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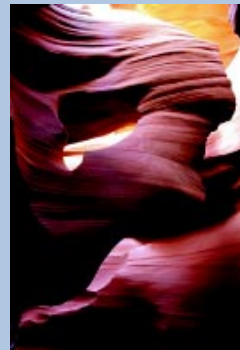
Planet

Special Edition

Embedding Careers Education
in the Curricula of Geography,
Earth and Environmental
Sciences (GEES)

In this issue:

- Employer Perspectives on Graduate Employability
- Career Planning Agreements
- Teaching Career Management Skills
- Personal Development Portfolios (PDPs)
- Helping students to articulate key skills
- QAA Code of Practice on Careers Education, Information and Guidance



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What is PLANET?

PLANET is the bi-annual publication of the LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Its aims are to:

- Identify and disseminate good practice in learning and teaching across the three disciplines of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences and present examples and case studies in a "magazine" format.
- Provide a forum for the discussion of ideas about learning and teaching in the three discipline communities.
- Provide information for readers on Subject Centre activities and on related resources, conferences and educational developments.

Other Special Editions of PLANET

Two other special editions of PLANET will be delivered to your departments during the summer of 2001. The special editions will cover:

- Integrating C&IT in Fieldwork;
- Problem-based Learning.

These issues will give examples of some innovative discipline-specific developments in these key areas of learning and teaching. Each edition will also be available to download from the Subject Centre's website at: <http://www.gees.ac.uk>

If you would like to receive your own copy of either of the above publications, please contact the Subject Centre on info@gees.ac.uk. We will then mail a copy out to you.

Further copies of PLANET are available in a variety of different formats - if you would like any further information please contact the Subject Centre: info@gees.ac.uk • (01752) 233530

The University of Plymouth-based team

Steve Gaskin
Operational Editor
Subject Centre Dissemination Co-ordinator

Brian Chalkley
Subject Centre Director

Mike Sanders
Subject Centre C & IT Manager

Helen King
Subject Centre Manager

The Centre's National Advisory Team

Mick Healey Cheltenham and Gloucester College of HE
Subject Centre Geography Senior Advisor

Neil Thomas Kingston University
Subject Centre Earth Sciences Senior Advisor

Jennifer Blumhof University of Hertfordshire
Subject Centre Environmental Sciences Senior Advisor

Geoff Robinson University of Leicester
Subject Centre C & IT Senior Advisor

Why careers in the curriculum?

Brian Chalkley – LTSN Subject Centre for Geography,
Earth and Environmental Sciences

Pauline Kneale
University of Leeds

The world of higher education is now, more than ever, expected to prepare students for the world of work. Universities and colleges, once portrayed as quiet backwaters, are now in the mainstream of economic and social change.

The reasons for this are not hard to find. Increasingly, governments recognise that the quality of higher education is a major determinant of the country's future prosperity. In the new century the economically successful nations will be those with highly skilled and flexible workforces and a strong commitment to education, training and lifelong learning. Governments want higher education to ensure that graduates are equipped with the knowledge and skills which will enable them to contribute effectively to the nation's prosperity. They want an economic return on the tax-payers' investment.

Similarly, students are increasingly looking for subjects and courses which will assist them in obtaining employment and in laying the foundations for a rewarding career. As students are required to pay more towards the costs of their higher education, so they expect their courses to open the way to well-paid jobs and the chance to repay their loans and debts as quickly as possible.

The pressures from government, employers and students for a more 'vocational' higher education have occasionally met with opposition particularly from the more traditionally-minded amongst academic staff. None the less, in recent years the trend towards vocationalism has been powerful and has already led to some substantial curriculum changes, most notably the stronger focus on key skills, such as C&IT, communication and group work.

Our three disciplines of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES) have already participated in these new developments and in various ways have responded to the case for closer links to the world of work. For example, the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA), Benchmark Statements for the GEES subjects have underlined the importance of embedding key skills in the disciplines' academic curricula. In addition, a small but increasing number of departments have introduced modules in work-based learning.

These attempts to promote our graduates' employability will, of course, only bear fruit if our students are in addition equipped with the skills of identifying job opportunities, searching for posts, writing CVs, making good applications and performing well at interviews and assessment centres. The encouragement of these and other 'careers skills' has hitherto been seen as largely the province of the University's careers service. Although many academics have offered occasional careers advice to their students, this has traditionally tended to be informal and ad hoc. Similarly, students' use of the University careers service has generally been patchy, with often the students who needed it most using it least. It is true that many academic departments have nominated a member of staff to act as a careers advisor but this role has often been separate from the main academic curriculum.

Now, however, things are set to change. The QAA has issued a Code of Practice on Careers Education, Information and Guidance (CEIG) which calls for much closer co-operation between academic departments and careers units in order to ensure a more systematic and effective approach to students' careers education. The Code, which echoes ideas in the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997), asks institutions to consider 'integrating CEIG within the curriculum, for all higher education programmes of study'. It recommends achieving this 'through incorporating CEIG into learning and teaching strategies and making explicit the links between CEIG and a particular programme of study by means of the programme specification'. (A full copy of the Code is included at the end of this publication.)

A small number of GEES departments are, of course, ahead of the QAA in that they already embed CEIG within their academic programme, for example, in the form of a module in professional development. However, for the great majority of GEES departments, the new QAA Code will require a significant change in the curriculum, a closer relationship with the careers service and perhaps an investment in academic staff development.

To assist departments in thinking about these issues, the LTSN-GEES Subject Centre provided a national conference on CEIG in March of this year at the Geological Society in London. The conference was organised by Pauline Kneale of the Geography Department at the University of Leeds and Steve Gaskin (LTSN-GEES). About sixty delegates attended, including an interesting mix of subject-based academics, employers and careers advisers. The conference, the first of its kind, provided among other things, an important 'show-case' for a number of pioneering curriculum initiatives, some given as presentations and others outlined in poster displays.

The level of interest generated by the conference has encouraged LTSN-GEES to devote a special issue of our journal PLANET to this theme of embedding careers education in the GEES curriculum. Many of the papers in this volume derive from the conference itself but some are later additions. All will, we hope, be of interest to colleagues facing up to the challenges of the CEIG arena. This special edition of PLANET is therefore designed to assist you in responding to the QAA Code of Practice and most importantly, in preparing your students for a successful transition to the world of work.

Reference

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Brian Chalkley
LTSN-GEES
bchalkley@plymouth.ac.uk

Pauline Kneale
University of Leeds
pauline@geog.leeds.ac.uk

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PLANET is also freely available to download as a .pdf file from the Subject Centre's website at <http://www.gees.ac.uk>. The website also provides general Subject Centre information and specific links to other learning and teaching sites. Pay us a visit.

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What Does the Employer Want? A British Geological Survey Perspective on Graduate Employability

Ian Penn

British Geological Survey

Geoscience employers require graduates with a high level of ability in technical and transferable skills, whether their degree courses are vocationally specific or of a more general nature. Our impression is that this need is understood by most Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), although the extent to which this understanding has permeated all HEI practice is unclear. Current need is for all relevant departments in HEIs to perform to the levels of practice attained by the best providers. Just as successful HEIs incorporated transferable skills into their curricula in the 1990's, we suggest that business skills, professional skills and professional ethics should be introduced today. Of these, only professional ethics may need to be formally taught; the others can be presented as perspectives, dimensions or frameworks for technical and transferable skills.

Background

The British Geological Survey, one of the largest employers of geoscientists in the UK, has changed its employment pattern over the years (Penn, 1996; Plant, 1996) and this may be considered somewhat representative of UK earth science employers. In the past two decades it has seen a decrease in the proportion of classically trained geologists in its ranks and a corresponding increase in the proportion of scientists from other disciplines, particularly chemists, hydrogeologists, geographers (GIS area) and people with an IT background. As well as reflecting the inexorable rise in the importance of IT, the change also reflects the growing importance of BGS's need to supply solutions to problems in the environmental sustainability sector, complementing its earlier activities in support of resource-based industries. BGS is recruiting, therefore, across the range of the Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES) graduate output.

Technical Skills

Courses within the GEES family have an apparent generic strength arising from the 'natural science' of their subjects. All tend to emphasise the inductive approach and to a certain extent a non-reductionist method of 'analysis'. All educate students to deal with complex systems for which only incomplete data sets are available. Experience of operating in such a milieu may be transferable to a wide range of 'service' occupations, and is especially useful to graduates who regard their GEES learning as non-vocational.

Our impression is that subject-based skills in geoscience are still taught to the highest standards and are capable of supplying graduates who are technically competent over a wide range of geoscience skills. This is no mean feat given the constantly enlarging scope of the subject, though most employers will still need an induction process to ensure that the academic content of the undergraduate course is tailored to the way in which geoscience is conducted within their organisations. It is of paramount importance, however, that there be sufficient field-work throughout the undergraduate course. Of equal importance to employers is that the student completes a stand-alone project. Such a

project requires facility in numerous transferable skills in addition to being a measure of technical competency. It has a particular, apparently paradoxical, relationship to team-skills. A team-member is seriously inadequate if the other team members cannot rely on accurately observed, reported and substantiated data brought by single individuals into the team ambience. Finally, we strongly recommend that geoscience courses be accredited by the Geological Society. This will ensure a balanced content sufficient to satisfy the profession. From the point of view of the students, too, it will mean one less year needs to be served for chartered status to be attained.

