

Notes of the StARs Forum – Tuesday 5th May 2015

Topic: Careers Service and StARs System

Present:

Tom Clarke – **TC** (SU (Co-Chair)
Marie Stowell – **MS** (QUED (Co-Chair)
Catriona Fyffe – **CF** (ISES, StAR Coordinator)
Roger Saunders – **RS** (WBS, StAR Coordinator)
Lesley Spiers – **LS** (IHCA, StAR Coordinator)
Rose Watson – **RW** (Careers Service)
Maureen Beckwith – **MB** (QUED (note-taker)

StARs present:

Institute of Humanities and Creative Arts (3), Institute of Health and Society (1), Institute of Science and the Environment (1), Institute of Sport and Exercise Science (5)
Institute of Education (1, comments via email)

Part 1: Questions about employability and careers:

1. To what extent does the Course prepare students for the world of work?

- Good opportunities for worthwhile placements reported in ISES but 3 occurrences in final year considered too many
- ISE are varying some placements due to course changes
- Some courses offer very limited opportunities for placements – could be expanded
- IoE reported useful support about applications, interviews and what UW will provide as support in NQR year. Further suggestion to have more information about teaching in areas outside of the locale – further afield such as Birmingham, Oxford etc.

2. How useful are the resources and advice sessions provided by the Careers service?

- RW commented that opportunities not always taken up by students or perhaps benefits are not sufficiently promoted to students. This includes writing CVs and completing application forms
- More tailored information via courses as to where their specific degree could take students' careers, the options which may be open to them, would be welcome. Perhaps more beneficial to be discussed in (mandatory) lectures, not Worcester Weeks
- IoE students appreciated help with checking of their application forms

3. What additional support might help to prepare students for employability?

- Would be helpful to have more assistance on finding placements within modules – onus is on students in some Institutes
- When students have to find own placements, it is akin to job hunting
- Have notification of volunteering opportunities available on Blackboard.
- Worcester Weeks not seen as engaging or a priority to students – would welcome chance for placement activities in that time

- Statistical software used between staff and students (SPS) not on same versions – creates problems. ILS reply to this comment: SPSS Version 22 is on the student image, in all open access areas and teaching labs. The same version is available to staff (it's part of the latest image for staff) but they would need to request an update from ICT if they are on an older version.
 - Work related skills development, eg communications – practice as to how to interact with people undergoing counselling
 - How to articulate particular skills in applications and interviews.
 - Helpful to know what students should expect from an employer – particularly relevant to IoE NQT students.
4. Are there examples of good practice that other courses could potentially adopt?
- Short video assignment of placement, showing weekly progress. (ISES)
 - Mock interviews, which are filmed, with feedback to students
 - Preparation for interviews with employers talking about how they approach the process (IoE)
 - Karen van Berlo presentation on PGCE course, concerning other career routes post-degree. Helpful for students considering different career to that initially envisaged

Other actions:

- i. RS to contact Reuben Irving (IHCA) about link with students on advertising course.
- ii. RW comments that we need to discuss collaborations between Careers Services and course leaders re more tailored information for courses.

In year 1, there should be a higher set of expectations required of students. As part of group-work and assignments, some work should be implemented in order to improve what can be (perceived) disparity of effort and reward across the group.

Part 2: Questions about the StAR system

- 1. Is the StAR system an effective way of ensuring that students' interests are represented at Course level?**
 - Some StARs have been using module evaluations to prompt discussions and suggestions for improvements
 - More links between StARs and staff. CMCs seen as good forum
 - Some StARs used social media to good effect to interact with fellow students
 - Sometimes other students are reticent/slow about feedback to StARs. Helps to go into lectures and speak directly
 - Agreed face-to-face contact is most productive/reliable method
 - Students often find it easier to talk to a fellow student, rather than staff member.
- 2. If you attended StARs training, did this prepare you well?**
 - Suggestion that within Institutes, the StARs get together at end of academic year to collate and feed forward ideas for following year's StARs training.

- Provide short video clips for new StARs re training, for those not able to attend session. Make available via YouTube and embed into ppts, and via Blackboard.
 - StARs liked freebies (ie hoodies)
 - Help with thinking about how to approach situations and problem solving.
- 3. What have you learned from your experience of being a StAR?**
- StARs learned how important student feedback is to bring about changes on courses
4. What changes or improvements might help StARs become more effective?
- Generic email address for StARs to be able to contact their respective cohorts. Could this be available via Blackboard or SITS? Reply from ILS – the simplest way to achieve this would be via SOLE.
 - Sharing Institute Reps might be useful, with delegation to StARs
 - In the IoE, make sure that all StARs are WiPs because it is the WiPs who make the changes so this will help the StARs provide more feedback to students and ensure that the problems are being addressed

A.O.B

General queries:

1. When does UW academic support end for year 3 students?
Academic support will be available until end of academic year – 12th June 2015, end of Semester 2.
[http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/documents/calendar201415\(9\).pdf](http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/documents/calendar201415(9).pdf)
There are two assessment weeks (11 – 22 May 2015) followed by three weeks for marking and moderation and processing of marks; third of these weeks is designated 'feedback and academic advice week' so students can see tutors about results and implications for following year/reassessments etc. Note, however, some courses do not operate to this pattern. Careers advice is available for up to three years after students have left.
2. MS commented that perhaps more emphasis could be placed on course handbooks including a clear schedule of all submission dates across modules and reviewing this annually as well as making use of it at course approval (so bunching is recognised). It was also pointed out that managing deadlines is a matter of time management for students.
3. Action R.E Anonymous marking - ILS to check out that clicking on name on emails brings up student numbers. Staff to ensure emails are addressed and sent via 'bcc'.
4. Consistency in marking – where students have queries about marking consistency these should be referred back to the tutor involved. StARs should help to empower students to do this where appropriate.

If you didn't get the opportunity to raise some of the questions, comments or suggestions you wanted to on behalf of the students you represent, please jot them down here.

1. More help getting placements/internships over summer.
2. Meetings with academic tutors discussing life after Uni (several tutors offer 'progress reviews' but not all. They are not well advertised and people don't seem to know what they're for.
3. More help finding work placements in elective modules (eg Engaging with Education).
4. More advice on specific career paths (and reassurance!).
5. Concerns about reserve modules.

6. StARs is a good scheme. Personally felt that I had to really go and ask peers of comments to bring back to course management committees and StAR forums rather than them coming to us to raise concerns. Don't think everyone sees it as that important.
7. More staff/student links.

8. Create a survey/StARs feedback section on Blackboard similar to the current survey part.
9. This StARs section can also include the training videos that were mentioned.

10. More employment discussions in mandatory modules.
11. Being a StAR has been very good. Communication can be difficult between StARs and students.

12. Mock interviews – work-placement very useful. Filmed and feedback from interviewee.
13. Worcester Week.
14. CYQ Level 3 completed.
15. Personal training – health and disease; prevention – physical activity.

16. How to ensure that third year students are getting their money's worth?
17. When do our fees stop supporting us, end of July? But our last assignment is due end of May.....