Egerton University
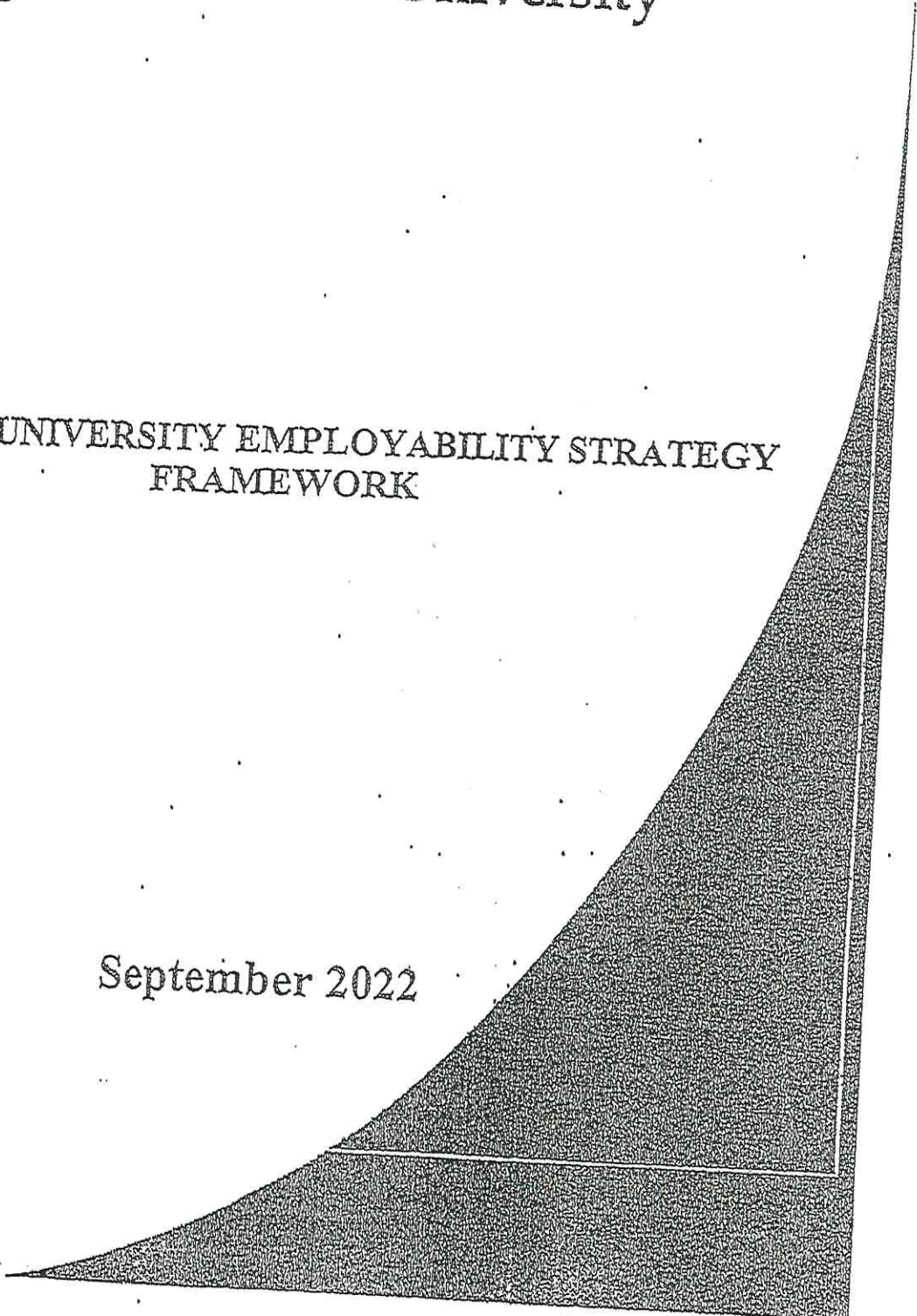
EGERTON UNIVERSITY EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

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FOREWORD

Egerton University is the oldest institution of higher learning in Kenya. It was founded as a Farm School in 1939 by Lord Maurice Egerton of Tatton, a British national who settled in Kenya in the 1920s. In 1950, the School was upgraded to an Agricultural College offering diploma programmes. The Egerton Agricultural College Ordinance was enacted in 1955. In 1986, Egerton Agricultural College was gazetted as a constituent college of the University of Nairobi. The following year, 1987, marked the establishment of Egerton University through an Act of Parliament. The Egerton University Act of 1987 was repealed and replaced by the Universities Act No. 42 of 2012 and chartered afresh in 2013.

