1994 group>

Established to promote excellence in research and teaching. To enhance student and staff experience within our universities and to set the agenda for higher education.

Beyond the Curriculum
Opportunities to enhance employability and future life choices

The 1994 Group

> The 1994 Group is established to promote excellence in university research and teaching. It represents 19 of the UK's leading research-intensive, student focused universities. Around half of the top 20 universities in UK national league tables are members of the group.

> Each member institution delivers an extremely high standard of education, demonstrating excellence in research, teaching and academic support, and provide learning in a research-rich community.

> 1994 Group Universities achieved outstanding results in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008. 1994 Group members are UK leaders in seventeen major subject areas, achieving 1st place in their field. 57% of the 1994 Group's research is rated 4* world-leading or 3* internationally excellent.

> The 1994 Group represents: University of Bath, Birkbeck University of London, Durham University, University of East Anglia, University of Essex, University of Exeter, Goldsmiths University of London, Institute of Education University of London, Royal Holloway University of London, Lancaster University, University of Leicester, Loughborough University, Queen Mary University of London, University of Reading, University of St Andrews, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of Surrey, University of Sussex, University of York.

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Policy Report
November 2009

Beyond the Curriculum
Opportunities to enhance employability
and future life choices

This is a report by Tom Norton and Hayley Thomas on behalf of the
1994 Group's Student Experience Policy Group

1994 group>

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Executive Summary

This summary provides:

- an introduction
- key findings
- recommendations

The 1994 group has gathered information on the co-curricular activity taking place or being developed at its member institutions. This report presents a 'snapshot' that summarises and analyses current practice, highlights examples through case studies and looks forward with recommendations for universities, business and the government.

Introduction

The graduate employment market is extremely competitive and as such it is crucial that students are well equipped during their time at university to successfully progress and achieve their potential in the workplace, a need which has been made even more acute by the recession.

Employers (including businesses, charities, voluntary organisations and the public sector) greatly value the knowledge and skills that graduates develop whilst studying at university, along with the skills and experience they gain from undertaking activities beyond the curriculum. The most employable graduates are those which not only possess such skills, but are able to reflect and articulate how they have developed their skills and why they are important.

The 1994 Group of research-intensive, student-focused institutions have for many years been working with their students' unions to offer activities outside the curriculum in order to give their students the opportunity to broaden their university experience and enhance their employability. In recent years there has been a strong and growing commitment from our universities to bringing together the various strands of such activity and formally recognising it through the development of 'awards' that sit alongside students' academic achievement.

Recognised 'co-curricular' activity[1], run in parallel to degree programmes, is a route through which to meet employers' demand for skills obtained outside the academic curriculum and develop the employability and career prospects of graduates. It is also, crucially, an extremely effective way of enhancing the experience of students in higher education, whether they are undergraduate or postgraduate, from the UK or abroad, studying full-time or part-time.

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[1] When we refer to 'co-curricular activity' we are clustering together the following: a) structured programmes of activity leading to a university award, which may include receiving university credit; or b) university-facilitated programmes of events which do not lead to an award, but can be useful to enhance the student experience and employability.

"Employers greatly value the knowledge and skills that graduates develop whilst studying at university, along with the skills and experience they gain from undertaking activities beyond the curriculum. The most employable graduates are those who not only have this blend of skills, but who are able to demonstrate and articulate how they have developed their skills and why they are important. The co-curricular awards which the 1994 Group has highlighted are an excellent way to enhance graduate employability and should be strongly supported."

Miles Templeman, Director-General, Institute of Directors (IoD)

Key Findings

Nature of activity

The majority of 1994 group institutions offer a formal co-curricular award, or have plans to do so. The awards encompass a range of activities, including skills sessions, volunteering, work experience, sports and societies, and have a formal assessment process. Other institutions have programmes that provide volunteering or work experience placements and career development modules, which may be on an assessed or more informal basis. Employability is a key aim of co-curricular activity, as is enhancing the student experience.

Participation

Co-curricular awards are primarily aimed at undergraduates, although in some institutions post-graduates are eligible or will have another award developed for them. Generally all undergraduates are eligible, although some newly-piloted awards have been restricted to particular year groups. The more informal activities, such as volunteer placements, are available to all. Because most awards have only recently been piloted, data on participation and completion is not extensive. Participation ranges from small pilot cohorts of 25 to registrations numbering over 3,000.

University commitment

Institutions are committed to developing co-curricular activity, which is seen as a strategically important area. This commitment is clearly manifested through the resourcing of dedicated staff to develop and administer award programmes. It is also clear across institutions, where staff from academic departments, student services and administrative departments give time to support the awards. Students' unions play an important part in helping develop and deliver the activities.

Employer involvement

In order to meet the employability aims of co-curricular activity, employers – the ultimate arbiters of this quality – are heavily involved in awards. This spans the development, delivery and assessment stages, in addition to sponsorship and endorsement. For universities, employer involvement ensures that the schemes are meaningful and produce employable graduates. For employers, involvement ensures that the awards meet their needs in terms of skills development, and is an opportunity to raise their profile among students.

Measuring success

The success of co-curricular awards and activity is being measured by widely-sourced feedback covering students, alumni, staff and employers. Feedback is then used to develop the activity further. The feedback received thus far has been overwhelmingly positive and strongly endorses the introduction of co-curricular programmes from both a student experience and employability perspective. Students report that they have gained immense personal benefit from their co-curricular activity, have a much clearer idea of what employers are looking for and believe it will help them in their careers.

Challenges

Resourcing is clearly a key challenge to delivering this activity effectively, especially when the extension of activity to larger numbers of students is considered. High-quality delivery and robust assessment, crucial to the student experience and creating a credible award that employers value, are resource-intensive but not areas that can be compromised. It is also critical to ensure that activities appeal across the student body and overcome the time constraints that students face as they combine academic study, work and other activities.

'We endorse this report from the 1994 Group and welcome that Universities are increasingly turning their attention to the extra curricula experience of their students, alongside students' unions.'

'Co-curricular activities are fundamental to a well rounded student experience. Students' unions are absolutely at the heart of delivering this and transforming the lives of thousands of students every year.'

'The transformational power of the co-curricular should never be underestimated in terms of retention, achievement and employability.'

Richard Budden, VP Union Development, NUS

Recommendations

Nature of activity

- There is no one 'right' model for co-curricular activity and the diversity of provision between institutions should be seen as a strength, ensuring it is tailored to individual circumstances.

- Nevertheless, institutions can learn a lot and receive invaluable support from one another. Sharing experiences is an efficient use of resources, can provide inspiration for new developments and a forum for addressing challenges.

