Employability: Challenge and Change in an Evolving Landscape

4 May 2016, Jordanstown campus, Foyer (16G)
#UlsterEmpConf

09.30 to 10.00  Tea/Coffee Registration (Foyer 16G)

10.00 to 10.10  Welcome (Room 16G42)
Professor Geoff McMullan, Chair of the Sub-Committee on Employability, Associate Dean of Life and Health Sciences

10.10 to 10.30  ‘Setting the Scene’
Professor Denise McAlister, PVC Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, Ulster University

10.30 to 11.15  ‘Preparing Students for Lifelong Employability in a Digital World’
Dr Peter Chatterton, Director, Daedalus e-World Ltd

A recent CBI/Pearson survey (CBI/Pearson 2015) highlights the stark reality of the graduate landscape: “Businesses look first and foremost for graduates with the right attitudes and aptitudes to enable them to be effective in the workplace – nearly nine in ten employers (89%) value these above factors such as degree subject (62%)”. If such needs of employers are to be addressed, universities must provide a lot more than just career/job guidance as a stand-alone end-of-programme activity. Instead, the concept of lifelong employability needs to be nurtured in students throughout learning programmes. Peter will describe how programme teams can achieve this through “connected curricula” approaches, which bring together concepts such as T-profile curricula, partnership working with employers, authentic learning and assessment for learning - all underpinned using a 5-dimensional model of “technology for employability”. These approaches are all described in a recent Jisc report ‘Technology for Employability’ (Jisc, 2015) that Peter has co-authored and are illustrated with 20 in-depth case studies. Peter will also argue that expectations must be raised in relation to graduate (employability-framed) e-competences and e-leadership, highlighting how these are being realised in universities through initiatives such as student change leaders and innovators.

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<td>11.15 to 11.25</td>
<td><strong>Questions and Answers</strong> (Chaired by Professor Geoff McMullan)</td>
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<td>11.25 to 12.00</td>
<td><strong>Tea/Coffee Break</strong> (Poster Marketplace, Foyer 16G)</td>
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| 12.00 to 12.20 | **‘Measuring Learning Gain through Student Self-Perception and Career-Readiness’**
                  | Joanne Ives, Deputy Director of the Graduate Development Centre,      |
                  | Liverpool John Moores University                                       |
                  | Where, how and when do students make their career decisions and how   |
                  | these link to the institutional support they access to assist them?   |
                  | Often the only institutional impact measure and evaluation of        |
                  | employability support is to trace graduates sometime after they have  |
                  | graduated to establish their first career destination or employment. |
                  | As universities worldwide are grappling with providing effective and  |
                  | timely employability support for individual students and graduates    |
                  | that is also strategic, high quality, accessible and cost-effective, |
                  | having more ‘in time’ data on existing students and their career     |
                  | development paths could be helpful in improving the support for      |
                  | current students and achieve this aim.                               |
                  | This session will share the LJMU case study of the introduction of a  |
                  | university wide annual ‘Career Readiness’ survey and how the data    |
                  | has already been used institutionally and at programme level,        |
                  | providing insight into student career decision helping to monitor    |
                  | and evaluate learning gain and it’s link to student and graduate    |
                  | employability.                                                       |
| 12.20 to 12.40 | **‘Closing the Gap: Student Mobility = Employability.**                |
                  | **The Essex Model’**                                                  |
                  | Ivan Hutchins, Head of Global Mobility, University of Essex           |
                  | A growing body of research indicates that international experience   |
                  | brings significant employability benefits to graduates. Following    |
                  | similar initiatives in other countries, 2013 saw the launch of the    |
                  | UK outward mobility strategy by UUK, with an overall aim to achieve   |
                  | the Bologna Target of 20% student mobility by 2020. However, an      |
                  | embedded culture of study or internship abroad is rare among UK      |
                  | students, who may not believe it is necessary to travel overseas to   |
                  | access world-class education, experience different cultures and      |
                  | countries, or benefit their careers.                                 |
| 12.40 to 12.50 | **Roundup of Presentations** (Professor Geoff McMullan)                |
| 12.50 to 13.00 | **Transfer to Workshops**                                              |
| 13.00 to 13.45 | **Parallel Workshops** (Room 16G25/42/45, 16D05, 16D08, 16C30)        |
| 13.45 to 14.15 | **Lunch** (Poster Marketplace)                                         |
‘Employability Challenge and Change in an Evolving Landscape’ Conference

