

## **AGCAS Skills Award Case Studies:**

### **DUNDEE PLUS AWARD**

#### **Background**

Dundee Plus was launched at the start of academic year 2015/16 replacing the existing Dundee Graduate Skills Award which was established in 2009/10.

It was established firstly to encourage new students to get involved in extra-curricular activities. First (and second) year students are encouraged to set goals for the year and are signposted to services where they will receive support (e.g. the Careers Service can help them find a part-time job or summer internship). When a student reaches third year, they are able to apply for the Dundee Plus Award which aims to help students identify and articulate skills developed through extra-curricular activities.

#### **Structure**

Students can apply for the Dundee Plus Award from 3<sup>rd</sup> year onwards. The process involves attending a workshop where the application process is explained along with examples of good practice and how to answer competency based questions. The students then individually assess a previous applicant's submission and decide whether or not that applicant should have received the Award or not. Following their attendance at the (compulsory) workshop, they have 2/3 weeks to submit their application for the Award. This involves answering competency based questions around three skills from a list of eight (self-management, group & team working, professional attitudes and commercial awareness, analysing and problem solving, communication and literacy, application of numeracy, information literacy and IT and leadership). Each skill has three questions to choose from (they are therefore choosing three questions from a list of twenty four). Answers are expected to be between 250-500 words each.

They then receive their outcome with feedback by email and if successful are considered as a potential prize winner. If their application is unsuccessful, they are given feedback to why that is the case and are given the opportunity to resubmit. Applicants resubmitting successfully will receive the Dundee Plus Award.

Workshops are held in both semesters and are open to all students. Some arrangements are in place with schools, where we will deliver workshops to a particular programme, however the process is the same regardless of which students are attending.

#### **Recognition**

The University of Dundee has not 'signed up' to HEAR. Students successfully completing the Award receive a certificate to recognise their achievement.

A graduate recruiter is then asked to select the third best, second best and overall winner for the year from a shortlist of the best applications received.

#### **Size/Engagement**

All students (undergraduate and PG) are eligible to apply for the Award. Undergraduates from third year onwards.

In 2016/17, applications for the Award were received from 193 students from a total of 324 who attended a Pre-application workshop (approx. 60%).

193 students completed the Award in 2016/17. UoD has over 17,000 matriculated students.

### **Platform/ IT system**

We have recently signed up to Target Connect and are looking at how we can make better use of the system to manage the administrative process. We currently use the tagging facility to monitor Dundee Plus registrations and Award applications.

### **Reporting**

An annual report is produced in May each year once the prize winners have been recognised. This details numbers of students registered for Dundee Plus and those who have applied for the Award by year and school. It also details the skills being articulated. Figures for the previous year are also provided for comparison purposes.

### **Resourcing**

Approximately 0.4 FTE work on the award with some admin support equivalent to approximately 0.5 FTE.

### **Evaluation and Impact**

Applicants are asked to complete an online survey and those who attended a workshop but did not complete the Award are asked to complete a separate survey to establish their reasons for not completing the process.

As for involving others in evaluation of the Award and its impact: No research done as yet although I would like to in the future (resource permitting).

### **Key Successes and Challenges**

Continually thinking about improvements, however small to make it easier/more attractive for students to participate and also to reduce admin time. Buy in from academics is key to growing the number of students participating and this is an ongoing conversation.

Our Award has developed from a very much paper based / email heavy application to a more streamlined process with online application form. This has made a huge difference and looks far more professional. I see the Dundee Plus as very much a work in progress with change as a constant as we strive to offer more options to what seems to be an ever more demanding demographic.

### **Future Developments (particularly for the next three years)**

Other skills programmes have already been developed:

#### Leadership Plus

The programme involves a number of elements:

- Completion of a number of leadership based skills development workshops' which will be delivered by external organisations including the RAF, Tesco and Lloyds Banking Group.
- Creation and regular updating of your own Word Press Blog (training on this will be provided). Please note that your website will be publicly accessible.
- Being matched with a mentor with whom you will have regular contact with throughout the programme.

Applications for a place on the programme are invited from students who meet the following minimum applicant criteria:

- Current matriculated University of Dundee students.
- Students who are currently undertaking or will be undertaking a leadership role whether in a club, society, team, job, voluntary role or other similar position during the full term of the programme.

STP Plus <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/careers/stp/>

Participation involves completing a school based placement of at least 30 hours, during which you will undertake a study on an aspect of school life, the subject of which will be agreed between the participant and the school. Following completing of your placement, you will present the findings from your study to teachers from your placement school and members of staff from the University of Dundee. Students interested in STP Plus should complete the STP application form and discuss participation at the applicant meeting.

Benefits of successfully completing STP Plus include:

- An excellent addition to your CV.
- A CV to evidence participation.
- A guaranteed interview when apply to the University of Dundee PGDE Programme (subject to minimum entry requirements being met).

Additional 'Plus' programmes in the early stages of planning (for launch in 2018/19) include Dundee Plus International and Business Plus.

It is also the intention that Open Badges will be offered as a replacement for (or in addition to) paper based certificates.

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