Since its inception as a farm school, Egerton has had a long and rich history of training professionals who have a high demand in Kenya and beyond the borders, especially in the field of agriculture. Training of professionals with employable skills has always been at the core of the curricula reforms undertaken at Egerton from the early days.

The Vision of Egerton University is to be a world-class university for the advancement of humanity. To realize this vision, the University is currently implementing the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan which has incorporated Kenya's Vision 2030. The University, therefore, needs to continuously produce graduates with requisite skills and attitudes to support Vision 2030. The Egerton University Student Employability Strategy Framework 2022-2027 sets out the key strategic objectives that will set the University towards enhancing the employability of its graduates. This employability framework demonstrates Egerton University's commitment to enhancing employability for all graduates of the University. Its implementation will, therefore, be a key aspect in the University's delivery processes, and it will support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal number 4.

Prof Isaac O. Kibwage, PhD, HSC
VICE-CHANCELLOR

Acknowledgement

List of Abbreviations

COL	Commonwealth of Learning (established in 1987 by Commonwealth Heads of Government "... *to create and widen access to opportunities for learning, making use of the potential offered by distance education and by the application of communication technologies to education.*
DVC	Deputy Vice Chancellor
EU	European Union
FKE	Federation of Kenya Employers
IUCEA	Inter-University Council for East Africa
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
LMS	Learning Management System
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
R&D	Research and Development
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Definition of Terms

Employability strategy: For the purpose of this Strategy Framework, employability will be understood to mean the blending of academic learning with skills of personal and professional development that enable Egerton University graduates to make informed choices of career paths of their choice, and contribute towards the sustainability of their lives and communities.

Graduate employability: The capacity of a university graduate to secure meaningful employment locally and internationally in their area of training.

Graduate: A student who has completed the course of study they were admitted to pursue and has acquired all the requisite skills and competencies in their field.

1.0 University Vision, Mission, Philosophy and Core Values

1.1 Vision

A world class University for the advancement of humanity.

1.2 Mission

To generate knowledge and offer exemplary education and training to society for national and global development.

1.3 Philosophy

Egerton University innovatively influences human development through generation, acquisition, preservation and dissemination of knowledge and skills in agriculture and related disciplines.

1.4 Core Values

The University's activities and decisions are guided by the following core values:

i. National unity and social fairness;
ii. Integrity, transparency and accountability;
iii. Professionalism;
iv. Internationalism;
v. Passion for excellence and devotion to duty;
vi. Team work;
vii. Passion for environmental conservation;
viii. Innovativeness and creativity; and
ix. Gender equity.

2.0 Rationale for the Strategy Framework

The rationale for the Egerton University Employability Strategy Framework is to empower students to develop skills that will make them employable and productive in future. It aims at giving students opportunities to gain experience that will enhance their chances of securing employment and creating employment opportunities upon graduation. The job market is continuously being shaped as a result of technological and scientific innovations, changes in economic, political and social dynamics, and globalization. In view of this, the strategy aims at ensuring that the curriculum offered promotes employability through exposure to opportunities for employment and employment creation. A focus on employability would motivate and

encourage students to achieve better results and enhance their employability. The strategy will equip students with foundational skills and empower them to realize their ambitions, enhance their innovativeness and fulfil their potentials.

3.0 Employability Concept and Context

Employability empowers graduates to lead satisfying lives after graduating from their programmes of study. The role of the university is to increase the propensity of graduates to secure gainful employability by equipping them with a wide range of skills needed at the workplace. Broadly speaking, employability skills are required by students to organize themselves to satisfy the requirements of many different jobs, including self-employment.

The youth population in most African countries is bulging whereas jobs are shrinking. Kenya's youth unemployment is at an all-time high of 16.3% among the ages 20 to 24 (KNBS, 2021). This is despite the fact that Kenya has the highest Gross Enrolment Ratio in tertiary education in the Eastern African region, averaging at 11.5% between 2017-2020 (UNESCO, 2022). On the other hand, the nature of employment is changing as new jobs are emerging across the globe. Some traditional jobs are either vanishing or undergoing a significant transformation. These changes are caused by emerging dynamics like the Covid-19 pandemic, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Digital Techs, Online jobs, and Biotechnology, among others.

