Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Individualised Self-assessment to Enhance Employability (I-SEE) in postgraduate students

Transition(s) the practice supports: Skills assessment and reflection and development during studies to enhance employability on exiting

Abstract: I-SEE is embedded in a compulsory non-credit bearing Generic Skills course and covers 3 stages – self-assessment, reflection and articulation. The skills audit includes an academic writing assessment, basic IT skills assessment, psychometric testing (Abstract, Numerical and Verbal reasoning skills & personality typing) and self-rating of other relevant employability skills (HEA employability profile and University of Aberdeen's Postgraduate Attributes). Automated responses provide tailored feedback identifying development areas and signposting to appropriate support such as online resources or workshops/courses. Thereafter, students are required to record and reflect on their progress using an e-portfolio and a checklist. Supportive documentation with tips and links are provided to support them in articulating these skills within future employment applications.

Description: Enhancing students' employability is increasingly being recognised as a priority for Higher Education Institutions and seems especially important for taught postgraduate programmes where students may have diverse graduate/professional backgrounds and nationalities. This translates into a variety of previous experience and skill levels in terms of key employability competencies, as well as their education and English language proficiency. Current induction programmes though are generally not individualised or reflective in nature. As self-awareness underpins employability, an online resource to extend employability provision for taught postgraduate students was developed with financial support from a HEA Individual Teaching Development Grant. I-SEE was developed on MyAberdeen and piloted with Division of Applied Health taught postgraduate students during the 2012/13 academic year. It is currently embedded in the non-credit bearing Generic Skills course which is compulsory for all taught postgraduate students in the Schools of Medical Sciences & Medicine and Dentistry for the 2013/14 academic year.

The I-SEE process covers 3 stages – self-assessment, reflection and articulation. The self-assessment of employability skills is based on the HEA employability profile and the University of Aberdeen's Postgraduate Attributes. Prior to completing the self-assessment questionnaire, students complete an academic writing assessment, summarising a given text in 150 words or less. This is

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assessed by Programme Coordinators using a standardised rubric for accuracy of summary AND language (grammar, punctuation and spelling). Grades are uploaded to MyAberdeen. An IT skills assessment of 50 questions relating to basic IT skills required for e-mail, Excel, PowerPoint, Word and the internet must be completed and automated scores and feedback are provided. Students are also required to complete psychometric testing from the *Profiling for success website.* The University Careers Centre have a selection of tests freely available to registered students and four were identified for I-SEE relating to Abstract, Numerical and Verbal reasoning skills as well as personality typing. Each test takes only 10-15 minutes to complete and feedback and scores are emailed directly to the students. Students are required to provide scores from these tests and self-rate other relevant employability skills. Automated responses provide tailored feedback identifying development areas and signposting to appropriate support – which may be online resources or workshops/courses available within the University. For the next few months, students are required to record and reflect on their progress using an e-portfolio. A checklist is provided for them to reflect on identified development areas, what they may have done to improve or plan to do in the future. A CV template, supportive documentation with tips and a link to Career Services are provided to support them in articulating these skills within future employment applications. For the first time this year (2015), a mock job application process will be followed at the end of the programme allowing students to apply for an advertised post, be shortlisted and attend a mock interview.

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