4th May 2016

Workshop and Poster Abstracts
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Workshop 1: Quick Fire session: (Room 16G25)
Theme: Employability in the Curriculum

a. Career Entrepreneurship Leads to Graduate Success
   Glenda Martin, Employability and Marketing

According to a recent Institute of Directors survey of 500 directors, 64% said that when recruiting, employability skills were more important to their firm than the specific occupational, technical or academic skills.

If this is true, universities need to provide more than career guidance. Employability skills need to be embedded and developed within learning programmes. Career Entrepreneurship is a 20 credit point module, the aim of which focusses on the development of student employability skills.

The innovative learning methodology embeds employability skills directly in the programme and the assessment includes a combination of new technology, real life recruitment practice and authentic assessment scenarios that challenge students to step out of their comfort zone.

This session will share good practice, provide ideas that you can take away to apply in your own discipline and help you consider how employability might fit in your learning programme.

b. Compulsory Employability – A Review of Professional Irish
   Dr Malachy Ó Néill and Dr Caoimhín Ó Dónaill
   School of Irish Language and Literature

Employability statistics have traditionally been a challenge for the Arts and Humanities, yet since the inception of a new employability-focused model in 2012 EDGE participation has risen dramatically and NSS has returned consecutive 100% student satisfaction score for Irish. This presentation offers an insightful synopsis of the various steps taken by staff in Irish to develop an employability ecology from induction to graduation and will review the inaugural year of a compulsory employability module, Professional Irish.

Students of Irish are offered a road-map of opportunities to participate in work-based learning at various stages of the undergraduate degree programme, including EDGE-accredited activities such as Luach Breise, an internship with an organisation in the Irish language sector, or GLIC, a competition based on the design of pedagogic resources for the learning and teaching of Irish. 2015-16 saw the initiation of the compulsory employability module for final year students with ‘Professional Irish’ providing some wonderfully rich experiences for participants including cross-campus collaboration, work experience, CV building, networking, pitching and presenting to industry partners. This employability model provides a template for other disciplines across the University.
Workshop 2: Quick Fire Session: (Room 16C30)
Theme: Innovative Models in Work-based Learning Practice

a. Benefits of Embedding Transferable Employability Skills into Year 1 for Staff, Students and Industry
   Professor Jonathan Wallace, Computing and Maths
   Dr Michaela Black, School of Computing and Information Engineering
   Aaron Colton (graduate student).

There are many benefits to be gained from embedding employability skills into courses from the start in Year 1.

The Faculty of Computing & Engineering will present case studies of current practice that have already offered great benefits to the staff, students and industry partners involved.

We will present effective interventions and pilots covering student profiling to assist effective resources, such as Hackathons for charities, to enhance students confidence building, employability, transition and retention;

The presentation will also present successes gained from initiatives such as the Business Launch Pad including perspectives from the student and graduate experience.

b. Developing knowledge and skills in risk management for Nursing students: The use of simulation and applied drama
   Pat Deeny, Diane Lyttle and Mary Findon-Henry
   School of Nursing

The Safe and Effective Nurse and Safe and Effective Mental Health Nurse are year 3 semester 1 modules delivered to pre-registration adult and mental health undergraduate nursing students(n=210). This workshop will outline how a problem based learning (PBL) approach is used within this skills-based module to develop students’ knowledge and skills in risk management. A combination of simulation and applied drama techniques is used. Students are allocated to eight different scenarios designed around real life clinical problems that occur in the workplace. In their problem based learning groups, students apply decision-making and leadership skills to manage the risks presented in the scenario. Video-recordings of the scenarios are uploaded to Sharestream in Blackboard Learn. Both the PBL Groups and the Actors (as patients and/or family members) play-back the videos, reflecting on the overall management of risk. The experience improves confidence in risk assessment and management and helps the Nursing students gain insights into the user experience. This workshop provides the opportunity to examine the rationale, processes and experiences of both staff and students and how this approach can enhance employability in future registered nurse roles.
a. Social Media: Changing the Face of Recruitment?
Lyndsay Rodgerson, Randox Laboratories Ltd

In recent years social media and the internet have changed the rules, making communication between businesses and their potential employees, direct and instantaneous. In order to stay ahead of the competition, organisations are adapting their approach with recruiters having to demonstrate innovative use of social media and new technologies in order to identify the perfect candidate. This presentation will review the increasing importance of social media in recruitment practice ensuring your organisation, and students alike, do not get left behind.

