

Abstract 4C

## **Identifying and Assessing Employability Skills within Service-Learning**

Presenter: Susan J. Deeley, Social and Political Sciences

In the undergraduate Public Policy honours curriculum, two distinct modules entitled 'Education for Citizenship' and 'Active Citizenship' together form a service-learning course. Service-learning is a type of experiential and enquiry-based learning in which academic theory is combined with civic engagement. In the course, students participate in voluntary work in a welfare agency while also attending classes. Students relate the practical experience of their service to the community with the academic coursework. This is achieved through structured and supported critical reflection in small group tutorials, and by writing a reflective journal.

Outcomes of intellectual and personal growth through service-learning are well documented in the literature (Deeley, 2010; Kearney, 2004; Eyer, 2000). There is a dearth of investigative studies, however, into the nature of employability skills that students may acquire or develop through service-learning. This study attempts to redress this. A small scale qualitative research study was conducted using semi-structured individual interviews and focus group methods. The overall aims of the study were to investigate: the nature of employability skills identified by staff in welfare agencies; the effects of service-learning on students' development of employability skills; and an appropriate method of assessing students' reflections on their development of these skills.

The learning outcomes are:

Identifying employability skills and graduate attributes in enquiry based learning

Identifying methods of good practice in terms of assessing employability skills