- Awards should aim to enhance both employability and the student experience. In a competitive graduate job market and recession which has particularly affected young people, universities must produce graduates well-prepared to enter the workforce. To be enduring and attract participants, however, they must also add to the student experience.

Participation

- Co-curricular activity should be as widely accessible as possible and have sufficient flexibility to cater to the wide-range of needs and commitment within the student body.

- Elements of an award programme can be opened up to all students, even if they are not completing the award.

- Resourcing an award for 1,000 students is of an entirely different magnitude to 100 participants. As such, the scalability of activity should be considered from the outset.

University commitment

- Management and co-ordination of an Award, especially if to cater for a large number of students, requires dedicated staff.

- Co-curricular activity can benefit from the imput of a wide range of individuals across an institution, from both academic and support divisions, who should be involved in awards to as great a degree as is possible.

- It is fundamental for the success of co-curricular activity that awards and activities involve partners such as students' unions and employers as, on top of the benefits the activities bring to participating students, many benefits are experienced for universities and their partners through building these strong partnerships.

Employer involvement

- The involvement of employers from an early stage of development is crucial to creating awards that will meaningfully address employability. Their input should, furthermore, be sought at all key stages and on a regular basis.

- Multiple employers, from multinationals to charities and local businesses, should be approached in order to benefit from varied viewpoints and diverse experiences.

- Employer involvement at the assessment or moderation stage is particularly crucial to endowing the awards with credibility in employers' eyes.

- Students should have contact with employer representatives, for example through the delivery of skills sessions, in order to gain access to employer perspectives.

Measuring success

- Feedback should be systematically sought from students, alumni, staff and employers and this be fed back in to the development process.

- Employability data should be gathered to measure the impact of an award or activity on a graduate's employment prospects.

Challenges

- The government should show its support for co-curricular activity by creating incentives for employers to become involved, such as a scheme in which government matches employers' contributions (whether these are cash or in kind).

- Institutions should consider developing different levels of activity; a general award or training to be undertaken by a significant proportion of students, and a 'high-flier' award for those students who are highly-motivated and committed.

- There must be a balance between demanding so great a commitment that only a few students complete an award, and requiring too little for the award to be meaningful.

1. Introduction

The graduate employment market is extremely competitive and as such it is crucial that students are well equipped during their time at university to successfully progress and achieve their potential in the workplace. This need has been made even more acute by the recession, with record numbers of students finishing university at the same time that graduate recruitment and the wider economy has come under pressure.

Employers greatly value the knowledge and skills that graduates develop whilst studying at university, along with the skills and experience they gain from undertaking activities beyond the curriculum. Studying for a degree helps students to enhance their intellectual confidence, logical thinking, communication and teamwork, and these skills are enhanced and broadened further by their engagement in activities such as volunteering, part-time work and involvement in their students' union. The most employable graduates are those which not only possess such skills, but are able to reflect on what they have learnt from their experiences and articulate how they have developed their skills and why they are important.

The 1994 Group of research-intensive, student-focused institutions have for many years been working with their students' unions to offer volunteering programmes, careers development workshops and similar activities outside the curriculum in order to give their students the opportunity to broaden their university experience and graduate as well-rounded individuals ready to enter employment. In recent years there has been a strong and growing commitment from our universities to bringing together the various strands of such activity and formally recognising it through the development of 'awards' that sit alongside students' academic achievement.

The CBI has recently strongly urged universities to prioritise enhancing students' employability skills.[2] Recognised 'co-curricular' activity[3], run in parallel to degree programmes, is a route through which to meet employers' demand for skills obtained outside the academic curriculum and develop the employability and career prospects of graduates. It is also, crucially, an extremely effective way of enhancing the experience of students in higher education, whether they are undergraduate or postgraduate, from the UK or abroad, studying full-time or part-time. Co-curricular awards are a way of formally recognising and adding value to activity already taking place beyond the curriculum, building upon this with additional elements, guidance and reflective assessments, and encouraging greater participation from students in such activity. Universities increasingly making a strong strategic commitment to co-curricular activity and awards means they can enhance collaboration with students' unions, build up partnerships with businesses and strengthen their wider role within the community.

The fundamental role that non-academic aspects of the student experience play within university life was recognised in the 1994 Group's 'Enhancing the Student Experience' policy statement in November 2007.[4] Further to its recommendation in this policy statement to work to promote the 'well-rounded' graduate, the 1994 group has gathered information on the co-curricular activity taking place or being developed at its member institutions. Whilst recognising that such activity is certainly taking place at other universities in the UK, this report presents a 'snapshot' profiling the 1994 Group universities' progress in this area, in order to contribute to the sector's understanding of the impact of this activity.

All 1994 Group members have long been running a range of activities beyond the curriculum in partnership with their students' unions. Some members have been recognising these with formal awards for a number of years; others have awards at development or pilot stage. All members have a strong level of commitment at a strategic level to this area, and are keen to share practice with the sector in the hope that this contributes to an open dialogue of

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"The Bath Award has helped to recognise all the extra-curricular activities I have undertaken in a way that is presentable to employers. It was fun and a great scheme to get started. I'm glad to have the recognition on my CV"

Student from the University of Bath

2   Over 80 per cent of employers surveyed believed universities needed to prioritise improving undergraduates' employability skills. CBI, 'Future fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work,' March 2009.

3   When we refer to 'co-curricular activity' we are clustering together the following: a) structured programmes of activity leading to a university award, which may include receiving university credit; or b) university-facilitated programmes of events which do not lead to an award, but can be useful to enhance the student experience and employability.

4   1994 Group, 'Enhancing the student experience' policy report, Nov 2007. See: http://www.1994group.co.uk/SEPolicyReport

ideas and experiences. The Group is aware that this is a key focus area for the National Union of Students and we want to work in partnership to further investigate the effect of co-curricular activity on the experience and employability of students.

To gather the information contained in this report, a questionnaire was sent out in June 2009 to all 1994 Group institutions, covering the nature of the activity being taken , the measuring of success, the resources and commitment required and the challenges to delivering it effectively (See Appendix A for the Questionnaire). Questionnaire responses highlighted particular areas of interest which were subsequently followed-up in greater depth and supplemented by evaluation reports and information publicly available on institutions' websites. The resulting report summarises and analyses current practice, highlights examples through case studies and looks forward with recommendations for universities, business and the government.

2. Nature of Activity

Thirteen of the nineteen surveyed 1994 Group members are running or have approved a co-curricular award; another is in the early planning stages. The awards recognise skills development activities, employment, volunteering, engagement with the university and community, leadership and management, student enterprise and other extra-curricular activities. Several awards are flexible in the combination of activities required for completions, whereas others have a more precise framework to follow. Royal Holloway offers two separate programmes rather than an all-encompassing award and Exeter operates two levels of award – students which have completed the Exeter Award may progress to the Exeter Leaders Award.

