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A personal introduction

• Mark Clements.
  – Programme Leader in the School of Engineering.
• I am interested in people, perhaps more than engineering.
  – I take a postconstructivist approach.
• A long time ago I learnt to put the student first.
Introduction

- Last Summer, 83 graduates chased each job vacancy (AGR, 2011).
- UK Government says, “Embedding employability” is a “key priority” of HE (HEFCE, 2011).
- Our Greenwich Students must, therefore, be equipped to become employable Greenwich Graduates.
- I devised an activity to enable this goal in the School of Engineering.
A slice of pedagogy

- Experiential learning has the potential for a positive effect on student learning (Mumm, 2006, Anderson & Harris, 2005).
- Why not put Engineering students through a “dress rehearsal” in a safe environment for the job application process and inevitable interviews that they will face after graduation?
Interview panel design

I wanted to mimic a “real” interview.
Panels to consist of three members:
• Each interview panel to be composed of:
  – One academic – subject specialist and chair.
  – One specialist from University’s Guidance and Employability Team (GET).
  – One local employer.
• Recruitment Initiative for Student Enhancement.
• I heard that a voluntary mock interview scheme for students in the School of Science had approximately 30% take-up.
• How could I improve upon this in Engineering?
• By making RISE compulsory as an assignment in a core course.
Design considerations

1. Find a core level 6 course.
2. Find assistance to show students best practice for job application and interviews.
3. Find a suitable venue for interviews.
4. Find interview panellists.
Some answers

1. Course: Management & Communications.
   approx 60 students.

2. Employability assistance: GET – the University’s Guidance and Employability Team.


The 4th question was more difficult to answer. More on this later......
Interview logistics

• Constraints imposed by the course – 57 students, 2 hour Monday afternoon lecture slot.
• 20 minute interview = throughput of 6 students per panel during scheduled slot.
• Split interviews over 2 consecutive weeks.
• 5 interview panels running concurrently needed over 2 weeks.
• 3 interview panellists.
• 15 interview panellists needed per week.
My Outreach Work

- First LEGO League (FLL), Risk It Enterprise Technology Challenge & Teen Tech competitions.
- Medway Education Business Partnership.
- Based at BAE Systems in Rochester.
- Have existing networks of local employers.
- In return for assisting at their school events, I asked if MEBP could find employers to help at the interviews.
- Contact with local employers was made.
The assignment

• 20% weighting for a 30 credit course.
• 5 ‘jobs’ were created by academics in their cognate areas with application criteria.
• Students apply with a covering letter and CV.
• Copies of applications are sent to appropriate panel members 4 weeks before the interviews.
• A simple scoring method was designed with scoring instructions sent to employers and panel members with each student application.
Assessment items

• Application:
  – Curriculum Vitae,
  – Covering letter.

• Interview:
  – Appearance,
  – Body language,
  – Responses to questions,
  – Eye contact.

• Simple qualitative and quantitative data gathered.
Digital management

• This is smart use of IT in a complex targeted context.
• Mail merge & spreadsheets helped create written feedback for students and letters to panellists.
• An online form is used to gather student feedback.
• Data processed to produce relevant information.
After the interviews

• 5 minutes of verbal feedback was given to interviewees immediately after the interview.
• Feedback is gathered from panellists in debriefing session and formally later – very positive.
• Feedback gathered later from students online.
• Students were given personalised feedback reports detailing their performance on the assignment after completing online feedback and also in class.
Personal Written Feedback for Mr [REDACTED]

Covering letter: 9 out of a possible 15.
Curriculum Vitae: 10 out of a possible 15.
2 of the panellists would have called you for interview based on your CV and covering letter.
Your appearance scored 15 out of a possible 15.
Your body language scored 10 out of a possible 15.
Your responses to interview questions scored 6 out of a possible 15.
Your eye contact scored 7 out of a possible 15.
The interview panellists’ recommendation to employ you based on the interview was 5 out of a possible 15. A score of 10 or over may be regarded as shortlisted. Less than 10 fails the interview.

Below are some brief comments based on your performance in applying for the job and how the panel felt about your interview performance.

CV not properly targeted, lacking technical details, answered technical questions better than "people" questions, little eye contact
Feedback from students

Of 40 respondents:
• 97.5% believed that the assignment had helped them with their application and interview skills.
• 87.5% rated the mock interview and the verbal feedback as good.
• 72.5% rated the assignment overall as good.
• 50% rated the written feedback as good, with 42.5% rating it as average or above.
• Following feedback, 87.5% would make use of GET to improve aspects of their performance.
• 22.5% had gained employment following graduation.
Data analysis

• 21% of participants passed both the application and the interview.
• 35% (theoretically) would not have been called for interview at all based on their application paperwork.
• 52% failed to be unanimously shortlisted according to their interview performance.
Relative performance analysis

- Covering Letter: 8.3
- CV: 8.4
- Appearance: 11.2
- Body Language: 9.6
- Responses to questions: 8.8
- Eye contact: 9.7
Lessons learnt

• Expand the *quid pro quo* relationship with MEBP.
• Allow the interview scheme to carry significant marks to ensure student participation.
• Integrate GET into the process more fully for preparation and follow-up work.
• Run the interviews earlier in the year to allow targeted assistance, based on feedback, to be given to students before they leave us for good.
• Make increased use of IT to assist data management.
Summary

• RISE improves students’ chances of gaining employment.
• EBPs can provide employers.
• Analysis of results shows we need to target job application skills for around 75% of my students.
• Personalised feedback allows targeted assistance per student by GET.
• Will help to work towards our institutional employment indicator target.
• Produces a more employable Greenwich Graduate.
Any questions?
References


