



# Pathways to Employability

## USEP Video Transcript

[Video available at https://youtu.be/wiiKtp9bQ\\_g](https://youtu.be/wiiKtp9bQ_g)

**Dennis Knox (00:04):**

USEP is the University Specialist Employment Partnership. It's a support service for students with a disability, an injury, or a health condition who are within their final 12 months of study or who have recently completed their study within the past 12 months and are looking for assistance to identify employment opportunities in their graduated field.

**David Swayn (00:21):**

So the USEP Project came about because a colleague and myself were looking at some of the employment outcomes for higher education students with disability. Students with disability have always had a lower employment outcome compared to students without disability. That's an inequity from our view, and we wanted to find out how we could utilise existing funding and support, but do it in a way that supports students with disability to get a graduate career.

**David Swayn (00:44):**

One of the most gratifying thing we've seen in Australia over the last three years was that we have seen a consistent increase in overall employment rates for graduates with disabilities, and also we've seen a lot of universities around Australia provide more specific and tailored supports, one of them being USEP.

**Chris Youness (01:00):**

Western Sydney University took up the University Specialist Employment Partnership Program, the USEP Program, in 2019 and what it does is essentially appoints a disability employment service provider to work with our students in their case management into work.

**Dennis Knox (01:18):**

There's a couple of ways that students could access the USEP Program. There is information on the Western Sydney University website about the USEP Program. They can directly contact the USEP consultant, Dragana, to set up a meeting. That meeting can initially just be a bit of a chat about who that student is, what they're after, and how USEP might be able to assist them with that.

**Dennis Knox (01:40):**

So it can be a self-referral. It can be through the careers department as well, too, through the support that they offer, and then also through the disability advisors, as well, too, for any students that are registered with that service as well. They can access the USEP Program through that.



**Dennis Knox (01:54):**

A student that, that is registered with the USEP Program will receive a dedicated USEP consultant who is there to prepare them to enter employment, who is there to support them, and advocate to potential employers, potential graduate employers.

**Dragana Koncar (02:09):**

USEP consultant works in a collaboration or in a partnership with the USEP participant in discovering the roles that are matching a participant's degree.

**Chris Youness (02:22):**

I think with the University Specialist Employment Partnership, so the USEP Program, what we are able to do is to actually case manage individuals. A case management approach, with our disability employment service is an incredible opportunity to actually understand and unpack some of the things that that student has, or is interested in, and how we then position that specifically for them, tailored for them, and for their goals and aspirations. That's the amazing thing about this type of work.

**David Swayn (02:48):**

I think more students are coming forward because of the program because of some of the positive stories we've been able to showcase. So we've had a number of students write to us to say that, "because of what you did, I got this great job."

**Meltem Lloyd (03:00):**

I received an email from Access News, and I jumped on it pretty much straight away. I did not waste a second. As soon as it popped in, I happened to be in my emails, so I sent an email back straight away to Dragana, and she was very quick to respond, and we organized the time pretty quickly, like the following week.

**Dragana Koncar (03:18):**

Students find out about the program, and they contact me.

**Meltem Lloyd (03:23):**

From our first interview, it was pretty much fact-finding, so me understanding what she does and her understanding what my challenges were, which I have dyscalculia. So it's like dyslexia, but with numbers, and I actually discovered that in my final year at university. Every session that I had with her, we sat down, we went through my resume, my responses.

**Dragana Koncar (03:45):**

So that, entails working on building their skills on how to write a strong, impressive CV and cover letter, how to research on, on the employer.



**Meltem Lloyd (03:58):**

She was always very focused on helping me identify what my strengths were and helping me articulate what my strengths were.

**Dragana Koncar (04:07):**

To have a disability, you know, waking up every day with a chronic pain, with different symptoms, and still managing to balance your life, to achieve great outcomes at university, to get a degree - isn't that a great achievement? And many of my clients struggle to recognise and to think about it that way. Then we actually make together an action plan, and then we go step-by-step. What do we need to do to achieve your goals, to meet your aspirations, and to get you your dream job?

