WAVE – Work and Volunteering Experiences Workbook in PebblePad

WAVE (Work and Volunteering Experiences) is an online workbook that allows them to prepare for their experience, reflect on their learning and development and record this in one place where they can access the information as and when they require it.

**Target Audience:**Generic version developed for use with all students engaging in work or volunteering experiences, within or outside academic programme. Specifically tailored versions developed for Class Representatives, those involved in volunteering work and Resident Assistants working for Accommodation Services

**Staff Involved:** Employability Consultant, Careers Advisers, Accommodation Services Residence Life Coordinator, EUSA Academic Representation Coordinator and Volunteering Manager

**Date:** Launched AY11/12, ongoing development

Key features

It is generally accepted that students who elect to take part in work, internships, voluntary work and assume positions of responsibility within (and without) the University gain skills, experience and maturity, all of which will generally enhance their lives and contribute specifically to their employability. Usually, with the benefit of hindsight, students come to understand what they have gained from these experiences, but they often approach the experience with little preparation and expectation, do not reflect on or capture the experience as they are living it, and struggle to articulate what they have got from it on their return. To help them capitalise fully on their experiences, **WAVE (Work and Volunteering Experiences)**is an online workbook that allows them to prepare for their experience, reflect on their learning and development and record this in one place where they can access the information as and when they require it. It offers advice and support and suggestions for further activities and development, and is housed within the University’s eportfolio PebblePad.

A collaborative, cross-institutional approach was used to develop WAVE. Why? Because there are numerous examples of work or volunteering experience offered within the University – by pulling together representatives from very different sections of the University a generic resource that is easily tailored to individual settings could be produced, and one that is stronger as a result.

The workbook is flexible, and can be tailored to students undertaking any experience. It is not compulsory (although for certain roles it could be integrated as a formal part of the role to support the personal and professional development of students).

Planning

Between June and August 2011, two Careers Advisers, the University’s Employability Consultant, EUSA Volunteer Development Manager, EUSA Academic Representation Coordinator and the Residence Life Coordinator (Accommodation Services) met to discuss the purpose, content and structure of the resource. The ideas generated by these meetings were then developed into a module comprising five sections:

* **Introduction** – including instructions on how to use the workbook and complete the activities;
* **What?**– looking at what the student intends to do and making initial action plans;
* **How?**– to be completed once the student is partway through the experience recording the highs and lows, thinking about alternative approaches and looking at sources of support;
* **Why?**– to be completed towards the end of the experience and to encourage the student to record what they’ve gained and developed as a result of it; and
* **Now what?**– support in articulating and selling the experience and moving forward to access new opportunities.

Each section is a mixture of information, advice, exercises, videos, quotes and prompts to reflect on and record individual experience. The generic version is suitable for use by any student undertaking any work or volunteering experiences, within or outside their academic programme. The package can easily be tailored for specific experiences and staff from EUSA and Accommodation Services who were involved in the initial planning stages have worked on tailored versions for their student groups.

Resources

The collaborative, cross-institutional approach was used to increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness: a strong and truly generic resource that can be easily tailored. Now that the groundwork has been completed any customised version will take significantly less time to develop. Automatic enrolment on the module can be arranged by IS if there are particular student groups who would benefit from access.

Student-directed information and instructions on accessing the resource in PebblePad are available on the [student employability webpages](http://www.employability.ed.ac.uk/WAVE/index.html).

Evaluation

Working collaboratively on the resource has been a mutually beneficial experience and improved the quality of the final work, over and above that which could have been achieved by any of the working group individually. Different perspectives offered at the start of the project resulted in a more robust and valuable resource and the needs of a diverse range of student groups were represented. The collaborative approach has also has stimulated a variety of new connections on other projects.

Advice

Generic resources that will be genuinely applicable in multiple contexts can be difficult to develop. Recognising this at the outset and pulling together a small group representing different perspectives and user groups can help significantly. Once produced, however, such resources can be tailored and recycled repeatedly, increasing the overall development efficiency.

Encouraging students to engage with supplementary activities, recording and reflection is not always easy. For generic resources, ensure the design makes it easy for students to engage and to apply it to their own experiences. Ensuring that all students record their experience and complete the work is only possible if it is a required part of a particular experience (e.g. being Resident Assistant). Alternative approaches must be used where it is not a compulsory requirement, including prompts within the resource itself.

Key contacts

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