

AGCAS Skills Award Case Studies:

EXETER AWARD

Background

Launched in 2008, the **Exeter Award** is an extracurricular award that aims to provide students with:

- A systematic framework to gain relevant skills and experiences
- An opportunity to gain recognition for extra-curricular activities
- An opportunity to practice for the recruitment and selection process without risk

The Award was designed to mirror the graduate recruitment process and be as flexible as possible, allowing for maximum participation without being resource intensive. With the exception of the mock job application, all the activities in the Award framework were already on offer to students from the careers service, employers, colleges, and Students' Guild (student union) before the Award itself was launched. It operates as a roll-on-roll-off programme with taught students able to begin/complete at any time whilst at Exeter.

Structure

- 1) Students must complete the following activities in any order: 35h of work experience or volunteering, CV or application form session, personal development session, and two other employability activities. Personal development sessions include: Time Management, Presentation Skills, Negotiations Skills, Networking Skills, Team Dynamics, etc. The 'Two other activities' section encompasses a wide range of employability activities available on campus (eg. employer/alumni presentations, language courses) as well as verifiable activities that the students may engage in outside the university. Taught students can count publishing journal articles, presenting papers or posters at conferences, and applying for funding towards their activity hours, with 100 published words corresponding to 1h of work, and the need for academic staff to confirm the amount of time the student spent on research.
- 2) They then submit an online mock job application form. Which is marked and each student is provided with formative feedback.
- 3) Finally the reflection and articulation of skills developed takes place at the interview stage, when activities are individually assessed and feedback is provided.

The Exeter Leaders Award was launched shortly after the Exeter Award. It recognises leadership and provides a framework to help students develop as a leader. It provides progression from the Exeter Award and was designed to be more challenging. Students must:

- Complete the Exeter Award
- Demonstrate a leadership activity via a formal leadership role the student has been elected or appointed to
- Attend a programme of leadership skills development sessions (including core and optional workshops)
- Complete an online reflective application form
- Deliver a 15 minutes presentation to a panel composed of the Award team, employer, and a Careers Consultant..

Recognition

- Both the Exeter Award and the Exeter Leaders Award are featured on the Exeter HEAR.
- Students who have completed the Exeter Leaders Award can apply for the Level 2 Award in Leadership and Team Skills accredited by the ILM and the University will fund 50% of the cost.

Size/Engagement

	Exeter Award	Exeter Leaders Award
New registrations	2000	250
Completions	500-550	70

Resourcing

Administration is paperless and handled via the Career Hub system, which is used to:

- Enable event booking and record attendance at sessions.
- Process online forms for: application form completion and assessment, recording of work experience, requests for external employability activities to be accredited and skills session evaluation.
- Control the logic when activities have to be completed in order.

Management of the Awards is a low resource: Award Manager 0.2FTE with admin support also at 0.2FTE. The cost per head of completing the Exeter Award was calculated at £51, and the Leaders Award at £92.34.

Evaluation and Impact

- In the early years of the Award, all completers were required to complete an evaluation form. This feedback, together with an analysis of queries sent to the Award email, was used to inform a host of changes such as level of provision across campuses and making the process easier to understand. Student feedback is overwhelmingly positive, particularly with regard to the final stage of the Award.
- Other stakeholders, including employers, have also been consulted as part of the evaluation process.
- The structure of both Awards has remained unchanged for several years. We continue to evaluate individual components of the Award and use this feedback to inform/improve those sessions as appropriate.
- Whilst the structure has remained unchanged, the Award has continued to evolve with example Pathways available to students to show how the Award can be used to explore and test a particular occupation or sector.
- DLHE results for Award completers have been mixed and higher rates of graduate level outcomes observed have not been statistically significant, with the exception of one particular cohort.

Key Successes and Challenges

- The flexible nature of the Exeter Award is key to its success. We are moving limited material online so that students who are studying or working overseas, or distance/ commuter learners are able to participate more in Award activities.
- A key challenge is keeping track of all of the new initiatives which have been developed across the university and capturing them so that students can use them towards their Award completion.
- Whilst we have managed on very minimal resourcing, it would be a great deal easier to run the Award with more dedicated resource, particularly in areas such as marketing to students.

Future Developments

Capturing the new Professional Pathways in the Award structure – these are composed of a training programme followed by internship and cover a variety of sectors

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