

ENhance Case Study

Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

Department of
Learning & Teaching
Enhancement

Themes presented:

Employability; Sustainability

Programme

BA (Hons) International Festival & Event Management

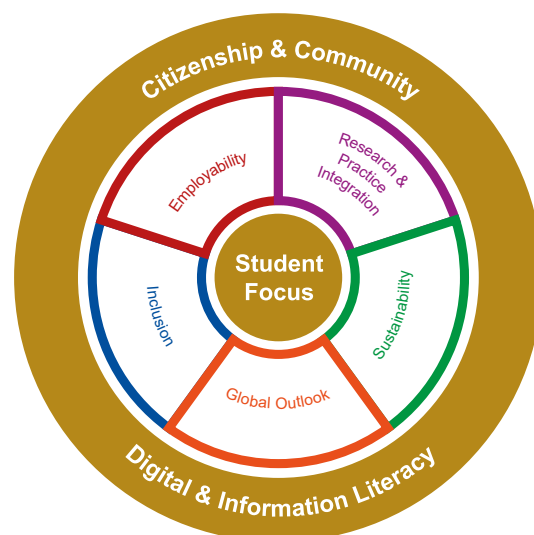
Submission made by

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Case Study

Employability is a core consideration of the BA (Hons) International Festival & Event Management programme (IFEM), and its cousin undergraduate programmes in the Tourism subject area. As a programme team we recognise how important employability is to our students, as well as other stakeholders from industry partners to students' families. There are three principle dimensions to the inclusion of employability within the IFEM programme: industry-facing modules; the Employability Skills Programme; general employability embedded into modules.

Our Work Based Learning placement module is widely admired by external examiners and has successfully supported hundreds of student placements over the years. Participating students are enrolled onto the module at the beginning of year three, in order to begin preparatory classes through the autumn term. These are structured around topics such as CV development, interview techniques, job applications and more. There is a considerable amount of integration and cooperation between the academic module tutors, the Business School Placement Office, and other departments within the University. Most students find a placement through one of three routes: some convert an existing job into a placement (e.g. a part time event assistant job could turn into joining the event planning



team); some apply for jobs that the Placement Office makes available through their contacts; some find placement entirely independently, and are supported in ensuring that it meets our criteria for personal support and academic development. Placements last 20-24 weeks, and are assessed primarily on the basis of a portfolio of work that is submitted in September, 12 months after the student began the module.

Students in year three have an alternative route available to them through the Live Project module. This module places students into groups of four or five, and presents them with a project brief that has been drawn up between the University and an industry partner. This module takes place within the usual spring term weeks. Student projects involve primary research, engagement with the industry partner, comparator and market analysis, and the development of novel and achievable recommendations. Many of these projects see new ideas adopted by the partner organisations.

The Employability Skills Programme (ESP) has been part of the undergraduate experience in the Business School since September 2020. Students in all four years are involved in ESP activities in the autumn and spring terms, with module teaching suspended for two “ESP weeks” per term. For many students this is through the development of team projects. Those in year four have ESP activities focused on the Dissertation, and on entering the graduate job market. The ESP is in its infancy, but it has quickly found its feet, and new ideas are being developed for each round of activities in response to student feedback.

Finally, various modules embed employability themes in their teaching and assessment. This includes: the involvement of guest lecturers and site visits; assessments that simulate industry challenges and activities; and contributions from colleagues such as Dave Jarrold, who bring employability skills training into the classroom.

The initial “why” this all features in our programme is that it was inherited from the programmes on which IFEM is based, namely the Tourism and Hospitality programmes. It has persisted, and been developed, because we recognise the value of this work to our students, and to the identity of our programme. We like to talk about employability at Open Days (for example), and we find that our visitors and partners like to ask us about it.

Students are generally very supportive of what we do in the area of employability. This comes through in module evaluations and the NSS verbatim comments. There has been a sustained improvement in this regard over recent years, which can be put down to a number of factors.

Sustainability has become an increasingly important part of our programme, just as it has within the

fields of Event Management and Event Studies. As a theme, sustainability is embedded in a number of the compulsory modules on the IFEM programme, interpreted as each module leader feels is appropriate in the context of their module. This is also reflection of the literature and sources used in those different modules, and how sustainability has been interpreted therein. Example modules (on which I teach) include TSM09102 Planning and Public Policy for Festivals & Events, and TSM10103 International Festival & Event Environments.

The most deliberate effort to bring sustainability into the IFEM programme is in TSM10113 Festival & Event Impacts and Sustainability. This module is a successor to The Impacts of Festivals & Events. The original module was at level 08, but we brought it to level 10 and amended its content as part of a review of the full programme suite. The revised module has given students, and their tutors, an opportunity to explore sustainability from a wide range of perspectives in the context of festivals and events. This includes policy, industry standards, advances in the academic literature and more. It is well suited to level 10 as it encourages the kinds of overview and strategic approaches that we want to see playing a part in the curriculum in the final year of the BA (Hons).

The rationale for this approach to including sustainability in the IFEM programme is a reasonably standard mix of influences: wanting to reflect contemporary themes from literature, policy, industry, and student interest. Encouraging module leaders to approach sustainability in ways that are relevant to them is important, and has helped us try to reflect the breadth of perspectives and interpretations of the subject.

We have seen positive responses from students to these developments. One way of identifying this is through the choice of Dissertation topics in a given year. Sustainability is probably more common than ever before in terms of what the students want to research, and what they want to write about. There is an inclusivity element to sustainability in terms of festivals and events. We want to develop graduates who go on to produce and support sustainable events. That means making events accessible, responsible and accountable. If an event is not achieving those normative targets then there is a discussion to be had about why.

Digital & Information Literacy and Citizenship & Community

Citizenship and Community is very important to the IFEM programme, partly on account of the high profile of these themes in the Event Management and Event Studies academic literature. The relationship between an event and its host community is often vitally important, and we are interested in this in terms of outcomes and impacts, the role of public policy, and a range of sociological themes such as place, space, identity, socialisation, civil society and social capital.

Digital Information Literacy has helped to underpin the last 18 months of LTA on our programme. Students have done well in the shift to online learning, and we saw excellent returns in the 2021 NSS.

This is an area of high potential though, as the adoption of digital approaches is (and probably always will be) dependent on decisions being made by individual module leaders. It is therefore context specific: what do MLs think will work best for them, at a given time? The best source of inspiration for new innovations is likely to be students themselves: what would they like to use; what have they used in other modules; how do they feel about working in a hybrid environment?

In terms of digital and information literacy, due to the international nature of sustainability as an important theme, there is a wealth of online information available for our students to engage with. This includes government policy and strategy documents, case studies, and third sector organisations. Of the latter, Positive Impact is one of the most prominent in the events sector, and they have provided study materials for HE institutions to make use of.

Further links

<https://www.positiveimpactevents.com>

<https://juliesbicycle.com>

<https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com>