Transferable Skills

These are well known (see, for example, Thomas, 1998, pp549-558) and include:

- Communication – Oral and Written
- Teamworking
- Leadership potential
- Time management
- Project/Task management
- Self management
- Problem solving
- Research and investigation
- Numeracy
- Computer literacy
- Planning and organisation
- Innovation/creativity
- Interpersonal skills

Such instruction is carefully embedded into the best undergraduate courses but our impression is that not all departments carry out this task equally well. HEIs who are weak in this area will serve their graduates' careers well by raising their performance to match best practice in other HEIs.

Business Skills

These are needed to enhance understanding and skills in managing, assessing, interpreting scientific information and communicating its value.

Such an understanding answers questions such as:

- What use is this information?
- Who is the end-user?
- Who needs to be told?
- How do we explain the significance of the information and make sure that this is understood?
- How do we convince the user to do something about the situation?
- How do we assess the value and cost?
- How do we assess impact and longer term repercussions?

At this stage, we do not imagine such an approach forming a discrete part of undergraduate teaching. It may constitute more of a framework or ethos within which technical skills can be placed.

Professional Skills

By professional skills we mean the ability to communicate peer-group, technical knowledge and skills, and their significances, to those outside the technical peer group. The need for including a professional ethos is becoming apparent in the UK and elsewhere from the difficulties

scientists and other professional nowadays encounter in serving an increasingly well educated and sceptical lay-public.

Undergraduates should be prepared appropriately by keeping records of their geoscience activities, if possible, obtaining suitable work-place attachments and an appreciation of the importance of Continuous Professional Development. Acquaintance with codes of conduct and realising the importance of Health and Safety issues may need to be linked to formal training in Professional Ethics (Williams, 2000a,b).

Professional Ethics

At the heart of the issue of professionalism is the question of ethics. In general, geoscience in the UK is behind other professions, such as law, medicine, engineering and business, in dealing with professional ethics and we are also somewhat behind the USA (Williams, 2000a). There, an increasing number of universities and colleges have chosen to provide formal education and training in professional ethics, either as course modules or stand-alone courses.

Key components of such courses help students to:

- Realise that there will be professional ethical problems;
- Realise that he/she is not and will not be the only one facing ethical problems;
- Recognise the diversity and complexity of ethical problems;
- Know and have experience with the techniques to deal with ethical issues;
- Know what resources are available to assist in dealing with ethical issues;
- Be able to develop an ethically defensible solution to the problem.

Although it may be some time before such courses are felt to be needed, just as the UK has tended to follow America in developing professionalism in geoscience, so it is likely that a glimpse into the not-too-distant future will reveal that UK students will need to be similarly prepared for the professional ethics of the world of work.

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Ian Penn
British Geological Survey
iep@bgs.ac.uk

The use of an Employers Forum for Student Career Development

Sarah Maguire and Claire Guyer
University of Ulster at Coleraine

The School of Environmental Studies at the University of Ulster has as one of its main aims the support of students through periods of transition. Traditionally, this has focused on inducting incoming students but increasingly this is broadening to include the support of students as they move through higher education and on into employment. As it is recognised that careers development should be embedded within the curriculum we have established an employers forum to help us identify what we should do and how we should approach a careers education. This article describes this approach for Environmental Studies, but the initiative could easily be adapted for Geography and Earth Sciences programmes too.

Why did we involve employers?

It is the University of Ulster's policy to involve employers in programme design and operation, as their viewpoint allows us to benefit from an external perspective on specific issues within the curriculum such as graduate skills and subject benchmarking. In addition, discussions with employers help us to identify opportunities where they can support learning and teaching activities within the School.

Who did we involve?

Contact was made with a range of Northern Irish environmental organisations including governmental bodies, environmental consultancies and voluntary sector agencies. Use was made of links with past graduates now employed by these organisations and existing staff contacts. In addition, representation was sought from organisations that take part in our student placement programme. Employers were invited into the University for a lunch and afternoon meeting. Inevitably pressure of work prevented some from attending but a representative group of a dozen were able to be present.

What have we gained from our employer forum?

Consultation with these employers confirmed their desire to recruit students well equipped with transferable skills, who were flexible and who demonstrated an enthusiasm to continue learning. It was also made clear that employers valued graduates who had experience of the workplace. In fact, a number agreed that they would prefer students with a years relevant work experience to students with a masters degree. We were also made aware of the willingness of employers to become involved in teaching and learning initiatives within the School, including careers workshops, student conferences and in the provision and support of student dissertations and projects. Many also stated that they would discuss further the possibility of offering funded student placements.

How have we used this advice and support?

The strategy we have adopted has two main strands and has involved working closely with both employers and careers staff:

- Workshops focusing on students' skills awareness, potential employability, self-marketing and also on the employers' perspective;
- Placement experiences ranging from one year sandwich placements to organisation-based dissertations.

Our experience at this stage has demonstrated to us the value of consultation with employers and the level of support they are willingly prepared to provide. Feedback from a recent student workshop has emphasised the value students place on such events, in making explicit to them the goals they need to achieve to be successful in obtaining employment and in motivating them to study.

Students excerpts:

"It is very important to meet people from the real world who are employed in environmental areas"

"It helped me direct my attention towards working more now to achieve a good degree"

95% of the students who attended the workshops found the information about careers either useful or very useful.

The following were considered the most important things students had learnt:

- The identification of key skills and how to highlight them for employers;
- Postgraduate research as an option;
- Work experience can be just as important as academic achievement;
- The importance of networking within the Northern Ireland environmental sector.

Involving employers has been of enormous benefit to the School and has provided us with the external perspective that we as academics can often miss. Also, through our subsequent work on embedding careers within the curriculum, we have tapped into another valuable, but often unused resource - namely our careers staff. The use of employers and careers staff has helped to convince students of the need to identify their career plans and to maximise opportunities to put them into practice.

If you would like to find out more about this careers initiative and how it operates, please contact us using the email addresses below.

Sarah Maguire and Claire Guyer

Teaching and Learning Development Unit

School of Environmental Studies

University of Ulster at Coleraine

cs.maguire@ulst.ac.uk

cf.guyer@ulst.ac.uk

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Stressful Experiences are Useful Experiences: Creating Skill-based Materials for GEES Students

Pauline Kneale
University of Leeds

Careers and student related activities can be embedded in the curriculum through academic, subject-based, and more generic activities. The exercises described in this article could form elements that are tested at an interview or an assessment-centre. They are short, generally effective, and get students working in teams under pressure in the GEES disciplines.

The exercises outlined below give students experience in working under pressure and thinking on their feet – useful attributes at interviews and more widely in the world of work.

The key for the lecturer is to design an activity that can be reasonably well done in 'x' minutes. Then, the time allocated for each task can be reduced by about 30%, or the amount of supporting information provided can also be reduced, or you could remove a normally available element, so that people have to co-operate (work effectively as a group) to find a less obvious way to get the task done on time. Examples from related disciplines rather than from a students' direct experience can be more effective because students work on and understand the skills processes and pay less attention to the content.

Creativity and Group Work

Design a poster that explains the skills ... (geography / earth science) ... students have or, design a poster that explains the skills ... (environmental science / maths) ... graduates take to the workplace. Work in groups of six. You have twelve minutes, one sheet of flip chart paper, four pens and you are not allowed to use words on your poster.

Where this exercise is done at the start of a module it is worth keeping the posters, repeating the exercise 'x' weeks later and asking the students to comment on the differences.

This exercise develops creativity, innovation, discussion, co-operation, negotiation, presentation and art-work skills.

Context Case Studies

'Context' is a Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) programme which promotes key skills in Higher Education. Some Context Case Study's (available on-line – see below) can be completed in only 2-3 hours. Using 'Design a National Flood Warning Campaign' or 'Seatons Chemicals' you might give each group of six just one or two copies of the briefing materials. This forces students to talk, and to share ideas.

Both cases develop teamwork, negotiation, discussion, planning, creativity, time-management and presentation skills. The Seatons Case is excellent in showing students that there are no 'right' answers and in practising decision making skills. The National Flood Warning study ends with a press briefing and conference, which is also useful in developing 'thinking on your feet' skills.

Tutor's and student's notes can be downloaded from:

<http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/courses/other/casestudies/>

Data Analysis

Give each group a data set and ask for an analysis presented on an OHT in an impossibly short time. Using first destination employment data for past graduates is one option. Ask students to graph the

destinations of 80-100 graduates, and be ready to present the results to the whole class in 12 minutes. The task can be done using all the data if the group agree very quickly on the categories, divide up the work and then combine the data. It can also be done by sampling, say every 5th item on the list. This is an approach that shows students have learnt something from sampling and data management classes.

The exercise develops skills in working under pressure, decision making, communication, negotiation, presentation and lateral thinking skills.