A student participating in the **Leicester Award for Employability** is required to:

- Attend three interactive workshops throughout the academic year
- Complete two pieces of reflective writing based on their work experience
- Participate in e-learning activities via Blackboard
- Give a short presentation at the end of the programme

There are several support sessions planned throughout the year to help students with all aspects of the programme. The Award is formally endorsed by the University of Leicester and will appear on a successful participant's academic transcript.

The institutions without a formal co-curricular award have more informal activity, which particularly focuses on volunteering and does not involve a formal assessment process. The University of Essex runs a formal Certificate in Community Volunteering, equivalent to an NVQ Level 2, in addition to its informal volunteering project. The University of East Anglia runs an informal volunteering programme, which has been running since 2004 and currently offers 198 local volunteering opportunities with 177 organisations. There are also several optional modules or certified courses on career development, including at St Andrews, which offers a certificate supported by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP which

has three levels – bronze, silver and gold – depending on the amount of time committed and points earned. Also, in addition to running a Volunteering Unit, the School of Oriental and African Studies has introduced a 'language entitlement' allowing every undergraduate to register for at least one African, Asian or Middle Eastern language course during his or her time at the School. This diversity in activity reinforces that there is no one 'right' model for co-curricular activity – each institution is different and has developed activity that meets its own circumstances and requirements.

> *'BP looks for graduates that are able to demonstrate not only academic excellence but also have proven employability skills such as team working, communication and organisational skills.*
>
> *'The Loughborough Employability Award provides students with an excellent opportunity to evidence their skills to employers and I would encourage all Loughborough students to take up this opportunity.'*
>
> **UK Graduate Resourcing Manager, BP International**

The awards are granted based on the results of various assessment methods, including portfolios, application forms, interviews and presentations, and are designed to demonstrate skills development, reflective learning and an awareness of how to appeal effectively to employers. The vast majority of awards are not credit-bearing, but they do appear on the degree transcript as an award from the University. Queen Mary offers 15 credits at academic level 6, but the award does not impact on a student's degree classification. Essex plans to introduce a Career Development module, carrying 15 credits at academic level 5, which will be separately certified. Birkbeck offers a Careers and Professional Development module with 15 CAT credits (transferable to participating institutions) at academic level 4.

The awards are overwhelmingly aimed at enhancing the employability of graduates through encouraging participation in additional activity, adding value to it and providing evidence of such engagement and skills development. Goldsmiths, University of London, for example, have recently approved the Gold Award, the aim of which is to provide recognition and reward for students' participation in extra-curricular and developmental activities and achievements which enhance skills and employability. The award will be on a points-based system which includes rewards for entrepreneurship and enterprise. Another important

The York Award requires participants to demonstrate the skills they have gained across the breadth of their academic and non-academic experience at university, including their work-related experience and personal interests.

'Sam', a chemistry undergraduate, received a York Award by demonstrating:

- *Academic study:* the employability skills developed by studying for his Chemistry degree
- *Work experience:* the transferable skills gained from his vacation job working in the DEFRA Central Science Laboratory, from his part-time job in a bar, and working at a children's summer camp
- *Personal interests:* the employability skills developed whilst being a Students' Union Events Rep and through his involvement in the University rugby club
- *Elective Courses:* from the broad range of extra-curricular courses available as part of the York Award, Sam completed the following:
  - An Introduction to British Sign Language
  - The York Enterprise Scheme
  - Team Development

Each of the above elements contributed a certain number of 'points'. Sam needed to achieve 100 points before applying for the York Award.

To apply for the York Award, Sam completed a substantial application form and was interviewed by a panel that consisted of an employer, an academic and a York Award representative. Throughout the application process Sam needed to demonstrate, and evidence, an analytical and reflective approach to the development of a range of skills.

purpose of the schemes is to add to and improve the student experience, officially recognising the significant extra-curricular activity that already occurs, which is very often delivered through students' unions, and providing a useful framework to build upon it. The University of Surrey has embarked on a feasibility study aiming to develop an award to encourage, enable, recognise and value what students do to make their education more complete, within which employability skills will be a subset.[5] Informal programmes across other institutions share many of the same aims, but because of their volunteer focus tend to emphasise to a greater extent the benefits of community engagement, widening participation and improving the quality of life among disadvantaged groups.

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[5]   This is building on the work of the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTrE).

As partnership working is fundamental to co-curricular activities, they not only bring broad benefits to the students participating, but also allow universities engaging in them to strengthen their own relationships with students' unions, volunteering groups and local businesses, greatly enhancing the university's role within the wider community. An example of this is the University of Reading's Modular Accreditation for Students Involved in Volunteering (MASIV) scheme, which has been running for five years. The University allows students to add five non-academic credits to their transcripts through participating in the scheme. The scheme was initiated and is run by the Students' Union, and many of the volunteering opportunities available to students are within the Union's own clubs and societies. More than 200 students participated in the scheme last year, and these volunteers helped strengthen the links between the University and the local community.

"The Exeter Award has been the perfect opportunity for me to gain official university recognition to the range of activities I have undertaken during my time at university, and will show employers the skills that I have sought to develop. It has played a pivotal role in teaching me how to highlight important skills and ultimately build up the best possible CV. I have recently been accepted onto the Teach First program ...Working in tough schools in tough areas, with only six weeks of training will be such a huge challenge but one that Exeter has well prepared me for."

**Psychology BSc student,
University of Exeter**

The majority of awards are at an early stage of development or implementation, having been launched in the past two or three years, with the notable exception of York and Leicester where the awards have been running for eleven and five years respectively. Royal Holloway has been running its tutoring and mentoring scheme for eight years and its community action programme for five years. Other awards are either in their pilot/first year or due for launch in the coming academic year.

The York Award, which has been running since 1998, is based on the premise that it is the combination of academic study, work experience and leisure interests that help to develop the broad range of skills and competencies that employers seek. As a certificated programme of transferable skills training and experiential learning, it provides a framework to help students manage an active programme of personal development and gain recognition for valuable activities that are not formally recognised through the degree programme. Students gain points for a flexible range of co-curricular activities and once 100 points have been achieved must successfully complete a graduate recruitment-style application form, followed by an interview, to achieve the Award. At York, staffing is provided through one full-time management post, a 0.3 FTE (full time equivalent) careers assistant and a 0.4 FTE administrator. Assessment, marking and chairing involves the Careers Service and Professional and Organisational Development and Departments staff. A number of employers are involved in the development, delivery and assessment stages, including the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Aviva, Deloitte, IBM, Eversheds, the Financial Services Authority, the Civil Service, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Nestle. Over seventy local employers also regularly donate their time to interview York Award applicants.