Despite the changing job environment, higher education is still prized for its capacity to provide graduates with jobs and professional careers. Graduates want to study in institutions that guarantee them employment after university. Thus, employability remains at the heart of the value proposition of university education (Tiyambe, 2018). But graduate unemployment remains a big challenge for many universities in Kenya, including Egerton University. The Kenyan economy lacks sufficient capacity to absorb all graduates into the job market as university graduates outnumber available jobs. In addition, as explained in a study by the Interuniversity Council for East Africa, 51% of the graduates from universities in Kenya were not versatile hence they were unable to adapt into the job market (IUCEA, 2014).

To address the challenges of graduate unemployment and underemployment, institutions of higher learning need to refine their curricula to infuse new literacies in teaching and learning like

data literacy, technological literacy, and human literacy. Institutions of higher learning should strive to impart employable skills and life skills in their curricula; including co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Egerton University provides various avenues for career development support for its students to enhance their employability. These include industrial attachment, farm attachment, mentorship and career counselling, work study programmes, networking with professional alumni, digital skills training through the Ajira Digital Club, community extension programmes, regular review of curricula, and programme self-assessment, among others. However, these efforts are not well coordinated since the University has not had a policy that facilitates mainstreaming of graduate employability. Through this employability strategy framework, it is envisaged that academic departments and faculties will play a key role in driving the employability agenda at Egerton University. This strategy will seek to enhance this further by engaging external and internal partners and aligning it with the key strategic objectives identified by the 2018-2023 University Strategic Plan.

4.0 Scope and Applicability of the Strategy Framework

This framework applies to all academic staff and students of Egerton University and the offices that support teaching and learning activities; including Deans of Faculties, Chairs of Departments, Directors of Schools and Institutes. It also applies to the Directorate of International Linkages and Career Services the Directorate in-charge of Industry and Internship placement. The Vice Chancellor will oversee the implementation of the activities under this strategy framework.

5.0 Key Strategic Objectives

The following are the key strategic objectives of the Egerton University Employability Strategy Framework:

Strategic Objective 1

Embed employability and entrepreneurship in all the programmes of study.

Strategic Objective 2

Increase opportunities for all students to gain local, national and global work experience.

Strategic Objective 3

Increase the level and quality of coordinated employer and alumni engagement.

Strategic Objective 4

Increase co-curricular activities as well as student experiences.

Strategic Objective 5

Initiate Employability support systems and development for graduates.

6.0 Approaches to Implementing the Employability Strategy Framework

This framework will be a key instrument for enhancing the incipient permeation of a culture of employability at Egerton University. To achieve this, a multi-pronged approach will be used to institutionalize employability in the University.

a) Strategic intent and policy

i) Develop and integrate an employability framework to Egerton University's strategic plan and incorporate it as a policy document for implementation.

ii) Establish a functional career services directorate in the University to provide guidance to students, to enable them make career decisions and access timely information on job prospects.

iii) Incorporate and discuss student employability in Departmental or Faculty meetings and enforce best practices that increase graduate employability.

iv) Establish a functional Alumni centre/platform whose mandate includes documentation and record management of the University's employed graduates. This will improve graduates' traceability and promote the University/Employer relationships.

b) Relevant and all-inclusive curriculum

i) Regular periodic curriculum reviews to ensure curricula reflects labour market characteristics, trends and expectations. Courses developed to be more relevant to employers' needs with a focus on integrating transferable skills in the curriculum at all levels.

ii) Improve cooperation between Egerton University and relevant organizations when designing curriculum and study programmes.

iii) Ensure that employers and professional organisations participate in the process of curriculum design and development so that the skills gaps identified are bridged.

c) Learning, teaching, developing and modelling students for employability

i) Enhance teaching and training capacity in order to produce more employable graduates through pedagogy programmes for faculty staff.

ii) Retooling of all faculty staff in pedagogy, technology enhanced learning and curriculum development and implementation

iii) Disseminate and support student acquisition of identified relevant knowledge, experiences, skills, competencies, attitudes, attributes and behaviours that are crucial for graduates to demonstrate in order to be employable.

