

AGCAS Skills Award Case Studies:

WORCESTER AWARD

Background

- The Worcester Award has been running since its pilot in 2010. The award was restructured into two tiers in 2014-15: the Worcester Award and Worcester Award+. In 2015-16, the award was restructured into three tiers: Bronze, Silver and Gold.
- It is designed to recognise and encourage employability skills development through extra-curricular activities across and beyond the campus.

Structure

The scheme recognises a range of activities and experiences both within and outside the curriculum, with students taking part in a range of activities drawn from three groups:

- Work experience
- Personal and skills development
- Employability activities

The requirements for each level of the award are:

Bronze: 40h of work experience / 20h of personal development activities / 1 employability activity.

Silver: 80h of work experience / 40h of personal development activities / 2 employability activities / Silver Award (reflective) workshop.

Gold: 80h of work experience / 40h of personal development activities / 2 employability activities / Silver Award (reflective) workshop / 5 minute presentation and 20 minute panel interview.

Assessment of the award includes the submission of a log book, which includes space to reflect on the detail of each activity and what skills are developed. Activities require verification by signature in the log book or via email. Activities can include work on or off campus, active membership of a club or society, enterprise activities, volunteering, language modules, course rep, career or CV clinics, and work experience/employability based modules. Each Gold Award interview panel is made up of a local employer, academic and a member of the Careers and Employability team. All three Award levels can be completed at the same time as activities completed for the level below can be used for the level above, and students can use activities completed throughout their time at university toward the Award.

Recognition

- The Worcester Award is recorded on students' HEAR when they graduate, and they receive an official certificate from the University at the annual Worcester Award Celebration Event.

Size/Engagement Any registered University of Worcester student can achieve the Worcester Award. They can be:

- From any of the six institutes
- Studying full- or part-time
- On their placement/sandwich year (if applicable)
- Based at a partner college, or

On an undergraduate or postgraduate course Numbers of students engaging and completing were initially low, but the numbers have increased substantially since 2014-15. In 2017, over 250 students completed the Worcester Award, including 119 Gold Award winners.

Resourcing

- The Worcester Award is currently managed by the Student Employability Activities Co-ordinator.
- The Worcester Award is run by the Careers & Employability team.

Evaluation and Impact

Students, staff and employers have been very positive about the award. 93% of students surveyed after completing the Worcester Award in 2015-16 stated that the award has improved their future employability, with comments including *'it's important to evaluate past experiences of extra-curricular activities in order to support future employment'* and *'it's recognition for what we have done alongside our degree'*.

Key Successes and Challenges

- Delivering brief presentations at the start of the academic year to promote the Worcester Award and encourage registration; involving local employers on Gold Award interview panels – they provide feedback, which is recorded and sent as an audio file to the student.
- Ensuring that students who have registered actually complete the award; gaining buy-in from a greater number of academic colleagues

Advice:

Ensure that the award has a strong identity and network with academic colleagues and local employers; use various means of communications to ensure that students receive your consistent messages about the award.

Future Developments

Ideas for the future include exploring the possibility of the 'Worcester Leadership Award' to showcase students' skills even further and providing an online platform that would enable students to log their hours and reflect online.

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