Alison Gault, Belfast School of Art

While a lot of criticism has been levelled against the use of social media and the distraction it can be, the opportunities for learning and interactivity however is profound, and the use of such technology is changing the business landscape and therefore the educational landscape.
Students are adapting and responding to the world through these relatively new methods of communication and in a world where connections are important graduates are coming into the workplace with key skills in social media. This way of communicating and their ability to assess, analyse, retain and share information is escalating and students often don’t even realise they’re developing these skills through the use of this technology.

This presentation will consider the use of blogging, twitter and Instagram in the context of students logging their progress while on placement and developing a community of practice, with their own student group and the wider business community and the impact on employability opportunities.

Workshop 4: (Room 16D05)
Developing a framework of employability: A School-wide Approach
Professor Ruth Fee, Criminology, Politics and Social Policy
Shauna McCloy, Employability and Marketing

The development of a School-wide framework for employability addresses the challenges of fully embedding employability into the student experience regardless of programme, level or mode of study. This has the benefit of articulating the concept of employability in a way that is easily understood by academics, students, employers and awarding bodies and provides a clear, visual answer to the simple question of what employability is.

This workshop offers a structure and process for defining and developing effective approaches to embedding employability into the student experience. The framework
adopted by the School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy reflects recent employability developments within Ulster and those influencing the wider HE employability agenda. The framework is something that can be adapted by programme teams across the University and also opens up new opportunities for the development of assessment tools and research into the impact of various employability interventions.
POSTER 1

‘Facilitated Practice Base Learning: enhancing professional practice and career prospects’
Dr Donna Brown and Christine Boomer
School of Nursing

Abstract:
Aim: Provide an overview of how an innovative academic framework, providing credit for practice based learning, can transform practitioners, deliver enhanced practice outcomes and provide opportunities for promotion.

Background: Health and social care provision is increasingly challenging within an ever evolving context, high expectations and increased scrutiny. Greater resource scrutiny has made it all the more relevant to have flexible and accessible learning that enables practitioners to simultaneously achieve personal growth, achievement and reward while also contributing to organisational and practice development. This poster presents an academic framework which recognises and values the fundamental importance of life-long learning based in practice to deliver person-centred healthcare (McCormack and McCance 2010).

Programme: The Developing Practice in Healthcare Programme is an innovative programme that runs collaboratively between Ulster University and health and social care providers. It is aimed at registered professionals within the Health and Social Care sector who wish to enhance and develop their knowledge and skills as part of their personal and professional development plan. The focus of the programme is practice-based whereby students learn the theory underpinning practice and apply this to practice, while they continue to work in their practice setting. Healthcare practitioners are encouraged to explore and reflect on their practice to develop person-centred cultures and enhance clinical practice, using a professional practice-based learning model. Developing knowledgeable person-centred practitioners and leaders, who are sensitive to the needs of people who use healthcare services, is fundamental to health and social care policy. This programme draws on a wide range of knowledge sources to promote the use and uptake of evidence into practice (Rycroft-Malone 2008).

Critical reflection offers a way of bridging the gap between theory and practice and is recognised, both in research and in this programme, as a defining characteristic of professional practice. However, the development of critical reflection remains challenging and evidence from implementation of this framework highlights the pivotal role the practice based facilitator has in enabling the student to develop their reflective knowledge and skills and subsequently evidence their learning. Successful facilitation of learning within this framework has been shown to result in professional and personal growth, increased career progression and enhanced patient outcomes.

