

Supporting a diverse makeup of students, calls for diverse career opportunities

Explore how Birkbeck University is using Handshake to support their diverse cohort of students by providing them with access to greater, and more diverse work opportunities.

We spoke to Sam Turnpenny, Birkbeck's Digital Careers Lead, to understand why Birkbeck chose to switch to Handshake and how they're not only able to offer a wide-range of graduate, placement and part-time job opportunities to their students, but also, how they're driving engagement through student-generated content and are saving time and money.

Name Sam Turnpenny	Location London (and online)	Institution Birkbeck, University of London
Job title Digital Careers Lead	Enrollment 15,000 students	Career services staff 12 people

Challenges

- Engaging with a remote population** - Birkbeck has a high proportion of online and remote learners, and most of their students are juggling other full-time work, families or other commitments in addition to study. A traditional, legacy system wasn't working for this cohort and so Birkbeck wanted a solution which would put the student voice first, utilising technology to speak to students in their own language.
- Building diverse employer relationships** - Birkbeck's diverse student population, who bring a huge range of work, study and home-life experiences with them, need a diverse range of employers to share opportunities and support them to work towards their aspirations.
- Developing strategic systems** - the move from a legacy system to Handshake came from Birkbeck's desire to use technology to enhance their strategy, alongside a need to save time and money. Rather than complicating their direction with an array of products and software, Handshake works as a "one-stop shop", driving efficiency for students and careers teams alike.

Key stats

- 39%** increase in student event registrations
- 21%** increase in active student accounts
- 56%** team time saved on employer outreach and event management

"Everything is becoming app-
led, so using this language
and format that students
understand is becoming
particularly important.

It places careers into their own hands, with a comfortable setting that takes away the stress and fear they can feel around dipping their toe into the world of work."

Solutions

- **Placing careers at students' fingertips**

Since implementing Handshake in June 2021, Birkbeck has seen a significant increase in event registrations across the board. By using Handshake as a central hub for all events, appointments and comms, Birkbeck has seen a huge increase in students activating and using their accounts, empowering them to take careers into their own hands.

- **Developing dynamic employer partnerships**

Direct contact with students through Handshake incentivises employer engagement, and has opened up Birkbeck students to a greater range of opportunities. Handshake has revealed a huge number of new opportunities and is providing more and more functionality for tailoring and filtering these to suit individual students. Activity by students and employers can be tracked, meaning employer engagement teams can easily identify the most appropriate and proactive connections to engage with further.

- **Driving efficiency**

Handshake has provided Birkbeck with a central location for hosting training content, resources and employer-based delivery, as well as more tools allowing them to streamline the E2E guidance process. In the future, Birkbeck are keen to tie Handshake more closely to their strategy in this area by managing placements through Handshake's Experiences product and tie in the University's new life-long learning offer by tracking alumni via Handshake as well.

"At Birkbeck, we've found Handshake efficient, effective, and easy-to-use. Employers post their own events and opportunities directly onto Handshake and this has taken a huge amount of workload off our team, giving us time back to develop deeper employer partnerships and deliver impact for our students."

Birkbeck's top tips for using Handshake

- Place the student voice front and centre and incentivising students to create their own content that promotes Handshake and career services so it engages their peers
- Drive sign-ups through prizes (we use a £100 prize!) alongside using Handshake as a "one-stop shop" for all careers and employability based communications, events and appointments
- Explore all Handshake's functionalities! When you speak to Heads of Careers and other careers teams across the country, you find out about all the ways they are using it for the benefit of their students and to enhance their strategies.

"What I love about the HE sector is that we work together for the benefit of our students and Handshake brings together students, employers and universities, providing us with events, webinars and professional-development alongside their platform. It's a community where we can come together and share some of the amazing things we are all doing across the country."

Learn how to level the playing field for your students today

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<https://www.joinhandshake.co.uk/universities/overview>