

AGCAS Skills Award Case Studies- University of Lincoln

Background

The purpose of the Lincoln Award is to support students to develop and learn how to demonstrate their employability skills. The Lincoln Award was launched in 2010 and has grown massively to reach student numbers of over 1700 active each year. The overarching motivation for the introduction of the award was to positively impact our DHLE statistics; as all our activity is channelled towards this overall objective. One of the main drivers for the award was to join up the activity of the Student Job Shop and the wider Careers service; to ensure students were able to identify and communicate the skills being developing during part time employment and other extra-curricular activity. It was also identified as a vehicle to increase student engagement with Careers events and activities. This was successful as there was an immediate and clear correlation between an increase in award sign up and engagement in Careers activities.

Structure

The award has a clear visual structure which outlines the activity required;

<http://uolcareers.co.uk/students-graduates/lincoln-award/award-structure>

We run daily 1 hour Induction events where the students attending receive information about the award and also complete our Careers & Employability Skills Assessment. This is the first part of the award and provides students with a chance to reflect on their current confidence levels in the skill areas listed; these are informed by the graduate labour market. Students are recommended to use the results to inform their activity on the award. Students are also required to take engage in and record a certain amount of evidence from a huge range of eligible activities. There are 3 sections of activity required; 40 hours of extra curricular activity (part time work, volunteering or work experience), 1 Employment Advice or Skills Development Session (our in house advice sessions), 2 Chosen Activities (a wide range of skills or employability related activities run centrally by Careers, on campus or externally) and 3 Academic Subject Activities (related to the student's area of study; such as employability modules, guest lecturers and particular projects). Once students have recorded participation at all required activities they are booked onto the two final components of the award; the Pathway Reflection and the Assessment Centre Experience. The Pathway Reflection sessions are delivered by our Careers Advisers and provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their progress throughout the award, returning to review the original Skills Assessment. The session also prepares students for the Assessment Centre Experience. This is the final stage of the programme and an opportunity for the student to put their experiences and learning to the test. We run our Assessment Centre Experiences in partnership with employers and professionals to ensure it is as realistic an experience as possible but within a safe and supported environment. Students are sent a job role and company details for context. The experience is made up of; a group tasks, a written exercise and a short interview. All elements are scored and students receive a feedback report which includes their score and some feedback on each area. Our scoring criteria ensures consistency and failure to meet the required level triggers further support for the student with an adviser before they can rebook to attempt the experience again.

Recognition

We hold a Celebration Event in May every year for all our completers. This is a fairly informal event where a member of university management comes along to recognise the students' achievements and we present their certificates. We would like to explore more formal recognition however we also emphasise to students the main value of the award is their experience rather than the recognition.

Size/Engagement

All students are eligible to take part in the award and they can sign up at any point. The only restriction for completion is by May of their graduation year. We have between 1500-1700 students active each year and between 250-350 completers. About 12% of our student body are active on the award.

Resources

Our award is co-ordinated by our Student Employability & Careers Centre Manager and the administration is supported by our Customer Services intern (a paid 1 year graduate role) who manages our Careers Centre reception area and co-ordinates all bookings for the service. The Lincoln Award forms part of both roles in amongst a wide remit of activity spanning across the service. The award Induction events are delivered by our 2 Skills Advisers within the team and the Pathway Reflection session by our Careers Advisers. The whole team are involved in delivering the Assessment Centre Experience alongside our employer partners.

Evaluation and Impact

We gather student feedback throughout the year and from all award completers in May each year. We also run surveys to gather feedback from non-engaged students. We have previously analysed the DHLE outcomes of completers. Evaluation is an area we have identified as a priority for development as it has been restricted by resources and the increase in student engagement.

Key Successes and Challenges

The student experience has been our main success in the development of the award. The simple structure of the award is popular with students and has enabled us to provide a great experience for students with minimal additional resources. Tracking and evaluation have been our main challenges due to a paper based system. We are currently planning our move onto an online system and this will be launched ready for the 2019/2020 cohort. This will provide major improvements in tracking the progress of students and co-ordinating activities. It will also provide a much more tailored experience for students and we hope have a positive impact on completion numbers.

Email contact: Jessica Shields, Student Employability & Careers Centre Manager;
jshields@lincoln.ac.uk

Website: www.uolcareers.co.uk/lincolnaward

