



Outduction: Enhancing the Final Year Experience

Case Study

Title	Postgraduate Certificate in Employability and Entrepreneurship
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Organisation	University of Bradford
Intended learning outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge – Comprehend the potential challenges and barriers within the labour market, and to adapt their problem solving and decision making methods to take account of these unpredictable issues.• Professional skills, - Engage in and take responsibility for critical reflection of their own personal and professional development and to review creatively their approach to managing their career path.• Transferable skills - Apply a range of existing and established employability and enterprise progression techniques through evaluation of current practice and changing labour market requirements to develop a range of advanced techniques that are applicable to their individual circumstances.
Problem statement (what did the case study seek to address?)	<p>The current economic climate means that it will be increasingly difficult for graduates to find work particularly in the local economy. Graduates are increasingly going to need help and support to adapt to the changing worlds of work and to ensure that once in work they are able to make a difference to that organisation and to be fulfilled in their own careers.</p> <p>The need to work in partnership with local employers has never been stronger and the university is in an ideal position to do this and to influence the development of the local workforce.</p> <p>This course provides career planning and initial career management skills for all those graduates who have left university without making any sort of plans or really considering their career pathways. As such it will continue to have an appeal to recent graduates and employers after the UK has moved out of recession and employment opportunities increase.</p>

Context	<p>The world of work for graduates has been changing for a number of years now, however the pace of this change is more than likely to speed up in the summer of 2009 as the global recession takes hold and the effects of this cascade down to local level employment opportunities. The notion of a 'graduate job' and a linear career path are no longer realistic expectations for the 21st century graduate. Those leaving Higher Education in the next few years will be expected to engage with a diversity of work patterns, many working in smaller and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), or becoming self-employed on a portfolio or freelance basis.</p> <p>Graduates leaving the University of Bradford have always had to use flexibility and proactive approaches in order to gain employment locally, in what is predominantly a semi-skilled economy. Increasingly not only will graduates now have to know how to create their own opportunities but they will also have to know how to enable these to grow and develop so that they can have a fulfilling career in the long term. Employers will have a buyer's market so our graduates will have to be able to cope with and adapt to new approaches within existing recruitment and selection processes. They will also need to be able to stand out from the competition, particularly graduates from other universities in the Yorkshire region.</p> <p>Graduates face continuing criticism from employers about their capacity to cope in the real world and particularly about their ability to hit the ground running. Carl Gilleard, the Chief Executive of AGR (Association of Graduate Recruiters) recently said that "Graduates will have to be prepared to take any job to get a foot in the door"</p> <p>University of Bradford graduates more than ever before will need a wide range of employability and enterprise knowledge, aptitudes and skills in order to enter the employment market, to then take control of their careers, to continue to work effectively with others and then to add value to society and organisations in a short space of time. In smaller organisations like the hundreds that exist in Bradford, training is likely to be on the job, requiring graduates to be 'work ready' and to fit in quickly and to be able to cope with this steep learning curve of employment.</p>
Activity	<p>15 funded places were provided by the University of Bradford for 2011; graduates had to have been from the University and have graduated in 2010. There were more applicants than places so all applicants had to be interviewed and not all were successful.</p> <p>This course is offered on a flexible part-time basis, delivered over a minimum of six months and a maximum of twelve months. The course due to both its nature and its demand needs to be flexible and able to respond to the circumstances of the course participants.</p> <p>The postgraduate certificate comprises 60 credits made up of three 20 credit modules; all are compulsory elements of the programme and are at M level.</p>

	<p>One of the modules requires the graduates to obtain a period of work experience. Whether this is an internship style project or a period of voluntary work, all are valid. These opportunities may be paid, but equally likely they may have to be done on a voluntary basis.</p>
Issues	<p>Very hand-on approach required; extremely time consuming and labour intensive, small course numbers are essential. Motivation and confidence have been big issues for the students. The course is quite challenging as it is very much skills based and so graduates are asked to take a very active part in the sessions, very different to what most of them have done in their degrees.</p> <p>You are at the fast moving edge of the employment situation, you work closely with employers and organisations like the job centre. As a tutor this is a very hands on, 24/7 sort of tutoring where you need to respond quickly to both employers and students, it is fast paced and very time consuming. There needs to be a supportive relationship with the students but at the same time you are pushing them to do things for themselves and you have to trust and rely on the fact that they will take the action suggested.</p> <p>Combining the course with an internship project has proved challenging; employers are often looking for specific skills or degree disciplines and these are not necessarily the graduates who have been recruited to the course.</p> <p>15 funded places were provided by the University of Bradford for 2011; graduates had to have been from the University and have graduated in 2010; however funding for the course in future years is uncertain.</p> <p>Students could all be at different stages, some working, some even full-time on a temporary basis, some could be out on internships quickly for others it might take ages yet the curriculum has to be delivered and this has proved challenging.</p> <p>University still quite a rigid approach, certain things have to be done at certain times and the whole idea of flexible learning and appropriate flexible structures and responses is taking some time to get established</p>
Hot tips/key points for effective practice	<p>Tutor approach, being responsive is vital, you have to build a reputation that is a fine balance between support but also encouraging independence.</p> <p>Feedback from course participants has been very positive.</p> <p>“...I could not thank you enough for your support and belief in me. Personally it is the biggest achievement for me as education has never been one of my strong areas but I believe I have overcome this weakness also thanks to your support. I also would like to say that you have been a pleasure to work with and I could not ask for anyone better than you to have led this course the way you did. You did not just help me believe in myself but helped me find my true self;.....I am just trying to express how I</p>

feel right now and how your help and support has developed me into someone who believes that there may be times when you feel that you have reached a stage where life is tough but there will also come a time when you will feel that life is only as bad as you make it out to be.”

“My internship has been highly beneficial to me in terms of gaining graduate level work experience and developing new professional skills which I thought I would never gain.The internship has proven to be an invaluable experience which has strengthened my CV and enhanced my opportunities in the graduate labour market. Thank you for this opportunity”-

“This time last year I was an unemployed engineering graduate with no real direction having no relative work experience and no confidence in my abilities when it came to interviews. 12 months later I am employed as a design engineer in a successful and ambitious engineering firm in Keighley. I put this down largely to Bradford University and in particular the funded course run by Ann Berry; the Post Graduate Certificate in Employability and Entrepreneurship. I cannot overstate the benefits this course offered not only to me, but also to ten other graduates in a similar position as myself. I have seen the results the people on this course have achieved. Through internships and voluntary work, it has given enthusiastic intelligent people unfortunately caught up in one of the worst recessions to hit this country, a much-needed stepladder into the world of work and onto a career path.”

“I believe the PGCEE to be an absolutely brilliant initiative” *intake 1 student*

“I honestly feel that the taught group sessions, with the challenging activities have made me both more confident and entrepreneurial. I have picked up numerous skills that I will hold on to for the future”

Outcomes known from 2009 and 2010 intakes:

- 17 successfully completed.
- 14 now in employment, various types of jobs mostly in the Bradford/Leeds area.
- 1 set up own business.
- 1 moved on to a vocational postgraduate course.