Accord, this approach aims to ensure more students from low SES backgrounds, First Nations students, and students studying at regional campuses are supported to access, participate, and succeed in higher education.

3.

Optimising the use of AI tools through unique data

University have access to significant amounts of data which is unique to the institution and to their student population. This unique data is crucial when implementing AI tools because it enables the development of models and insights that are tailored to the specific context, challenges, and goals of an organisation.

For university careers services, this might include data on student engagement, employer interactions, or graduate outcomes that are not available elsewhere. Unique data allows AI systems to generate more relevant predictions, personalise student support, and uncover patterns that generic datasets might miss. It also helps ensure that AI tools reflect the diversity and complexity of the institution's community, leading to more equitable and effective outcomes.



Examples of data types

These unique data types allow AI tools to deliver personalised recommendations, predictive insights, and targeted interventions that are far more effective than generic models.

Student-Centric Data

- **Engagement data:** Attendance at careers events, workshops, or one-to-one guidance sessions.
- **Career readiness assessments:** Results from tools measuring employability skills or confidence.
- **Application behavior:** Patterns in job applications submitted via university platforms.

Contextual and Demographic Data

- **Course and faculty data:** Linking employability trends to academic disciplines.
- **Widening participation indicators:** Understanding outcomes for underrepresented groups.
- **Geographic mobility:** Willingness or ability of students to relocate for work.

Service Usage Patterns

- **Digital footprint:** How students interact with online careers platforms and resources.
- **Support pathways:** Which services students use and in what sequence (e.g., CV review → mock interview → job application).
- **Timing of engagement:** When are students engaging? And with what?

Employer Interaction Data

- **Recruiter engagement:** Frequency and type of employer contact with the careers service.
- **Job posting trends:** Types of roles, industries, and skills employers are seeking.
- **Feedback from employers:** Insights on student performance in interviews or placements.

Graduate Outcomes Data

- **Destination data:** Where graduates go after completing their studies (employment, further study, etc.).
- **Time-to-employment:** How long it takes graduates to secure a role post-graduation.
- **Sector alignment:** Whether graduates are working in fields related to their degree.

4.

Supporting your institutional rankings strategy

The influence of rankings such as the Times Higher Education University Rankings, QS World University Rankings, and the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) is of strategic importance to Universities and had become an area of particular focus and scrutiny more recently as rankings are known to play a significant role in the decision making process for international students debating which global institution to select for their studies.

Careers services are instrumental in shaping these outcomes, and data is essential for demonstrating the impact services are having directly and indirectly on the institutional rankings. By capturing and analysing student engagement, employability development, and post-graduation destinations, careers teams can contribute directly to institutional reporting and benchmarking. This evidence supports strategic planning, compliance with government frameworks, and enhances the university's reputation in a competitive landscape where rankings affect student recruitment, funding, and international partnerships.

5.

Enhancing your employer relationships

In a labour market that is constantly evolving with graduates needing to be more resilient than ever to get through recruitment processes, data can be a powerful tool for strengthening employer engagement. By analysing student interests, application trends, and sector gaps, careers teams can identify opportunities for new partnerships and tailor employer outreach.

Sharing anonymised insights—such as increased demand for flexible work arrangements or growth in interest in regional placements—positions the careers service as a strategic connector between student aspirations and workforce needs. This data-informed approach helps build trust and relevance with employers, as well as local decision makers focused on retaining valuable graduate skills, leading to more targeted opportunities, long-term collaborations and opportunities to engage in the regional growth agenda.

6.

Positioning the Careers Service as institutional leaders in student data

Careers services in Australian universities are uniquely placed to lead on student data strategy, sitting at the intersection of academic, personal, and professional development. By demonstrating expertise in data analytics—through engagement tracking, predictive modelling, and outcome reporting—careers teams can position themselves as key contributors to whole-of-institution student success initiatives.

This leadership opens doors to cross-functional collaboration, influencing curriculum design, equity strategies, and graduate employability planning. The opportunity to link data across services and student characteristics opens up possibilities for Universities to better predict risk and address issues at earlier stages of the journey to optimise resource. In an environment where data drives policy and funding decisions, careers services have a vital role to play in shaping the future of student support.

Edge Hill University

Edge Hill mini case study

Having started from using targetconnect for their Careers Service, Edge Hill University has reimagined how it delivers student services.

Central to this transformation is target connect, now used as the digital platform that underpins Catalyst – the university's award-winning hub that brings together library and learning services, student services, and careers under one roof.

The Catalyst's physical and digital infrastructure supports Edge Hill's holistic model, which ensures students receive timely, coordinated help from the right teams. By using TargetConnect in this way, the university has created a student-centred support experience that strengthens collaboration between services and empowers students to engage more confidently with the help available to them.