The Leicester Award for Employability, launched in 2004, offers accreditation for leadership and management skills acquired outside the academic curriculum and aims to add to the student experience as well as enhance employability. Eligible activity includes work experience, student committees, volunteering and participation in research groups. Participants also attend three full-day workshops with business professionals, receive training in personal development and career management and meet graduate employers. Candidates must successfully complete two written assignments comprising a reflection on skills development and prepare a presentation in order to receive the award. The University of Leicester funds a 0.6 FTE post to co-ordinate the scheme and deliver one of the main constituent programmes of the award. Student Development staff within Corporate Services run the budget, provide administrative support and also lead on curriculum design and development and provide the majority of tutor time. Deloitte acts as patron for the Leicester Award for Employability Skills, which is also endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management, the largest management qualification awarding body in the UK. Other sponsors include Accenture, Enterprise Rent-A-Car and ACCA, the global body for professional accountants. Employer representatives sit on the management board and contribute to assessment, and representatives from external organisations contribute to the tutoring of participants.

The Exeter Award, launched in 2008, is designed to enhance the employability of participants by providing official recognition and evidence of co-curricular activity and achievement. It comprises four compulsory elements: 25 hours of paid work; volunteering or musical/sporting activity; three sessions on applications, personal development and interviews; and two optional elements such as a training course or employer presentation. To complete the award, students complete a series of reflective questions and a discussion with a careers advisor. Exeter also operates a second level of award, the Exeter Leaders Award, which students may progress onto once they have successfully completed The Exeter Award. Participants must demonstrate either leadership skills over a prolonged period or an outstanding achievement, as well as six additional elements, including skills sessions, activities related to graduate recruitment processes and a 500-word profile. Both schemes are joint activities between the Careers and Employment Service and the Students' Guild. The Exeter Award is managed by an officer as part of their work. In addition, the university has appointed a O.75 FTE Trainer and Award Support Officer for 3 years and an additional 0.5 FTE Careers Adviser to support the Award. The Exeter Award is sponsored by a major graduate recruiter, Ernst and Young, and many more employers are also involved in the development stages and in delivering skills sessions and presentations. As part of the Exeter Leaders Award, employers conduct mock interviews with candidates. Positive implications for alumni engagement have already been noted in the first year of operation.

The Bath Award recognises achievement in co-curricular activities, together with modules relating to employment. The Award is run from the Students' Union with help from the university Careers Service. Students must produce a portfolio based on their experiences, complete 100 hours of activity and meet standards in the key skill areas of communication, teamwork, leadership, commercial awareness and problem solving. The portfolio is then assessed by a team drawn from academics, Careers and Students' Union staff. It piloted in the 2008/09 academic year with the aim of formally recognising extra-curricular activity, while adding to it with an employability dimension. The University supports one full-time post to manage the Award, who uses Students' Union administrative support. In addition, careers staff and academics are involved in developing the Award and assessing the portfolios students produce. Significant funding, guaranteed over three years, has been secured from Abbey Santander's Universities Global Division in order to help develop and launch The Bath Award. Santander also participates in the assessment moderation process and in its second year volunteer industrial mentors will be involved in the assessments themselves.

3. Participation

Eligibility: The awards are aimed first and foremost at undergraduates. At several institutions postgraduate research and/or taught students are also eligible, although undergraduates remain the focus and some institutions have or are planning to establish separate postgraduate programmes. At the University of Sussex for example, the Sussex Plus employability initiative is in the early piloting stage and is currently targeted at undergraduate students, but will be open to postgraduate taught students in 2012. There is currently a separate initiative at Sussex called Profolio for postgraduate research doctoral students. While around half of the awards are open to all undergraduates, including the longer running schemes, others have chosen to focus on particular year groups, with an equal mix between earlier and later years. There are also some more specific restrictions in some instances. For example, Queen Mary does not include medical and dentistry students as these have separate pathways more relevant to the careers they are likely to follow. York excludes one-year courses due to the award's requirement to consider development over a period of time, but whereas not everyone is eligible for the award itself, the course programme is open to all. The activities and awards are open to international students, and this builds on the specific guidance universities already offer to international students on enhancing their employability and asking their questions about working in the UK.

Demand: The level of demand for many of these awards is as yet unclear – most have been launched only recently or are in their planning stages. Many of the pilots are being conducted with selected students, ranging from small cohorts of 25 at Queen Mary to large groups of 500 at Sussex. When Exeter launched its award it experienced registrations representing 25 per cent of the student body and was required to double the number of skills sessions on offer, but as this was the first year of operation trends are difficult to identify. Of the awards that have been operational for several years, demand has steadily risen each year to around 250. The more informal activities have less precise data on participation. At the SOAS volunteering scheme, for example, between 35 and 80 students are known to have been placed each year, but this underestimates involvement since the unit acts as a brokerage service between students and organisations rather than organising placements directly.

Targets: Over half the institutions have targets for participation that are broadly in line with current practice – numerical targets of either 200-300 or 10 per cent of the student population - or an aspiration to grow each year. Sussex is unusual in having a target of 1000 students in the second pilot year and for 70 per cent of the student body to be engaged by 2012. Other institutions feel it is too early to establish targets and are waiting see the award in practice, particularly how it fits in with the competing demands on students, or are constrained in offering places by financial resources. SOAS's volunteering programme also has participation targets, which are similar to those of the formal programmes when size of institution is taken into account. Moving forward, scalability will be one of the key challenges of the schemes – can such activity remain effective and manageable if it is rolled out onto a larger scale? Targets must address both the desire to widen participation and ensure that the award remains meaningful through maintaining robust, high-quality activities and assessment processes.

Completion: Completion rates are likewise difficult to analyse given the available data and recent nature of the awards. This is exemplified by the possibility, and indeed often recommendation or requirement, that the award be completed over more than one year. At Bath, for example, 40 per cent 'graduated' within the first year, but many are expected to return to complete next year and produce a high overall completion rate. At Exeter, five per cent of registrations completed within the first year, but this is from a particularly high base and close in number to the target number of completions. In some instances, a 'completion rate' has little meaning as the course programme and activities may be undertaken by all, regardless of edibility for the award, or students apply for the award only once they have completed the activity required.

4. University commitment

Co-curricular activity has received strong institutional support at both a senior and wide-ranging level. The majority of institutions have established steering groups for their awards, or the wider employability and student experience frameworks of which they are a part, which include representatives from student services, teaching faculties, the students' union and graduate employers. The awards are being discussed by senior management and led or overseen at the Deputy and Pro-Vice Chancellor level. They are also able to take advantage of infrastructure support, such as access to or the bespoke development of virtual learning environments and web resources.

