What should be the aims of UG psychology education? A student perspective

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Outline

• My Background
• My perception of the UG degree
• Problems with the UG degree
• Student employment concerns
• Ideas to improve the UG degree
My Background

• UNSW B Psychology (Hons) Graduate - 2009
• Gap year – Cancer research – 2010
• UNSW Masters Organisational Psychology 2011

• Previous work experience
  • Research Assistance (Psychology – since 2006)
My perception of the UG degree

- 1\textsuperscript{st} year = interesting and fun
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} year = similar content to 1\textsuperscript{st} year, but more in-depth
- 3\textsuperscript{rd} year = student focus is on grades to get into honours
- Honours = very difficult and rewarding experience
Problems with the degree

• Focus of the UG degree = preparation to become an academic
  • Most students won’t become academics

• Lack of practical application
  • Basic information so that we can apply some principles to our friends and families

• Some topics could be better linked to application
  • What can I do with the 6 weeks of learning about ‘concepts and categorisation’?
Problems with the degree

• Students are unaware of their skill level
  • Need to explicitly state how psyc students differ to students in other degrees → we lack confidence outside of academia

• Lack of employment options
  • Possible job roles – besides RA work, what else could we do?
  • Why would a company hire a psyc grad over a HR grad?

• Employers may misperceive student skills
  • E.g., My employer thought I had interview skills training. They then had to train me.
Students’ employment concerns

- Getting the ‘right’ job → resort to getting ‘a’ job
  - It is a difficult lifestyle without money, (+living out of home)

- The benevolent application of psychology (e.g., global citizenship) might not manifest when one is financially unstable
  - Consider Maslow’s Hierarchy.....after UG, we are towards the bottom
Ideas to improve psyc education

• Have workshops on basic employment skills
  • Leadership
  • Management
  • Communication skills (basic counselling)
  • Interviewing skills

→ If cost is an issue, can masters students be involved in administering the workshops? – pro bono (looks good on resume), or as a part of their course?

• Have teaching staff explicitly emphasise student skills
• Link coursework to practical application
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