The Collaborative Development of an Occupational Psychology Internship: Students and Employers as Partners

The two-fold purpose of this Poster Presentation is …

1. To detail the collaborative development of a new Occupational Psychology Internship (OPI) with University of Glasgow undergraduate psychology students and a local employer, by

- Explicating the role of the collaborating students who participated in a focus group early in the development of the model of the OPI
- Outlining the links to be established, internally within the University, and externally, both with the relevant professional accrediting body (in this case, the British Psychological Society, www.bps.org.uk) and a suitable local employer (in this case, a Glasgow-based employer with a global reach: McAdam King www.mkbusinesspsychology.co.uk)

2. To highlight the win-win-win benefits for students, employers, and the university of the OPI, by

- Emphasising the key winning elements from each perspective of student, employer and the university

3. Engaging students as collaborators (see Cook-Sather, et al, 2014) was a crucial element in the development of the OPI. Why? Because it was only through meeting with students that it was discovered there was a keen demand for ‘official’ internships i.e. which students recognised as being facilitated by the University, and ‘stamp-marked’ by an professional accrediting body (in this case, the BPS). In a focus group, students (final year undergraduate Psychology students) reported that while there were many HR type and Big 4 type internships available, there were “virtually no proper Psychology internships” on offer at the University of Glasgow. Students also provided information about their expectations of an Occupational Psychology Internship, as well as the type of preparation needed and type of support required by filling out a short questionnaire. It is to be noted that although a small number of students responded (N=5) and participated (N=2), the data were sufficiently rich, by virtue of an hour-long recorded focus group discussion, along with completed questionnaires, as to provide the information needed to formulate the model to a stage of development required to make contact with a local employer and enter partnership discussions.

WIN-WIN-WIN

STUDENT: participating in the OPI will allow the intern to experience a high-quality year-long, part-time paid Internship with a reputable Occupational/Business Psychology employer and gain valuable insight to the role of an OPI. This experience will stand the student in good stead for applying to an MSc in Occupational Psychology in the future, as well as leading to the possibility of conducting his/her empirical work for the final year project, in an applied context in the workplace.

EMPLOYER: participating in the OPI will allow the employer to recruit a keen student as an Intern, developing key UofG Graduate Attributes (http://www.gla.ac.uk/students/attributes), able to engage in important work, as part of their team in a constantly expanding area of applied psychology.

UNIVERSITY: participating in the OPI will allow the university to develop important new links with a local employer in Psychology with global reach. It is anticipated that all universities will need to do more to deal with the concerns raised in the Nov 2015 Green Paper, Filling our potential. While employers report strong demand for graduate talent, they continue to raise concerns about the skills and job readiness of too many in the graduate labour pool”. Participating in the development of links with employers, through partnership internships such as the OPI, is expected to be a step in the right direction.

Therefore, taking together these three perspectives, the OPI provides the potential of a Win-Win-Win outcome for all concerned.


NB: The OPI is quality-controlled by the BPS Division of Occupational Psychology (BPS DOP).

References:


THEME: ‘Active student participation in learning, teaching and assessment’