One of the most significant manifestations of institutional support has been the funding allocated for staffing, which is particularly important as programmes develop and are rolled-out, but also as they grow. The majority of institutions have dedicated staff time to manage the awards, totalling between 0.6 and 1.7 FTE. In many cases, administrative support is provided in addition to this, from the department managing the award or from the students' union. Specific funding streams that have supported co-curricular activity include HEFCE's Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF), Teaching Enhancement and Student Success (TESS) allocations, and the Higher Education Active Community Fund (HEACF)[6].

The delivery and assessment of the awards requires a further staffing contribution across institutions, including academics and other university staff. At Bath, for example, careers service staff and four academics put resources into assessing portfolios, where assessing and moderating an individual's portfolio is calculated to have taken one and a half hours during the pilot year. Delivery was estimated to have taken 163 hours of students' union, careers and other university staff's time, excepting the award co-ordinator. York estimates that marking and chairing assessments involves 250 hours of staff time across the careers service, professional and organisational development within HR, and departments. Interviews by academic staff consume another 120 hours and course delivery takes 100 university staff hours. Delivery is a particularly crucial area in terms of maintaining student satisfaction with and commitment to the award, and a robust assessment process is important for an award to hold value to an employer. Since both of these areas, particularly assessment, consume a large number of hours per student, this has implications when scaling the awards up to cater for more participants.

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[6]   Now the Higher Education Volunteering Awards

In order to demonstrate commitment to the Lancaster Award as an area for strategic focus, the university invested in part of a post in the careers service. The team developing the award is led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Colleges and The Student Experience and the Director of Undergraduate Studies and members include the President of the Students' Union, Faculty Teaching Deans and senior staff from the Centre for Employability, Enterprise and Careers.

At Royal Holloway the Community Action Volunteering Programme office is located in the Students' Union building, but sits within the College's External Relations line management. At the inception of their volunteering programme, HEACF funding supported a full-time co-ordinator, a 0.2 support worker and some project funding. Two years later this was reduced and the co-ordinator role was thus condensed to 0.6 and the support role disappeared. The following year Royal Holloway decided to support the programme by re-introducing the support role and raising the co-ordinator to 0.8. HEACF

The Loughborough Employability Award, launched in 2009, is run through the Careers Centre, which employs two staff members to manage & administer (0.8 and 0.4 FTE) supported by TQEF funding . When this funding ceases, money will be directed from HEFCE TESS funding. The award scheme has web space within the Careers Centre web pages and online resources within the University's virtual learning environment. These developments are supported as part of the University's ongoing commitment to increasing the employability of its students.

The volunteering accreditation scheme at the University of Essex is run by the Students' Union 'V team' with a part-time Community Volunteering Manager who for the past 3 yrs has been financed by TQEF money. 'Frontrunners', a paid work experience placement scheme within the university with supporting skills programme,is funded from tuition fee bursary underspend, and employs a full-time project manager to coordinate around 200 Frontrunners placements a year. There is the expectation that staff in the departments and administrative sections involved will give their time and experience to the Frontrunner. Frontrunners must receive certain training from staff and each placement is managed by a Placement Supervisor in the area of the University in which it is based. Each Placement Supervisor monitors progress, carries out an exit interview and produces a report for the Frontrunners team.

5. Employer involvement

A fundamental characteristic of the 1994 Group co-curricular awards is extensive engagement with employers, whether they be business, charities or voluntary organisations, throughout the process of development, delivery and assessment. Institutions have been particularly keen to develop this aspect of the awards in order to utilise employer resources and expertise and to enhance students' employability by developing the skills that employers themselves value, ultimately producing graduates that will be successful in the graduate job market.

Employers have also been keen to engage with the awards and build upon the existing work they already do in partnership with careers services, particularly to support the aim of producing employable graduates for the work force, and also mindful of the benefits of increasing their own profile among these students. Lord Mandelson, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, highlighted in July 2009 that it is the relationships between employers, universities and students which are the key to producing employable individuals.[7] Only if employers and business are engaged with the awards can they truly achieve their aims, for it is these groups who are the ultimate arbiters of employability.

> *'At Ernst & Young we're committed to helping our people achieve their potential. It's how we make a difference. We are proud to sponsor The Exeter Award, which aims to enhance the career opportunities of graduates and helps them to achieve their potential both professionally and personally.'*
>
> **Sarah Cleal, Account & Resource Coordinator, Ernst & Young**

Funding

Over half of the formal schemes have secured employer sponsorship, involving private, public sector and voluntary organisations. National and international graduate employers are particularly frequent sponsors, reflecting the graduate employability focus of the schemes and popular graduate destinations. This link is emphasised on one award website, for example, where clicking on sponsors' logos leads directly to that company's recruitment pages. Most sponsors support an award in its entirety, sometimes guaranteeing funds for a specified number of years in order to promote stability and sustainability.

> Lancaster University's Award is endorsed by two small and medium-sized businesses, Petrus communications, winner of the 'Best Internship Provider' for a small business in 2007, and NuBlue Web Solutions, which employs 12 students and graduates. Showing Off LTD, a marketing training and consultancy firm, also helps out with the University's Insight into Employability and Enterprise event. This two day programme, which is a compulsory part of the Lancaster Award, is led and facilitated by employers and consultants previously known to the University for their expertise in supporting employability-related learning outcomes. The University's Centre for Employability, Enterprise and Careers provides the context in which these learning outcomes relate to career planning and recruitment processes and sign-post to sources of additional support. The University also runs other employer based events through such as the Insight into Creative and Media Courses. This was a two day event with workshops given by representatives of leading national and international media companies, such as the BBC and Lewis Global PR.

At York, which has a particularly broad and extensive list of supporters, employers fund individual courses that are relevant to them. For example, York has received £12,000 from the Financial Services Authority to develop a financial capability module within the York Award. Royal Holloway has also secured funding for specific initiatives within its volunteering programme, and has done this through local businesses rather than large graduate employers. Some sponsors provide funding to support specific activities, such as marketing, as well as contributing to the Award's delivery. Many of the awards have more than one sponsor, although there is often a 'lead' organisation. Some employers are involved with more than one scheme.

[7] Lord Mandelson 'Higher education and modern life', Birkbeck University, 27 Jul 2009. See http://www.dius.gov.uk/news_and_speeches/speeches/peter-mandelson/universities.aspx

Institutions without a current employer or business sponsor have identified this as a key area for development. Many of those institutions operating informal volunteering programmes work with organisations with limited funds and therefore financial support in order to manage the schemes is difficult to obtain.

