Graduate attributes in Nursing – identifying & selling

Nursing is a vocational course with an excellent destination record (almost all go into nursing jobs). However there is still competition for jobs in particular areas so there was a need identified to help students have awareness of the (graduate) attributes they had developed through their course and work placements and how they might make employers aware of those attributes.

**School/Subject Area:** Health in Social Science

**Target Audience:**Nursing Final Year students

**Staff Involved:** Careers Adviser and Nursing Studies Senior Lecturer

**Dates/timings:** Piloted February 2010; now delivered annually

Key features

Nursing is a vocational course with an excellent destination record (almost all go into nursing jobs). However there is still competition for jobs in particular areas so there was a need identified to help students have awareness of the (graduate) attributes they had developed through their course and work placements **and** how they might make employers aware of those attributes. Awareness of this was not just needed for those initial post graduation positions but also for promoted posts later or identifying areas of CPD. There was also some desire to consider employer perceptions and how to sell the quality and distinctiveness of Edinburgh University Nursing graduates in the wider labour market.

Planning

The Careers Service was approached by Nursing Studies to deliver a session on graduate attributes as opposed to a more traditional session on e.g. job hunting, which was not a specific concern for this vocational degree. Following the initial discussion, minimal additional joint planning was required and was restricted to mainly email correspondence.

Session

45 minute very interactive (no PowerPoint and no chalk’n’talk!) session delivered in Semester 2.

**Part One – Nursing graduate attributes versus employer perceptions/awareness** Two Post-It Note exercises:

* Students asked to identify what they think is an employer’s perception of what an Edinburgh graduate would have to offer.
* Students then asked to reverse this – what they think they have to offer employers.

Significant differences emerged – raising the possibility that employers might not be aware of everything that University of Edinburgh Nursing graduates have to offer and therefore a need for the students to be able to articulate and sell this.

**Part Two – How to prove or demonstrate attributes to an employer**Students asked individually to select an attribute and write down how they would be able to demonstrate (through evidence) the attribute they claimed to have. Peer feedback then used to explore these examples and discuss how strong the example was, how well articulated and explained etc.

These activities sought to illustrate how they might need to demonstrate to an employer in writing (e.g. through an application) and in person (e.g. through an interview) these attributes.

Resources

Initial preparation time for the Adviser approx. 3 hours, plus 45 minutes of delivery.

Evaluation

Feedback from the key staff and the students has been positive, indicating the session was both useful and thought provoking, and the students clearly engaged actively in the session.

Advice

It can be useful sometimes to have a session that is deliberately seeks to be interactive and fairly low tech (no PowerPoint, no handouts etc.)

Future developments may include incorporating some relevant employer insights and perceptions to share with the group.

Key contacts

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<http://www.ed.ac.uk/employability/staff-information/how-employability-addressed/good-practice/hss/graduate-attributes-in-nursing>