

Topic stream: C. PgCert and BOE

Submission type: Presentation

Submission title:

Supporting student transitions to placement and work: developing a new self-identity

Abstract:

There is substantial evidence that employers are increasingly looking for relevant work experience when filling graduate vacancies. Meeting student demand for placements with pay and/or academic credit remains a challenge for universities; a challenge in terms of resources and balancing supply and demand. In practice there is generally substantially more student demand than employer supply. Through e-Placement Scotland we are managing the transition to placement to ensure students maximise their chances of securing a computing placement and ultimately a graduate job. But what about the students that do not manage to secure a placement? Is there more that can be done to capitalise on their efforts to try to ensure that their experience is positive and promotes a transition in their self-identity that can support a subsequent transition to graduate employment?

Funded by the Scottish Funding Council, e-Placement Scotland has been running since 2010, creating paid placement opportunities for students studying computing and related subjects in all universities and colleges in Scotland. Through our unique cross-sector insights across Scotland we have identified successful strategies to ensure smooth transitions from university to placement. Examples of these include managing a substantial lead-in process, industry-led tech talks, classroom interactions and networking events. Recognising strong student demand for paid placements, one of the aims of the project is to add value whether or not the student is successful in applying. By running these value-added events we are trying to develop awareness of the employment landscape in Scotland and encourage students to start thinking about their self-identities in terms of their future careers thereby supporting their transition into the workplace. We have developed a study into student and professional identity underpinned by the theories of identity and social identity.

Our presentation will explain our approach in the hope that we can stimulate further discussion on the benefits of placement to all students (placed and unplaced) by recognising the transition from student to graduate through the lens of identity adaptation.