Outcomes: Students innovative practice developments have impacted positively on nursing, nurse education, patients and services across a range of healthcare specialities and settings. Student initiatives, through practice based learning, have substantially changed the way in which healthcare is delivered as students have explicitly embraced the principles practice development which underpin the programme. The Developing Practice in Healthcare Programme also enables organisations to build leadership capacity for practice development, has assisted students with career progression and supports the delivery of high quality, safe and effective person-centred care.
References:


POSTER 2

GET REAL! Creating genuine industrial experiences for undergraduate students
Dr Malachy O’Neill
School of Irish Language and Literature

Abstract:
Embedding Work Based Learning: Irish Language Initiatives
Authors/Schools/Departments: Dr Malachy Ó Néill & Dr Caomhín Ó Dónaill, School of Irish Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts
Short descriptor of content: This presentation outlines the political imperative for the provision of work based learning opportunities across the HE curriculum and how staff in Irish at Ulster have developed practical learning opportunities in line with departmental and institutional goals in this area.

POSTER 3

Simulating the Interview: The Student Perspective
Dr Laura Bradley and Dr Lynne Tinkler
Department of International Business

Abstract:
Overview: The poster will provide details on a pilot implementation of an interview simulator, among Years 2 and 4 undergraduate students, within the Ulster University Business School. Interview skills present a challenge for Higher Education Institutions for a number of reasons, not least that the students need support to develop this skill, but that this can be very time and resource intensive. The use of an interview simulation tool has been shown to be a valuable option to support this learning. The feedback from students on the impact the simulator has had on their interview skills was very positive.

The students used the resource, which could be tailored to their individual needs base, to improve their personal and professional development – thereby providing a student centric and driven initiative. The findings from the pilot study indicated that the use of simulators to develop interview skills is an effective option and should be considered for all student year groups to help continually develop and improve their interview skills.

POSTER 4

Embedding and enhancing graduate qualities and employment opportunities within social work at Ulster
Denise McDermott
School of Sociology and Applied Social Studies
Abstract:
Rationale
Work based learning is a core element of social work education and learning comprising 50% of the degree programme for undergraduate and postgraduate students in Northern Ireland. Practice based learning is a central tenet in contemporary social work practice; it is recognised and acknowledged internationally as the signature pedagogy of the social work profession (Fortune, McCarthy, & Abramson, 2001; MacDermott and Campbell, 2015; Shulman, 2005; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010). In an increasingly competitive labour market embedding employment strategies within the curriculum is essential for students, providing an opportunity to showcase their graduate qualities and for the University securing external partnerships with social work employers.

I devised an Enhancing Employability project in collaboration with colleagues from Employability and Marketing to specifically target social work students and employing agencies.

The Project
‘Getting that job’ Employability Event was launched on 19th February 2016. Promotion of the event was negotiated and an Insight video was secured to share internally with colleagues and students.

POSTER 5
Ulster University Business School and Deloitte providing a ‘BrightStart’ for students - an insight into an HLA Pilot
Judith Wylie and Professor Gillian Armstrong
School of Psychology

Abstract:
An insight into ‘BrightStart’, a Higher Level Apprenticeship Pilot programme being run in partnership between Deloitte and the Ulster University Business School. The ‘BrightStart’ programme aims to develop school leavers into valuable consultants, over a five-year period. During this time, learners balance their time between on-site client work, tutor led skills development and study for their degree.

POSTER 6
Connecting staff with student employability
Brian Byers
Employability and Marketing

Abstract:
The recently launched Staff Employability Portal aims to support University staff in developing student employability. It provides staff with an insight into the online resources that students can access in their pursuit of relevant work experience, enhanced skills, improved confidence and ultimately securing a graduate level opportunity. The Staff Employability Portal also brings together key employability indicators including EDGE, Destination data (DLHE), the Employability Journey and also provides advice and resource on work based learning and embedding employability in the curriculum. Like the Student Employability Portal the Staff Employability Portal is a fully responsive website which brings together key resources and relevant systems in one place.
OPTER 7

Optometrists see a bright employment future with postgraduate study at Ulster University.
Dr Raymond Beirne and Professor Tara Moore
School of Biomedical Sciences

