The AWARE framework - A progressive approach to employability

'Employability in Action: Opportunities for Developing the Student Experience' conference

6th May 2015

POSTER ABSTRACTS

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POSTER 1

'Building a Partnership with Industry'
Dr Gervase Cunningham, Dr Mark McKane and Dr Sharon McClements
School of Built Environment

Abstract

Quantity Surveying staff at the Ulster University are focused on building and delivering work based learning for undergraduate Quantity Surveying students. The university's reputation for delivering work-based learning means that year after year employers from the UK construction sector and also internationally are returning to recruit our highly skilled and employment-ready graduates.

The Building Partnership event hosted by the Ulster University and organised by Quantity Surveying academics and **construction industry leaders** provides a **great opportunity** for industry to recruit full time undergraduates for both graduate positions and placement positions. Almost 50 organisations attended the event which provided students with the opportunity to find out more about the organisations who attended, the projects in which they are involved and the placement and graduate opportunities with these companies. It also provided academics and the wider university community with the opportunity to network with these stakeholders in the construction industry and hopefully develop engagement and collaboration going forward.

The Building partnership event helped to build and support the construction sector which is on the road to recovery post-downturn. Jonathan Hunter, human resources manager at Farrans Construction, said: "A career in the built environment can be hugely rewarding and as the economic recovery continues, now more than ever is an exciting time to be involved in the sector.

The Building Partnership event is a great opportunity to gain access to some of the best up-and-coming talent within the local construction sector.

POSTER 2

'The AWARE Framework – A Progressive Approach to Employability'
Ms Nicola Ayre, Dr Ian McChesney and Mr Roy Sterritt
School of Computing and Mathematics

Abstract

The University's third strategic aim is "*to enhance Ulster's role as a sector leader for student employability as an integral part of the wider student experience.*" The Computing Subject Area underwent a highly successful Revalidation in 2012/13. As part of our revalidation activity we were keen to develop an enhanced employability strand, underpinned by a greater awareness and understanding of professional issues within the curriculum.

Based on reflections from the EDORT process, input from the Viewpoints project and through work conducted by a working group of the course committee, a progressive approach to employability was devised and introduced in September 2013 - the AWARE framework:

Awareness (Year 1)
Work preparation (Year 2)
Acquire experience (Year 3)
Reflect / refine / refocus (Year 4)
Employed

With a major emphasis of employability being the Year 3 placement year, each of the Years 1, 2 and 4 have an 'anchor' module for developing employability concepts and skills with employability skills taught, developed and assessed elsewhere as appropriate.

The University Revalidation Panel, in their formal feedback, regarded AWARE and our enhanced employability strand as exemplary. As part of the Year 4 reflective activity each student prepares a <u>Project Showcase</u> – a reflective report which allows the student to explore their project work from an employability perspective. One student noted, "*the Project Showcase made me think about my project as something I could use at interviews*." Another said, "*the project showcase was something I could talk confidently about at my interview, I've just secured my dream job, it really helped*."

POSTER 3

'Developing employability skills: student perceptions in the School of Engineering'
Dr Pearse O'Gorman and Margaret Morgan
School of Engineering

<u>**Abstract**</u>
This poster presents the results of a study conducted on first and final year students in the School of Engineering to explore their understanding of and insight into:

- expectations of engineering graduate employers, and
- what skills – professional and hard - they could develop further at University to enhance their employability.

Analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that first and final year students possessed a good appreciation of what employers wanted in a graduate engineer. The results showed a marked difference between the two cohorts in terms of the skills they believed they needed to acquire or develop more fully in order to enhance their employability. The findings will help inform curriculum developers as they seek to align the delivery of course content with both student and employer expectations.

POSTER 4

'Employability Journey(s) at Ulster'
Dr Malachy O'Neill, School of Irish Language and Literature
Prof Melanie Giles, School of Psychology
Ms Shauna McCloy, Employability and Marketing

<u>**Abstract**</u>
Our vision is that applicants to Ulster will be introduced to our institution-wide employability strategy via a series of generic and subject-specific marketing and recruitment events during their AS/A2 years at post-primary level. This would include guest-speakers from industry at