As a result of the recession, which has shrunk the profits, balance sheets and capitalisations of a diverse range of businesses, as well as increasing uncertainty for the future, strengthening this source of funding significantly in the near future will be challenging. Yet funding for skills development is crucial for students at university now, in order for them to be competitive when they join the employment market, support businesses as they resume growth and sustain a highly developed economy. Given the importance of producing employable graduates with the skills required by employers and the economy, the government should consider ways of supporting and encouraging this activity by creating incentives for organisations to become involved, such as a scheme in which government matches employers' contributions (whether these are cash or in kind).

'At LloydsTSB we are looking to recruit top calibre graduates to become the future leaders of our organisation. We believe the Exeter Leaders Award would be an excellent way for students to differentiate themselves in a crowded graduate market'.

Suzanne Harley, Graduate Recruiter, LloydsTSB

Endorsement

In addition to those institutions that have secured demonstrated employer support for their schemes through sponsorship, several more have achieved endorsements from employers, particularly on how the activity and awards enhance employability. The employer endorsements are aimed at promoting the awards to students, especially at the launch stage, by marketing their usefulness and indicating that the awards have the confidence of employers.

'As a Government agency who recruits and supplies graduates to a whole industry sector, the Lancaster Award provides further reassurance that Lancaster University has the capability and commitment to ensure that its students and graduates are receiving the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills to become the enterprising employees that today's graduate employers require. Lancaster University continues to provide us with exceptionally talented graduates and we feel that this award clearly highlights the next generation of talent for our current requirements and beyond.'

Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

Development

Over half of all institutions have involved employers in the development of their Awards, involving recommendations on the competencies they should seek to evidence, input on aims and objectives and the breadth of the awards, sitting on the management board and developing the structure of the awards. Many more seek employer feedback in order to measure the success of the awards and feed this into the development process. Employer involvement in this stage of the awards is perceived as particularly important in terms of ensuring that they meet employers' needs, have credibility in employers' eyes and therefore can achieve their employability aims. It also helps ensure the awards are the best preparation possible for graduates entering the job market. In the early stages of the pilot phase at one institution, the employer representatives on the advisory board had sufficient confidence to suggest those in possession of the award might be shortlisted automatically.

As Durham University developed its Award, which is being piloted in 2009/10, employers with existing connections to the careers service were contacted regarding the proposed award, particularly where they were proactive in student skills development. These employers included large multinationals, charities, and businesses with local connections. Key issues that required employer input were the elements employers wished to see in an award, how to best showcase the skills employers value and how to ensure it would be valued as evidence in a graduate application. Two consultations were held in-person with representatives from nine employers, with additional input from others via email and telephone, some of whom were Durham alumni who could bring both their student and employment experience to bear. Further, employers were updated at key stages of development and their comment sought. Feedback that was incorporated into the award included the need to reflect the whole university student experience, the key competencies that should be evidenced and regarding issues of quality. Opportunities for further employer involvement, such as in assessment, were also identified and it is intended that employers will continue to contribute to further development for the award, a process which has been formalised with three employer members on the Employability and Skills Steering Group.

At Queen Mary, University of London, the development of the Drapers' Skills Award structure was overseen by the College's internal Employability Advisory Group. At the time the award was developed there were four representatives from industry on the Group providing input on the aims and objectives of the award. The members at that time were from the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, the South East Industrial Trust/EDF Energy, MiADUK Ltd and Interactive Ideas Ltd. The event themes and content were further developed with the inputs of the Chief Executive Officer of GetEnergy, who co-delivered two of the development workshops. In addition GetEnergy offered a one-day paid work experience activity to some of the students, who also helped Get Energy run one of their corporate events.

Delivery

Almost all awards involve employers in their delivery, most often through assisting or leading skills sessions and employer presentations. Other contributions include tutoring students, providing paid work experience and the possibility of employers 'shadowing' a cohort through the scheme. York estimates that employers contribute 120 hours to course delivery over one year. Students frequently report employer involvement at this stage – for example through delivery of skills sessions, providing an employer perspective and networking – as the most valuable aspect of a programme. It also enables employers to ensure that content is appropriately tailored to their needs.

Assessment

Almost half of the formal awards include employer representatives on their assessment panels, allowing students to receive objective performance feedback from real employers. Many of the assessment processes also involve elements of the job application process, including interviews, presentations and application forms. York estimates that employers and alumni contribute 120 hours to assessing The York Award - an employer representative sits on each interview panel and employers are also involved in assessing individual elective courses. Employer involvement as this stage is an important quality assurance mechanism - maintaining the award's credibility in the eyes of employers – and can take the form of moderating or reviewing a sample of assessments as well as direct participation. As part of the Durham Award employers and alumni will be involved in the delivery of skills sessions and the formal assessment process. At Lancaster, key colleagues from graduate employers will be joining university staff on assessment panels for the award, which will be in the form of short interviews. It is hoped through this assessment process, used in many of the awards, students will gain a realistic expectation about the assessment process involved in securing a graduate job.

6. Measuring success

Feedback

Student, alumni and employer feedback is a key element of the awards' evaluation criteria. This includes formal evaluation with questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, the latter particularly at the pilot stage, and more anecdotal evidence. Feedback has thus far been overwhelmingly positive, which is borne out by the steady increase in numbers participating. Students report that the assessment process is useful practice for articulating examples of their skills to employers, that the award is an integral part of their university experience and a 'wake-up call'.

"The Lancaster Award provides an ideal opportunity for students to build upon their skills and experiences whilst at university. It offers recognition for both current and new achievements and skills whilst focusing on a wide range of activities that students at Lancaster already partake in. The Lancaster Award really does prove that graduates from Lancaster University have much, much more to offer than just a degree."

**Michael Payne, President,
Lancaster University Students' Union**

Skills providers see the awards as promoting opportunities and encouraging involvement in a wide range of activities. One assessor commented that it was 'great to see how the top students are getting the most out of their time at university'. Surrey County Council have followed up on their strong support for Royal Holloway's tutoring and mentoring scheme, where students are placed in local schools to support students who are disengaged and lack motivation, by introducing a Surrey County Council Cup for the tutor or mentor of the year.

Graduate employment

Enhancing employability is the central focus of the awards, and institutions' informal co-curricular activity, and therefore measuring the impact on graduate employment is important when gauging the success of the awards. As a result of the time taken to collect such data and the short space of time most awards have been running, it has not yet been possible to do this in most cases. York, which has been running its Award since 1998, is the exception to this and has used the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DHLE) survey results over the past five years to measure the impact of its Award. This suggests that 43 per cent of those graduating with The York Award have been in graduate level jobs and 36 per cent in further study within six months, compared with 36 per cent and 32 per cent of non-York Award graduates. The numbers of York Award graduates in non-graduate jobs were around 9 per cent below the regular cohort, suggesting The York Award has a clear employability benefit. Other institutions recognise that this is a key measure to demonstrate success and have plans in place to gather employment statistics.