Abstract:
There is great potential for optometrists to become more involved in diagnosing and managing ocular disease in both community and hospital practice, working in collaboration with ophthalmology and several other stakeholders. It is widely agreed that individuals working in an advanced optometric role should have specialised post-graduate qualifications. In 2014 Ulster became the first UK University to be accredited by the College of Optometrists to offer the Professional Certificate in Medical Retina. We wanted to determine any impact on employability that this course has had, and might have in the future, for optometrists who completed the first two runs of the course. Our survey shows that 38% of respondents to the survey have already been given increased clinical responsibility within their employment. A significant proportion of students believe that post-graduate qualifications will improve their future employment prospects and their remuneration. Employers and managers are keen to see their employees obtain higher qualifications and many are prepared to fund or help fund the cost of this training. There is a strong market for post-graduate qualifications in Optometry, particularly on-line courses, which can have a very real positive impact on long-term employability.

POSTER 8

School of Sport Employability Toolkit
Dr Rachel Telford, Paul Kitchin and Professor David Hassan
School of Sport

Abstract:
This employability resource (either an interactive pdf or ebook which can be have aspects printed i.e. templates etc and be accessible on computer and mobile device formats) would be for both students and staff within our School who could use it as a handbook/how to guide for all things employability related from 1st through to final year using Ulster's Employability Journey as its basis to guide staff and students to resources and opportunities with a different focus for first years, second years, placement year and final year students. Areas covered will include for example WBL, placement, study abroad advice, setting up placements, advertising volunteering opportunities, how to set up your own business, qualifications and training courses available, CV builder advice, interview prep techniques etc. I have suggested that we could make this document relevant for all schools in the Faculty or indeed university wide in terms of having generic content sections on e.g. employability, directing/linking students to content on the employability portal or Recruit, CV development, templates, interview skills etc. Then other schools could customise certain sections e.g. volunteering opportunities, WBL, placement etc. as they saw fit for their requirements.

This resource would also be supported by regular one page newsletters emailed to staff and students to direct them to certain sections at particular times of year that they are applicable e.g. sourcing a placement, applying for Study Abroad deadlines, resources and new opportunities as they become available.
POSTER 9
Enhancing the employability of our students through Assistive Student Profiling for Improved Retention and Engagement (ASPIRE).
Dr Michaela Black³, Dr Michaela Keenan¹, Dr Sharon Milner⁴, Tandy Haughey², Zoe Younger², Garry Prentice³ & Dr Gavin Breslin³
School of the Built Environment¹, School of Sport Studies² and School of Computing and Information Engineering³, Employability and Marketing⁴, Ulster University, Dublin Business School⁵.

Abstract:
Aim: To research the effective use of student profiling to identify at-risk students and to design pro-active support and development sessions using a theoretically grounded intervention of attitude and behaviour change.

Process: To be effective University tutors and students worked in partnership to develop the intervention content.
Student researchers worked together with staff to:
1. Deliver a profiling questionnaire;
2. Identify at risk students;
3. Receive a psychological skills training model on coaching from the sports psychology students and careers;
4. Design and deliver a series of coaching sessions with staff;
5. Design and deliver a hackathon development activity with a creativity and employability component;
6. Review feedback and performance measures of ‘at risk’ students and feedback findings to staff groups

The interventions took place across six weeks and were delivered across three diverse schools (School of the Built Environment, School of Sport Studies and School of Computing and Information Engineering) supported by employability and marketing wherein pre and post-test measurements were collected and compared to a control group. Data analysis has been carried out and positive effects were shown on student retention and career aspirations. Furthermore the model of student and staff working in partnership was a positive outcome where lessons have been learned for future curriculum development.

POSTER 10
Developing and Managing Overseas Placements
Seamus McConomy
Employability and Marketing

Abstract:
Graduate employers want students with multicultural awareness, flexibility, adaptability and who are robust enough to deal with business on a global scale.
International placements enable students to develop these highly transferable skills which are proven to increase employability, but Higher Education Institutions can find the development and management of these placements daunting.