**Meltem Lloyd (04:45):**

If you really want something and there are resources there to help you, you have to grab that opportunity, and I did. I did not waste a second. It's changed my life. It's 100% changed my life.

**Joshua Maddison (04:57):**

My name's Joshua Maddison and I am a proud graduate of Western Sydney University. I have a very form of Autism Spectrum Disorder. I was diagnosed at a young age, when, I think when I was about one or two years old.

**Joshua Maddison (05:11):**

I think the most important part of me accessing USEP was to gain the extra support that I would need to gain meaningful employment.

**Dragana Koncar (05:20):**

I have to say that I'm very proud of each of my USEP participants, because they're so actively involved. There is an amazing energy and passion that we exchange, and basically, I enjoy this being on that journey with them.

**Joshua Maddison (05:39):**

What I found very useful about the USEP Program was how it was catered more towards university-level students than anything else that had, that has been offered by disability employment service providers in Australia.

**Dragana Koncar (05:53):**

This is an amazing experience for me, and it's great. It's a wonderful moment, and I celebrate it with all my heart when they get the job.



**Joshua Maddison (06:04):**

I believe that even with a little bit of support, they can get, they can get far. If it wasn't for Dragana's help, I probably would still be looking for work today. I am now a solution developer with IBM Australia.

**Christine Ma (06:17):**

At IBM, we like to refer to it as people with "diverse abilities," because at the end of the day disability takes many shapes and forms. One of the benefits that we find is that diversity in teams, through diverse ability and diverse people really fosters innovation, so that's one of the key benefits that we see at IBM.

**Christine Ma (06:38):**

One of the benefits we've noticed with partnering with USEP is we've been able to identify a short list of potential graduates or candidates for our roles. We've also noticed that the students have been more well-prepared and well-researched for the interviews. So, they've come into the interviews knowing how to articulate what their goals and their interests are, and how that relates to our roles.

**David Swayn (07:04):**

Many students we've worked with once the job starts, things start to pop up, and it's really helpful to have someone to call to get some expert advice, and so the project is set up so that that person would remain available for you after you start work. You might've gone through the recruitment process and everything has gone fine, and then you might hit a bump in the road with a colleague or with a supervisor and so we put it in place so that supports are available after you've started work so that you can keep contact in the consultant.

**Chris Youness (07:30):**

I think society is changing significantly in its understanding and its appreciation for what having a disability means. It's very powerful to see that, that people are being able to consider, and apply for, and be successful in range of employment opportunities that perhaps, might not have ever been available to them before.

**David Swayn (07:48):**

I would say if you're watching this, and you're wondering whether or not you should make contact with the USEP consultant at your university, if there is one, contact the consultant if you're looking for specific advice about yourself. It doesn't have to be an ongoing process. It's not set up so that you're locked into something, but it is set up so that you gain access to that expert advice.

**David Swayn (08:07):**

If you don't have access to that great advice in that critical time when you're meant to apply for roles, and you leave university, and you're on the disability support pension, it could be extremely difficult to get back onto the right track of graduate employment.

**Dennis Knox (08:20):**

I'd, yeah, I'd really encourage any student just to have that chat with the USEP consultant, and work with them, and just see what they can offer and... And they might realize, actually, this could be a benefit to my study and to identifying potential graduate opportunities.

**Joshua Maddison (08:33):**

I would really encourage people to seek help, to seek help if they need it, even if they don't feel like they need it, because you never, you never know when that help could help, could change your life.

**Voice Over (08:48):**

For more information, please visit [USEP.com.au](http://USEP.com.au).

**Voice Over (08:54):**

If you do not have a USEP partnership at your university, please visit the university careers team for information, tools, and resources, to support your transition into meaningful graduate employment.

