

Newcastle University: Developing graduate attributes through a work-related learning programme

Career Development module – optional module for academic credit; developed and delivered by Careers Service

a. 650 students per year choose the 20-credit year-long module

Currently 6.2FTE staff to develop and deliver (with administrative support)



History

Grew out of existing WRL programmes:

Students into Schools (since 1995, joint with Northumbria University)

Student Volunteering (since 2004)

Learning from Work (since 1999), students use self-sourced part-time term time work

Combined as different 'routes' through single Career Development module – same requirements, assessment etc

All students spend minimum of **70 hours** at placement across academic year

Successes & Innovations

- University support → permanent position (and funding) as centrally-delivered academic module from Careers Service
- Strong support from academic colleagues to promote the value of the module to students, hence ensuring its sustainability
- Popularity amongst students and planned expansion
- Evolution of programme and assessment in response to feedback and developments in practice.
- Consistent focus on experiential learning (Kolb; 1984) and developing range of **graduate attributes/skills**.

Challenges

- Working with wide range of degree programmes (42 this year) – timetabling, expectations, academic perceptions (and across 2 universities until this year)
 - Move to 20-credit only modules
 - Pressure on available placements
- Appropriate assessment methods – need to combine academic rigor with authenticity and appropriateness
- Linked to assessment – students’ perception of the module (and marks awarded) crucial to its longevity

Graduate Skills

- Students evidence their development of **communication**; **teamworking** and **personal enterprise** through placements
- Skills of self-awareness and reflection; goal setting; occupational awareness and independent research are developed throughout the module
- These attributes/skills were chosen as they are appropriate to wide-range of work placements; as well as attractive to employers
- Part of **Graduate Skills Framework** (University-wide)
- Cover most of levels 1 and 2 of Barrie's 'Graduate Attributes' (2006)

Main graduate skill

Use speech, writing, technology and behaviour effectively to present and communicate ideas and information in order to achieve personal and organisational goals.

Verbal

Use styles and content of spoken communication to respond to the context and audience.

Definitions

Non-verbal

Components of skill

Respond to non-verbal behaviour and use written and other appropriate communication tools and resources.

Team Working

Work with others in order to establish and achieve personal and organisational goals.

Team membership

Form effective working relationships and collaborate to establish and achieve personal and organisational goals.

Team leadership

At an appropriate level, set direction, win the commitment of others and take responsibility for actions and decisions.

Personal Enterprise

Respond to opportunities and initiate change in order to achieve personal and organisational goals.

Initiative & Creativity

Generate and visualise novel ideas and concepts, initiate action and bring to completion.

Problem-Solving
Newcastle
University

Respond readily to changing situations and priorities by critically evaluating complex information in identifying problems and key issues for action.

Assessment

- Module aim: “to develop students who can independently self-manage, proactively interact and ethically apply their knowledge and skills in a work-related context”
- Assessment focus has been on around **recognising** and **articulating** the development of graduate attributes/skills, gained through experiential learning in the workplace.
- Students don't attend weekly lectures (timetabling impossible!) but come to workshops, seminars and tutorials throughout the year to help them get the most from their placements and prepare for assessment.
- They are encouraged to complete 'Learning logs' to help with reflection and goal setting.

There are currently **3 assessment components**:

- Written assignment/poster presentation reviewing a personal goal (25%)
- Formal evaluation from supervisor on placement (25%)
- Assessed presentation or **Assessed Interview** based on strength/competency-based job interview (50%)



Assessment Criteria:

Written review/poster presentation/ Assessed Presentation/Assessed Interview

Newcastle(CDM)/Northumbria(SiS) work-related learning modules assessment criteria 2011/12 Final Year Students

Classification	Fail			Third		2:2		2:1		First					
Strand and theme	0	25	30	39	40	49	50	59	60	69	70	79	80	90	100
Critically analyses and evaluates how goals and key issues relevant to self and placement influenced actions	Shows little or no understanding of goals or key issues relevant for self or placement			Identifies goals and key issues for self and/or placement that influenced actions		Discusses how goals and key issues for self and placement influenced actions		Consistently uses critical analysis when discussing how goals and key issues for self and placement influenced actions		Meets all criteria to this point and consistently uses critical analysis and evaluation across all strands of the assessment criteria			Consistently uses critical analysis and evaluation across all strands of the assessment criteria to instigate innovative practices within the host organisation		
Applies research relevant to self and placement linked to goals and key issues	Provides little or no evidence of applying knowledge in practice			Provides one example of new or existing knowledge applied in practice or refers to sources of limited quality		Provides examples of knowledge applied in practice from a combination of appropriate primary and secondary sources		Consistently provides examples of knowledge applied effectively in practice from a combination of appropriate primary and secondary sources							
Evidences development of competence in Graduate Skills at placement and during assessment, linked to goals and key issues	Provides no evidence of developed competence			Provides evidence of basic competence only, from placement and during assessment		Provides some evidence of appropriately developed competence from placement and during assessment		Consistently provides evidence of appropriately developed competence from placement and during assessment							
Evidences beneficial outcomes for self and placement linked to goals and key issues	Provides no evidence of explicit outcomes			Provides limited evidence of explicit outcomes that benefit self and/or placement		Provides evidence of a range of explicit outcomes that benefit self and placement		Consistently provides evidence of a range of explicit and significant outcomes that benefit self and placement.							

Outcomes

- 75% students agreed/strongly agreed with statement ‘my confidence increased as the result of taking this module’ (2010/11)
- “The module introduced me to the criteria employers looked for in prospective employees and I feel that this knowledge has given me a head start in preparing for interviews in the future.”
- “It was different from any module I've ever taken and genuinely feel I got a lot out of the module in terms of confidence and organisational skills.”
- “I feel a bit more ready to go and get a ‘real’ job when I have finished my degree”

(selection of comments from 2010/11 students)

The future...

- Increasing student numbers
- Academic schools developing own WRL modules – Geography; Environmental Science; Combined Honours; Biology/Marine Biology; Education...
- School-owned modules combine key facets of CDM (practical experience, reflection, graduate skills) with subject-specific placements and some different assessment
- Move towards eportfolio as a means for reflection; action planning and possibly assessment – joined up with work in academic schools
- More evaluation of medium and longer-term impact of work-related learning on employability, confidence and transition to workplace – DHLE analysis; use of alumni contacts etc

References & contacts:

Barrie, “Understanding what we mean by the generic attributes of graduates”, *Higher Education* 51: 215-241.

Kolb, D. (1994) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*

Email: jessica.jung@ncl.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/develop/cdm/index.php>

Paper on development of assessed interviews (“Assessing learning from a student community engagement project”)
<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1917975&show=abstract>