

## **Degreeplus**

A group of staff have been developing the concept of Degreeplus through the Higher Education Academy 'Change Academy' concept since June this year. The team are preparing for the formal launch to coincide with National Student Employment & Volunteering Week in week commencing February 20<sup>th</sup> 2012.

The broad aims of the initiative, supported by an appropriate staffing structure are to ensure that the university supports the undergraduate student journey through to employment by 'enabling students to achieve more from their university experience'. It will also coordinate all existing volunteering opportunities, the development of new third sector partnerships and a university wide promotion of non-credited experience focused initiatives.

The initiative is much more than the identification and co-ordination of existing practice – it is about the management and co-ordination of a range of new initiatives that are designed to support current provision, which will:

- Make the university a more attractive place to study
- Provide the university with competitive advantage through the managed linkage of university life to skills development, work experience
- Add further value to the student experience
- Support the agreed learning & teaching strategy
- Influence programme structure to encapsulate the principles of Degree Plus
- Work in partnership with all 'placements' activities' to generate external internships
- Engage employers & the third sector in a dynamic 'business facing manner'
- Demonstrate to students, parents and employers that we are continually working to prepare students for a successful life beyond graduation

Degreeplus acknowledges that it is incumbent upon the university to promote and manage all those activities above to promote the value of the verification of such co-curricula activities through the EGG scheme.

### **Degreeplus Internships & the 2011/12 - the pilot phase**

The University Executive has approved the Change Academy Team's proposal for the University to provide 120 internships in the pilot phase between May & September 2012 and a further 50 internships with local Employers & the Voluntary sector. They will be:

- Aimed at Level 4 students
- They would be in 'term 3' initially
- Participants will receive expenses
- They would have an 80 hour experience (over 4 weeks)
- Students would be 'placed' by a co-ordinating team
- The primary focus initially will be on Humanities students
- During 'term 3' there will not just be work experience – but also a wide range of skills development workshops open to all students.

We will be:

- Enhancing continuing students' preparation for the following academic year of study
- By definition the initiative seeks to extend aspects of students 'contact time'
- Supporting the PDP in a valued & tangible way
- Helping students with a gap analysis of their skills
- Identifying any appropriate ICT skills development needs
- Providing peer support/mentoring
- Providing a work-based module for all courses
- Ensuring the recognition of entitlements (& adding to the Student Charter as a result of the initiative)

## **Summary**

The Change Academy team undertook the project with the broad aim of developing the concept of internships and seeking to apply it to the undergraduate experience at our university. As the initiative developed it became clear that the title *Degreeplus* could be much more than the co-ordination of internships – it could become the defining feature of the undergraduate offering, of our brand as a university, our identity in a crowded marketplace and be something very special for our students – a genuinely enhanced student experience through which the employability (& employment rates) of our students is a key part of our conspicuous mission. After benefitting from guidance and advice from a number of colleagues, including the University Management Group, University Council as well external agencies as well as a facilitator from the HEA, the *Degreeplus* Business Plan was signed off by the University Executive last week. In the coming months the *Degreeplus* concept will be launched and integrated into university life and the team look forward to working with you to ensure that it is a great success for our students.

## **The Change Academy team are:**

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