iv) Explicitly articulate the relevant graduate employability skills in the learning outcomes for each course or programme to teach students on how to be employable and engage them.

v) Encourage work-study programmes within and outside the University. Students and staff with the required skills and knowledge can be engaged by the University whenever there are projects that require such expertise instead of outsourcing.

vi) Increase funding to promote research and development (R&D) so that the quality and relevance of the graduates can be improved.

vii) Encourage student participation in volunteer activities and programmes so as to develop and grow their work experience in order to boost their employability profile.

viii) Create linkages and encourage learning under sector-specific work placements for continuing students and graduates to enable students utilise opportunities for work-based and work-related learning activities.

ix) Influence a change of employability mind-set to include self-employment and encourage students to embrace the same by including training on entrepreneurial education, skills and activities in the curriculum. This will include regularly inviting industry and institutional speakers to engage students and faculty in public speaking forums.

x) Departments and Faculty staff to design and apply specific and relevant evaluation/assessment tools and activities which are aligned to learning outcomes that relate to industry best practices, standards and approaches.

xi) Encourage students to undertake professional training and register with relevant professional bodies to inform disciplinary-oriented practices that improve their employability profile.

xii) Encourage students to be active in the open and free online learning platforms, exchange programmes and strategic partnerships that seek to improve their networking, communication

skills, sector-specific skills, team working capabilities and problem-solving skills which are important for graduates when seeking job opportunities.

d) Support and link students to the job market through collaborations

i) Improve the Egerton University ranking and reputation through collaborative approaches that seek to promote research, high quality learning and infrastructure developments with interested parties.

ii) Create and encourage strong university-employer linkages in order to promote the University graduate employability opportunities.

iii) Enhance cooperation between the University, private companies, agencies, government and investors to enhance internship programmes for students, for example, through inviting and engaging employers to provide and support increased opportunities for student work experience, placements and internships.

iv) Establish communication links between the University, companies, agencies, government and investors to ensure free and fair flow of information that seeks to empower and advantage students in respect to available jobs, market needs, jobs diversity and growth trends.

7.0 Guiding Principles for Employability Strategy Framework

This framework will give practical expression to the University's principles and values. The principles signal what matters about student life at Egerton University and in their after-study activities in Kenya. The principles will continue to be a compass that guides implementation of policy in the University, including the Student Employability Strategy Framework.

Table 1: Guiding Principles for Graduate Employability

Inclusivity	All Egerton University students, regardless of their ...
	... their employability, make successful transitions and manage their careers.
Gender and other forms of social	Egerton University will ensure that its employability initiatives reach female and physically challenged students under its care. Equally important will also be those students that come from geographically disadvantaged areas in the

marginalization	country.
Collaboration	Employability is a collective responsibility of all stakeholders. Collaborative approaches to learning and teaching should enrich and inform the curriculum and support graduate employability. Collaboration between Egerton University and industry (employers) should provide opportunities, inform the curriculum, and be a key driver of the University's approach to employability.
Engagement	Developing a shared view and understanding of employability by all in any given context to facilitate a proactive staff, student and employer engagement with a positive impact on employability.
Motivation and Awareness	Awareness of employability support available across Egerton University and a collective responsibility for all staff to engage and work with alumni, the community, employers, professional organizations, third sector employers, voluntary organizations, etc., to support students' employability.
Skills	Senior management, academic departments, course teams, student union and all students to have a common focus on acquisition and embracing of identified knowledge, experiences, skills, competencies, attitudes, attributes and behaviours that graduates should demonstrate in order to increase employability.
Quality Graduate	Graduates with improved knowledge, transferable skills and broad-based experiences that empower them to be marketable in the local economy and abroad.

8.0 Employability Guidelines

Egerton University will adopt the use of the basic guidelines shown in Table 2, which were developed through COL support. These guidelines will help the institution measure the progress made in imparting employability competencies and skills to students. At the departmental or discipline level, academics can also use the same guidelines to check on their performance in implementing the spirit of this employability strategy.