Design a Protocol / Procedure / Experiment to

You have one (two...) hours to look at the attached material and develop a plan to ... Limit the time and ideally take an example that asks for general rather than specific knowledge. Tell them that you do not want a complete answer. Some elements will be complete, while others will require a statement that more work is needed on ... It is how the student sets about the task and their ability to see and solve many aspects of a multi-dimensional problem and to negotiate that is important, rather than the details of the final answer. Examples include:

- Design a protocol to ensure safety while making a lasagne supper for 50 at a campsite (limited shopping list, limited tools).
- Design an experiment to retrieve a two-man canoe from a limestone cavern system (supply some maps and a starter equipment list such as short ropes).

This exercise develops creativity, negotiation, logic, empathy, insight, planning, decision making and presentation skills.

Getting outside the box – creative thinking

Brainstorming in action. Brainstorming is about quantity of ideas, not the quality. Try it sequentially with solo oral answers, solo written answers and group answers. Say 15 minutes maximum for all three stages, including feedback. The dynamic and volume of answers changes each time, and students piggy back on each others' ideas.

What could you use this 'flipchart, its stand and a chair' for? Ask for 10 answers in 120 secs – (medium), 20 (good), 30 plus (outstanding). Other objects might include a sledge; music stand; clothes rail; bar-be-que etc.

Student Reflection:

'I felt quite uncomfortable and a bit bewildered as to what sort of answers were wanted.'

'I needed to change my way of thinking, ... find a more creative angle rather than a sensible answer.'

'I found it hard to work creatively under pressure, and as a result realise this is something to work on...'

'It was good because of the 'no idea is worthless' ethic, which did mean that trains of thought that seemed to be going nowhere could result in some good ideas.'

'I was nervous about speaking at the start, I did not want to look stupid, discussing in the group was more relaxing... I realise I need to be more self-confident and put my ideas forward at the start.'

This exercise develops creative thinking, time management, communication, negotiation and lateral thinking skills, and realising how one responds to solve the same problem individually (verbally and on paper), and as part of a team.

Pauline Kneale

School of Geography
University of Leeds

p.kneale@geography.leeds.ac.uk

A 'Career Planning Agreement' devised for Geography programmes

Alice Goddard
University of Brighton

This article reports on a Career Planning Agreement (CPA) designed by The University of Brighton. The CPA aims to embed careers planning in degree programmes, in response to national guidance. This article looks at the approach adopted jointly by the Department of Geography and the Careers Centre and highlights the way in which departmental and careers staff have successfully introduced the CPA through the design and development of a Careers module. The success of the Geography initiative is borne out by the fact that other degree programmes are adopting similar modules throughout the rest of the University.

The Rationale

The Career Planning Agreement (CPA) at the University of Brighton was devised to provide a framework to meet specific career planning learning outcomes through inclusion in the students' curriculum. Dearing's recommendations (NCIHE, 1997), the QAA Code of Practice for Career Education, Information and Guidance (CEIG) (DfEE, 2001) and the Higher Education Careers Service Review (Harris, 2001) all recognise the need for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to implement CEIG strategies. These will only be successful if supported by the academic departments and their courses.

Employers at the LTSN-GEES Subject Centre's 'Embedding careers in the academic curriculum conference' at the Geological Society in March 2001 stated that graduates need to successfully demonstrate competence in key skills during the careers application process, and that key skills need to be made explicit in the curriculum (GeogNet, 2001). The CPA endeavours to deliver this through its learning outcomes.

Aims of the CPA

- To ensure careers content within courses is made explicit to students, rather than being implicit;
- To ensure students are prepared for the transition to life after university;
- To focus students on the support they need to facilitate this transition;
- To ensure a common standard for all students in the support they receive within courses with lifetime career management;
- To establish a partnership approach between courses and the careers centre to deliver aspects of CEIG;
- To develop an institutional approach to CEIG with responsibility lying within departments and with the careers service;
- To use and build on good practice in delivering the learning outcomes of courses;
- To share good practice and map skills across the university.

Learning Outcomes

Through the CPA students should develop competencies in:

- Self assessment and personal review;
- Researching job ideas and occupational information;
- Decision-making, goal setting, action planning;
- Communication during the transition to work, self employment, study or training.

Two Models of the CPA

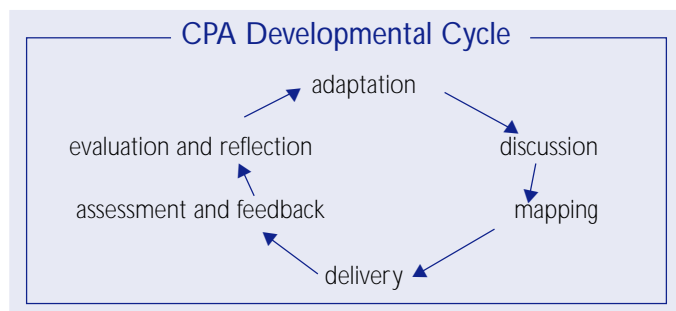
Geography took part in the 1996 pilot CPA project, along with three courses in other faculties. The CPA was designed for maximum flexibility, so that it could be accommodated by the diverse range of courses on offer at the University of Brighton. Two models were developed – an integrated one, where careers input happened throughout the course at relevant stages, and a stand-alone careers module (the approach used in Geography).

The Process

The CPA adoption process has tended to follow the pattern outlined below:

- Deans and Head of School contacted, and the CPA explained at Faculty Management Group meetings;
- Initial explanatory meeting between careers counsellor and course leader;
- Draft mapping of the CPA by course leader;
- Second meeting to discuss and adapt mapping;
- Additional materials provided if required;
- Explanatory meeting with those involved in delivering the CPA – e.g. at the course board;
- CPA document signed;
- Six-monthly check-up, to ensure the CPA is running smoothly;
- Annual review;
- Ongoing amendments as necessary.

This can be represented, as in the flow chart below:



The Geography Career Planning Agreement (CPA)

The Geography CPA module is located in semester two of year two. It spans ten weeks, and was originally delivered mainly by careers staff. Ownership has gradually passed predominately to Geography staff. Aspects covered are:

- Week One – Introduction to the Module;
- Week Two – Introduction to Careers Materials & the Careers Centre;
- Week Three – CV Preparation;
- Week Four – Job Study;
- Week Five – Field Classes;

- Week Six – Independent Job Study Research;
- Week Seven – Placement Students' Presentation and Workshop;
- Weeks Eight, Nine and Ten – Individual Presentations to Panel.

Advantages of the discrete module are:

- Clear emphasis on careers for students, due to stand-alone module;
- The assessment tasks mean students view careers as an important part of the curriculum;
- Collaboration between academics and careers counsellors.

Disadvantages of the discrete module are that:

- The CPA is not fully integrated into the day-to-day curriculum;
- Relevant curriculum inputs throughout the course are not exploited;
- Students tend to see careers as separate from their academic work, rather than embedded within their studies.

Student Feedback

Current Year two geographers taking the module have commented:

"The module...has helped me face my CV dilemma. It also gave me confidence in my ability...it was a great introduction to networking and showed me other means of getting into work."

"Interviewing someone in employment may be of use if you've never had a full time job before but I can't see the relevance".

"...a very useful module to get me to...come up with some concrete ideas. Interviewing people in the work field...has given me insight and useful contacts...I found the Careers Centre very helpful when I was doing my research."

The Results

There has been greater collaboration between Geography academics and the careers centre, and increased use of the careers centre generally. Geography students are better prepared for choosing, and successfully finding, employment. The profile of careers within the university has increased too. As a result of this initiative, other degree programmes are integrating the CPA at the University of Brighton, including BSc Environmental Science and BSc Geography/Geology.

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Alice Goddard

CPA Co-ordinator and Careers Counsellor
University of Brighton
A.Goddard@bton.ac.uk

Embedding and Assessing Career Management Skills in Earth Sciences degree courses: A subject-specific group and individual assignment

Neil Thomas
Kingston University

This article outlines the context, structure and assessment strategy for a subject-specific, career development assignment within a second year geology module. The assignment develops and assesses a range of skills related to careers education information and guidance (in addition to many other key skills) alongside technical knowledge of exploration geophysics. Students are placed in a scenario of applying for an exploration job (by submitting a CV and covering letter in response to an advertisement) and attending a mini assessment centre (incorporating a technical interview and group exercise). The assignment is an example of successful collaboration between academic and careers service staff. The exercise could easily be transferred to other degree programmes, such as environmental science and geography.

The Context

Geology and Earth Sciences degrees at Kingston University contain formal learning outcomes in relation to career management skills, reflecting the school's dedication to enhancing student employability. Due to timetable constraints, our courses no longer include formal 'career development' modules. Consequently, the necessary skills have to be developed and assessed within existing technical modules. In order to engage student interest and staff involvement, it is crucial that such material is covered in relevant core modules. In our case the majority of the necessary coverage is given in a Level 2 "Resource Exploration and Evaluation" module which is compulsory for all single honours students studying geological degrees. This is a full (15 credit) module and the career development assignment described here accounts for 15% of this module. The timing of the assignment is chosen to allow the students to benefit from the lectures and practical work which form the technical content of the module.

