

CARRICK INSTITUTE : DISCIPLINE BASED INITIATIVES

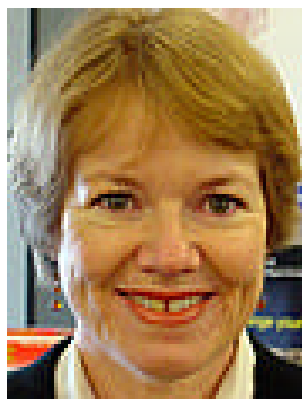


Work Integrated Learning : A national framework for initiatives to support best practice

Swinburne University of Technology – Careers and Information Communications Technology

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Vignette title and details	Professional Employment Program 4 day intensive program Postgraduate students from the Faculty of ICT International Students
Discipline	Information Technology
Employment sector	Multi– sector
Student numbers	The program was offered twice in 2007, June and Nov 2007 about 60 students in each, and will be offered again this year, 2008
Optional/compulsory	Voluntary for some but mandatory for students enrolling in a 12.5 credit point unit – Internship Project.
Credit bearing	Non credit bearing subject
Assessment	No Students are expected to update their Resume and attend a Mock Interview with an industry professional
Payment	Unpaid
Number of staff involved	Faculty of ICT Careers and Employment staff 3 Higher Education Careers Consultants
Weblink	http://www.international.swinburne.edu.au/currentstudents/life/documents/Student-Life-Jun07.pdf http://www.swinburne.edu.au/ict/international/documents/CT_Intl_Guide_2008_web.pdf
Key Word	Careers; Employment; Skills; lifelong learning; International; Internships

Overview

Over the last five years the number of young people in Australia enrolling in Information Technology courses has gradually declined, whilst the shortages of professionals in this area has steadily increased. Conversely, the number of international students, especially postgraduates, enrolling in the ICT courses has increased particularly here at Swinburne University of Technology. Recognising this, Swinburne's Faculty of Information Communication Technology decided they needed to take a positive step towards connecting the expanding base of international ICT students with industry. Thus the Professional Employment Program (PEP) was developed.

In June 2007 the Faculty of ICT (FICT) launched its first Professional Employment Program (PEP) - a career development workshop lasting for 4 days. Delivered in conjunction with the Swinburne's Careers and Employment Unit (CEU), the program focused on helping overseas postgraduate students understand the Australian job application process and workplace culture leading to increased job readiness upon completion of their ICT masters courses at Swinburne University of Technology.

The Faculty of ICT offers 6 Masters programs:

- Master of Information Technology
- Master of Science (Network Systems)
- Master of Technology (Information Technology)
- Master of Information Systems Management
- Master of Information Systems Management/Masters of Accounting
- Master of Information Systems Management/Masters of Business Administration

Students from all these programs have the option to participate in PEP.

Structure of program

The program was developed in response to student feedback from focus groups conducted in 2006. These focus groups identified a need for a program that would address international graduates' generic skills for employment.

Some key objectives of PEP are:

- help ICT students to plan their careers and identify suitable vacancies
- improve communication, presentation and interview skills of students
- provide updated information of contemporary ICT industry to students
- facilitate provision of relevant industry experiences to students.

The first PEP was offered in June 2007 with sessions running over four full days from 18th to 21st June. About 60 ICT international postgraduate students commencing their final semester attended. The delivery mode of PEP is mainly in the form of workshops with highly interactive teaching approach including activities such as: self-assessment, mock-interview, team activities, expert feedback, industry visits, etc.

The block delivery mode was chosen because it fitted into the students' mid-semester break and allowed students to totally immerse themselves into the program without distraction from their other academic commitments.

The program was offered again in Nov 2007 and is planned for June 2008.

Additionally, in early 2007, new Government information became available detailing the then proposed changes to General Skilled Migration (GSM) regulations requiring international graduates to gain relevant post-qualification work experiences as part of the GSM application requirements. This program is an attempt to assist students gain such skills.

Students have the opportunity to apply for an Internship Project in their final semester where they will be placed in a workplace for one day per week for the semester whilst they undertake a project. In order to qualify for the Internship, they must complete the PEP. The Internship Project enables students to further develop their understanding of business processes, and professional networks within the IT industry together with their professional and personal skills.

Special Features

The PEP has been the right fit for its target audience and has been enthusiastically received by large numbers of international postgraduate students. The PEP maintained a very high attendance rate over both programs, and applicants have continually exceeded the number of places available in the program.

The key to its success is that it builds on the experience of *Careers in the Curriculum*, a compulsory but non award unit which all Swinburne undergraduate students must complete prior to graduation. However PEP is tailored to both the students and the ICT industry, and delivered collaboratively with Careers and Employment and the Faculty of ICT, thus drawing on the collective strengths of each.

Students have offered the following feedback:

The PEP program gave me confidence and upliftment in an area I was lacking and hence very useful.

I found that the best elements of PEP were the industry visits, guest speakers and resume checking.

This program will help me in building my skills for applying ICT jobs and helping me to know what I need to do in certain situations when applying.

This program clearly helped international students to gain knowledge about how to improve yourself for interviews and other job selection procedures.

This was a great program with good information to know the real world recruitment policy

Additionally in 2007 the PEP won the Vice-Chancellor's Internationalisation Award 2007:

The Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies and Careers and Employment Unit Team for the development of an 'ICT Professional Employment Program' which has contributed to extremely positive changes in student outlook and greatly improved employment outcomes.

It has resulted in greater collaboration with industry and the local community, as industry visits are part of the program and representatives from industry participate in the mock interviews, which students report as being one of the most valuable aspects of PEP.

The mock interview was realistic and the greatest thing was we received immediate feedback from industry experts. The videos used in the demonstrations were fantastic.

Another key to the success of the program is the staff and this is reflected in the student comments:

You guys are doing an extremely good job, especially for International students. Keep the good work going.

Tutors are great.

This program was run excellently. The entire team was very good, friendly and made us feel very comfortable.

Future Work

Australia is on the cusp of significant changes in the visa requirements for international students and as more becomes known about such changes, the program may need to be adapted to reflect this. However, as the program has been very successful so far, it is viewed that few changes are required at this stage except for industry visits to employers who are currently or considering employing international students.

Student feedback on 'improvements' they would suggest included:

Many students missed this opportunity because they don't know about this program. Promote more so that it reaches more students.

More interview practice

Leave more time for students and staff to have lunch.

I would like this program to include group interviews and presentations to make it more valuable for students.

More time on site visits and review resumes.

Give more information about the assessment centre.

Maybe 4 days was too much.

Additional Insights

When students were asked 'what was the best aspect of the course?', a variety of responses were elicited:

Covering all aspects of job hunting which was delivered in an easily understood language

Conducting interviews and industry visit

Increasing self confidence

Telling us what employers expect and how to prepare a resume and cover letter

The booklet as it contains all of the resources that we need to work on

Mock interviews and guest speakers

Knowing about how to approach the Australian corporate culture by getting adequate information about it

Friendly staff and well coordinated.