

2-5F Enhancing employability through a multi-disciplinary approach to graduate attributes: embedding engagement and developing self-efficacy in pre-honours undergraduates

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There is increasing emphasis on the importance of making Graduate Attributes (GAs) explicit to students as part of their degree programme and the role of students themselves in proactively developing GAs (HEA 2015). However, it can be challenging to engage students in non-core activities in large pre-honours classes, and the success of employability activities are also subject to efficacy beliefs and personal qualities (Yorke & Knight, 2007). A further issue is how we embed employability whilst accounting for the specific needs of the subject discipline and linkages with university careers services (O'Leary 2016). The aim of the present project was to work in partnership with careers professionals and students in reflecting on how curricular and extra-curricular activities can develop graduate attributes throughout the degree programme (Daniels & Brooker, 2014).

To this end we extended our work with psychology undergraduates (Swinger et al., 2016), by developing and evaluating short-self-reflection in class exercises for pre-honours psychology, earth sciences, and business school undergraduates, which asked students to reflect on their curricular and extra-curricular activities and how the practical skills gained from these activities are linked to graduate attributes. Class activities were followed by discipline specific careers workshops and alumni events, focused on gaining confidence in communicating graduate attributes in an interview context, and the benefits of engaging with alumni on professional networking sites. Our presentation will focus on: 1) students' levels of self-efficacy in specific GAs across subject disciplines; 2) the relationship of student self-efficacy in GAs to self-efficacy in H.E.; 3) Student feedback on the in class reflection activities, careers and alumni events, and their intentions to further develop their GAs. The findings will inform participants about the benefits and challenges of embedding GAs and employability in the pre-honours curriculum and include perspectives from students and staff.

References

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