The assignment

The assignment has two main elements:

Job application

Students are presented with a scenario early in the module. They are required to apply, in response to advertisements, for a job as an exploration geophysicist in one of three industries. The advertisements cover the hydrocarbons, minerals and construction industries corresponding to the three broad areas covered in the technical aspect of the module. Students are required to produce three items of paperwork for their applications: a fully-tailored CV, a statement covering the role of a geophysicist in their chosen industry and a covering letter. They submit their applications within two weeks of receiving the advertisements, giving staff one week to assess the applications (see below) before the second element of the assignment is staged.

Mini-Assessment centre

A full three-hour session is allocated to the mini-assessment centre element, where students are split into groups governed by the jobs for which they applied. Two assessments are run on a rotational basis: a 1.5 hour group exercise and a formal 15 minute technical interview with a member of staff.

The group exercise requires students to solve a problem related to relocating the offices of an exploration company. They must evaluate given information and, drawing on their own knowledge of the technical aspects of exploration activities, make decisions on office and building layout. There are no 'correct' answers, only more appropriate ones.

The formal interview is similar to that a student would encounter in an assessment centre during a recruitment event. Students are asked some basic questions about exploration geophysics and then asked to apply their knowledge and provide solutions to one or two exploration scenarios.

Monitoring, assessment and feedback

This assignment, being largely problem-based, requires academic and careers staff to be available for a single set session as consultants to provide monitoring of students' progress. Advice is given on researching the role of a geophysicist in industry, constructing and tailoring CVs and putting together appropriate covering letters. Students must book consultation time in advance and come prepared with specific questions or queries.

The application element carries 60% of the marks for the assignment, with assessment criteria covering the structure, content and style of the CV and letter, accuracy and evidence of research contained in the role statement. The assessment centre accounts for 40%, with assessment criteria covering the accuracy of answers given to technical questions and the approach to technical problem solving at interview, the achievement of set team tasks, the quality of products generated by the team and effectiveness of the team performance.

Students are given feedback on all elements of the assignment. The application paperwork is annotated with detailed constructive comments and each student is given a five minute debrief covering the main developmental points of their application. At the assessment centre, students are given an evaluation from their interview. Members of academic and careers staff give a ten minute debrief on the group exercise, after which students are given a sheet detailing how they should have approached the group exercise.

Key skills development

This assignment covers all areas of graduate key skills listed in the ES3 benchmarking statement (QAA, 2000). These skills are both developed and assessed as an integral part of this exercise which critically retains a subject-specific technical focus throughout. This integrated approach represents the most relevant and effective way of addressing key skills (e.g. Thomas, 2001) and, from experience, is the best way to engage both staff and students in the process. The following is a list of how specific skills developed are assessed:

- Self awareness (through CV and letter);
- Written communication (through CV, letter and statement);
- Oral communication (through interview and group exercise);
- Electronic communication (through e-mail submission of application);
- Team skills (through group exercise);

- ICT (through preparation and submission of application);
- Numeracy (through numerical problems set at interview);
- Time and task management (through completion of individual elements of application, submission to deadline and completion of tasks in the group exercise);
- Research and information handling (through preparation of application and preparation for interview).

Evaluation of assignment

Students were questioned on the effectiveness of this assignment in increasing their awareness of the overall process and skills required in applying for a subject-specific job. The feedback was extremely positive, with students overwhelmingly commenting that the problem-based approach enhanced their learning experience.

As a result of running this assignment in various stages of development, the team has decided to make a number of changes for the coming academic year. These are:

- Extending the interview to cover personal issues related to the students' applications in addition to technical issues. This will involve external interviewers to complement the staff team;
- Modification of the assessment weighting to award 60% of the total marks to the assessment centre exercise in recognition of its increased importance.

Curriculum development

This assignment enhances the Level 2 curriculum in a number of ways. Firstly, it formally integrates key skills within a relevant, subject-specific technical module. It also provides an insight into how industry works at a critical stage in students' career planning cycles and offers, through problem-based learning, an innovative way of delivering material which is often given little credibility by staff and students alike.

Conclusions

This assignment has enhanced the student learning experience and the pedagogic effectiveness of the curriculum. The staff input is no greater than that required to deliver the material via a combination of lectures, practicals and tutorials.

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Neil Thomas

School of Earth Sciences and Geography
Kingston University
n.thomas@kingston.ac.uk

Developing and Embedding Reflective Portfolios in the Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Pauline Kneale
University of Leeds

Schools in the Faculty of Earth and Environment Sciences at the University of Leeds created a Faculty Personal Reflective Portfolio (PRP) as part of the Department for Education and Employment Project (DFEE) – 'A Strategic Model for Developing Methods and Materials for Recording Achievement in Traditional Universities' (R&RA2000). It is used by undergraduates in the Schools of Geography, Earth and Environmental Science and the Institute of Transport Studies. This article describes the PRP and presents some feedback from students who have tried and tested this initiative.

The National Position

The Dearing Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE, 1997) recommended Higher Education institutions develop progress files with:

- a transcript recording student achievement which should follow a common format devised by institutions collectively through their representative bodies;
- a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development.

QAA (2000) state that the Personal Development Planning should help students to:

- become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners;
- understand how they are learning and relate their learning to a wider context;
- improve their general skills for study and career management;
- articulate their personal goals and evaluate progress towards their achievement;
- encourage a positive attitude to learning throughout life.

Portfolio objectives and structure

- The portfolio is for student use and personal to the individual. Each school integrates it into curricula activities;
- Students can assess their own strengths and weaknesses, make a record of personal successes and failures and record the reasons underpinning these achievements, and monitor their progress throughout their degree;
- It should help students understand that they can and should set their own objectives, not just respond to departmental and tutors' agendas. The process encourages students to identify gaps in their activities that might lead them to seek specific training or work experience;
- The portfolio monitors progress and sets an agenda for conversations with peers and tutors. Formalising the process through the portfolio integrates consistently, and in greater depth, a practice that was already present.



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The main elements are:

- An introduction to skills and reflection, the role of the portfolio and the tutorial system;
- A summary assessment of pre-university skills, and articulation of ambitions for the next semester;
- A section on how to reflect, examples of reflective statements stressing the need to articulate evidence;
- A section for structured reflection completed at the end of each semester, a record of module marks, external activities and 'Action Planning' for the next semester. This is discussed individually or in a tutorial;
- An end of year summary of skills and achievements, discussed with tutors and filed in departmental records;
- Advice on planning a CV, and details of resources in the Careers Centre and on the www.

Email messages prompt students to complete particular sections and to take them to their next tutorial. Emails prompt tutors to include portfolio work in tutorials.

Electronic or paper-based copies?

IT encourages the active recording of experience by students, but perhaps at the expense of the process of thinking and reflecting on experience. Musing with a pen appears to be more effective when reflecting. The Leeds schools chose paper-based portfolios for use in tutorials and other classes without terminals. Students may however download an e-version.

Arguments from students for the paper versions include:

'You need to be able to carry it around and add things when you feel like it.'

'The booklet is more private.... you can scribble in it at random, without making a big effort to access a machine.'

'If I had to find a computer each time I wouldn't.'

Student comments

Feedback is generally positive, with the usual range from scepticism to enthusiasm.

Part-time and overseas students were particularly enthusiastic, finding it helpful with time management and prioritising. Student responses fall into three groups:

1. Students using the document strategically:

'I used it to establish myself as a student and to compare what I am now to what I was six months ago'

'I didn't really think it was much use at first, but after 18 months I can see that the notes we made at the end of the first exams were useful'

'I was surprised, it seemed to be a waste of time at first, but I now realise what a help doing some planning can be'

'Recording helped me realise what I have learnt this year'

2. Those who recognised the positive potential of the approach:

'If I took time to read the Portfolio, I am sure I would find it very valuable in aiming for the future'

'It reminds you what you should be doing'

'Maybe I would use it at the end of the year to reflect upon the whole years work'

'I know I should be using it more, I am not good at this sort of thing, so having to do it for my tutor would be useful'

3. Those who were dismissive of the recording process in particular:

'I assess what I am doing myself, I don't need a book to help me'

'I don't need to write down experiences and achievements, I think I can remember'

'It's too early to plan ahead, I don't know what I am doing next week'

An important caveat emerged in both written and focus group comments:

'I think (this type of) support is good, but talking to someone on a regular basis is better and more productive than writing it down'

Costs

Cost per booklet is £1.11, met from Faculty budgets. The costs are partially offset because the portfolio includes materials previously copied locally and more expensively. Using the portfolio within existing curriculum and tutorial arrangements means there are no additional staff costs. The portfolio provides a means of performing and enhancing existing functions.

Staff Benefits

Academic staff benefit where students become more independent and self-confident learners. Careers advisers working with students from these disciplines comment on the greater maturity of these students when expressing themselves at interview, and the increasing level of self-confidence demonstrated by students who are familiar with the reflective skills approach.

