



University
of Glasgow



Graduate Attributes Reflections

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Graduate attributes reflections

We asked our level 2 psychology students to reflect on their Graduate Attributes in-class.

Context

School of Psychology

Level 2

Subject: Psychology

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Key features

Large group of participants comprising 101-300 students.

Focusing on specific graduate attributes in a lab setting.

Sequence of standalone sessions carried out wholly in class. They comprise 10 mins pre-reflection, 1 hour reflection activity and 10 mins post reflection activity

Used paper materials, PowerPoint presentations displayed using a projector.

Little impact on syllabus redesign.

Some impact on staff's workload due to the set-up of pre- and post-evaluation (but this can be as required).



Activity description

Rationale

Using the Graduate Attributes student engagement strategy as a framework, we adopted the principle of placing GAs as a narrative of the student experience by providing Level 1 and Level 2 students with opportunities to engage with GAs in their timetabled classes. We were particularly interested in how we can use the matrix as a starting point to support student self-reflection and opportunities for self-assessment at the earlier years of the UG degree as we believe this may be helpful in students reflecting on their academic GAs and the wider student experience/extra-curricular activities.

Implementation

We devised a series of short self-reflection exercises for Psychology at Level 2 which were embedded into the curriculum as practical classes. Their main aim was to identify specific attributes the development of which may require extra support and assist the students in coming up with an action plan to address that need. From a practical point of view, such an approach is viable in big classes, it encourages active student participation in employability across the whole cohort while the evaluation can help to design structured Careers support.

The activities scaled well because most of the work was carried out in pairs or small groups. The exercises were run with Level 2 students, meaning that this was often the participants' first exposure to the notion of graduate attributes. Students came away from the exercises with, at the very least, an understanding of the attributes identified by the institution and, in most cases, a list of actions they could undertake to develop their attributes further.

Reactions

In feedback, students talked about finding it helpful to consider how best to plan their time to develop as a student, and to identify areas of their development that needed work. Students came away from the exercises with, at the very least, an understanding of the attributes identified by the institution and, in most cases, a list of actions they could undertake to develop their attributes further.

Analysis & evaluation

Our analysis showed that the reflection exercise resulted in significant changes in ratings for 7 of the 10 graduate attributes as outlined here:

- Subject specialist: diff = 0.08, $p = 0.029^*$
- Investigative: diff = 0.07, $p = 0.113$
- Independent and critical thinker: diff = 0.17, $p = 0.001^*$
- Resourceful and responsible: diff = 0.144, $p = 0.005^*$
- Effective communicators: diff = 0.135, $p = 0.001^*$
- Confident: diff = 0.096, $p = 0.008^*$
- Adaptable: diff = 0.16, $p = 0.001^*$
- Experienced collaborators: diff = 0.03, $p = 0.243$
- Ethically and socially aware: diff = 0.03, $p = 0.29$
- Reflective learners: diff = 0.1, $p = 0.017^*$

The group work aspect of this activity worked well with students supporting each other in contextualising their graduate attribute development both within their academic and extracurricular activities.

When discussing graduate attributes and employability skills, there is certainly no 'one size fits all' and it seems that even more differentiation may be needed to engage students throughout their study cycle, starting right in the early years and account for their evolving identity, knowledge/experience base and skillset. Students really appreciate being able to work in groups as this facilitates peer learning and is conducive to developing confidence.



Recommendations

This exercise has now been adapted by Earth Sciences and Business as well as a number of Arts-based subjects, including Music, History, Film & TV, French and Portuguese. The cohorts ranged in size from a couple of dozen to over 300 students, and, as noted above, the activities scaled well because most of the work was carried out in pairs or small groups.





References

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This resource is part of the 'Graduate Attributes – Roadmap for Staff' resource:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/leads/goodpractice/graduateattributes>
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