This poster will outline the recommended approach to practice within your network and wider afield for sourcing and managing placement activity within a robust framework. Insurance, health and safety and visas have the potential to detract from the positive benefits which impact student outcomes and prospects.
POSTER 11

Enhancing student employability using an accounting and finance simulated suite
Clodagh Hegarty and Claire McAteer
Department of International Business

Abstract:
A 'Simulated Accounting and Finance suite' has been established in the Department of International Business, which is a direct simulation of a typical office working environment. The suite is designed to increase the employability prospects of accounting and finance students. Some of the activities which are held in the suite include an 'Audit Simulation' whereby students complete an audit for a simulated virtual company; a simulated financial accounting case study whereby students prepare financial statements which comply with International Financial Reporting Standards using IRIS accounting software; and 'Autumn Statement and Budget Analysis' meetings. The project aims to evaluate student perceptions of the use of the Simulated Accounting and Finance Suite to develop employability skills.

POSTER 12

Placement Employability: Challenge & Change in an Evolving Landscape
Roy Sterritt, Dr Edwin P Curran, Dr Nicola Ayre, Dr Ian McChesney and Professor Paul Hanna.
School of Computing and Mathematics

Abstract:
Computing students have enrolled on a four-year course which has a mandatory 'placement' year embedded into it. Previously we have highlighted an approach to embedding employability in the courses through an AWARE Framework [1]. AWARE offers progressive employability refinement; from year 1 Awareness, year 2 Work preparation, year 3 Acquire experience (placement) and final year Reflect/refine/refocus with the graduate aim to be Employed! We also highlighted some practice, in particular in year 2 for Work preparation. Yet many challenges continue to arise in a changing and evolving employability landscape for our students. This poster outlines those challenges and three recent developments: Creation of a Drop-in Employability Clinic; Mid-Year Assessment of Engagement; and Year 1 onwards employability support through Studies Advisors.

POSTER 13

Improving employability through student mobility: A short-term study visit to Germany
Dr Cherie Armour and Dr Claire McDowell,
School of Psychology

Abstract:
Pedagogical research indicates that student mobility, particularly related to an international experience, brings significant employability benefits to students. The current initiative invited students in the 2nd year of the BSc Hons Psychology or Social Psychology programme to avail of the opportunity to conduct a study visit to Germany for 1 week. In total 10 students were selected from a total of 58 applicants. Students participated in a structured programme developed in collaboration between Psychology at Ulster University and Business Psychology at Osnabruck, Germany. The programme involved some basic German language classes in which Ulster students interacted with Osnabruck students. Lecturers at Osnabruck held some interactive seminars (in English) related to the topics of Occupational Psychology and the various industries in Germany in which Occupational
Psychology is applied. Part of the study visit also included a tour to a major German steel works company to see and hear first-hand the ways in which Psychology is applied in the workplace. Students also learned about the history of Psychology in Germany. Part of the initiative included an educational tour to Berlin and the site of the Berlin Wall. Ultimately the study tour provided students with the opportunity to see first-hand how Psychology is taught and applied in a foreign country. In week 12 the activity was assessed via student presentations to members of the Psychology staff team.

POSTER 14

Wendy Saunderson
School of Sociology and Public Policy

Abstract:
‘Employability-proofing’ of existing provision and developing connected curricula through piloting a range of innovative, engaging and complementary learning experiences, at programme mid-point, focused on maximising student engagement, student experience and graduate employability.

The Social Policy Pilot module was ‘Applied Theories and Concepts in Policy-Making’, a year 2, semester 2 module, commencing at the pivotal ‘half-way’ point in the programme. Enhancements also address the identified risk of ‘diluted engagement’ and the potential feeling of ‘reduced belonging’ for Combined Studies students, whose degree programmes span two disciplines, two Course Directors and two course teams (the Tutor is particularly aware of these issues as Campus Coordinator and Director of Combined Studies for the Faculty of Social Sciences). A ‘Flipped Classroom’ approach encouraged ownership of learning through student collaboration in planning module preferences, submission dates and some module content. An integral part of the ‘employability proofing’ was a one-week placement, in response to the requirement to embed a form of WBL from 2016/17. Evaluation outcomes of this pilot employability-enhanced module were very positive from placement hosts and, particularly, from the students themselves.