

Online enrichment workshops: an effective programme to engage and enrich your students' experiences

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PROBLEM

Many students don't appreciate **employability benefits** and crucial skills gained by engaging with practical home and online investigations (Haresnape, 2022).

SOLUTION

Online Enrichment Programme for LHCS which

Raises awareness of employability skills/possibilities.

Bonus

- Keeps students engaged over summer.
- Creates a sense of community.

WHAT WE DID

- Weekly interactive recorded online enrichment workshops (summer of 2022 and 2023);
 - Introduced by a host to give continuity.
 - Led by tutors or library colleagues who gave personal career journey.
 - Interactive used polls, discussions, internet searches etc.
 - Widely advertised via forms and emails.
- Monthly Online Journal Clubs (New et al., 2024).

REACH

Attendance in summer 2023:

- >200 students attended at least 1 live event.
- >440 students attended or viewed recording of at least 1 live event.
- 25 students engaged with 5 or more sessions.

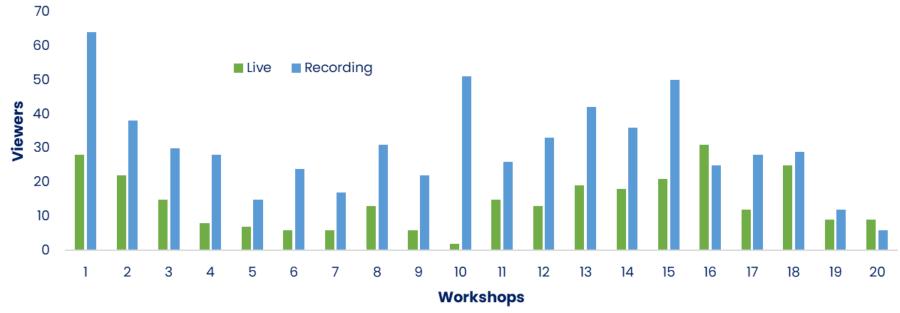


Fig. 1: Attendance at weekly interactive recorded enrichment workshops either live or via recording.

RANGE OF WORKSHOPS

- Insights into field and lab-based jobs: chemistry/biology/ health science
- OU research: Global health and Cancer research.
- Transferable/technical employability skills developed during study and practical work.
 - Showcasing skills in CVs, job applications and interviews.
 - Illustrations of using skills in different contexts.
- FutureYou and support from Careers & Employability Service and Library.
- Panel discussion with PhD students exploring their experiences.
- What is Global Citizenship?

(Accessed 16 May 2024).

WHAT WORKED WELL?

- Catchy titles: Penguins, Parasites and Poo.
- Intriguing content: Is snail slime used in face cream developing information literacy.
- Need to know skills: Assignment bootcamp, how to use Excel.
- Broadening horizons: Facilitators' fascinating and varied career journeys.
- New opportunities: Bioinformatics for Beginners using Galaxy.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Comments all very positive. Main emerging themes:

- Building employability-related knowledge and skills.
- Bringing studies to life/providing enrichment.
- Creating sense of belonging/Feeling part of a community.

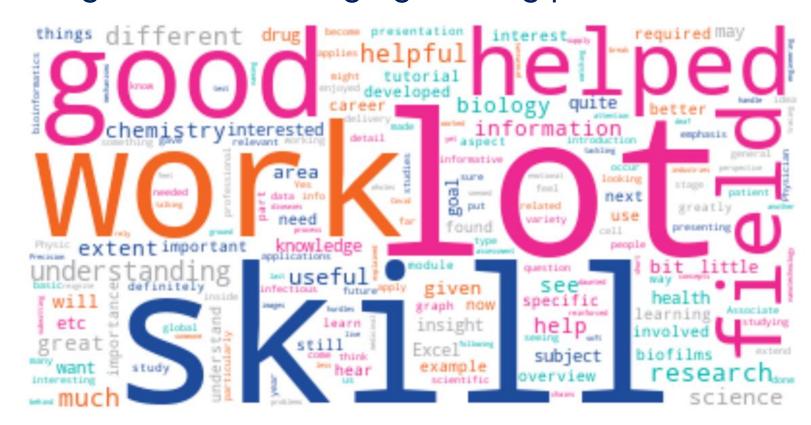


Fig. 2: "To what extend has this session helped you to understand the skills which might be required in a particular field of work?"

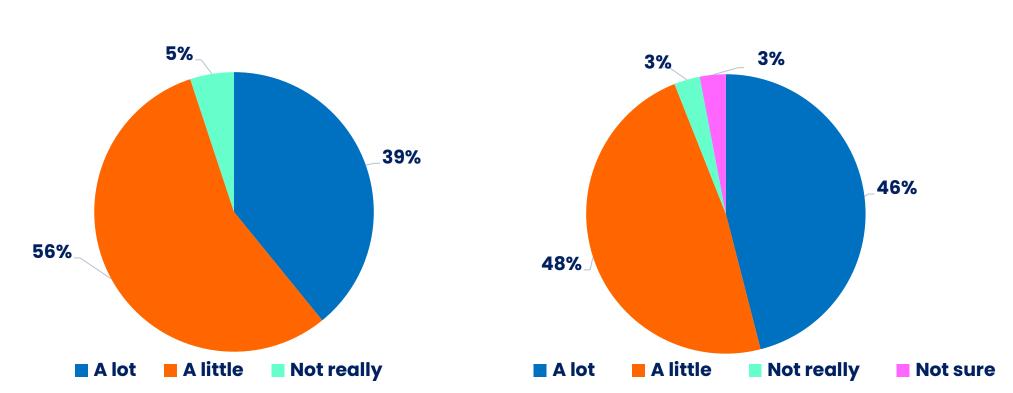


Fig. 3: Student responses to "what extend has this session helped you to understand the skills which might be required in a particular field of work?"

Fig. 4: Student responses to "what extent is this programme helping you to feel part of an OU community of students?"

"To hear from a practitioner. ..., I want to hear what it is really like!"

"nice to hear the calm approach of the tutor, it can be quite isolating to apply for jobs on your own."

"It was interesting to hear from other people that were further along the **academic journey** and see where things can go."

"It helped me **realize** the skills that I've developed during my **study** with the OU and how I'll be able to use those in a CV"

"It's easy to get immersed in the schoolwork but also easy to lose sight of the **career aspect**. This brings that back."

"Useful ideas to include in application forms, **skills** employers look for and further support from the OU."

Fig. 5: Examples of student's responses relating to employability.

WHAT NEXT?

- Exploring student input/ownership.
- Does attendance at enrichment sessions increase engagement with Careers and Employability service?
- Would a similar programme work at your institution?
- Do you do similar? Interested in sharing ideas?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Workshop facilitators and Hannah Gandy, Student presenter



eSTEeM Centre for Scholarship and Innovation Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

Haresnape, J.M. (2022) Practical skills progression and employability in the Life Sciences pathway at the Open University. Open University eSTEeM Final Report.

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