

Case Study 4

This case study describes the approach the Centre for Career Action (formerly Career Services) at the University of Waterloo has used to evaluate their resume services.

This case addresses the evaluation of:

Inputs	no
Processes	yes
Outcomes	yes
• Learning outcomes	yes
• Personal attribute outcomes	no
• Impact outcomes	no

Evaluating Resume Services at the Centre for Career Action, University of Waterloo

We decided to evaluate our resume services in order to a) measure the effectiveness of our online and face-to-face resume advising, and b) provide support and information in our annual report regarding the effectiveness of our resume advising services.

Because of our association with the Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education (WatCACE) and the ability to bid for some research funding, we decided to turn this into a larger, and more formal, research project. The Centre collaborated with 3 faculty members.

The data was intended to serve as a benchmark for the effectiveness of our service, and to determine whether both services (online and face-to-face) should be offered, and their relative effectiveness.

The Evaluation Tools

We developed and used two tools. The first is a resume rubric (which lays out the criteria for evaluating each section of the resume – can be used for assigning a grade to the resume and each component part). The second is a student survey regarding student perception of the value of online and face-to-face advising. Both tools were developed by The Centre for Career Action staff after reviewing other available tools.

Resume Rubric



Student Perception Resume Survey



Logistics

Who the tool(s) were used with	The tools were used with students. The resume rubric was validated by employers.
When the tools were administered	<p>The resume rubric is regularly used in our co-op prep courses, but this use, as part of a larger study, was new. The student surveys were developed for this work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The first survey determined eligibility for participation based on prior use of the Centre for Career Action. ▪ Students who qualified and completed all tasks followed this path: online survey and resume submission, complete online resume-related reading/activities, 2nd survey and submission of revised resume, face-to-face resume critique, 3rd survey and 3rd resume submission
How the tools were administered	Students completed most work online, including surveys, completing the resume module, and booking the resume critique. The resume critique itself was completed in person.
Response rate	<p>A notice about the research was sent to all full-time students (20,000+). However, many respondents were soon eliminated as they had prior experience with the Centre for Career Action, and we wanted only “new” users, so our group of 549 was reduced to 350.</p> <p>This was a very involved, multi-step process. Students needed to fill out 3 surveys, submit resumes at 3 points in time, complete online work, and have an individual advisement meeting. Ultimately, only 29 students completed all of the steps. Larger sample sizes were used in analysis for the aspects that were completed by those students.</p>
Summarizing and analyzing data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A faculty member and the Director, the Centre for Career Action, directed a research assistant, who used SPSS to analyze the statistical data. ▪ To score resumes against the rubric, student assistants were trained to mark using the rubric. Resumes submitted each time were coded and graded. Each marker marked each resume (not knowing whether it was the first, second, or third resume version).

Our Results and Learnings

The feedback confirmed that students enhanced their perception of their resumes and the quality of their resumes (based on improved grades). Certain resume section grades increased more than others. There were some statistically significant results. We have included the results in our annual report to support the measurement of learning outcomes, and these results were shared at conferences (WACE, CACEE) in Spring 2009.

We think the following were strengths of our approach:

- The resume rubric we created is sound as it was validated by employers.
- In the 2nd and 3rd surveys we asked students to reconsider their previous resume versions and rate them in light of what they now knew.
- It was good to have both subjective (student perception) and objective (resume grade) measures.

We think the following were weaknesses of our approach:

- We may need to rethink the marking scheme to weight certain sections more heavily, although the downside is that this would make the process more complicated for students (and markers).
- From the data we were able to collect, it is not clear whether online learning was better or whether it only seemed to teach students more because it was the first intervention.

We have learned that doing such longitudinal, multi-step, multi-method research study is complicated and time consuming. We have also learned that partnering with research experts on campus is very helpful. In the future, if we were in a similar situation, we would do this mostly the same with some very small tweaks, and would need to choose an in-depth study topic wisely. Before embarking on a project like this again, a good question to ask ourselves would be, “How deep do we need to go to meet our objectives?”

This tool and overview were submitted by the Centre for Career Action at the University of Waterloo.