

RED Award – University of Reading

Background

The RED Award was launched at the University in 2010/11. It was designed as a vehicle for students to develop key transferable skills, and to gain recognition of the extra-curricular activities they undertake.

Structure

In order to complete the award, students have to:

- Register – through our student portal
- Complete 50 hours of activity
 - 5 hours of training and development (workshops run by the university or students' union such as careers workshops)
 - 10 hours of volunteering
 - 35 hours of core activity (paid-work, internships, work experience, further volunteering)
 - **Note, students track their hours through a hand-written activity checklist and must get proof of hours in the form of signatures.*
- Attend a completion session – this is compulsory for all students to complete the award. In these sessions we collect the completed activity checklists from students and also run a number of activities to help them think about the skills they have developed through the award (and how they can demonstrate these skills in applications and at interviews).

Recognition

Students who complete the award are provided with a certificate signed by the Vice Chancellor. We also add details of their completion to their degree transcript, which they receive when they graduate.

Size/Engagement

All of the University of Reading students are eligible to take part in the RED Award and there are no restrictions around this (although students can only complete it once).

We have approximately 1,300 students register for the award each year and in recent years have had 550+ completing the award each year (with this number gradually rising annually).

The award is well regarded across the university and we manage to attract students from all schools to take part.

Resourcing

A Project Officer manages the award at the university, however, they also run another project relating to an undergraduate research opportunities programme. Therefore work on the award is the equivalent to 0.6 FTE.

Evaluation and Impact

In order to evaluate the award we produce a report each year looking at the participation based on demographics such as:

- Year of study
- Underrepresented groups
- Schools/departments

We record the type of activities that students undertake through the award and also keep track of the number of volunteering hours completed.

Key Successes and Challenges

The RED Award is currently well embedded in the university and is recognised by the majority of staff and students.

This has been key to the success of the award as a lot of different activity across the university can count towards the completion hours. For example, workshops run through our counselling and wellbeing team can count towards the training and development hours, being part of a society committee can count towards volunteering hours, and work on campus can count towards core activity hours. Therefore students are constantly reminded and recommended to take part in the RED Award through a lot of different touch points they come across at the university.

Another success has been running non-compulsory introduction sessions. These sessions have been well attended and give students a clear understanding of what they need to do, and how they can go about finding hours in order to complete the award.

One of the main challenges we currently face is understanding where students are on the road to completing the award and identifying any barriers that stop them from completing. As all students hand complete their activity checklists we are not able to see at any stage how many hours they have left to complete and what we could offer them in order to aid completion.

Future Developments

Our aim with the RED Award is to encourage more first year students to take part. This will help them to engage with various parts of the university at an earlier stage and encourage them to think about their skill development earlier than they may do otherwise.

We would also like to increase the amount of students completing the award in one academic year. Although we appreciate that the activity involved in the award can take some time to complete, we believe it is achievable in one year. If the students are able to complete in this timeframe we can then look at moving them onto other initiatives and schemes that they may be interested in (such as our newly introduced Advanced RED Award).

In the future we would like to investigate potential online progress trackers so that we can identify what stage each student has reached in their RED Award progress. We would then be able to use this information to identify trends and put processes in place to aid more completions of the award.

Email contact

Tom McCann – t.mccann@reading.ac.uk

Website

http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/careers_and_professional_development/grow/red-award.aspx