As of the latest data, the university recorded 13,683 appointments and 61,932 interactions, with over half of the student population having a casebook.

The University said:
"We're already seeing the reconciliation of attendance monitoring with personal tutor attendance. That's very early days, but we can see where it's heading. […] There were all these really high-quality teams doing great work, but they were slightly disconnected. targetconnect brought those cogs together and allowed them to work more in line."

04.

Top 4 ways you can use your data to transform your student journeys

In today's data-rich educational environment, careers services are uniquely positioned to use insights to shape more personalised, equitable, and impactful student experiences.

By strategically leveraging data, services can move from reactive support to proactive transformation.

Here are four powerful ways to do this.

1.

Providing targeted, just in time support

Careers services can use student data—such as course enrolments, extracurricular activities, and job search behaviour—to offer tailored career guidance. This helps students discover opportunities aligned with their unique strengths and aspirations, rather than relying on generic advice. For instance, data projects can inform the design of self-serve AI based support and guidance tools and chatbots, or targeted marketing and outreach campaigns.

Real-time engagement metrics, such as bookings, event attendance, resource usage, and digital footprint, are especially valuable for monitoring uptake and behavioural patterns. When analysed collectively, these data points help services identify underengaged cohorts and inform just-in-time outreach that can shift behaviours before students disengage further.

2. Enhancing access and inclusion initiatives through leading indicators

Developing a suite of leading indicators such as Career Registration surveys at the start of each academic year, skills tracking and engagement data can offer insight into whether students are 'on track' and offer Careers Services the opportunity to react long before outcomes data is measured.

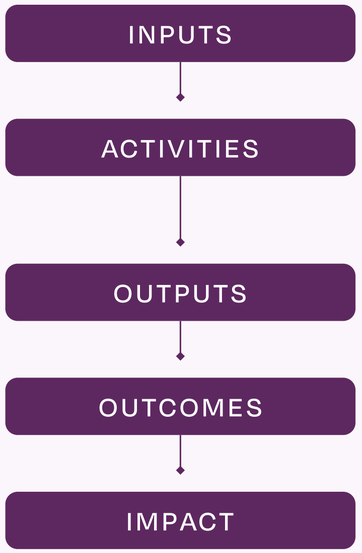
Leading Indicators in Practice

Goal

Improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Steps

- Identify relevant data such as levels of engagement with careers events, coaching services, and industry programs
- Segment student population by specific indicator in this case it would be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, but you could also use indicators such as First in Family, RRR or socio-economic status
- Design interventions and develop Theory of Change:



These are the resources needed to implement the intervention
Examples: Funding, trained staff, partnerships with local employers, cultural advisors.

These are the actions taken using the inputs to achieve desired outcomes.
Examples: Career workshops, mentorship programs, internships, cultural competency training for employers.

Direct results of the activities.
Examples: Number of students attending workshops, number of internships offered, number of mentors recruited.

Short to medium-term changes resulting from the outputs.
Examples: Increased job readiness, improved confidence, stronger employer-student connections.

Impact: Long-term change or goal achieved.
Example: Higher employment rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

- Track key leading indicators through dashboard for example: improved confidence, skills self-assessments, or early participation in employability programs

Leading indicators can offer real-time insights into what's working and what might not be, so you can adjust your approach well before final-year graduate outcomes are recorded, optimising chances of success and increasing impact.

3.

Curriculum and employer alignment

Aggregated data on student interests and labour market trends can inform curriculum design and employer partnerships. Careers services can help bridge gaps between student aspirations and available opportunities by co-creating relevant experiences.

Example: Data reveals a surge in student interest in sustainability careers, but few internships exist in this space. The careers team partners with the relevant school/faculty and local green tech firms to develop a new internship program and embed sustainability modules into existing courses.

4.

Optimising the use of colleague resources

Utilising the data in the system, services can optimise their use of resources, both in terms of targeting student groups who need it most but also in understanding behavioural patterns and adjusting the provision of services based on student demand based on time of day, time of year or even location.

For example, a service might notice that student bookings from CV appointments are high between the hours of 11.00 and 14.00 but that there are fewer bookings and more no show between 9.00-11.00 and 15.00 – 17.00 this might prompt an adjustment of when that service is provided, freeing up Career advisers to reprioritise outstanding tasks.

05.

What to consider when choosing a tech partner for student data

Selecting the right technology partner is a strategic decision for careers services aiming to unlock the full potential of student data. The right partner can help transform raw data into actionable insights, streamline operations, and enhance the student experience. However, not all providers are created equal. Here are key considerations to guide your decision-making:

1. Alignment with Educational Values and Student Outcomes

Your tech partner should understand the unique goals of careers services—supporting student development, employability, and equity. Look for providers who prioritise longterm student success over short-term metrics.

