

Impact of extracurriculars

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It was my intention, at the initiation of the MSc Information & Library Studies programme with Robert Gordon University (RGU), to simply immerse myself in the content. The opportunity to participate as one of this year's three Class Representatives changed the trajectory of my intentions and has shifted the way I both approach my academics, as well as the extracurricular activities and opportunities that have come my way.

The work I participated in as a Class Representative gave me the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills through the various meetings and discussions with not only the other Representatives, but also the Representatives from other courses, the course cohort, tutors, and university staff. Acting in this role forced me out of my comfort zone and encouraged me to look beyond the academics of the MSc, toward a more holistic view of the experience as a Master's student where I embraced supplementary learning opportunities (conferences, external certifications) in addition to the academics. Being a Course Representative gave me a close community of peers that was previously out of reach as an online distance student, but it also gave me the opportunity to grow as a confident academic.

For the work done as a Course Representative, I was awarded the Certificate of Recognition; Partnership from the RGU:union Partnership Awards. The Awards strive to highlight the importance of constructive partnership, engagement, contribution and the ability to work as a team. Solidifying the importance of partnership, collaboration and communication, the work done as a Course Representative through the execution of participatory activities, feedback surveys, and causal cohort meetings and study sessions helped me grow as a team player, strengthen my approaches to collaboration, and develop and refine my communication skills.

In the first semester of the programme, we were given the opportunity and were encouraged to pursue the Scottish Innovative Student Award (SISA) offered by the Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE), Level One, and the further levels Two and Three if interested. In completing and achieving said level, I pursued the following two. Participating in such encouraged critical and creative thinking and reflection, flexibility and adaptability, collaboration and communication, ownership of ideas, and to combine analysis with synthesis and intuition. I was able to take what I learned from the certification process (combination of seminars and individual work) to apply to how I was approaching my work as a student and my relationships with my cohort as a Course Representative.

I was further able to apply the skills toward the virtual placement I participated in. The work, while familiar and easily supported by theory I had learned in the semester prior, required autonomy, strong communication and independent problem-solving skills, and the ability to collaborate and be flexible in the approach to the work.

While my interpersonal and professional skills have improved through the combination of additional communication and work required, they are continual and will require long-term effort to maintain; extracurriculars demand the maintenance of such.

The extracurricular activities and projects I have participated in has ultimately strengthened my confidence as an academic and professional.