Skills for learning and work – promoting graduate attributes through diverse approaches to assessment

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Graduate attributes naturally align with the aims of MPhil Textile Conservation programme. It is a 2-year programme that leads to a professional career in the heritage industry that requires a balance of academic and professional skills. The nature of the programme, with its focus on enhancing employment skills, has cultivated the development of creative and diverse ways to use assessment in teaching and learning to promote student learning. The breadth and range of assessment is designed not only to provide a means to develop the students’ learning and indicate progress but also fosters a wide range of transferable skills which support the students’ development of the skills required for professional careers and which closely align to the University of Glasgow’s Graduate Attributes.

Textile conservators need a wide range of skills which we aim to develop through the programme. Throughout the two years of study, students engage in a variety of assessment tasks, including: reflective writing, literature reviews, open exams, presentations to peer groups and outside organisations, research proposals, object focused projects, posters and blogs, and collaborative projects, all of which are devised to promote transferrable skills that students will use in the world of work and connect to different dimensions within the University’s Graduate Attributes framework.

While these assessment approaches have been utilised with small classes, we believe that many of the approaches could be easily adapted for larger groups. This paper will illustrate how alignment of the Graduate Attributes and programme aims can provide an effective means to develop a wide range of course assessments. The paper will show how for textile conservation students this approach promotes active engagement and the development of informed decision making and enables the students to become independent, reflective and adaptable lifelong learners.