Another source through which success in enhancing employability can be assessed is the student perspective. At the University of East Anglia, for example, which operates an informal volunteering programme, student feedback reports that participation in the programme has aided their career progression. Programmes and Awards can help not only by demonstrating the skills sought by employers, but by providing exposure to and networking opportunities with different types of organisations, advice from real professionals and encouraging a firmer grasp of career aspirations. Queen Mary hopes to gather further information in this area by, as part of an assessment, asking students to report and reflect upon how the Award has thus far helped them to obtain part-time work, internships or other work placements.

In the first assessment for Queen Mary's Drapers' Skills Award, the student with the highest mark has the opportunity to have an article published in London Business Matters (LBM), the official magazine of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry. LBM were pleased to have this article; the student was thrilled to see their work in print and also published a version of the article in a campus newspaper. Employers were interested in this achievement during summer job/placement interviews and asked to see the article.

7. Challenges

As the majority of awards are in the planning or pilot stages, the experiences from which challenges can be identified is not extensive and is skewed towards the start-up process. This will evolve as the awards become more established. Several challenging areas for delivering the awards effectively are, however, outlined below.

Completion

Several institutions have identified time constraints as an obstacle to completion, particularly in the final year of study. This includes limited student time available for this activity and the award assessment process, as well as poor time management by students. However, in conflict with this, it has also been noted that a long time period between events can demotivate students. There are tensions inherent in the level of work and effort required. On the one hand, co-curricular awards and other activity must sit alongside the degree programme, be accessible to those with heavy timetables and enable high completion rates. On the other, it must be sufficiently demanding to actually mean something and add value to the student experience both in students' and employers' eyes, providing a supportive and encouraging framework but avoiding the charge of 'spoon-feeding'.

Logistically, timetabling to avoid conflicts with degree programmes can be problematic where students from a large number of degree disciplines are involved. This is particularly pertinent to skills sessions and other activities organised by the university, often with employer or other outside involvement that cannot be offered with multiple choices of timeslots.

Resources

Even for those institutions that have secured support from business, funding remains a key challenge and constraining factor. Resourcing dedicated staff is seen as a particularly difficult problem, as is the lack of stability in the funding streams. At one institution, even with employer sponsorship guaranteed for three years, numbers are capped and based primarily on availability of financial resources. Raising participation rates is difficult without a corresponding increase in resources to support it. This is particularly true of key activities such as assessment, where costs are relatively fixed per student and allow little economy of scale. Any dilution of resources in this area

jeopardises the very value of the award, to employers as meaningful evidence of skills and to students as an asset in the employment marketplace.

We recommend that the government should show its support for co-curricular activity by creating incentives for employers to become involved, such as a scheme in which the government matches employers' contributions (whether these are cash or in kind).

'Our involvement with the Leicester Award for Employability Skills has proved to be an invaluable way of gaining exposure to high calibre, motivated and enthusiastic students. Students who participate in the awards benefit from meeting employers on a one-to-one basis which enables them to find out more about the career opportunities available to them - a unique opportunity for both the student and the employer.'

Barry Nee, Project Manager, Accenture

Scalability

Many of the awards are currently piloting with small numbers of students or engaging with around 10 per cent of the student body. If broadening participation rates is seen as a goal, it will be important that quantity remains balanced with quality. The assessment processes in particular are often very resource-intensive and rely on a significant amount of support from within the university, alumni and employer communities. It will be necessary to ensure that these are scalable without compromising on quality assurance and that the current high levels of goodwill and support can be maintained.

In addition to a resource issue, scaling activity will potentially require a change in messages conveyed to both participants and employers. One of the marketing points of the awards for students is that an award participant will stand out from the crowd and have an edge in terms of employability. As it grows, the exclusivity and 'specialness' of the award is diluted. For employers, one of the attractions of the award is the opportunity to raise their profile among the particularly motivated and ambitious students who engage with the award. One solution that allows both for broadening engagement and retains the opportunity for exclusivity is multiple levels of award that grow in their demands and prestige as a student progresses.

Staff engagement

By their nature, the schemes involve a broad range of individuals and departments across institutions, including careers and employment services, the students' union, academic schools and professional services. Engaging and communicating with such large numbers of staff can be challenging, particularly where awards require the adoption of new technologies. In many institutions, award management or functions are spread across more than one department – sharing management and administration between the careers service and student union is not unusual – and any tension over ownership requires careful management. Effective engagement and consultation across institutions will remain important as the awards grow and develop.

8. Key findings and recommendations

8.1 Nature of activity

The majority of 1994 group institutions offer a formal co-curricular award, or have plans to do so. The awards encompass a range of activities, including skills sessions, volunteering, work experience, sports and societies, and have a formal assessment process. Other institutions have programmes that provide volunteering or work experience placements and career development modules, which may be on an assessed or more informal basis. Employability is a key aim of co-curricular activity, as is enhancing the student experience.

Recommendations

• There is no one 'right' model for co-curricular activity and the diversity of provision between institutions should be seen as a strength, ensuring it is tailored to individual circumstances.

• Nevertheless, institutions can learn a lot and receive invaluable support from one another. Sharing experiences is an efficient use of resources, can provide inspiration for new developments and a forum for addressing challenges.

• Awards should aim to enhance both employability and the student experience. In a competitive graduate job market and recession which has particularly affected young people, universities must produce graduates well-prepared to enter the workforce. To be enduring and attract participants, however, they must also add to the student experience.

8.2 Participation

Co-curricular awards are primarily aimed at undergraduates, although in some institutions post-graduates are eligible or will have another award developed for them. Generally all undergraduates are eligible, although some newly-piloted awards have been restricted to particular year groups. The more informal activities, such as volunteer placements, are available to all. Because most awards have only recently been piloted, data on participation and

completion is not extensive. Participation ranges from small pilot cohorts of 25 to registrations numbering over 3,000. In the well-established programmes, demand has risen steadily year-on-year.

Recommendations

- Co-curricular activity should be as widely accessible as possible and have sufficient flexibility to cater to the wide-range of needs and commitment within the student body.

- Elements of an award programme can be opened up to all students, even if they are not completing the award.

- Resourcing an award for 1,000 students is of an entirely different magnitude to 100 participants. As such, the scalability of activity should be considered from the outset.

8.3 University commitment

Institutions are committed to developing co-curricular activity, which is seen as a strategically important area at a high level. This commitment is clearly manifested through the resourcing of dedicated staff to develop and administer award programmes. It is also clear across institutions, where staff from academic departments, student services and administrative departments give time to support the awards through development, delivery and assessment. Further, co-curricular activity programmes have access to an institution's infrastructure, such as its web or IT services, and have also developed bespoke technology systems to meet their needs.

