

STRENGTHS · PROFILE

CASE STUDY

Student Careers and Skills at the University of Warwick provide skills development opportunities, careers advice and guidance for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The University of Warwick is consistently rated as one of the top six universities in the UK. It is the second most targeted university by graduate employers for graduate recruitment programmes, and delivers leading graduate employability outcomes.

The Challenge

University students, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, often face a number of hurdles in their transition to employment and the world of work. These can include a lack of a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, the need to increase their self-confidence and self-awareness, and the ability to distinguish themselves at interview and demonstrate their employability.

Anne Wilson, Head of Careers at the University of Warwick, identified that helping students to understand their strengths and weaknesses might help them improve their self-awareness and self-confidence, as well as enhancing their employability. In addition, the trend for graduate employers, such as EY, to use strengths-based recruitment in their graduate campaigns demonstrated further value-add through identifying and developing the strengths of students and graduates.

Our Approach

Over 50 Student Careers and Skills staff were trained as Certified Accredited Strengths Practitioners in the use of Strengths Profile as a strengths identification and development tool for students and graduates through the following approach:

- Two groups of 15 students were used in a pilot project to test the approach: second year students about to apply for internships, and final year students with no clear career plans
- Two workshop sessions were delivered for each group, helping them to focus on understanding their strengths through Strengths Profile, and using this to inform their own career development decisions
- Careers Services continue to run regular one-to-one debriefs with students and graduates to help them inform their career choices, along with workshops in developing their strengths to gain further confidence

The Outcome

Both groups showed significant average increases in their ability to:

- Describe their strengths in an application or CV – **from 40% to 80%**
- Articulate their strengths to a recruiter – **from 60% to 80%**
- Display increased confidence in attending interviews – **from 50% to 70%**

Three participants from internship group of 15 students specifically attributed their success at securing a placement to their understanding of their strengths, achieved through the Strengths Profile workshop.

“We have found that both the Strengths Profiles and the strengths workshops have proved to be a valuable addition to our work with students. Often students struggle to find the language to articulate their skills, motivations and strengths. Strengths Profile provides students with this language, which when qualified with personal examples, enables students to describe themselves authentically and with increased confidence to recruiters.”

Anne Wilson, Head of Careers