Activities similar to those required in external environments

This is an Employability CETL resource which draws upon existing good practice in the faculty of Development and Society (D&S). It comprises examples of good practice, questions which teams can collectively consider and discuss as well as recommendations for addressing the employability agenda when writing for validation. It draws evidence from evaluative work on validation documents submitted by course planning teams in 2007 and is intended primarily as part of a pack for teams preparing for validation.

Examples of good practice

One form of evidence, indicating that a course makes considered provision for employability to its students, is in clearly articulating a range of areas or sectors of employment which students could potentially target upon graduation. An awareness of such opportunities is further a sign that course planning teams have established links with the world of work - both of these factors contribute to making it possible to provide activities to students, which are similar to those required in external environments.

A good example of articulating clearly the opportunities available to students comes from BSc (Hons) Geography (2007: 10) where specific mention is made of opportunities and kinds of employment valuable to Geography graduates within the private, public and voluntary sectors. The validation document further articulates how students could use their transferable skills to access these opportunities. This would work to encourage students to think about and to engage with the value of transferable skills while at university, which arguably is one of the key challenges facing employability provision in higher education.

Another example of good practice is found where documents have emphasised the need for students to consider their own priorities and aims in employment, alongside those of potential employers (FdA/BA Early Years, FdA/BA Education and Learning Support, FdA/BA Professional Learning in Children and Young People's Services, 2006). A large part of employability is considering the self in relation to the world of work (Kumar, 2007), which includes reflection on one's personality and values alongside consideration of achievements and skills. This kind of thinking reflects the values of lifelong learning and is therefore an important part of employability provision. With this in mind, courses that emphasise lifelong learning and students' own priorities in professional development have the potential to contribute to learners' employability.

An understanding of the approaches to work and the demands of the real world of work which students would eventually be targeting, and making this understanding part of teaching and learning practice, contributes significantly to enhancing learner employability. There are a number of approaches to integrating real world of work activities within the HE curriculum. Amongst those demonstrated by D&S courses were:

- Inviting professionals as visiting speakers - for example in the MA Film Studies with Screenwriting 'visiting speakers who are professional practitioners are invited to meet with and discuss with the student group selected aspects of industry practice' (MA Film Studies/MA Film Studies with Screenwriting, 2007: 27).

- Basing modules on industry practice - for example, Construction and Real Estate courses (MSc Real Estate Investment and Management/MSc Real Estate Construction and Development, 2007: 3) integrate within their PDP provision the RICS APC competency framework, which is a professionally recognised approach to CPD.

- Using industry standards within assessment and pedagogic delivery - for example in the MA Film Studies with Screenwriting 'assessments on modules focussed on the practice of screen writing are based on industry practice' (MA Film Studies/MA Film Studies with Screenwriting, 2007: 27). Similarly the Early Childhood Studies course has designed their modules in line with the Every Child Matters agenda and outcomes, which make students aware of performance standards and ethical considerations which they would be required to perform to in professional working environments. (BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies/BA (Hons) Children and Playwork/BA (Hons) Childhood Studies, 2007: 4)

- Raising awareness in students of the value of continuing professional development (CPD) - for example TESOL courses which integrate real world of work activities (including teaching and research) into the course, in order to 'best enhance their continuing professional development by building up teaching experience' (MA TESOL/Postgraduate Cert in TEAP/Professional Foundation Scheme, 2007: 28). These activities are developmental, they contribute to a more

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holistic understanding of the teaching role and in this way introduce the kind of thinking which is required in CPD.

Questions to consider and discuss

- Are there opportunities to further and more precisely identify areas of potential employment available to students within validation documents?

- How could course planning take into account the need for students to consider their own priorities and aims in employment (including personality, values, and the self), not only those of an immediate employer?

- Are there possibilities to integrate into teaching and learning an understanding of the approaches to work and demands of the real world of work (see bulleted list of suggestions in previous section)?

Recommendations for addressing the employability agenda when writing for validation

In writing for validation on activities similar to those required in external environment, courses could place an emphasis on the key aspects of lifelong learning - how could these values be introduced to students in a way which would allow them to carry them into employment? This further implies an emphasis on teaching students about the values of CPD. A number of approaches were identified within D&S validation documents which contribute as activities intended to prepare students for the world of work. Included amongst these are:

- Inviting professionals as visiting speakers

- Basing taught modules on industry practice

- Using industry standards within assessment and pedagogic delivery

References:

Kumar, A. 2007, *Personal, Academic & Career Development in Higher Education: SOARing to success,* Routledge, London and New York.

References to definitive documents:

https://staff.shu.ac.uk/fds/workStudents/quality/defDocs.asp
[Accessed 23d February, 2009]

1. BSc (Hons) Geography validated February 2007

2. FdA/BA Early Years, FdA/BA Education and Learning Support, FdA/BA Professional Learning in Children and Young People's Services validated December 2006

3. MA Film Studies/MA Film Studies with Screenwriting revalidated May 2007

4. MSc Real Estate Investment and Management/MSc Real Estate Construction and Development DELIVERED IN PRAGUE validated May 2007

5. BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies/BA (Hons) Children and Playwork/BA (Hons) Childhood Studies revalidated April 2007

6. MA TESOL/Postgraduate Cert in TEAP/Professional Foundation Scheme revalidated May 2007