2. Data Privacy, Security, and Compliance

Handling student data comes with serious responsibilities. Ensure your partner complies with privacy regulations such as national Privacy Acts or GDPR in Europe/UK and other relevant regulations, and offers robust data protection protocols. It is also worth finding out about access to data to ensure that all data captured by the platform can be accessed by you as the customer.

3. Integration with Existing Systems

The chosen technology should integrate smoothly with your institution's existing platforms—such as student records, centralised CRM systems, learning management systems, VLEs and alumni databases—to avoid duplication and ensure a seamless experience.

4. Flexibility and Customisation

Every institution has unique needs. A good tech partner will offer configurable tools that allow careers teams to tailor dashboards, workflows, and reporting to their specific context. Find out how your data can be accessed, is the report design flexible, intuitive, can it API into your data lake/warehouse or join up with cross institutional data?

5. Support, Training, and Partnership Approach

Beyond the software, consider the quality of support and the ethos of the provider. Look for partners who offer expertise in the sector, ongoing training, responsive support, and a collaborative approach to innovation.

Useful terminology

API (Application Programming Interface)
A way for different software systems to communicate and share data securely.

CRM (Customer Relationship Management)
A system used to manage interactions with students, employers, and alumni.

Dashboard
A visual interface showing key metrics and data insights in real time.

Data Governance
Policies and processes that ensure data is managed securely, ethically, and legally.

Data Integration
Combining data from different systems into one unified view.

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)
A legal framework for handling personal data in the UK and EU.

Interoperability
The ability of different systems and tools to work together and exchange data smoothly.

Machine Learning
A type of AI that uses data to identify patterns and make predictions.

Predictive Analytics
Using historical data to forecast future outcomes, such as student career success.

Single Sign-On (SSO)
A login system that lets users access multiple platforms with one set of credentials.

User Experience (UX)
How easy and intuitive a system is for students and staff to use.

Data Visualisation
Graphical representation of data to make insights easier to understand.

Cloud-Based
Software hosted online, allowing remote access and scalability.

Customisation
Ability to tailor features, workflows or reports to meet specific needs.

Data Disaggregation
Breaking down data by categories (e.g., gender, ethnicity) to identify trends or gaps.

AI
Artificial Intelligence; the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines.

Generative AI
Type of AI that can create new content such as text, images or music based on training from existing content.

Data Lake
Storage repository that holds vast amounts of raw data in its native format until needed.

Data Warehouse
Centralised repository for structured data from multiple sources designed for query analysis.

06.

Data Maturity Model

Our bespoke data maturity model for university careers services provides a structured framework to assess and enhance how your data is collected, managed, and used to support student employability and institutional goals. As careers services increasingly rely on data to demonstrate impact, inform strategic decisions, and tailor support to diverse student needs, this model will help you to identify current capabilities and chart a path toward more sophisticated, integrated, and proactive data practices. By progressing through stages—from basic data awareness to advanced analytics and continuous improvement—careers teams can build a culture of evidence-based practice, strengthen stakeholder engagement, and ultimately improve outcomes for students and graduates.

Scan the QR code to access the Data Maturity Model and Assessment Framework.

07.
Conclusion

As this paper has demonstrated, data is not just a tool—it is a strategic asset for careers services. From enhancing equity and employer engagement to supporting institutional rankings and AI integration, the effective use of data enables careers teams to deliver more personalised, impactful, and resilient support. By investing in the right technology partnerships and building data maturity, universities can ensure their careers services are future-ready. We encourage all careers professionals to reflect on their current data capabilities, explore the opportunities outlined in this paper, and take proactive steps toward embedding data at the heart of their strategy.

By tracking the right metrics, segmenting student populations effectively, designing targeted interventions, measuring outcomes, and understanding the financial return on these activities, careers services can position themselves as strategic partners in the student experience. They can help ensure that funds are directed where they will have the greatest impact, whether that's supporting under-engaged cohorts, expanding highperforming programs, or testing new ideas based on clear data and metrics.

This data-informed approach doesn't require perfection from day one. It starts with working with the right partners, asking better questions, using the systems and data already available, and committing to continuous improvement.

When data is embedded into everyday practice, not just reporting cycles, it becomes a driver of smarter decisions, stronger student outcomes, and more sustainable investment. We believe that careers teams who can harness this potential will not only deliver better support but also build stronger cases for their role in shaping the future of higher education.

If you have any questions, thoughts or comments – I'd love to chat.
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