

## **Business and Transferable Skills MSc Bioscience Technology**

### **Motivation for developing the course**

The materials were developed as part of the MSc in Bioscience Technology at the University of York. Although all of the Masters courses have a transferable skills component, these materials (particularly Part 2) were developed with a specific business and entrepreneurship element that tied in closely to the subject matter of the course. This was appropriate because the MSc in Bioscience Technology was designed to prepare students for employment in bioindustry whereas other Masters courses have been designed to send students along the academic route to pursue doctorates.

### **Any problems/issues in developing the materials**

The materials were developed by a Teaching Fellow/careers adviser with a wealth of experience of developing and delivering transferable skills sessions, and expertise in small-group teaching and participatory learning methods. These were particularly suitable for the development of the Business and Transferable Skills module. The problems lay not in the development materials, but in the practicalities of their delivery – principally:

- Videoed presentations session. There can only be a maximum of eight students in each session (preferably less). It's not possible to concentrate and give good feedback on more than eight presentations in a row.
- Nine was the absolute maximum for getting through the assessments which were conducted in the form of a HR interview by a recruitment professional. With increased numbers, the interviews will have to be held in parallel, which raises issues about potential discrepancy in marking standards between interviewers.
- If student numbers do not permit division into equally sized groups, fairness may be an issue. Part 2 requires a lot of work and a group size of 3-4 is recommended.

### **Student numbers and broad indication of feedback**

These materials have been used for two academic years, with a third commencing in 2008/2009. In 2006/2007 there were nine students, and for Part two, they worked on their business plans in two groups of three. In 2007/2008 there were eight students, and after some deliberation, it was decided to place the students in two groups of four rather than creating unequally sized groups.

Feedback for the materials has been outstanding, with the Part 2 receiving among the highest feedback across the department and a letter of congratulation from the Head of Department. Informal feedback suggests that the success of the materials lies with the fact that they are closely allied to the course content itself and clearly contribute to the career aspirations of the students. Many of the sessions were delivered by professionals in their field, emphasising the importance of developing these skills in the workplace.

Finally, the fact that the modules were assessed and constituted a significant part of the degree (7.5%) highlighted the importance of transferable skills in the minds of the course designers, and hence the students.

### **Future plans and developments**

The popularity of the course has meant that other Masters courses have requested places for their students on some of the sessions. This means that the course materials and activities need to be reconsidered in the light of larger student numbers. In some cases, where larger numbers would be detrimental to the quality of the sessions, these materials can now be made available to academics to use themselves rather than creating larger than optimal class sizes.