

Abstract 1B

The Graduate Skills Programme (GSP): Supporting transferable skills development and reflection amongst undergraduate and postgraduate students

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Launched in October 2010 the Graduate Skills Programme (GSP) supports students from across the College of Social Sciences to reflect on and enhance the transferable skills they are developing through their academic studies and their participation in extra-curricular and work-related activities. Interest in this voluntary skills programme has been significant with approximately 400 undergraduate and postgraduate taught students registering within the first two months of the Programme's launch.

The Programme is structured around the four key elements of academic skills, extra-curricular activities, work-related learning and jobs and careers. GSP 'sessions', 'self-directed activities' and 'workshops' are delivered by GSP staff, the Careers Service, the Student Learning Service, the SRC, the Student Volunteer Service, Student Enterprise and graduate employers.

GSP participants are supported through workshops, the GSP skills handbook, a dedicated Moodle site and annotated reflection tables to compile online 'Professional Development Portfolios'. These Mahara ePortfolios include personalised competency frameworks, critical incidents reflecting on specific examples of skills development, reflection on the impact of skills development on academic studies and future employability and detailed professional development plans.

The Programme was developed to address a range of college-specific and institution-wide student development issues, including:

- a need to provide a strategic impetus for student engagement with PDP
- a professed student interest in a more structured approach to employability development (Cashman, 2007)
- an emerging interest in mapping and enhancing students' 'graduate attributes' and their ability to identify, reflect on and take ownership of their development of key attributes and skills

This presentation will provide an overview of the development, operation and impact of this new College-level skills programme and discuss its potential to provide a 'linked model' (Atlay, 2009) of student engagement where students are explicitly encouraged to reflect on the generic competencies they are

developing both through their academic studies and their extra-curricular activities.

Participants will be provided with:

- an overview of the development and operation of the Graduate Skills Programme
- an interim evaluation of student engagement with the Programme and its impact on their ability to reflect on their skills development
- a discussion of the planned future development of the Programme to meet college-specific and institution-wide objectives

Atlay, M. (2009) Integrating PDP practice in the curriculum. *Personal Development Planning and Employability*, revised edition. York: Higher Education Academy

Cashman, L. (2007) *Student Attitudes to Employability and PDP*, Report for the Faculty of Law, Business and Social Sciences, submitted 16 June 2007.