The Cardiff Award

Background

The Cardiff Award supports the University's strategic commitment to employability. It encourages students to use personal development planning to document and articulate the development of their employability skills and experience. Furthermore, it seeks to ensure that participants are employable upon graduation and have the broad array of skills and attributes required by recruiters.

It commenced in the academic year 2011 – 2012 with a small cohort from selected schools. The Award is now in its 8th year and has over 500 students participating in the programme.

Structure

Students are able to sign up to the Cardiff Award anytime from the day they register at University and have until 1st April of their final year to complete. The timescale is deliberately open and flexible to enable students to complete the programme at a pace that works for them.

Students undertake a range of activities both on and offline and then complete an online portfolio on our platform.

The programme is set out to complement the first three stages of career readiness.

Explore

Students complete three online self-awareness assessments

- Your personality indicator - A discovery tool for personal development. This is a simple online questionnaire that gives a detailed report that will provide insight into a student's personal behavioural style and team role preferences.

- Your skills and attributes indicator - Identifying strengths and areas for development from 10 top graduate skills and attributes.

- Your opportunities indicator - Exploring different sectors and careers options to help identify those of interest.

Develop

- Students gain 70 hours of experience in a minimum of two activities and record these on their profile. They also complete reflections of their activities.

- Students complete online employability sessions on the topics of CVs and cover letters and reflection.

- Students complete a further 5 other employability sessions of their choice. They can choose from any of the online sessions or attend employer presentations on campus and employability sessions within their School.

- Students are expected to reflect on their activities throughout the programme. This is done within online sessions, the reflections on their 70 hours of experience and within other activities that are completed offline.

- Students upload their CV to the CV and Application form management tool and receive written feedback.

Compete

Students practice for recruitment by completing one recruitment experience from a choice of:

- Mock interview

- o Mock video interview
- o Mock assessment centre
- o Business plan summary
- o Psychometric tests

Recognition

Students receive an e-certificate and can also put a certificate on LinkedIn. The Cardiff Award is also included on their Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR).

Size/Engagement

The programme is open to all students; undergraduate, part-time, and postgraduate. Registration is rolling and students can sign up anytime from when they register and have until 1st April of their final year to complete (this ensures their information goes to Registry to be included in their HEAR before graduation).

This year has been the first for the new programme and we have had 500 sign-up to date; this is approx. 2% of the student population. We are looking to increase this to 1,000 next year but our capacity for student sign-up is higher than this. In previous forms of the programme, retention averaged at around 50% and we are now looking to increase this.

Platform/ IT system

We have had a bespoke platform designed by https://potential.ly. Students can sign in through their University Intranet portal and the platform communicates with SIMS to enable single sign-on and completes registration details. Students also use Targetconnect to book on-campus employability sessions and to upload their CV to the CV and application form management tool.

Reporting

We use a combination of Excel and reports from our developers to report against KPIs. Our KPI is 500 students registered to the programme.

Resourcing

There is a Cardiff Award Manager and Cardiff Award Assistant Administrator. They are both FTE and they divide their time between the Cardiff Award and managing the online Platform, 'Your Career Journey'.

In addition, Careers Advisers and Employability Advisers promote the programme and can offer support to students during their one-to-one appointments.

Evaluation and Impact

There is an end of year evaluation which breaks down the statistics such as year group and school of the students as well as looking at the overall and average number of extra-curricular hours. Students complete a survey and their feedback informs this evaluation. We previously looked at whether the Cardiff Award has had a higher positive outcome on students vs those that have not completed the programme and we also complete a rough audit (mainly through LinkedIn) on where our Alumni are a year on. This year we have introduced a survey for non-completers to understand why they did not finish the programme.

Key Successes and Challenges

Moving online enables our students to complete the programme at any time and from anywhere that works for them. Alongside the flexibility of the timing we are now able to reach students who are final year, postgraduate, abroad or on placement which should see our numbers increase over time. Students can complete almost all elements online and whilst there are on-campus activities, they are not mandatory so this again offers more flexibility.

The main challenges include technical developments; we have had some 'teething issues' with the new system but these are being resolved. This year we reduced the level of face-to-face support, and are currently reviewing this, as students do value that. We are looking at how we can make this manageable with such a small staff team and our solution is through drop-in sessions with our Employability Advisers.

In terms of advice for others, I think the biggest issue is upscaling and continuing to offer a quality service. Buy-in is vital at all levels, both within the department and across the institution. Within our Service, the Award is included in other staff members' remits in terms of promotion and support. When spread widely, it doesn't have a huge impact on workloads.

Word of mouth is our best recruitment channel and in particular through academics so it is worth the time and effort to build those relationships.

Future Developments

We will be continuing to build our online platform and the Award programme will be a big part of this. We are currently looking at online badges as smaller stepping stones and a gamified way to motivate more students to get involved. We are looking at doubling our recruitment figures next year and increasing our retention rates.

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