

Developing Student-Centred Enterprise Skills

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Preparing students for life after university, by equipping them with the skills required by employers or by encouraging enterprise, is central to the aims and objectives of The University of Huddersfield.

To this end, the University has established excellent links with local AEMFC organisations, facilitating student placements, entrepreneurial enterprises and employment opportunities. One of the latest Teaching and Learning Programme initiatives designed to prepare students for working life, is a pilot project that took place over the summer.

The Summer Skills Workshops consisted of a series of short courses for students starting placements, thinking about starting a business or preparing for work. Aimed initially at Department of Engineering and Technology students, the courses provided an insight into the types of high-level skills required for students to become immediately effective and add value to their employer's organisation once they start work.

Dr Paul Denton, who devised and ran the courses in association with lecturer Mr Alistair McKinna, explained the reasoning behind the Summer Skills Workshops. "AEMFC students have a very industry-focussed curriculum, with industry-based theoretical research, case studies and placement learning. However, one problem that has been identified is the readiness and understanding of students to successfully cross from academia into the industrial workplace."

"In other words, we're finding that although our students have the academic excellence to make a valuable contribution in industry, they lack some elements of the skills required to put this knowledge into practice.



"Through the workshops our aim is to provide our students with a professional understanding of elements such as business analysis, project planning and change implementation. The intention is to arm them with the skills they need to make an effective contribution to a commercial company from the word go."

Learning valuable skills for work

Students were given the opportunity to attend up to five different Summer Skills Workshops – namely Industrial Awareness, Professional Potential, Consultancy Skills, Prince2 Project Management Introduction and Oracle Fundamentals. A total of 29

students attended some or all of the workshops, which averaged 12 – 17 delegates per session.

Offering an introduction to the Project and an overview of the issues facing global business today, the Realizing your Professional Potential session focused upon personal development. It looked at the ways students can maximise their influence through business-friendly CVs, interview techniques and presentation.



Hitting the Floor Running: Consultancy Skills, meanwhile focused on the importance of transferrable skills and how to navigate the consultancy process. This was particularly aimed at improving the effectiveness of placement-based students.

Two more technical sessions were included: Introduction to Prince2 Project Management, which allowed students gain an appreciation of the widely used and industrially recognised technique; and Oracle Database Fundamentals, which involved building, testing and management reporting with their own database.

The Summer Skills Workshops also included a talk from Stephen Boyd from the University Careers and Employability Service. He gave delegates an understanding of the current graduate employment picture and how work experience is of vital importance in giving them a competitive edge in the workplace.

Stephen also offered a more comprehensive view of how the University's careers service can help facilitate the move into work placement and employment.

Feedback from the students who attended the Workshops was extremely positive, with many enquiring about extending the programme to become an ongoing part of the curriculum. One student commented:

"...I gained a better insight into what it is really like to work in the UK, how to look for a graduate job and especially how to 'get in and get on'."

Having proved such a success, it is anticipated that the Summer Skills Workshop will provide a valuable platform for the University's student-led community and enterprise activities.

"From these initial sessions, we have now developed a repository of useful resources which we aim to expand into further student enterprise ventures and collaborative working with key industrial partners," added Dr Paul Denton

As well as focussing on developing the internal capability to support enterprise, the Project represents a valuable example of promoting best practice within the University through its Teaching and Learning Pilot Programme.

