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?

More information:
http://impress.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/about-pegs/