Embedding employability through a cross-university academic, professional and personal development module in undergraduate degree programmes

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Overview

• Embedding employability in HE

• Overview of ASPIRE at UWS

• The opportunities and challenges of ASPIRE

• Next steps
Employability in HE – why does it matter?

To the institute – Graduate Outcomes: performance, reputation, recruitment…

External – employers, local and national economy

Student success!

But there are concerns….
- Low confidence in skills needed for career, understanding employer expectations, evidencing skills (QAA, Focus On Graduate Skills 2019)
- Low confidence in skill articulation and preparedness for graduate work (Careers 2032, Handshake, ISE, AGCAS, WonkHE)
Embedding employability

Employability, at least, ain’t viral

Professor Mark Peace, MMU
"develop UWS graduates as the leaders of tomorrow. All students will be supported to gain world-ready meta-skills...".

We will develop a suite of core and common modules ("Academic, Professional and Personal Development modules") across all programmes..... These modules should be central to supporting student success, wellbeing and employability through the development of 21st-century meta-skills and attributes

Curriculum Framework 2022
ASPIRE

- Suite of core academic, personal and professional modules across SCQF levels 7-9
- Each module 20 credits and runs through terms 1 and 2
- Level 7 module piloted in September 2022
- Cross-institutional module design and delivery – including Learning Transformation, Professional Services and academic schools
- Assessed by reflective e-portfolios
Module underpinnings

ASPIRE
Level 7 Module

- Underpinned by Transition Pedagogy
- Designed as a form of extended induction
- Equipping self-directed learners
- Developing meta-skills, functional skills and values
- Fostering belonging and connection

Core

Supported reflection

Self-directed activity
## ASPIRE - Core

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to ASPIRE</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Getting to Know Yourself</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Exploring Your Values</td>
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<td>Exploring Your Career Possibilities</td>
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Academic Skills
Counselling & Wellbeing
Careers Service
ASPIRE – Supported reflection

• Introduction of an advising curriculum (supported reflection and personal tutoring)

• Regular group reflection sessions – dialogic teaching facilitated by ASPIRE advisers

• 1-1 sessions with ASPIRE adviser

• Group project in term 2
ASPIRE – Self-directed activity (meta-skills)

- SDS Skills 4.0 (meta-skills) used as guiding framework
- Each theme comprises 4/5 individual sessions
- Students select 12 sessions in term 2

https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/44684/skills-40_a-skills-model.pdf
Assessment

Formative Assessment – Action Plan
• Submitted in term 1 - formative
• Reflection and goal setting
• Choose meta-skills sessions based on goals and ambitions
• Completed in PebblePad

Summative Assessment – Reflective e-portfolio
• Submitted end of term 2 (PebblePad)
• Includes evidence from group project and reflections from module work
• Pass/Fail
Key benefits

• Enabled embedding of employability at scale and early in the student journey
Alignment with the Advance HE framework for embedding employability
Key benefits

• Enables embedding of employability at scale and early in the student journey
• Supporting student transition into, through and beyond university
• Enhances signposting and raising awareness of student support services
• Encourages deeper reflection enhancing life-long and life-wide learning
• Embedding employability into the culture of the curriculum
The Challenges

• Implementing large changes institutionally

• Organisational issues for implementing a new university-wide module across multiple academic schools

• Engagement – achieving student buy-in to a module that is a bit ‘different’!

• Disconnect between online and in-class learning – need to achieve greater connection between different areas of the module
Next Steps

• Core ASPIRE team recruited to manage module implementation and continuous improvement

• Post-module evaluation drawing on experiences and expertise of all stakeholders – commitment to understand and address key challenges such as engagement

• Increased collaboration from academic colleagues to contextualise module content

• Further embedding of level 7 module in further programmes in 2023/24

• Plans for Level 8 module
Thank you