

1D Developing graduate attributes and improving student employability through work-based learning: Opportunities, successes and challenges

Presenters: Krista DeLeeuw and Jane Weir, Careers Service; Dickon Copsey and Chris Roden, Social Sciences; Susan Deeley, Social and Political Sciences; Elaine Huston, Mary McVey and Chris Finlay, Life Sciences; Claire Miller and Mitchum Bock, Mathematics and Statistics; Victoria Price, Culture and Creative Arts

In the changing environment of learning and teaching, work-based learning (WBL) can be a great opportunity for students to develop graduate attributes and enhance their student experience. At the same time, our national student surveys indicate that career development and opportunities for WBL are increasingly key factors in student motivation for undertaking undergraduate and postgraduate taught study. In recognition of this, the University has recently developed a Work-based and Placement Learning Code of Practice, and projects aiming to improve these sorts of opportunities are currently underway across all four colleges. Although the specific goals of each project differ, we have found that we face similar challenges. This workshop will provide participants with information about approaches and available resources as well as a forum to discuss best practice and challenges in work-related learning provision, including the following issues:

1. The variety of types of opportunities included in WBL, including placements, consultation projects, collaborative dissertations, and more.
2. Experiences in creating new placements for schools and/or employers that have not previously offered them and barriers to doing so, including legal issues.
3. Sustainability of programmes as student demand increases, ensuring a good balance between student and placement numbers and variety.
4. How best to assess learning during placements, including development of graduate attributes.
5. Sharing of existing expertise, including from Club 21 and the WBL Code of Practice.
6. Support for placement students, including supporting the development of skills that will enhance their experience in the workplace, and peer groups for sharing experience.
7. Cost-effective administrative support for staff to manage WBL programmes and to maintain communications with external partners.

In this workshop, we will briefly discuss the range of projects we are currently working on and the successes and challenges we have encountered, followed by a structured discussion.

References

Bennet, P. and Turner, G. (2012) PTES 2012: National Findings from the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, Higher Education Academy [Online] Available at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/postgraduate/PTES_2012_report.pdf [accessed 20 December 2012].

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