

Title: “The Living CV has made me feel confident and aware of how my course is benefitting me” – helping students connect university learning with future work.

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

1. From their own experience, delegates working in small groups, identify any barriers that may prevent students connecting their university learning with the world of work.
2. Delegates sort the identified barriers (from learning outcome 1) using thematic analysis into overall themes for discussion in the wider group.
3. Delegates critique and question a curriculum initiative that encourages undergraduate students to represent their programme learning outcomes as CV outputs - ‘The living CV’. An exploratory study conducted at Solent University, found that students articulated an improved work readiness when they were presented the ‘Living CV’. During 2018, a larger, mixed methods study (n=127) was conducted across all three years of fashion degrees. Students completed a pre and post questionnaire before and after a presentation on the Living CV and their views were further explored in a focus group and interviews. Results found that the Living CV presentation heightened students’ awareness of the applicability of their programme learning to their future employability.
4. Delegates are given a previously identified theme (from learning outcome 2) to discuss how curriculum design and pedagogy can mitigate against these barriers so students can articulate their experience in written, oral and physical forms.

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

Critique their own teaching practice and courses for potential barriers to student employability and start to identify solutions with their own colleagues and students. Delegates would be able to apply the same thematic analysis method demonstrated in the workshop with their own students to explicitly identify the issues of work readiness that could be affecting students at different stages of study. Once identified, delegates would be able to use some of the curriculum design and pedagogy strategies formulated during the workshop with their own students as part of their learning journeys.

Session Outline

1. Barriers exist that allow students to seamlessly transfer their academic learning into other contexts, such as the world of work. The workshop will explore the breadth of these barriers and whether, once articulated and understood by both students and staff, curriculum design and pedagogy are more able to bridge the 'theory-practice' divide (Evans and Guile 2012). The work of theorists such as Wenger (1998) and Eraut (2000; 2004) will inform the debate of the importance of the process of learning and that students can only effectively use this learning if it is made explicit to them.

2. Many assumptions are made on the best way to embed employability skills into the curriculum. Cranmer (2006) and Boden and Nedeva (2010) both highlight the difficulties of introducing employability skills into the curriculum over longer time frames. The workshop will encourage discussion and critique of one such initiative - Solent University's 'Living CV' project and other examples provided by delegates. The Living CV study recommends that personalised and explicit coaching on 'work literacy' should be integrated into university programmes at all levels involving all staff working in higher education.

3. Using a constructivist ethos, the workshop will address a more student centric approach to enhancing work readiness. The link between students' learning and their future employability is complex and how students' perceptions of their own abilities (Räty et al 2018) and the many different elements of the student journey – skills, qualities, conduct, culture, ideology - can help form the whole professional (Jackson 2016). The workshop will be informed by the practical details of a group task to embed employability strategies into a programme of study through a written, oral and physical artefact on graduation.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Introductions to each other and workshop (5 minutes)

1. From their own experience, delegates working in small groups, identify any barriers that prevent students connecting their university learning with the world of work and the potential consequences of that.

Delegates are divided into small groups and use post it notes to identify barriers through discussion. They are required to isolate the five most important and agreed points with their small group (15 minutes)

2. The small groups present, debate and sort the identified barriers (from learning outcome 1) into wider themes for discussion.

The small groups present each of their five points and, with the help of the facilitators, these are joined and altered into wider themes agreed by the overall group (15 minutes)

3. Delegates critique and question a curriculum initiative that encourages undergraduate students to represent their programme learning outcomes into CV outputs; 'The Living CV'.

Lisa and Dawn present a published study on the Living CV initiative at Solent University which enabled students to identify their learning outcomes from their units for application to their CVs. Delegates have the opportunity to question the presenters and discuss their thoughts on the initiative (20 minutes)

4. Delegates are given a previously identified theme (from Learning Outcome 2) to discuss how curriculum design and pedagogy can mitigate against these barriers so students can articulate their experience in written, oral and physical forms.

Delegates discuss in their original small group how their given theme could be managed as a process outcome through the students' programme and as a written, oral and physical artefact on graduation. They present their findings to the wider group for discussion (25 minutes)

Concluding points and completion of an evaluation form of the workshop (10 minutes)

References

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