

**QAA Scotland: Student Transitions**

**Student Commentaries: Leadership Academy Case Study**

**Background**

The Leadership Academy develops students’ leadership skills and qualities through a series of interactive workshops and seminars. Sessions are delivered by inspirational leaders and external organisations around the theme of ‘leadership’. A key objective of the Leadership Academy is to support student development of Aberdeen Graduate Attributes. Students participate in at least 4, 2-hour workshops which focus on different aspects of leadership and also submit a short reflective piece to demonstrate their wider co-curricular learning and development in a non-academic context. The Academy was originally established by Aberdeen University Students’ Association and is now managed by the University of Aberdeen’s Careers Service.

[www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/case-studies/aberdeen-university-students-association-leadership-academy.pdf?sfvrsn=4](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/case-studies/aberdeen-university-students-association-leadership-academy.pdf?sfvrsn=4)

A survey was designed and delivered in order to capture the student voice and gather Leadership Academy feedback in the academic year 2016-17. 29 student (undergraduates and postgraduates) responses were received.

1. **What do you think of the Leadership Academy?**

Responses were very positive in relation to both Leadership Academy learning and enjoyment. Feedback and comments clearly illustrate students increased leadership knowledge and their understanding of their personal development. The main findings can be summed up as follows:

*“I really enjoyed the Leadership Academy. It allowed me to meet a number of inspirational people, explore my own strengths and weaknesses, and learn more about leadership.”*

*“I liked that all sessions encouraged us to think about our own leadership style and how we could develop in future.”*

*“Employers were so helpful and down to earth, and gave us a lot of tips and advice. It was great to hear about their own personal experiences and leadership journey. I would definitely do the Leadership Academy again!”*

1. **Why do you think that?**

A number of comments made by students illustrate the ways in which the Academy has impacted on their ideas for the future. In addition students revealed that the Academy had enhanced their confidence and motivation. The shaping of students’ mind-set is illustrated via the following comments:

*“I have to say that I do not feel like I have the same mind-set towards leadership as I had before the Academy. I was sceptical whether I could be an inspiring and good leader. However the programme showed me that everyone can be a leader in their own special way. I now feel more motivated and keen to take on a leadership role!”*

*“I got the chance to interact with new people and to hear new ideas.”*

1. **How do you know that?**

Students were requested to rate themselves against competence statements before and after the Leadership Academy. This approach is useful to track changes in students’ perception and behaviour over time and is illustrated via the following student comments:

*“Before and after the Leadership Academy, we were asked to rate our level of confidence in leadership. I was surprised by the result myself! I definitely feel much more confident and ready for my life after graduation.”*

*“Recently I volunteered to lead a project which I could not have done without the knowledge I gained through the Academy.”*

1. **Can you tell me more?**

In addition to extending students’ understanding of leadership students also reported that they developed a range of transferable skills and attributes, including team working and emotional intelligence and public speaking. The main findings can be summed up as follows:

*“I never felt comfortable speaking in public. The Public Speaking workshop really pushed us all out of our comfort zone as we were all required to speak! I was quite scared at first, but I managed to overcome my initial fear. I learnt a couple of valuable tips about how to handle questions and debates.”*

*“The Teamwork session showed me how different everyone is and how to manage diverse personalities whilst working in team. All sessions that I attended were great!”*

1. **What questions do you still have?**

The Survey findings presented within this student commentary clearly show the impacts and learning across student participants. Students have also bequeathed the Careers Service with a range of development ideas via the following points:

*“What other employers do you plan to invite to the Leadership Academy?”*

*“Do other universities provide similar opportunities to this?”*

*“Is my Leadership Academy learning and development recognised on my University Enhanced Transcript?”*

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