

Teaching Excellence Case Study

FOCUS (Focus on Careers and Unique Skills): A cross-disciplinary professionalisation initiative

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Modules: Various (from subject areas including Finance, Fashion, Marketing and Hospitality, Human Resource Management) **Student Level:** Postgraduate (Level 7)

LINKS TO EDUCATION STRATEGY PILLARS

- Embedded employability
- Community contribution and responsibility
- Creativity and enterprise

AIMS

For postgraduate taught students across a range of disciplines, it is crucial to “hit the ground running” in order to succeed in their intense one-year courses. To enable this, whilst building students’ confidence, team working skills, and sense of community within large student cohorts, a week long programme of activities (called **FOCUS: Focus on Careers and Unique Skills**) was launched.

ACTIONS

Colleagues from across course teams, and from various professional services units (e.g. Employability team; Library and Learning team) **collaborated** to devise and deliver the FOCUS programme in the first term of study. Between them, they divided the total number of participating **students (over 350)** into cross-disciplinary teams of 10. They also sourced four different **industry partners** from fields such as digital marketing and recruitment to support the activities.

At the start of the week, each team was set a challenge to **deliver a pitch** in which they would present their ideas to clients (i.e. the industry partners) and answer their questions. This would take place on the Friday of the same week, with awards given for the best pitches.

As well as preparing for their pitch across the course of the week, students took part in a range of **supporting activities** (around 12 hours’ worth), including:

- talks from industry partners (including alumni),
- skills workshops (e.g. on public speaking; teamwork),
- day trips (e.g. to Parliament to get insights into decision making)
- strategy sessions (for advice on pitching and image consulting, e.g. how to dress for the pitch).



IMPACT AND STUDENT FEEDBACK

The FOCUS week was very successful, with students able to draw upon their experiences on their **CVS and in job interviews**. Having it early on in the term worked wonders for **building relationships** between students across courses, as well as increasing their confidence and team working skills. The **model will be replicated each semester**, with different colleagues taking the lead on the organisational aspects.

- “Focus has helped to develop my skills...I **took every comment critically** and adopt it on how I can be better. It was a great experience for me!”
- “It was a great opportunity for us to develop our research, **teamwork and presentation skills** and to overtake our fears in terms of delivering a pitch to many people.”
- **94%** of participants would recommend FOCUS to future students at Coventry University London.

TOP TIPS

- Involving industry partners gave students an **incentive to make a good impression** as the importance of professionalism when representing the University was highlighted.
- Make use of the **support available from professional services**. Whether it’s the Employability team sourcing industry partners, or the Timetabling team dividing students into teams, they can help with many tasks.
- Ensure that **staff are available** to support the activities—send calendar invitations well in advance so that the responsibilities are shared.