Recommendations

- Management and co-ordination of an award, especially if to cater for a large number of students, requires dedicated staff.

- Co-curricular activity can benefit from the input of a wide range of individuals across an institution, from both academic and support divisions, who should be involved in awards to as great a degree as is possible.

- It is fundamental for the success of co-curricular activity that awards and activities involve partners such as students' unions and employers as, on top of the benefits the activities bring to participating students, many benefits are experienced for universities and their partners through building these strong partnerships.

8.4 Employer involvement

In order to meet the employability aims of co-curricular activity, employers – the ultimate arbiters of this quality – are heavily involved in awards. This spans the development, delivery and assessment stages, in addition to sponsorship and endorsement. For universities, employer involvement ensures that the schemes are meaningful and produce employable graduates, can be used to effectively market the award to students, and provides credibility in the eyes of employers. For employers, involvement ensures that the awards meet their needs in terms of skills development, and is an opportunity to raise their profile among students.

Recommendations

- The involvement of employers from an early stage of development is crucial to creating awards that will meaningfully address employability. Their input should, furthermore, be sought at all key stages and on a regular basis.

- Multiple employers, from multinationals to charities and local businesses, should be approached in order to benefit from varied viewpoints and diverse experiences.

- Employer involvement at the assessment or moderation stage is particularly crucial to endowing the awards with credibility in employers' eyes.

- Students should have contact with employer representatives, for example through the delivery of skills sessions, in order to gain access to employer perspectives.

8.5 Measuring success

The success of co-curricular awards and activity is being measured by widely-sourced feedback covering students, alumni, staff and employers. Feedback is then used to develop the activity further. The feedback received thus far has been overwhelmingly positive and strongly endorses the introduction of co-curricular programmes from both a student experience and employability perspective. Students report that they have gained immense personal benefit from their co-curricular activity, have a much clearer idea of what employers are looking for and believe it will help them in their careers. As most awards are recent developments, it has not been possible to substantiate feedback regarding employability with statistical evidence, with one exception. In this case, participation in the award improved a graduate's chance of being in a graduate-level job or further study within six months of graduation by between four and seven per cent; they were nine per cent less likely to be in a non-graduate job.

Recommendations

- Feedback should be systematically sought from students, alumni, staff and employers and this be fed back in to the development process.

- Employability data should be gathered to measure the impact of an award or activity on a graduate's employment prospects.

8.6 Challenges

As most awards are relatively recent, there is not extensive experience on which to base an assessment of the challenges they face beyond the initial stages. However, resourcing is clearly a key challenge, especially when scalability and the extension of activity to larger numbers of students are considered. High-quality delivery and robust assessment, crucial to the student experience and creating a credible award that employers value, are resource-intensive and yet not areas to compromise in if the award itself is not to be compromised. Other challenges for co-curricular activity are student and staff engagement. Activity must appeal across the student body and overcome the time constraints that affect students as they combine academic study, work and other activities. Equally, engaging and communicating with a broad range of staff can be challenging in such large institutions, but bring real dividends in terms of development, profile and delivery when achieved.

Recommendations

- The government should show its support for co-curricular activity by creating incentives for employers to become involved, such as a scheme in which government matches employers' contributions (whether these are cash or in kind).

- Institutions should consider developing both a scalable skills development programme or work experience training to be undertaken by a significant proportion of students, and a 'high-flier' award for those students who are highly-motivated and committed.

- There must be a balance between demanding so great a commitment that only a few students complete an award, and requiring too little for the award to be meaningful.

Tom Norton and Hayley Thomas
On behalf of the 1994 Group's Student Experience Policy Group

Appendix A: Questionnaire sent to member institutions (May 09)

NOTES

Explanatory note on what we mean by 'Co-curricular activity'
By 'co-curricular activity' we mean:

- Formal awards (accredited awards either delivered as part of the degree programme or as stand-alone awards; or non-accredited formal awards delivered alongside degree programme)

- Extra-curricular activity that is facilitated or funded by the HEI that clearly enhances a students' employability

Giving details of more than one, or different levels of, award/activity
Please feel free to give details of more than one activity at your institution. If you wish to do so, please fill in one copy of the Questionnaire per activity. Also, if a particular award/activity is delivered in different ways or at different levels, please fill in a separate Questionnaire for each.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Nature of activity**

1.1   If your HEI offers any formal co-curricular award, please give a top-level descriptor of this award. If your HEI does not offer a formal award, please give a top-level descriptor of any informal activity (e.g. volunteering scheme, etc), that is facilitated or funded by the HEI. (If you wish to give details of more than one activity, please fill in a separate form for each).

1.2   How many years has the activity been running? If the activity is in its early stages (such as a planning or pilot stage) please clearly state this, then fill in the rest of the form as completely as possible, based on what the activity is expected to achieve.

1.3   If it is an accredited award is it accredited as part of the degree programme or as a stand-alone award?

1.4   If it is a formal award, how is the award assessed / examined?

1.5   Who is the activity open to (e.g. undergraduates, postgraduates, international students, etc)?

1.6   Where is the activity run from (careers service, SU, etc)?

1.7   What are the main reasons behind running the activity (e.g. to enhance retention, employability, etc)?

1.8   How is the activity framed when it is advertised to participants (e.g. to enhance employment skills, to offer social benefits, etc)? How is it publicised to students?

1.9   Is there anything about the activity / award that you consider is distinctive?

2.   Measuring success

2.1   Please describe what measures are used to evaluate the success of the scheme.

2.2   What have been the levels of demand annually and overall since its inception? (Does demand exceed the number of places available?)

2.3   How many students have participated annually and overall since its inception? How many have participated as a percentage of the student population?

2.4   Does HEI have a participation target it is working towards?

2.5   How many awards have been completed per year and over the lifetime of the scheme? Are there any perceived obstacles to completion?

2.6   Is there any evidence (anecdotal or otherwise) on how students value the scheme?

2.7   Please give any further details that demonstrate the success of the scheme.

3.   Resources and Challenges

3.1   What is the University's contribution to the activity, in terms of infrastructure, financial and administrative resource?

3.2   Please give details of any cost that is required of the student

3.3   Please describe the nature of any involvement from business, industry or employers (e.g. details of sponsorship, formal or informal associations).

3.4   What do you see as the opportunities for enhancing the support for these activities (e.g. through collaborating with other HEIs, with external organisations or engaging with policy makers)?

3.5   What have been the particular challenges of running the scheme successfully?

4.   Further Comments

4.1   Please give any further comments regarding the activity, including any useful information that has not been covered above

4.2   Please provide details of web links with any further information (including marketing material / participant testimonials / podcasts, etc).

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