

Producing Employable Sports Graduates: Maximising The Benefits Of Volunteering



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Background

- Concern has been expressed about the low proportion of sports graduates finding careers within the field (Minten, 2010).
- Institutions should offer more course-specific extracurricular information and opportunities (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013).
- Extracurricular activities can negatively impact on academic performance, and students need to be strategic in their activities (Thompson et al., 2013).

Local Background



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Project Outline

Phase 1: Survey of Student Experiences

- Online survey of current students and recent graduates

Phase 2: Focus Groups

- Deeper exploration of survey themes

Phase 3: Resource Generation

- Production of a volunteering toolkit (video and written resources)



Project Team

Staff Researchers

- 3 staff members

Student Researchers

- 4 students (first and second years)

**Advisers/Supporters from the University
employability team**



Phase 1 -Student Survey

- Qualtrics
- 165 responses
 - 112 current students
 - 53 graduates
- Key themes identified by student researchers



Phase 2 -Focus Groups

Two student-led focus groups

- Current students with extensive experience
- Local employers/mentors

Planned focus groups

- More of the above!
- Students who have not done much extracurricular work



Initial Themes: Qualities that employers/mentors want

- Committed
- Understand the subject
- Enthusiasm
- Pro-active
- Professionalism
- Planned and organised
- Engaging
- Honesty



Initial Themes: Benefits

Students

- Personal Development
- Complementing Your Course
- Social Factors
- Improved Employability
- Sense of Achievement
- Careers hands on experience

Employer

- Recruitment of staff
- Bringing skills/expertise to the local area / job



Initial Themes: Obstacles

- Lack of Time
- Financial costs
- Lack of Availability of Appropriate Positions
- Practical Issues/Paperwork



Initial Themes: Advice

Do

- Start as early as possible
- Be enthusiastic & committed
- Choose an area that is relevant and that you are passionate about
- Take advantage of the contacts you develop and utilise social media
- Manage your time effectively
- Research the position



Initial Themes: Advice

Don't

- Let it interfere with your studies
- Focus too narrowly: gain a range of experiences
- Do the bare minimum expected
- Forget your responsibilities

Tensions and expectations

- Volunteering should be treated like a job
- Experience the whole job vs. being given remedial jobs
- Developing personal and employability skills vs. gaining specific experience for a job role.
- Perceptions of time
- Importance of obtaining a good degree

What next?

- Conduct an additional focus group with students who don't currently volunteer
- Provide tool kit for incoming and current undergraduates
- Work to assist students in overcoming barriers if possible
- Educate students on expectations and tensions

Final Thoughts

- Questions?
- Feedback?

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