Download and Use

If you would like to know more about the Leeds system and to see the documentation, copies of the PRP can be downloaded from: <http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/publications/portfolio/>

There is a version for taught masters students and a generic version.

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Pauline Kneale

School of Geography

University of Leeds

p.kneale@geography.leeds.ac.uk

Developing Undergraduate Entrepreneurial Abilities using Problem Based Learning

Barbara Page
University of North London

This article describes a pilot programme, organised by the Employability Unit, that took place over two weeks at the University of North London. The programme involved cross-disciplinary groups of undergraduates (from Electronics and Business Studies) producing innovative solutions to problems identified by SMEs in the Performing Arts Technology sector. Students researched the issues and developed possible solutions that were recorded in videoed oral presentations and in written reports; a copy of the latter was provided to each SME. The operational processes are outlined and the results of the evaluation are given. Some of the students opted to have their work assessed and accredited through an advanced level professional placement module. This article describes the pilot programme, which could be adapted for the GEES disciplines.

Introduction

Employability has been defined (DfEE, 1998) as encompassing:

- traditional intellectual skills;
- the 'new' core or 'key' skills;
- personal attributes;
- knowledge about how organisations work.

The University of North London is aiming to enhance student employability through its 'Capability Curriculum'® which develops and assesses six capabilities within each subject context. The six capabilities are:

- acting appropriately in the context of social and cultural diversity and the modern day environment;
- making ethical evaluations;
- thinking critically, and producing solutions;
- managing oneself and relating to others;
- communicating effectively in context;
- seeking, handling and interpreting information.

The School of Communications Technology and Mathematical Sciences has begun to embed a problem-based learning approach into some of its degree programmes. The University is also embedding employability development into mainstream provision through the introduction of, for example, the Advanced-level undergraduate module¹ 'Work Placement for Professional Experience'. This pilot project enabled undergraduates to apply their subject knowledge and seek solutions to real problems posed by Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) while, at the same time, developing their capabilities and gaining an insight into the role of the entrepreneurial consultant and the operation of SMEs.

The aims of the project were to:

- develop undergraduate capabilities and hence, employability;
- use a problem-based learning approach with inter-disciplinary groups of students;
- respond to the requirements of local SMEs;

- investigate the assessment and accreditation of this work in undergraduate studies;
- facilitate interaction and working between staff of different faculties and disciplines.

The Programme

The programme involved five main activities viz:

- establishment of working methods between the two faculties involved - Science, Computing and Engineering [SCE] and the Business School [BUS];
- selection of students;
- obtaining projects;
- undertaking the work;
- evaluation.

Establishing working methods and Selection of Students

The first stage of the programme involved explaining the programme to Faculty Deans and gaining their approval and support. The Careers Service was also contacted. After this initial briefing, 'flyers' describing the programme were circulated to staff and students and applications invited from students in the target subjects (Electronics and Business Studies). The Employability Unit identified interested academic staff and organised and led a day-long planning meeting at a local hotel. Suitable students for the project were selected during the day.

Obtaining projects

The Unit contacted and visited local organisations to explain the project and identified six suitable projects in four organisations. The projects selected included the:

- development of a new computerised booking service [local theatre];
- provision of a new sound system [local theatre];
- establishment of a community radio service [refugee community groups];
- new equipment needed to meet Health and Safety requirements [local theatre].

Undertaking the work

An induction session for staff and students introduced the projects and established the student groups. Each group comprised four students, two from each discipline area and all students had completed at least two years of their degree programme. Other sessions covered consultancy skills, report writing, and an introduction to group working.

During the two-week period, academic staff were available for student consultation by email and in scheduled 'clinics'. Students spent a relatively small amount of time in the SMEs - a maximum of three, half-day visits were made to establish SME circumstances and requirements.

A debriefing session and presentation of work was held at the end of the project for night. The group written reports were assessed by both BUS and SCE staff and final versions of these were sent to the SMEs.

Evaluation

Students' experiences and learning were evaluated through (a) a reflective log, (b) pre- and post-project questionnaires, and (c)

workshop questionnaires. Staff experience was obtained from (a) group discussion, and (b) individual questionnaires. The views of the SMEs were established through individual discussion.

Issues arising

The extensive evaluation identified a wide range of issues relating to the key stakeholders, which are summarised below.

Developing working relationships

Successful working relationships required:

- the support of senior staff was critical in giving authority and credibility to the programme;
- an established, University-wide network of effective collaborative contacts was essential;
- cross-institutional contacts and co-operation in the identification of the projects within SMEs;
- the ability to communicate effectively with SMEs, students and staff was necessary for the central management personnel;
- a central 'trouble shooter'. This was essential because it was necessary to ensure the rapid resolution of issues arising.

The student experience

The student experience was rich and varied and the following was found:

- students initially perceived the work as a fairly easy option but by the start of week two they realised the considerable effort needed;
- mostly, but not exclusively, Business Studies students were better prepared for undertaking this type of project work, could apply standard methodologies and needed less guidance and support than Electronics students. Electronics students encountered new topic areas and were, hence, on a steep learning curve;
- the clinics/advice lines were attended regularly, used by the majority of students and were important in ensuring completion of the projects;
- report writing and other communication skills need to be developed rigorously within undergraduate courses.

The SME experience

It was found that:

- appropriate projects (suitable academic level, length, subject relevance) exist in various organisations;
- SME resource requirements were small;
- SMEs welcomed the contact with the University and the students, and appreciated the work undertaken.

Conclusion

The project achieved valuable outcomes for the students, host organisations and University of North London staff. The ability of science, technical and business studies students to work together was greater than had been anticipated, although they would undoubtedly have benefited from greater initial development of effective team working. The local SMEs were pleased with the work and interested in future collaboration with the University, while academic staff appreciated the opportunity to work more closely together. As one member of staff commented:

'(I gained) a sense that it was possible to manage an educational experience that involved multiple aspects. It was cross disciplinary, it tested team working, it was problem-based, involved links with the local community, and it was relatively short in timescale.'

This type of project could be adapted/adopted by other degree programmes including Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences.

A copy of the full report is available from the author.

References

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Footnotes

1. This module is capability-based and accredited at Advanced level and validated separately in each subject. It is administered and supported by the central Employability Unit and assessed by academic staff; quality enhancement is carried out both centrally and by the subject areas. Students are assessed through a written report (60%), an oral assessment (20%), learning log (20%) and employer comment.

Barbara Page
Employability Unit
University of North London
b.page@unl.ac.uk

Putting Careers into a Single Honours Geography programme

Chris Ribchester and Judith Done
Chester College of Higher Education

The Careers and Personal Development Programme (CPDP) is a new initiative at Chester College, coordinated jointly by the Careers Service and the Department of Geography. It is currently in its first year and has been targeted, initially, at Single Honours B.Sc. Geography students. However, the format is equally applicable to the disciplines of Earth and Environmental Sciences. This article briefly describes the CPDP, which is focused around four key student-orientated questions. Possible areas for developing the programme are also discussed.

Fundamentally, the purpose of the CPDP is twofold. Firstly, to encourage all students to make the most of their opportunities in Higher Education by helping them to reflect systematically on the development of their skills, knowledge and experiences. Secondly, within this context, the CPDP aims to encourage students to develop clear ideas about future directions after completing their College studies, usually in terms of careers or postgraduate courses. We would argue that these issues need to be engaged with from an early stage in Higher Education and that key messages need to be reinforced on a regular basis. Therefore, CPDP sessions stretch across all three years of the B.Sc. Geography programme.

The CPDP pivots around four key questions, which represent the starting point for each teaching session:

- What have I got?
- What do I want to do?
- What is available to me?
- How do I get there?

These are generally recognised to be central to careers and personal development planning and each session focuses on one or a combination of these questions.

The CPDP is delivered in the form of lecture/practical sessions, of which there are around twelve, occurring with increasing frequency across the three years.

At Levels 1 and 2, the programme will use occasional teaching slots in existing B.Sc. Geography modules. In dealing with the above four questions, the CPDP draws on ideas and activities that are already used widely by careers services and personal development trainers (e.g. learning record sheets, skills and values audits, personal profiles, goal setting and 'prospects planner'). Broadly speaking, Level 1 has been designed to provide an overview of all the four key questions.

Sessions in Level 2 are intended to have more of a personal development emphasis, which will point towards and underpin an existing Work Based Learning or Experiential Learning double module, which all students are required to take in the final part of the year. Although the content of these two modules is very different (the former a six week work placement, the latter a residential field course in Spain), they both share an assessment component which requires students to reflect on their personal progress against targets which they have set themselves at the start of the module.

At Level 3, focused and practical guidance with a careers emphasis will form an important component of the programme (e.g. interview skills, letters of application).

Evaluation

Initial staff impressions and student feedback about the CPDP and our first year experience have generally been positive and encouraging. However, although a fairly clear vision has been developed for all three years of the programme, some important challenges remain. Of these, the most significant are likely to be maintaining the momentum of the initiative and, linked to this, keeping student interest and commitment. Irrespective of the value of the content, the programme is 'spread out' and there will be lengthy gaps between sessions. As a result, the student experience of the CPDP will be very different to a concentrated twelve-week module. Furthermore, at least for the moment, no part of the CPDP is formally assessed, which may act as a disincentive for some.

