

Title: Confidence Building – the Vital Link to Employability
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OVERVIEW
Overview, Aims and Context (the rationale including underpinning pedagogy) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall aim of the project is to increase the confidence of students in presenting themselves on paper, in person and to feel comfortable answering questions in a logical way, thus enhancing their employment prospects.
Description <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow students to review complete CVs and sections of incomplete CVs, highlighting problem areas and giving constructive feedback. • Use audio recordings of interviews which can be analysed in a structured fashion. • Give opportunities to allow students to explain a topic using e.g. a whiteboard. • Facilitate students to work in small groups to solve a tightly constrained problem.
Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial driving force came from a Peer Supported Review project conducted in 2015/16 which aimed to give a subset of Year 1 students an employer perspective on CVs. The set of CVs provided to the groups were carefully selected to show a range of CV layout styles as well as content. • Allowing the students to take part in this activity was designed to show them how their CV needs to make it through shortlisting and that it must be adapted to the job vacancy. This placed students at the heart of the learning experience and allow them to apply this learning to their own CV. • When discussing the shortlisting outcomes (each group was shortlisting the same set of CVs for same job role) the results from each group were collated and displayed for discussion. This

allowed the students to see how their choice of shortlisted CVs compared with other groups the others.

- With the experience of this Peer Supported Review project behind us, we realized that we could improve the learning experience of our second years as they engage with preparing their own CVs and going through selection procedures with companies.

This project set out to build on this approach with students having to make decisions and then reflect on these choices, focusing on reviewing sample CVs, reviewing audio recordings of interview answers and working in a group against the clock.

- This pilot has now produced a pool of audio recordings to interview questions, with extracts from CVs which can be used in the Professional Development module in 2017-18.

RESULTS

Findings and Conclusions:

- 133 students responded to a survey hosted by SurveyMonkey and responses are detailed below.
- **In preparing for interviews, is it helpful to listen to audio recordings with a variety of quality of answers to designated questions?**
57.9% either agreed or strongly agreed
15% either disagreed or strongly disagreed
27.1% unsure

For those students who were not placed, 53.3% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were placed, 59.2% agreed or strongly agreed

For those students who were exempt from placement 66.7% agreed or strongly agreed.

Looking at courses where students had most opportunity to experiment with audio recordings, 66.7% agreed or strongly agreed.

- **In preparing for interviews, is it helpful to have a recording of your answer to an interview question critiqued and this feedback given to you?**
75.7% either agreed or strongly agreed
10.6% either disagreed or strongly disagreed
13.7% unsure

For those students who were not placed, 76.3% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were placed, 69.4% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were exempt from placement 87.5% agreed or strongly agreed.

Looking at courses where students had most opportunity to experiment with critiquing recorded interview questions, 83.3% agreed or strongly agreed.

- **In preparing for interviews, is it helpful to gain experience of being on an interview panel?**

77.9% either agreed or strongly agreed

7.6% either disagreed or strongly disagreed

14.5% unsure

For those students who were not placed, 72.9% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were placed, 83.3% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were exempt from placement 79.1 % agreed or strongly agreed.

Students on all courses had opportunity to take part in mock interviews and have at least one opportunity to act as interviewer.

- **In preparing for interviews, is it helpful to have an opportunity to practice interview questions which require you to explain a problem (or method of approach to solving a problem), where you can use a whiteboard to draw on?**

75.6% either agreed or strongly agreed

6.9% either disagreed or strongly disagreed

17.5% unsure

For those students who were not placed, 75% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were placed, 78.7% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were exempt from placement 70.8% agreed or strongly agreed.

Looking at courses where students had most opportunity to experiment with using whiteboard, 75% agreed or strongly agreed.

- **In preparing your CV, is it helpful if you have the opportunity to critique sections of anonymous CVs?**

78.2% either agreed or strongly agreed

6% either disagreed or strongly disagreed

15.8% unsure

For those students who were not placed, 73.3% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were placed, 85.7% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were exempt from placement 75% agreed or strongly agreed.

Looking at courses where students had most opportunity to be involved in this activity, 66.7% agreed or strongly agreed.

- **In preparing your CV, would it be helpful if you had the opportunity to shortlist anonymous CVs for a particular job role?**

67.6% either agreed or strongly agreed

6.8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed

25.6 % unsure

For those students who were not placed, 68.3% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were placed, 69.4% agreed or strongly agreed.

For those students who were exempt from placement 62.5% agreed or strongly agreed.

Looking at courses where students had most opportunity to be involved in this activity, 66.7% agreed or strongly agreed.

EVALUATION

Reflective Commentary

- Over a number of years, experience with Professional Development module (taken by Year 2 students) has shown a need to enhance students' preparation for job interviews as well as interview performance.
- This pilot allowed an examination of what students perceived would be of advantage to them by permitting them to gain experience of some possibilities including viewing extracts of CVs, commenting on audio recordings of answers to interview questions.
- Overall this has provided a good insight into student perceptions which can be translated into Blackboard material for 2017/18. This should help with boosting the confidence of our second years as they seek employment for Year 3 of their course.

Student Engagement (to be completed by the student partner):

- Positive responses were received from 133 students as seen in the Results section earlier.

Learning Environment and Engagement:

- Large bookable spaces such as Assembly Hall prove useful when dealing with a large number of students and can avoid running duplicate sessions.

Impact

- When some of the material (sample CV extracts, audio recordings) are incorporated into Blackboard for 2017/18, it may then be possible to gain a fuller appreciation of impact.
- A bank of student answers (audio files) to interview questions has been accumulated which can be used as a resource within Blackboard, which include a range of quality and length.
- Final number of students placed in 2016/17 will not be known for another few months.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

Transferability

- Professional development relating to employability has widespread applicability. Job roles and industry sector will vary but opportunities to increase student confidence in presenting themselves on paper as well as in person are to be welcomed in any discipline.
- Gaining an interviewer perspective can be an eye opener in terms of seeing body language of interviewees (as commented on by our students).
- Number of students to be catered for can present problems. Having material to critique is a valuable resource and lends itself well to active learning by students in any discipline. There is certainly potential for further development.

Dissemination (internal and external)

- In the first instance results will be discussed at the next Course Committee planning meeting.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

References (using Harvard style, list literature and other resources that influenced your work)

Graduate Qualities, University of Ulster, 2014

Teaching and Learning Strategy for the period 2013/14 to 2017/18, University of Ulster, 2013

Student Experience Principles Working Group, University of Ulster, 2015

Black and Kernohan [2015] Employability in Action: Opportunities for Developing the Student Experience May 2015, University of Ulster "Student partners as Mentors Enriching the Placement Application Process"

Ives, [2016] Employability: Challenge and Change in an Evolving Landscape, University of Ulster "Measuring learning gain through student self-perception and career readiness"

Attachments List and attach relevant documents/images in support of project activities