

Title: **Working with students to help them develop robust self-efficacy beliefs as a key component of their employability credentials**

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Session Learning Outcomes

The aim of this session is to look at how students at Coventry University have participated in inquiry-based learning activities to help them appreciate the importance of robust self-efficacy beliefs as a key component of graduate employability. A key objective of the session will be to demonstrate that these activities can offer a practical, student-centered approach to help students 'help themselves' to achieve robust self-efficacy beliefs and hence better outcomes.

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

- Appreciate the importance of raising student awareness of the impact that self-efficacy beliefs can have on graduate outcomes.
- Understand how students can be supported to find out for themselves about the importance of self-efficacy through appropriate inquiry-based learning activities.
- Consider how self-efficacy related inquiry-based learning activities can be linked to student assessments.

Session Outline

Bandura (1995:2) describes self-efficacy as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations." Self-efficacy beliefs can influence factors such as motivation and commitment levels as well as an individual's willingness to take on difficult tasks.

It is vital that undergraduates are made aware of the impact that self-efficacy beliefs can have on individual outcomes and to help students with low self-efficacy levels to improve their beliefs and hence their employability credentials.

This session will describe a number of student led activities undertaken within the Department of Strategy & Applied Management (SAM) at Coventry Business School involving approximately 600 Level 2 and Level 3 undergraduates with the aim of increasing their awareness of the importance of self-efficacy and to help those students with low self-efficacy levels to improve their beliefs.

These activities are innovative in nature, as rather than being 'lectured at', students have been undertaking inquiry-based learning to find out for themselves the importance of self-efficacy.

This session will fit in particularly well with the *'Engaging students creatively as partner'* theme of the Conference. This is because the activities that the Project has delivered have been very much geared towards student-centered learning (through the medium of inquiry based learning activities) to enable students to find out for themselves the importance of self-efficacy.

Key issues to be addressed are:

- The impacts of these activities on participating students.
- How students with low levels of self-efficacy can best be supported to improve their beliefs.
- How appropriately designed assessment activities can play an important role in raising student awareness of the importance of self-efficacy.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

This session will consist of a 20-25 minute PowerPoint presentation of my (Higher Education Academy funded) self-efficacy Research Project. The remainder of the session will be used for discussion. To further capture the interest of delegates, I will also bring along some of the key Project resources to give attendees the opportunity to view and discuss these 'first hand'.

The presentation element of the session will start by highlighting the importance of self-efficacy to graduate outcomes (both in terms of degree classification and employment prospects). I will then overview the self-efficacy awareness raising activities that have been piloted with undergraduates at Coventry Business School together with details of activities that have been undertaken to help students with low self-efficacy to increase their levels. These activities included the following:

- All level 3 students within SAM were asked to create a self-efficacy awareness raising poster. To encourage student engagement, this activity was incorporated as a mandatory element of their semester 1 Career Development module coursework with the additional incentive of a prize of £200 in Amazon vouchers being made available for the best poster. The best 20 posters were shortlisted for printing and were subsequently displayed at a poster exhibition judged by level 2 students to determine the overall winner of the competition.
- The participation of level 2 SAM students in an inquiry based learning activity as part of their career development seminars with the objective of researching for themselves the role that self-efficacy and related mindsets can have on student outcomes. Additionally, they were asked to complete an 'attitudes to learning' questionnaire before and after participating in the seminars. The questionnaire was designed to prompt students to reflect on their own self-efficacy.
- Level 2 students were also offered the opportunity to participate in two additional workshops to help them work on improving their self-efficacy.

Indicative questions:

What are the most effective methods for raising student awareness of the importance of self-efficacy?

How can students with weak self-efficacy best be supported to develop more helpful beliefs?

What are the most appropriate methods for incorporating self-efficacy enhancing activities as part of student assessments?

What opportunities are there for other HEI's to utilise the self-efficacy resources developed by this Project for use at their own Institution?

The evaluation of the session will be way of informal feedback from delegates as part of the discussion element of the session. Additionally delegates will be asked to complete a brief evaluation questionnaire.

References

Bandura, A. (1995) 'Exercise of personal and collective efficacy in changing societies.' In Self-efficacy in Changing Societies. ed. by Bandura, A. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1-45.