

**Using blogs as a reflective tool for
learners to engage in academic
employability modules and enhance
the student experience**

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Background

- Employability and digital literacy are high on the agenda for Higher Education Institutions in the United Kingdom
- Integrated into teaching and assessments

Scenario

- Employability modules are embedded into courses across the university (eg. Placement modules and career development modules)
- Reflecting on development is encouraged for students progression
- From observation students do not fully engage in reflection
- This discussion paper looks at a possible way in which engagement can be encouraged - through student blogging

Literature



Digital literacy and Blogging

- Ollington, Gibb and Harcourt (2013) highlight the importance of maintaining a good presence online as employers use social media sites and blogs during the short listing and recruitment process
- Gvaramadze (2012) stated that using online or digital resources allows students to enhance and develop general competences which will benefit their employability
- Paklin, Piskin and Bol (2010) looked into blogging as an innovative approach for building and improving necessary marketing skills in the ever changing marketing environment
- Osman and Koh (2012) encouraged student to reflect on what they had learned in class and form links with practice through blogs

Pilot Test

- A pilot test was carried out on a small module of 12 students
 - the sandwich placement module
- Students were instructed how to set up and use a Blog
- Kolb's (1984) learning cycle was **suggested** as a format for the blogs as it provides an approach to reflective learning:
 - **Concrete Experience** - Students reported back on what they had learned during placement each month
 - **Reflective Observation** - Students were asked to look back on and report successes
 - **Abstract Conceptualisation** - Students considered what they could have done better
 - **Active Experimentation** - Students were asked to put an action plan together on how they would make improvements



Blogger™



WORDPRESS

tumblr.

Preliminary Findings

- All students used the Blog once a month for 4 months
- Students engaged in the reflective aspect of the module, this was reflected in the assessment results

Student Feedback

“The blog has allowed me to keep track of what I have done on placement and it looks great on my CV. Employers can find out much more about me just by browsing through my blog, they can see all my experience and the skills I have gained! Great way of keeping in touch with others in the industry too.”

“Blogging has enabled me to create online networks with my peers and also with marketing experts in the industry; this will enhance my employability and improve my chances of getting a graduate job! This was also a good way to complete a piece of the coursework, much more interesting and fun than usual.”

Possible Outcomes of Student Blogging

- Encourage students to engage in the reflective aspect of the employability module through using an innovative tool
- Allow students to reflect on their learning and improve and enhance skills in the educational or working environment
- Blogs will allow students to create and widen their online network
- The opportunity for students to build an online portfolio which will enhance their exposure to graduate employers - linking to Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy
- Enhance general competences and prepare students for a digital society – linking to Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy
- Enhance the overall student experience if embedded into modules

Research Method

- Mixed method approach
- Qualitative approach by means of interviews with students after they have blogged. Potentially speak with employers to discuss employability of students who engage in reflective learning and blogging
- Quantitative approach by means of analysing internal data such as students assessment results and MEQ results

Limitations

- Confidentiality of students whilst blogging
- Lack of knowledge in using Blogs could limit participation
- Research will only be carried out in the Marketing and Advertising Department at Coventry university so may not be generalised

References

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Thank you for listening.

Any questions?

Any suggestions are welcome!