

Working Group II: The impact of employability on curricular development- The Scottish Experience

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Outline

- Background and context
- Current work on employability in Scotland related to the higher education sector
- Quality assurance / enhancement in Scottish higher education and employability
- Conclusions and discussion

Background and context

- Employability and employability-related skills is not a new issue in Scotland.
- But now, particular emphasis on employability strategies
- Qualifications system and degree structure
- Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF)

Scottish qualifications system and degree structure

- Extract from EDS: hand-out
- Framework for higher education qualifications in Scotland
- 3 year Bachelors degree; 4 year Bachelor's degree with Honours; Masters Degrees; Doctorates
- Qualification descriptors for each degree type

Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework- SCQF

- See hand-out
- Each qualification assigned a level (e.g. level 9 for 3 year Bachelors degree, level 12 for Doctorates)
- Level descriptors – include employability-related skills

UK honours degree benchmark statements

- See hand-out
- Subject-level descriptors, include employability-related attributes, transferable skills...
- In Scotland, some benchmark statements developed by academics, professional bodies, employers representatives and relevant Government Departments

Programme specifications

- Arose from a recommendation by Dearing/ Garrick reports in 1997.
- Developed by institutions
- Include learning outcomes, transferable skills, high-level skills

Employability – a hot topic in Scotland

- Ongoing National debate on what is meant by “employability”
- Scottish Executive lifelong learning strategy
- Scottish HE has a key role to play in future economic success
- Scottish Funding Council’s *“Learning to Work”* document recently published

Quality Enhancement of Scottish Higher Education

- A new model for Quality Enhancement in Scottish Higher Education- 5 elements
- Developed through a collaborative approach
- Institutions expected to take *“deliberate steps to bring about continuous improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students”*
- One element is the **Enhancement Themes**



enhancement
themes

Enhancement Themes

- Initiative launched in 2003
- Sector-led and owned but SHEFC-funded
- One of the 2004-05 Themes is “Employability”
- Programme of development work and activities in response to sector’s priorities
- Includes Personal Development Planning
- www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk



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Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR)

- Peer review process administered by QAA
- Review focuses on the institution's strategic management of quality enhancement.
- The curriculum should be developed *“in the light of developments in knowledge and understanding, professional practice, **employer** and other stakeholder expectations...”*
- Codes of practice developed which institutions expected to take account of.

Doctoral degrees and employability

- Revised code of practice (2004)- see hand-out
- Research councils skills training funding
- 2002, Roberts report “Set For Success”
- *“UK PhD’s 50% less likely to be unemployed than first-degree graduates”*- recent report by UK GRAD
- *“PhD’s are much more sophisticated in their thinking and have a broader toolkit of skills to draw on in the demanding roles...”* Recruitment consultant
- *“PhD students have a high value in the market”*

Conclusions

- Employability is an integral part of HE and the quality assurance and enhancement framework in Scotland in a variety of ways;
- A higher education provides a range of employability skills (technical, knowledge, transferable, and crucially, high level skills);
- HE must continue to play a key role in supporting a nation's economic success;
- HE, employers and learners need to engage in ongoing discussion about 'employability'.