PTAS Project Report (for SMALL PROJECT GRANTS)

Project Title:

Principal Investigator: Stephen Hill

School / Department: Politics and International Relations

Team members: Thomas Charman, Andrew Drever, Patrick Theiner, Luba Zatsepina-McCreadie.

For further information, please contact: Stephen Hill

Grant recipients are expected to submit a brief report at the conclusion of their project which outlines briefly the following : nature of work completed; outcomes; benefits to student learning/student experience; dissemination activity (where relevant – actual and planned) and how the activity could inform future work or be transferred to other subject areas in the University. The brief report will be published on the IAD web pages.

Brief Report (maximum 500 words)

What did you do?

This study assessed the effectiveness of e-portfolios in helping students reflect on the development of their graduate attributes (GAs). We instructed approximately 140 students in an already existing 4-week long 2nd year pre-honours course, to construct MyEdGE e-portfolios. To assess the impact of the e-portfolios in encouraging reflection we conducted surveys at the beginning and end of the course, combined with a content analysis of their 1000-word reflection papers. These reflections were also scored against a rubric to determine the degree of sophistication evidenced for each of the seven GAs.

What did you find out?

Whilst the majority of students (83%) referred directly to at least one Graduate Attribute, their appreciation of the 4 Skills was generally less sophisticated than that for the 3 Mindsets. `Enquiry and Lifelong Learning' and `Outlook and Engagement' were the least discussed. `Research and Enquiry' was the second-least discussed. `Aspiration and Personal Development' was discussed most frequently. These results were to be expected given the students were in a Fundamentals course that runs in Semester 1 of their second year.

The surveys told us that 40% of respondents had heard of Graduate Attributes by the start of the course, rising to 72% at the end (though the number of respondents was a third of that at the beginning). Most interestingly, 62% of the students felt they `knew the Graduate Attributes that they would acquire in a PIR degree' at the start of the course (which increased to 72% at the end),

although this was not evidenced in the range and quality of their reflections. Our principal conclusion was that despite the majority of the students being aware of the idea of Graduate Attributes at the start of the course, they had little understanding of what they fully entailed. This knowledge did improve significantly with the tutorials, but a more `scaffolded' refection would help in future iterations.

How did you disseminate your findings?

The findings have already been presented to the PIR department as part of a general discussion on the potential role of reflection within our curriculum.

What have been the benefits to student learning?

Our students have become more aware of the GAs we want them to develop. By encouraging them to reflect on these GAs they have not only become more aware of the benefits of a university education, but also of the importance (and skill) of reflective practice. The sooner this awareness and skill is developed, the more they can be utilised in helping them fully appreciate the curricula and co-curricular activities they will undertake before graduation.

How could these benefits be extended to other parts of the university?

Utilising e-portfolios to encourage greater reflection of the development of graduate attributes is a model that can be replicated in any programme within the university.

Who can be contacted for further details?

Stephen Hill

Financial statement (please delete as appropriate):

This project has utilised the funding awarded to it by the PTAS adjudication committee and the Principal Investigator or School Administrator appropriate can provide financial statements showing the funding usage as and when required by the UoE Development Trusts who may require it for auditing purposes.

Please send an electronic PDF copy of this report to:
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