Working against these potential difficulties, however, is the deliberate embedding of sessions into existing modules as mentioned above. This increases the formality of the process, as does the direct input and tuition from the college careers service. The simple structure of the CPDP, based around the four key questions, is also designed to facilitate student engagement. Furthermore, a concerted attempt has been made to give the CPDP a clear identity, including the centralisation of all materials in student portfolios which are added to through the activities in each session.

Chris Ribchester

Department of Geography
Chester College of Higher Education
c.ribchester@chester.ac.uk

Judith Done

Head of Careers Service
Chester College of Higher Education
j.done@chester.ac.uk

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Why include Careers? The data

Pauline Kneale
University of Leeds

Why take time from the academic element of a degree to consider career related elements? Our students act in PR and ambassadorial roles for the department and will influence the prospects of the next generations of students, including their own children. Almost all students have a great-time while at university but what messages do they reflect down the line? What is their post-degree experience? This article considers destination data for GEES graduates as a starting point for discussion.

One driver for change in the HE careers agenda is the QAA Code of practice – 'Career education, information and guidance' available from <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/cop/COPcex/contents.htm> (and reproduced at the back of this publication).

Government and industry are driving the new skills agenda, encouraging higher education to an ever more vocationally/market oriented provision. The 'learning society' and the 'knowledge economy' are phenomena we are beginning to grapple with. These changing contexts raise many questions for the development of students' skills, prompting consideration of the role and function of skills in higher education. Skills are integral to Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Geography BUT:

Do our students and their employers value these skills?
Do our students make the most of this aspect of their degree?

One reality for students is exemplified in their comments:
'There are no jobs so why waste time looking, I must get a 2:1'
and:

'There is no time, I have a job four mornings a week and in one evening, and that's knackered. After university work you don't have the energy to fill in application forms, and if I take a day off for an interview I'll lose my job, and I can't afford that'.

At one level, GEES students do well in post-graduation first destination statistics (obtained six months after graduation) (Table 1).

While the very large majority of graduates are employed or undertaking further study, a closer analysis of the data shows that well under 50% of those entering employment in the first six months are joining companies at the graduate entry level. While a number of students are taking temporary jobs to raise money for travelling or

Degree Scheme	Geography	Earth Science	Environmental Science
Year of Graduation	1998	1998	1998
Employed	86	38	46
Still Seeking Employment/ Unknown	10	5	20
Not Available (Time Out/ Travel)	17	3	7
Further Study	21 (5 PGCE, 4 MA, 8 MSc, 3 PhD, 2- CPE and LPC: College of Law, Dip H.Ed., Nursing)	24 (16 MSc, 7 PhD, 1 MRes)	21 (1 MA, 1 MRes, 7 MSc, 5 PhD, 2 CPE and LPC: College of Law, 1 BTEC Art and Design)
Total	134	70	94

Table 1: One university's careers data

for debt repayment, further exploration through questionnaires and interviews reveals many stories typified by two people who had five jobs in two years. First a 2.1 BSc graduate who said:

'I decided to concentrate on the degree and not to apply for jobs until I graduated. Not such a good idea in retrospect. It was quite difficult applying from home although I got the vacancies bulletin. My local town careers centre was hopeless. I kind of messed about for 3 months. Then went to Europe with a friend. I got my first job as a storeman but that wasn't going anywhere. Then I worked for a PC retailer. It was interesting but... When I started to apply for graduate jobs it was difficult to explain the gap, and I sent off over 90 applications before I get sorted.'

And from a 2.1 graduate with Word, PowerPoint and Excel skills when she left university:

'I didn't know what I wanted, or really what I could do. So I temped in a local factory for 9 months, then I got on an 'into work scheme' and that helped me to get a clerical job. Then I was quite lucky and got picked for a management traineeship. Since then I have moved to as a junior manager.'

It is not all a picture of doom and gloom. Among the 30% who moved quickly into graduate level career work, we have many happy and settled graduates and some who used their first job to springboard to the next. However, those who left university without clear directions are taking a long time to get jobs with 'graduate earnings potential'. Earth Science, Environmental Science and Geography graduates are certainly no worse off than many other graduates, and generally are marginally better off because they pick up IT and finance related jobs more easily than general arts graduates. But is the current position good enough?

Significant numbers of our recent students are not in graduate careers. Talking to those caught in the post-graduation trap, there is clearly an issue about their self-confidence and about their role as the 'walking adverts' for our subjects - not perhaps the ideal image for them to pass on to friends, siblings and eventually their own children. They are

left with an image of a great degree experience, great fun, super place, great friends but not a course quickly leading to graduate work to help clear the debts; the 'was it really worth it?' factor.

'Career modules' are one useful way forward in encouraging students to value their degrees, and a useful PR activity for departments. GEES degrees give students many skills but often fail to provide the careers education and guidance which will enable students to use these skills to obtain graduate-level posts. In the current climate, this is an issue we cannot afford to neglect.

Pauline Kneale

School of Geography
University of Leeds
p.kneale@geography.leeds.ac.uk

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News on Geographers into Teaching News



This joint initiative run by the Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British geographers) (RGS-IBG) and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) aims to raise the profile of teaching as a career and encourage more undergraduates to think about teaching geography. There is a need to fill the increasing number of training places every year (approximately 1050 for entry in Sept 2001) and address the shortage of teachers within the discipline.

The quality of teaching at school is one of the most important elements in maintaining the health of the subject in HE. However, with the skills that Geography graduates possess, they are highly employable. As a result of a buoyant labour market, teaching has been faced with strong competition. There has been a steady fall in recruitment for postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) courses in Geography in England and Wales. In 1999, the percentage of Geography entrants to initial teacher training was 85% of the DfEE target, while in 2000 this had fallen to 83%.

On 30 March 2000, in recognition of the general problem in teacher recruitment, the Secretary of State for Education announced that training salaries of £6,000 would be paid to all students entering PGCE initial teacher training courses in England, as from September 2000. This was followed in October when the TTA launched a new £7M advertising campaign to attract new graduates into the profession ('Those that can, teach').

In addition to this, the RGS-IBG / TTA 'Geographers into Teaching' project has established a number of initiatives addressing recommendations in the report *Understanding the Teacher Supply in Geography*, which was published following a conference in April 1999.

What is the Project Doing?

- Liaison between the Geography community and the TTA – a Steering Group meets every quarter. A database has been created with the names of HEI Heads of Geography Departments and key contacts at initial teacher training institutions providing PGCE Geography courses.
- Publicity about teacher recruitment issues - Editorials have been published (Journal for Geography in Higher Education, RGS-IBG newsletter, GAP year literature). Flyers and posters have been sent to university Geography departments for distribution to undergraduates across England to raise their awareness about teaching. Careers leaflets are being produced to inform a wider audience (e.g. earth and environmental scientists), as you don't necessarily need a Geography degree to be Geography teacher.
- Presentations have been held for Geography departments at Liverpool University, Liverpool John Moores University and Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education. Visits to the Universities of Leeds and Leicester have also been carried out.

- Felicity Thorne, the project development officer, has been present at the RGS-IBG annual conference (January 2001), the Teaching In London Event (TILE) (January 2001) and the Geographical Association annual conference (April 2001). In March the project was promoted at a one-day national conference 'Putting Careers into the Academic Curriculum' organised by the LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences.
- Promotion of teaching through pilot projects – a schedule has been drawn up of partnerships already in place between universities, schools and teacher-training institutions to encourage students to consider teaching as a career. This will be used to inform a work programme to build on current initiatives in some regions and to encourage development in others.
- A London Focus Group convened in December 2000 to address the particular problems in the metropolitan region.
- Approval of funding for three universities to introduce projects aimed at promoting teaching as a career. This followed invitations to all university Geography departments in England to submit proposals for small projects in Spring 2001.

The next round of funding under this programme will be announced soon – keep an eye on the website below for details.

- Dissemination of success stories – this is taking place through email bulletins to HEIs heads of Geography and those interested in teaching links.
- A summary of the project is on the RGS-IBG website: (<http://www.rgs.org/education/teachinggeography>)

Some good news has already resulted from this work, and other efforts to promote teaching; applications for PGCEs in Geography are up when compared with last year. Although it is recognised that longer-term data are needed before the success of the project can be fully established, the recent up-turn is an encouraging sign.

We welcome your comments on this project. Further information can be obtained by contacting myself below.

Felicity Thorne
Project Development Officer
RGS-IBG / TTA
tta@rgs.org

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Geographers and the Workplace: an Embedded Module

Sue Hawksworth and Pauline Kneale
University of Leeds

This article describes a subject-integrated module that has been in place for five years. It encourages undergraduates to consider career planning sooner rather than later during their programme of study, and to realise that their degree experience has long-term value. This article focuses on the learning experience which students receive through taking part in an exhibition stand competition concerned to highlight 'what can geographers offer organisations?'. The project is now also run by both earth and environmental sciences students in their career modules at Leeds.