Table 2: Employability Guidelines

	Employability guideline	Evidence to look for
1.	Creative and innovative problem solving Curriculum designed to promote the development of problem-solving skills and creativity required in the world of work.	• Programme Learning Outcomes • Programmes and course descriptions • Document for teaching and learning work instructions • Standardized course outlines • Students' sample work • Student evaluation and examination policy • External Examiners' reports • Quality Assurance reports

	Employability guideline	Evidence to look for
2.	Team work Learning experiences promote the development of team work skills.	• Teaching and Learning Policy on collaborative learning • Clubs and group membership • Course descriptions • Internship exposures • Group assignments, tasks, presentations and discussion forums • Group projects • Team participations in award winning competitions /events • Student – staff team building events • Evidence of use of technology e.g. log files; group work reports as digital outputs
3.	Communication skills Multiple strategies are used for teaching students to master effective communication skills.	• Evidence of assignments and seminar papers for presentation • Records on participation in University student contests and challenge activities • Self-assessment portfolios based on a communication skills inventory triangulated with interviews • Use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) to assess level of interaction (or tracking learning metrics in LMS with focus on level attained in communication skills development) • Language proficiency on-shelf modules • Continuous liaison with industry for employability focused, technology-based assessments/tasks.
4.	Self-management skills Learning experiences promote students' ability to work autonomously, take initiative (proactively), and to be self-directed in undertaking tasks.	• Evidence of programme leaders • Case studies and projects • Evidence of student mentorship activities • Training documents, expenditure • Self-evaluation tools (wellness wheel), skills audit documents, psycho-social student support services • Evidence of student participation in competitions • Student self-managed community activities • Data on use of and interaction on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc.
5.	Entrepreneurship Skills All programmes of study offered by the institution promote entrepreneurial thinking and attitudes amongst students.	• A functional University business innovation and incubation centre • Entrepreneurial common courses in the curriculum • Evidence of student enterprise clubs and activities • Policy on scholarship programme for student

	Employability guideline	Evidence to look for
		entrepreneurs ● Student academic and industrial tours ● Evidence of student participation in entrepreneur workshops ● Industrial attachment and field work reports ● Project based assignments ● Student employer open forum engagements ● Visiting guests -Exposure ● Assessment/Evaluation of stalls during career fairs
6.	Technology skills All students equipped with digital literacy skills that empower them in the world of work	● Common courses in computer or information technology in the curriculum ● Short courses in computer skills and information technology ● Functional University resource centers ● Field reports on work integrated learning and internship exposure ● Evidence of institutional support and subsidy to students in acquisition of technology gadgets
7.	Creating networking skills Learning experiences provide a conducive environment to build and sustain networking, to enhance professional relationships and career opportunities.	● Student sponsorship/scholarship activities ● Reports on Alumni activity and connectivity ● Records of participation in industry sponsored contests and University students challenge activities ● Evidence of interaction with industry and community engagement ● University and industry – stakeholder engagement reports, minutes of continuous industry engagement ● Assessing actual network engagements and evidence of collaboration with external stakeholders such as business forums, etc ● Assess the use and interaction for networking on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, etc.
8.	Integrated career guidance & counselling. The University provides holistic career guidance to students.	● Functional Career Guidance and Counseling Centre (Physical and Virtual) with current and updated data on career opportunities ● Career handbooks ● Career information in the University websites ● Records of career awareness days

	Employability guideline	Evidence to look for
		● Invitations to speakers for career days and open forums ● Records of career activities by Alumni and other visiting guests from the industry/profession.
9.	Graduate attributes University education prepares students for the range of skills needed in order to profile themselves positively to potential employers.	● Records of graduate absorption rates ● Samples of students' written work ● Record of student awards – certificates and trophies (academic, community, industry) ● Feedback from interview panelists on student performance during interviews ● Supervisor reports on performance of graduates during internship ● Alumni Tracer study results ● Learners' initiative in showcasing their personal CVs on recruiter's platform.
10	Internationalization The institution has a systematic strategy for creating social awareness, multi-cultural tolerance, openness, and inclusivity as core values in students.	● Programmes catalogues ● Student/Staff exchange programmes ● Ethnic diversity and intercultural guidelines or policy document ● Evidence of access to e-information and collaboration reports ● University cultural week activities - Cultural exchange/enrichment initiatives ● Extra-mural activities to enhance inter-cultural skills ● Evidence of participation in community service engagement/assignments.

