

Driving Forward a Programme Based Approach - A Skills Passport Project

Petra Klawitter, Lorna Proudfoot, Jay MacKinnon, Rob Briers, Clare Taylor, Samantha Campbell Casey
School of Life, Sport and Social Sciences, Edinburgh Napier University, Sighthill Campus

Why a Skills Passport?

The School of Life, Sport and Social Sciences is developing a skills passport for students studying on the Biological Science Suite of programmes. We have engaged in a programme based approach in taking forward this new initiative in an attempt to help consolidate skills development not only within levels but also across levels in our programmes.



Objectives

- Identify key employability skills
- Increase awareness of skills development throughout course of study
- Highlight to students the need to evidence these skills
- Create opportunities for skills development and reflection
- Engage with employers to identify skills gaps within the workplace
- Prepare students for the 'world of work' and make them attractive to employers

Methodology

Primary qualitative research with a cross-section of sector employers has been undertaken to identify industry expectations, skills gaps in Biological Science graduates and to get initial feedback on the idea of a Skills Passport.

Mapping of the skills taught within our programmes to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Establishment of an Employer Liaison Panel (ELP) comprising of Academic staff, industry representatives and student representatives to discuss skills gaps, programme changes, skills provision and the development of a Skills Passport.

Implement changes to the programme structure to improve the employability aspects and also skills development opportunities for students.

Research Results

Skills gaps

Evidence from employers suggests the major skills gaps with Biological Science graduates in Scotland lie in **numeracy & literacy** skills such as day-to-day calculations and report writing; **work ethic** and engagement; and time management skills.

Besides the above interdisciplinary skills gaps, programme specific gaps could be identified including lab skills and IT skills.

Strategic Focus for Skills Passport

The Skills Passport will be linked to 'Repetitive Skills Reviews' to encourage students to regularly reflect on skills development. The Passport will be an individual document created by students during their 4 years of study focusing on their strengths, weaknesses and interests and will rely on students taking ownership of the passport and ultimately their skills development with the support of university staff.

The majority of employers questioned would regard this as an effective tool to help students to be more focussed, self-confident and ready to embed examples of their skills development in CVs and job interviews. They would however value a high level summary which could be used for applications and interviews rather than the whole portfolio. The initial meeting of the ELP has provided suggestions for implementation in the programme, next academic year.