GEOG2440 'Geographers and The Workplace' has been run for five years for geography students at Leeds. The module learning outcomes state that 'on completion of the module, students should be able to:'

- Consider how their geography degree programme and life at University help in the development of key skills;
- Demonstrate awareness of changes in the graduate employment market, both generally and specifically for geographers;
- Demonstrate their ability to present their personal and academic qualities against occupational criteria in a manner that is effective in applications;
- Understand the value of their academic, personal and learning skills in the workplace;
- Demonstrate awareness of a range of job search strategies and an understanding of the differing patterns of recruitment in selection in different sectors - SME's, blue chip companies, voluntary bodies, etc;
- Understand decision making criteria in relation to career planning;
- Evaluate different sources of careers information.

The value of the module has been recognised by a variety of companies and has been sponsored by companies including Kingfisher, B&Q, Unilever and Accenture. A copy of the module outline and details are available from the authors.

One element of the module is the group project: 'What Geographers Can Do For Your Organisation'. The group selects an organisation, company or occupational sector and presents a 'stand' which clearly markets the skills geographers have to offer to that organisation. These may be 'Geography specific' skills (GIS, field skills) but are more likely to be the generic skills employers are seeking, and with which the study of Geography has equipped them (e.g. teamwork, problem-solving). The emphasis is on an up-beat presentation that will persuade a personnel manager, for example, that the individuals as geographers, have attributes the company 'must have'. The 'stand' is assembled for 'human resources (HR) managers', and others to visit. There are prizes for the most persuasive performances. On the day students visit each other's stands and act as HR managers to get some practice at this form of selling. Then the groups are visited by a variety of people drawn from around the university, the careers centre and externally.

The following extracts come from the feedback to a selection of the groups in 2001 commenting on their performance in this project work and on their own evaluation. They give a flavour of the exercise and the discussions.

MI5 Good stand with a great game and some clever photo-montages. The conversation was heavily dominated by one member. Good on skills and values. The evidence was patchy and not all was justified. Tendency to the circular argument – geographers have skills which MI5 want so they want geographers, but without supporting evidence it sounds thin. Only two people really spoke, others drifted off.

NORWICH UNION Strong on the academic skills of geographers and plenty of evidence from course work, fieldwork and life. One person seemed to have researched NU very well and answered the tough questions; the others seemed a little lost. Wheel of Skills worked well in involving the assessor.

ARUP Strong on the strengths of geographers. I would have liked to see more explicit evidence tied to skills, but some good efforts. Understood well what the company needs. Good and creative material, own team logo. Needed to improve on personal illustration, a consistent team approach. Raffle was a nice touch, lots of enthusiasm.

RAILTRACK Good articulation of skills using graphs, PowerPoint, charts and fact pack. The biography and skills of each member were a super touch. Good research into Railtrack's needs. Each team member contributed to the presentation. Lively enthusiastic group.

WS ATKINS A creative and imaginative approach to the skills elements which were well articulated. Good examples from travel, cultural and environmental planning to link to the company. The company research was good, knew about the UK and global operation and where they could fit in. I like the way they made me think about what each costume portrayed. A good team effort.

VIRGIN This was a very good stand using colour coded and cohesive materials. The information was clearly expressed using the right language. Not so good at taking the geography degree apart and selecting the skills and experiences that it includes. I did not get a team feel from this group, one guy kept wandering off and around.

IMPERIAL CANCER RESEARCH FUND A dynamic team working well together. Looked at areas inside and outside the curriculum. Good video. Good at presenting specific evidence. Had done an appropriate level of research, knew what ICRF needs. Good at providing specific evidence from their own work.

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS Graduate attributes were listed and well understood. The speaker had clearly thought through the evidence from the curriculum and made the links to PWC literature. There were some strong individual performances here, perhaps worked less well as a team. The wall and sport shirt display was good.

ERDAS Had clearly done a lot of research into ERDAS. Related the academic skills well. Useful links made between the company and RS/GIS, could have been hotter on links to other modules. Ability to make personal illustrations was limited, tended to the apologetic rather than persuasive. Not the most visually exciting display, given GIS potential this could have been more dynamic.

MARS Very keen, v. enthusiastic, well thought out visual display well used to back up the oral points. Excellent at demonstrating from own experience. Had personal examples to quote when asked. Dealt with the diversity of the company well. Liked the sweets.

'The things I enjoyed least' [student and tutor comments]

'It was very frustrating trying to get the actual company to respond and get interviews and information' [this is worth remembering next year, you need to start pre-interview research well before the day before, getting info takes time and persistence.]

'Standing around waiting for people to talk to us, feeling like a spare part' [so get out there and make the first approach.]

'Being asked quite difficult questions because it was difficult to think on your feet and there was only limited time to research the company' [therefore you need plenty of time to research the company before an interview.]

'Some of the people were really difficult to talk to'. [this should not be true at an interview, but in every office and organisation there is someone who is hard to handle. Getting this skill going can be a great asset.]

'Talking to the first person, but it got better as time went on' [the message here is to realise that practising what you want to say out loud before this sort of activity, in the bath or bus stop, is really helpful and reduces nerves.]

'Answering questions that were outside the brief we were given, it was stressful'. [Expect the unexpected. Life is like this. You may have a brief but supplementary questions will come and suddenly an interviewer shoots off on another tack, try to keep calm, breathe deeply, listen hard and go with the game.]

'Getting everyone together' [time management and planning are critical, what would you do next time to make life easier?]

'It was tiring saying lots of things over again' [on recruitment and sales stands the staff are there all day, maybe for two or three days repeating the same information and everyone is exhausted by the end. Have a think about how information you would gain as a visitor might differ if you arrived at 9am on day one and 4pm on day three? How do you need to change your approach? What are the things that you can do as a visitor to a stand to help the speakers and make sure you get the best from their display?]

Synopsis

Students find this session exhausting but a very useful opportunity to use their presentation skills in a free format. They are very inventive in designing their stands and acquiring freebies, raffle items, and so on. Overall, the exercise reported in this paper is good fun and a good learning experience.

Pauline Kneale

School of Geography
University of Leeds
p.kneale@geography.leeds.ac.uk

Sue Hawksworth

Careers Centre
University of Leeds
s.hawksw@careers.leeds.ac.uk

The Personal Development Portfolio for Geographers and Earth Scientists– a tool to raise employability awareness

Andrea Duncan and Dawn Weatherston
University College Northampton

Higher education teachers use a variety of strategies to encourage students to reflect upon and evaluate their own learning experiences and plan for their own development. Personal development portfolios (PDPs) offer one such strategy. PDPs are structured and supported processes undertaken by individuals to reflect upon their own learning, performance and / or achievement, and to plan for their personal, educational and career development. This article reports on an experimental PDP document customised for final year Geography and Earth Science students at University College Northampton which is due to be introduced next academic year. The article should be of interest to course leaders in other institutions who are considering designing similar career-planning activities for their students.

Introduction

At University College Northampton personal development portfolios (PDPs) are now well established in a number of single honours and combined honours programmes in the first year. Personal development portfolios are centred on student development.

They seek to:

- improve the capacity of individuals to understand what, how and when they are learning;
- encourage them to monitor, review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning.

This year has seen the introduction of a standard year two PDP document and a number of pilot projects to customise PDP materials and supporting workshops for particular courses and year groups. The 'Geography and Earth Science at Work' year three module (20 credits), commencing in September 2001, is one of these projects.

This module includes a portfolio whose purpose it is to draw together key aspects of academic and personal development during and alongside a student's degree studies to provide a self-marketing tool for his/her future career. As an assessed document, it is designed to form a comprehensive summary of progression, strengths and skills, and to provide an invaluable source of material for use in applications and at interviews. In particular, it is hoped that the portfolio will increase students' ability to remember and articulate those experiences which demonstrate the qualities employers value.

Customising Materials

Recording and evaluating progress and setting goals is common practice within most professional appraisal systems in the workplace. It is hoped therefore that the PDP will be useful not just initially after graduation, but as the basis for continued self-development and learning.

In producing customised materials for final year students we were concerned to avoid 'recording fatigue' and to ensure activities are linked explicitly with the course programme: integration and

accreditation give recognition to the importance placed on ongoing recording, reflecting and planning processes. It is crucial for students' motivation to make relevant links to future career plans and the aim is to increase their awareness and confidence in the value and marketability of the degree they are working towards. The work experience element is obviously a key part of this, but regular opportunities to make connections between current activities and possible future work demands are essential in practising the skill of transfer. That is, thinking through how to apply knowledge and skills in different contexts.

Assessment

The draft portfolio we are currently working on carries a 40% weighting and includes a personal skills audit matched to specific career aspirations, an interview role play and a presentation to an employers' panel. The skills audit moves students on from simply listing examples of activities that demonstrate skills, to analysing and describing specific academic tasks at level three, and work-related experiences for the purpose of developing 'self-marketing' strategies. Students are encouraged to complete in-depth research into possible job roles and are expected to explore the demands of each. This research enables them to practise justifying their own suitability and motivation for the positions. The portfolio also requires a detailed action plan linked to accurate understanding of graduate labour market trends.

