

EMBEDDING AN EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FRAMEWORK INTO A POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK PROGRAM

Alison White

Presenting author: Alison White (alison.white@griffith.edu.au)
School of Natural Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan campus, Brisbane QLD 4111, Australia

KEYWORDS: Transitioning, Employability, Career Development Learning

Problem

The unique needs of postgraduate coursework students have been for the most part overlooked in tertiary institutions, with the lack of support to successfully transitioning these students both into coursework and then onto employment, often based on assumptions that minimal (if any) support is required for students to transition from undergraduate to postgraduate coursework study.

By unduly assuming that students can seamlessly transition into postgraduate coursework study and hence then so forth into employment, continues to dismiss the needs of these students (O'Donnell, Tobbell, Lawthorn and Zammit, 2009). This lack of transitioning support of postgraduate coursework students has been highlighted recently in work by Tobbell and O'Donnell (2013) who have recognised a clear gap in the support given to students in this area.

Plan

This project aimed to embed into the curriculum, a framework which supports students transitioning from undergraduate to postgraduate coursework study and then onto employment. To achieve this, current career development and employability frameworks utilised at Griffith University for undergraduate students were adapted to be applicable to postgraduate coursework students and were then embedded within the Graduate Diploma of Clinical Physiology.

Action

- Embedding a unique orientation week program which provides a '**Transitioning In**' step and includes learning activities that focus on the revision of key concepts from undergraduate study, team building activities and academic skills development sessions.
- Providing a '**Transitioning through**' step by embedding the development of career development skills and hence employability skills into the curriculum through the use of workshops centred on work readiness as well as assessment surrounding reflective practice, resume development and development of an ePortfolio.
- Providing a '**Transitioning Out**' step by creating an environment that assists students to establish connections with industry professionals and alumni. This is achieved by hosting networking evenings at the commencement of the program and also at the conclusion of the program so as to create industry networking opportunities and contacts for the postgraduate students to thus build a sense of involvement for the student in the professional community.

Outcomes

The success of each of these steps in the employability framework (i.e. transitioning in, through and out) can be evidenced from feedback from students surveyed, in which 80-83% of students strongly agreed that the revision of key undergraduate concepts assisted their transition into postgraduate study, that students found the embedding of employability skills in to the program an invaluable tool in the development of professional skills that go unaddressed by many academic programs and the high employability rates associated with the program in which in three consecutive years (2013-2015), 80-100% of students gained employment in a related profession within 3 months after graduation.

References

Employability: Linking scholarly learning with industry connections and student engagement. Careers and Employment Service, Griffith University. (2015). Retrieved 7 June, 2016 from <http://www.griffith.edu.au/careers-employment/for-staff>

O'Donnell, V.L., Tobbell, J., Lawthom, R. & Zammit, M. (2009). Transition to postgraduate study, *Active Learning in Higher Education* [H.W.Wilson - EDUC], 10(1), 26.

Tobbell, J. & O'Donnell, V.L. 2013, Transition to postgraduate study: postgraduate ecological systems and identity, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 43(1),123-138.

Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, The University of Queensland, Sept 28th to 30th, 2016, page 142-143, ISBN Number 978-0-9871834-5-3.