This report summarises discussions on building a skills matrix in degree programmes from the Academic Monitoring Dissemination Event on the 8th October 2014 and the subsequent follow-up meeting on 27th October 2014. The group comprised the following members:

Dr Gerald Prescott  Biology
Dr Verena Dietrich-Bischoff  Biology
Dr Graham Kirby  Computer sciences
Dr Bruce Sinclair  Physics and Astronomy
Dr Fiona Gray  Chemistry
Dr Jane Pettegree  Music (dissemination event only)
Ondrej Hajda  Director of Representation

The School of Biology presented details of a skills audit that they had conducted, looking at the non-subject specific skills (e.g. presentation skills, teamwork, numeracy, statistics, problem solving) that were taught, practiced and assessed across their degree programmes. The School had then built a skills matrix that enabled them to determine any gaps present in the development of these skills. An example was given whereby staff reported that some students struggled with essay writing at 3rd year and the skills review identified that a key practice essay had been lost for some students at 2nd year.

The discussions within the group focussed on 3 issues; 1, how other Schools could perform a similar skills review, 2, how to develop the skills matrix so that it was of use to students and 3, how information on skills development could be used to enhance student confidence and employability. These are discussed briefly below.

1. Biology reported that it had taken approximately 200 working hours to complete the entire skills review and to produce the matrix. Schools were keen on the idea of conducting a similar review commenting, “Spurred on by the interesting presentation at the event we intend to carry out a form of skills audit across modules.” It was, however, generally felt that this level of time commitment would be extremely difficult for many schools to achieve. As the information required for development of the skills matrix could predominantly be gathered by data mining, it was thought that it may be possible to use student interns to gather the required information. Outcome: Schools involved in the discussion will consider whether they could conduct a skills review with the help of a student intern.

2. The School of Biology are keen to use the generated skills matrix to help students identify the skills they develop during their degree. Discussions focussed around how this could be achieved. It was felt that degree controllers may be able to select the modules that are core to their degree programme and identify the key skills that are developed through these modules. Although potentially useful, it was felt that this may still not allow students to clearly see how their skills had improved. It was also a concern that the skills matrix could quickly become outdated and this may result in student concern regarding what is being taught. Outcome: It was felt that the skills matrix should remain an internal document and that alternative mechanisms for engaging students in identifying skills development are needed.

3. The majority of discussions within the group focussed on how to assist students with identifying the skills they have developed, with the aim of enhancing student confidence and employability. The group acknowledged that in NSS results, the university/their Schools did not perform as well on enhancing student confidence as they would perhaps expect. It was felt that this may be due to some students entering the university already very confident in their skill set, but that the challenge of a university course may, in some cases, cause them to realise that their skills may...
not be as strong as they thought. It was also felt that students struggled to see how their skills had developed during the course of their degree. The group discussed the possibility of producing a skills portfolio that allowed students to reflect on their skills year on year. It was felt, however, that it may be difficult to gain high levels of student engagement in completing such a portfolio. The Director of Representation reported to the group that he thought that the Careers Centre was hoping to hold individual appointments with all 3rd year students. It was felt that a short skills document that students were asked to bring to this meeting may be helpful. The group discussed how this document may look. It was suggested that students could be asked to identify 6 to 7 skills that they thought were key to their future career intention. They could then be asked to identify occasions when they had used these skills within their degree and within their extracurricular activities. Students could then be asked to reflect on how these skills had developed. The group felt that it would be beneficial if students had a mechanism whereby they could store examples of work using the skills identified, so that they could see how the skills had developed.

**Outcome:** The group felt that a mechanism whereby students, probably in their 3rd year of study, could identify key skills for their career and reflect on how these skills had developed during their degree would be extremely beneficial to students. The group were keen to hold discussions with the Careers Centre as to whether they also felt this would be beneficial and how this may be achieved. The Director of Representation will enquire whether students can have a digital access (e.g. via MMS) to coursework they submitted throughout the whole duration of their studies in St Andrews.”

**Outcome of discussions**

The Schools of Biology, Chemistry, Computer Sciences and Physics expressed interest in developing a proposal, perhaps alongside the Students’ Association and Careers Centre for funding through the Transitions Enhancement Theme. This would be to employ student interns to conduct a skills review within each of the Schools and to develop a mechanism whereby students can be made aware of the skills they are developing and can reflect upon this upon the development of key skills. It is hoped that this would be of value to all students in increasing confidence and employability.

Report created by Dr Gerald Prescott, School of Biology