

Learning and Teaching Conference 2012

Abstract 5C

Developing Graduate Attributes through a work-relating learning module

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This presentation will outline key successes, challenges and innovations of an established work-related learning programme which increases graduate confidence upon entering an increasingly competitive jobs market by developing student attributes to enhance employability. Career Development Modules (CDM)^[1] developed by Newcastle University Careers Service offer flexible work experience for academic credit and aim to develop students who can independently self-manage, proactively interact and ethically apply knowledge and skills in a work-related context.

The modules are chosen by around 650 students from a wide range of degree programmes annually, who undertake work-related learning in many different contexts. Students develop skills and attributes essential to graduate roles, including self-awareness and reflection, occupational awareness, planning and organising, communication, teamworking and personal enterprise (part of Newcastle University's Graduate Skills Framework and coherent curriculum). Student feedback indicates tangible benefits as the skills emphasised have empowered them to approach their placements innovatively, identifying areas for improvement and enhancement, making suggestions and in some cases carrying out projects with substantial impact. Innovative teaching and assessment methods, including assessed interviews,^[2] encourage the articulation of key achievements in a format that will be encountered upon graduation.

Key to the module's success and longevity have been the support of the wider University and the flexibility to accommodate different work contexts and offer students who may not take a placement year or be able to gain experience on an extracurricular basis a structured opportunity to enhance skills and attributes alongside subject-specific knowledge. Support and enthusiasm for the module has engendered, with support from the CDM team, several bespoke work-related learning modules within academic schools, which have further broadened the range of work-related opportunities for students.

References

[1] See <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/develop/cdm/index.php> for more information on the module

[2] Jessica Jung, (2011) "Assessing learning from a student community engagement project", Education + Training, Vol. 53 Iss: 2/3, pp.155 – 165 (<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1917975>)

Outcomes

Identify a range of graduate attributes and skills that are applicable across a wide

range of degree programmes and to graduate roles in all fields Understand how these attributes and skills can be encouraged through innovative teaching and assessment methods Recognise some key challenges and benefits of a large-scale work-related programme designed to increase students' employability and confidence, with principles that can be applied to for-credit and extracurricular awards of all sizes