

THE URE AS A VEHICLE FOR EMPLOYABILITY DEVELOPMENT – THE SUPERVISORS SPEAK

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BACKGROUND

Employers report STEM graduates lack appropriate employability skills and work experience (Deloitte Access Economics, 2014). In a previous study (Carpenter, Nguyen, Davis & Rowland, 2021), we explored Undergraduate Research Experience (URE) students' understanding of employability and how they believe the URE impacted their employability development. Findings showed students had a varied and underdeveloped employability understanding.

AIMS

In this study, we considered URE supervisors, aiming to determine the current landscape of employability understanding of supervisors who facilitate UREs.

DESIGN AND METHODS

Eighteen supervisors across six UQ Faculty of Science Schools were interviewed. A deductive, inductive hybrid approach was implemented, using the validated framework previously developed in the student study.

RESULTS

Supervisors commonly defined employability as 'the ability to be employed'. Most supervisors commented employability learnings were tacitly gained as a side-effect of URE engagement when asked how they facilitated employability development in UREs. Supervisors' examples predominantly focused on research pathways and felt strongly they should not be responsible for their students' employability development.

CONCLUSIONS

This supports a need for explicit employability curricula, to improve student employability understanding. In this presentation, we will discuss the role of supervisors in student employability development, and some ways to move forward that leverages the URE without placing additional teaching strain on supervisors.

REFERENCES

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