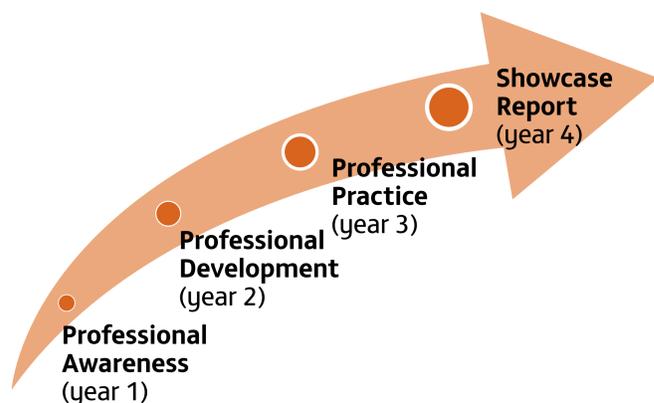


Helping students on their journey from undergraduates to IT Professionals

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Introduction

- In the recent revalidation of our suite of Computing courses, students now take a module in first year, **Professional Awareness**, which is the start of a journey which will help them adapt to working life as an IT professional.
- In year 2 they take a module on **Professional Development** before embarking on a one year **Professional Practice** with an Employer.
- In year 4 they produce a Showcase Report which draws together elements of good practice and experience drawn from all years of their course.
- Focus here is on the year 2 module (Professional Development).
- There are 312 students enrolled in Professional Development module in 2014/15. Delivered in partnership with Career Development Centre.



Quality Standards

In the guide for year 1 students [2], CDC define professionalism as

- “Professionalism is about understanding and exhibiting the level of excellence or competence that is expected by employers, professional bodies and clients.
- Being professional in your approach and commitment to your studies and producing high quality work.
- Having an interest and desire to do a job well and holding a positive attitude towards tasks you undertake.”

Many of our students entering year 2 have not entirely embraced this concept. The QAA in their Subject benchmark document [1] state, under Subject-related cognitive abilities, that Professional considerations in Computing Courses would

- “recognise the professional, economic, social, environmental, moral and ethical issues involved in the sustainable exploitation of computer technology and be guided by the adoption of appropriate professional, ethical and legal practices.”

In their benchmark standards, they identify that,

- to meet the threshold level on graduation, students should be able to: “identify appropriate practices within a professional, legal and ethical framework and understand the need for continuing professional development.”

What do we do in Professional Development?

- The Marketplace
- Selection Process
- Assessment Centres
- Practice + Feedback
- Commercial Awareness
- Legislation
- Professionalism
- Ethics
- Data Security
- Intellectual Property

Module misconceptions at start of year 2:

- This is a ‘careers’ module
- Better to do well in the technical modules
- It is not that important

Feedback from Assessment Centre Exercise

- “Being an observer allowed me to see the mistakes that my group were making.”
- “From my observation, the group seemed separated into two cliques. The group didn’t communicate and there were two members trying to dominate the group enforcing their ideas and trying to establish that they were group leader. Along with this, the group had no awareness of time nor did they try and encourage every member of the group to have an input”
- “I found the planning stage to be the most critical part of the project”

Examples of Coursework

- If you are setting up your own company what protection might you seek for your Intellectual Property and how would you go about it?
- Should employees be able to bring wearable technology to work?

Conclusions

1. We are giving students opportunities to develop graduate qualities, as defined by the University[3] ie self-confidence, global citizenship, appreciation of sustainability matters, ethical leadership, and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability and meeting QAA benchmarks in this area.
2. We are supplementing their technical knowledge with knowledge of current issues in the IT industry and the professional framework within which they will operate when employed in the industry.
3. We are helping them on their journey to become IT Professionals.

Challenge

To constantly champion the adoption of professional behaviour in all aspects of undergraduate life.

References

- [1] www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Subject-benchmark-statement-Computing.aspx.pdf
 [2] graduatequalities.ulster.ac.uk/
 [3] portal.ulster.ac.uk/render.userLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_tparam=utf&utf=http://www.ulster.ac.uk/academicoffice/Policies.html