

Utilising Interviews to develop Employability? A Circular Life-Cycle Perspective

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BACKGROUND: Students on the BSc (Hons) Human Resource Management degree programme need to be effective *interviewees* in order to secure placement for their third year (Arvey & Campion, 1982; Cheramie et al., 2014; Wiersma, 2016). Given the nature of HRM, the ability to be effective *interviewers* is also a vital component of the HR professional's skillset (Coetzer et al, 2014; CIPD, 2016). As part of the employability process, we sought to embed both as a circular life cycle process in the student journey involving students, lecturers and employers.



Process:

1. Second year HRM students: Using the social skills labs whereby second year students (who are preparing for placement) are interviewed by final year students for a mock vacancy. This is recorded and the 2nd year student has to watch their interview back and reflect on their performance in advance of placement interviews.
2. Final year students: This supplements what they have already learned on placement – some will have had more experience of interview panels than others. When the second year student then reaches final year, they get to sit on the other side of the table and so the 'life cycle' continues.
3. Staff and employers: The skills labs are also used to conduct mock performance review investigations. A final year student acts as an HR Advisor, conducting an investigation meeting either with a member of staff or an outside employer who volunteers their time to get involved. The benefit of this again sharpens the final year skillset and strengthens connection and exposure to the employer who gives them feedback and advice following the simulation exercise.

Student Feedback: *"The mock interview assessment was surprisingly enjoyable and again prepared me well for placement interviews"*



"I liked the practical labs and it was interesting to watch back interviews and disciplinary meetings gaining real insight into our own behaviours"

"Carrying out interviews and investigation exercises as this enabled me to develop my knowledge and skills which are essential for an HR career"

"I liked how the module was very practical and interactive, I felt I learned a lot more from carrying out the interview activity as opposed to just learning the theory"

"I thought being able to gain experience in the interviews and disciplinary investigations was great. It opened up my view towards what to expect."

Conclusion:

- Students are much more prepared for placement interviews – some never had an interview before this process.
- Students are more engaged in these activities given direct impact on their professional skillset, specifically recruitment interviews and performance management interviews.
- Employers are engaged by being part of the process and are reminded of how we develop our students.
- Video recording, employer feedback and student reflection are used to very good effect in this process.