9.0 Implementation Plan

This employability framework shall become operational immediately upon approval by the Egerton University Council, and shall remain valid until revised. However, periodic reviews shall be undertaken as may be necessary and the revised version shall also be approved by Council and takes precedence over the previous version. The formulation and implementation of policies by other units of the University will contribute towards the operationalization of this framework.

The University shall use multiple strategies to ensure that the objectives of this framework are achieved. The University shall keep all students fully informed on the distinct and consistent employability opportunities and offers. Students will be supported by recording and monitoring their employability journey.

10.0 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The effectiveness of the University's Employability Strategy Framework will be monitored using a diverse range of indicators. In addition to the guidelines outlined in Section 9 above, the following will also be used to evaluate annual implementation of the framework:

i) Tracking the progression of students into employment or further study, considering the type of employment secured, its relevance to the student's future career plans, and the current economic climate.

ii) Evaluating feedback from students on the support they are given and its value to them in identifying and making appropriate career decisions.

iii) Monitoring employability data collated through student/graduate tracer surveys and utilising the feedback obtained from the surveys to evaluate the effectiveness and helpfulness of the technical and non-technical skills acquired in the University.

iv) Feedback from employers on the suitability of our students for employment.

v) Programme reviews to consider discipline-specific employability provision.

vi) Feedback from students on industry experiences during internship and field attachment.

11.0 Logical Framework for the Strategic Objectives and Activities

Strategic Objective	Activities	Indicators	Timelines	Assumptions	Coordinating Office
Strategic Objective 1 Embed Employability and entrepreneurship in all the University's academic programmes.	-Faculty to identify employability skills in each programme and develop minimum standard for the integration of skills in the	-Curriculum incorporating employability and entrepreneurial skills developed

-Faculty retooled on employability in | -At the end of a programme cycle

-Once in a year | -Curriculum is reviewed regularly

-Academic | -Directorate of Quality Assurance -Faculties |

					staff retooled -Teaching effectiveness evaluation conducted
	curricula - Retooling of faculty to implement employability in curriculum development, review and implementation in the class room.	curriculum development and implementation			
Strategic Objective 2 Increase opportunities for all students to gain local, national and global work experience.	- Increase student placement, internships, work-based projects and work related learning, where appropriate for those experiences to be assessed and accredited - Establish linkages with national and international institutions and organizations	- Data on students placed on attachment and internships -Model established for accreditation of industry experiences as part of learning developed -Linkages established, - Number of MOUs with these organizations	Continuous	The University maintains good relations with the industry and international organisations	-Directorate of International Linkages and Career Services
Strategic Objective 3 Increase the level and	Support Student/ Graduate career development and employment	-Number of professional bodies and employer	Continuous	Good working relationships with	-Alumni Relations Office -Directorate

quality of coordinated Employer and Alumni engagement.	-Enhance employability support for graduates -Postgraduate provision for lifelong learning -Alumni mentoring	networks established by EU -Number of student and graduate recruitment fairs held at EU -Number of Alumni mentorship talks held at EU		stakeholders	of International Linkages and Career Services
Strategic Objective 4 Increase the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and student experiences	Actively promote and support co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that enhance student employability -Students to participate in innovation competitions - Entrepreneurship pitching and boot camps, etc. -Employability and career hubs	-Number of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities held on campus inviting industry players - Number of students attending innovation fairs - Number of boot camps (entrepreneurial) and career hubs held on campus	Continuous	Facilities and facilitation are available	Dean of Students
Strategic Objective 5 Initiate employability	-Provide every student and graduate with equal access to	-Employability portal created -Employability data dashboard	-Within the first year of implementatio n	-Requisite resources will be available	-Directorate of International Linkages and

systems support and development for graduates	employability and systems support - Provide careers, information advice and guidance to students - Create an employability portal (staff and students)	created in the portal -Career information and guidance provided			Career Services -ICT

12.0 Related Policies

Egerton University Strategic Plan, Teaching and Learning policy, Curriculum Development and Review Policy, Academic and Research Quality Assurance Policy, Academic Advising and Career Guidance Policy, etc.

13.0 Review of the Employability Strategy Framework

This Strategy Framework shall be reviewed on a five-year cycle or if need arises.

Mr. K. Cherono
Council & Clerk