Making graduate attributes tangible through international partnership

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Making Graduate Attributes Tangible Through International Partnership

A Case Study

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Introduction

A Memorandum of Understanding between the University of the West of Scotland and University of South China enabled a group of 10 Business Studies and Nursing undergraduate students from UWS to attend a Summer School in Hunan Province, China. Student experiences of cooperating as a team, engaging with industry professionals and adapting to cultural norms and traditions are analysed in terms of acquiring and developing graduate attributes in preparation for the domestic and global employment market.

Aim

To identify the value of international student partnership on developing graduate attributes and preparedness for employability and professional & personal development.

What Are Graduate Attributes?

Debate exists around an exact definition of however, a broad definition is: ‘the skills, knowledge and abilities of university graduates, beyond disciplinary knowledge, which are applicable to a range of contexts’[1] and it is argued that:

“such attributes are what makes higher education distinct from other forms or ‘levels’ of learning.”

Research Method

The students were invited to complete an online semi-structured qualitative questionnaire to provide feedback on how their travel experience impacted on the specific graduate attributes, their professional practice, employability and personal development. 6 students responded (60% response rate).

The responses were read and important moments or events described identified and coded. Thematic analysis was then used [2] to examine the themes emerging across the graduate attributes.

Results

Students developed several important skills necessary for professional and personal development

- Acquired the ability to apply knowledge and develop skills in new and changing environments
- Developed a wider and advanced range of communication techniques
- Adopted an enquiring mind and the ability to interrogate in order to problem solve
- Became more culturally aware and respectful of other cultures and individuals opinions and beliefs
- Experienced professional development and a positive attitude shift towards employability and international travel
- Increased in self-confidence and self-awareness
- Acquired organisation and planning skills
- Developed attributes and practical skills required to work as part of a successful team

Graduate Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Attributes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Working as part of a multidisciplinary team gained an insight into another profession as well as enhanced my team working - Dylan (4th Year BT Student)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The lack of small class size and direct interaction between the university and the affiliate hospitals provided a very unique opportunity for rapid exchange of patient clinical information. This has enabled some amazing links for future developments of technology and modernisation of nursing practice. This particular experience has opened my eyes to opportunities and efficient ways in assessing data - Dylan (4th Year BT Student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I enjoyed being challenged by all aspects which would have previously been out of my comfort zone, including delivering a presentation with members of the nursing team. I feel this trip has enhanced my confidence on a personal and academic level - Dylan (4th Year BT Student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The language barrier opened my awareness to find other ways of communication methods such as showing pictures, showing graphs and, speaking clearly. This has strengthened my communication skills and made me more aware of the way I communicate with patients” - Hayley (4th Year MB student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I enjoyed being challenged by all aspects which would have previously been out of my comfort zone, including delivering a presentation with members of the nursing team. I feel this trip has enhanced my confidence on a personal and academic level - Dylan (4th Year BT Student)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I was able to learn more about situations, how we react to situations, what you tolerate was to certain practices and how they change as an individual in any 24hrs. - Ashley (4th Year BT Student)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being able to apply knowledge and develop skills in new and changing environments - Ashley (4th Year BT Student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Acquired the ability to apply knowledge and develop skills in new and changing environments - Ashley (4th Year BT Student)</td>
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</table>

[1] http://www.gla.ac.uk/students/attributes/yourattributes/