Conclusions

This document will be used by the first cohort of students taking the module next year, and will no doubt be subsequently refined and modified. It is intended to increase students' awareness of the value of their undergraduate education and the potentially high level of employability it provides. In addition, the processes involved will give a firm grounding for self-reflective professional development, which is an integral part of long-term career management.

For an interactive paper on PDPs, which will encourage you to contribute to the thinking on what PDP means, please visit:
<http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/for-us/communications/UKbriefings/ref-0111.asp>

Andrea Duncan and Dawn Weatherston
 Educational and Careers Guidance Services
 University College Northampton
andrea.duncan@northampton.ac.uk
dawn.weatherston@northampton.ac.uk

What Career Skills do our Graduates take to the Marketplace?

Sue Hawksworth and Pauline Kneale
 University of Leeds

GEES students are multi-talented and multi-skilled. The problem is that they have trouble in acknowledging this. They generally disregard or undervalue the skills they acquire inter alia with GEES knowledge. In this paper, we look at some mini-exercises as a basis for discussing how this position can be reversed.

GEES graduates are well summarised by this employers' comments: 'Graduates come in with a level of education and intellect, and the level of work and commitment that is involved in passing a degree. So, in a sense, there are certain hoops that must have been jumped through in quite a short space of time. They have been trained to an extent in broad skills rather than just in a specific academic qualification. They are usually people who are willing to train further and to take further courses. They are not frightened by that and are usually quite alert in terms of what is happening in employment terms in their specific field' (Harvey *et al.*, 1997).

The skills employers want are generally summarised in lists which almost always include variations on: effective communication, teamwork, problem solving ability, analytical skills, flexibility / adaptability, self management / motivation, decision making, independent judgement, logical argument, research skills, creativity, IT skills, ability to relate to wider context and specialist subject knowledge.

Most careers and academic staff will agree that:

By studying their GEES courses students acquire: IT skills, organisational skills, presentation skills and specialist subject knowledge.

By doing part-time jobs whilst studying students acquire: communication skills, team working skills, people skills (ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds), time management skills, self management and motivation skills.

By being at university they acquire: Financial planning skills, decision making skills, communication skills, stress management skills, self management and motivation skills.

But careers staff observe that without considerable coaching and encouragement almost all GEES students DO NOT present the evidence for having these skills in their CV's, on their application forms and in their interviews. This is a real issue for getting through the early rounds in applications and causes unnecessary disillusionment. GEES students have the skills, we need to find ways to encourage them to recognise these skills and both talk and write about them.

So what can be done? This section outlines four very brief examples of activities that might be part of a 'careers' module or part of a traditional lecture course or which could be done on fieldwork or in tutorials.

- 1) The 'What is a graduate?' poster exercise asks students in groups of 5-7 to create a poster that defines graduateness. The only rule is 'no words allowed'. It takes about 10-15 minutes and requires the use of communication and creativity skills. 'No words' posters

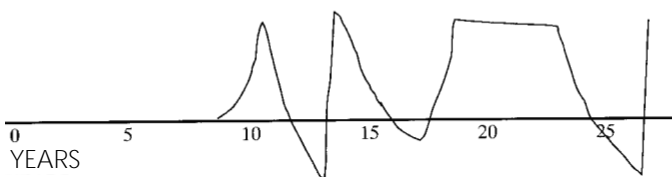
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can be used elsewhere in the curriculum to generate 'out-of-box' thinking. In all these sessions it is vital to take time in reviewing and commenting on the work to make sure students realise that in addition to achieving a product they are variably proud of, they have also used team work, communication, creative, and perhaps negotiation and presentation skills to complete the task.

- 2) *Legomania* is an exercise that many careers staff are familiar with as an ice breaking and group work task. The team has to construct a Lego person from a set number of Lego pieces in a given time. One person at a time is allowed to go and look at an example of the finished product so there has to be communication for the team to complete the task. Building a Kit-e-Kat tower is a similar exercise with easily available resources. Each group of 6 is given the same number of straws, pins and length of string. The winning team is the one that constructs the tallest tower from the materials to support the tin of Kit-e-Kat in the given time. This exercise drives home ideas about teamwork, communication, group leadership and how suggestions were pooled and chosen. In addition, time and stress management skills emerge.
- 3) Decision making is an issue that arises in interviews. People make decisions all the time but when asked how you make decisions it is not unusual for an interviewee to fail to recognise the processes involved, or to explain how s/he arrives at personal best processes. *The Life Line* exercise asks you to plot a decision making line in relation to your age. Good decisions go up, bad decisions go down. The materials required are minimal: (e.g.)



The dimensions could be something like participation in sport/music or academic achievement or perhaps decisions affecting ones overall life.

Student's comments after this life-line exercise are very revealing:

'I hadn't realised how much I rely on other people: I let other people take control and go with their ideas'

'I tend to put off decisions until the reality overtakes me and I realise that I have no choices left'

This is an exercise that really makes students think about how they operate as individuals. It is very quick to complete but they also need time to make some notes about how they operate and what that means, and whether they need to take more control – some do and some remain happily as they are.

- 4) Encouraging students to recognise and become familiar with talking about their skills can be usefully undertaken using the *competency-based questions* that come up on application forms in one guise or another. From the Procter and Gamble Management Application Form 2001 - *'Give an example of when you set yourself a demanding goal and overcame obstacles to achieve it'*. Or *'Give an example of when you led a group of people, set directions for them, gained their commitment and led them to achieve outstanding results'*. Such questions ask people to articulate their self-motivation and management skills. First attempts at these are invariably weak.

Evidence which students can use can come from within academic, part-time jobs, leisure and other activities. Talking around experiences in pairs helps people articulate the activity, and move from just describing it to explaining and evaluating their role.

GEES graduates have extensive transferable and very marketable skills. However, students need the encouragement, time and opportunity to identify and articulate the skills they possess. We need to devise learning experiences to help them to do this.

Reference

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Sue Hawksworth

Careers Centre
University of Leeds.
s.hawkswo@careers.leeds.ac.uk

Pauline Kneale

School of Geography
University of Leeds
p.kneale@geography.leeds.ac.uk

A Graduate's Perspective – from Geography to recruiting Geographers

Martin Bradbury

EuroDirect Database Marketing

Pauline Kneale

University of Leeds

EuroDirect is a company based in Skipton which has chosen to recruit locally through university contacts as well as through the traditional routes. Martin Bradbury is a GEES graduate who actively retains contacts between the business and Leeds university, to the benefit of both. Many students wish to continue to live in the area where they went to university, and search for local jobs. Building and retaining active contacts with local businesses enables a university department to offer workplace opportunities for project students, work experience opportunities, a window into industry and potential employment opportunities for graduates. This paper argues that cultivating such relationships is a win-win situation, one that can help to give students an insight into the local small to medium enterprises (SME's) as well as the wider employment market.

Martin Bradbury is a geography graduate who currently works for EuroDirect (<http://www.eurodirect.co.uk/>). He was in the right place at the right time gaining a job ideally suited to a GIS 'er'. EuroDirect is a rapidly expanding database marketing company, with award-winning Geographical Information Systems, creating bespoke analysis systems, working with the Electoral Roll and Census Agency. The company employs 80 members of staff, has a £7 million turnover and offices in Bradford and Leeds. Essentially, the business involves building and providing solutions for transforming raw data into valuable marketing intelligence, to enable corporate clients to build competitive edge through innovative use of publicly available data and information.

EuroDirect uses the traditional methods of recruitment including recruitment agencies, advertising in newspapers, advertising in trade magazines, the graduate gateway programme and interviews. It wants a variety of people and lists the following characteristics as ideal for new employees: client responsiveness, creative thinking, self-motivation, ability to work in a team and individually, enthusiasm, confidence, ability to work well under pressure and a capacity for hard work. In addition to their general recruitment, EuroDirect also ensure that information is circulated to local universities. Previous research and personal contacts mean that the company gains a particularly good understanding of students and their qualities through conversations with staff at the University of Leeds who understand the level of technical competence that may be required and are in a position to advertise potential project, work experience or employment opportunities to postgraduate and undergraduate cohorts. The company's recruitment programme benefits from these contacts.

From the academic standpoint, employers who are happy to contribute in a relevant way to academic courses and who are keen to pursue town-gown links are a real benefit. Students thoroughly enjoy meeting graduates a few years into employment and gain considerably from their 'stories' of the reality of employment and the relevance of that nightmare computer practical which *'makes perfect sense now'*. A company that offers direct GIS experience has clear and immediate links to the geography curriculum, but many local SME's offer comparable experiences to students. Links may be made with local voluntary organisations or environmental groups where there is always project work and not enough resources.

The student experience of the workplace by whatever means is a bonus on a CV, good interview material, and almost always a positive experience. Employer links of all types are very well worth cultivating, and using the alumni is a great first-step or 'foot in the door'.

Martin Bradbury

Client Services Manager
EuroDirect Database Marketing

Pauline Kneale

School of Geography
University of Leeds
p.kneale@geography.leeds.ac.uk

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Got a Question or Query?



The LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES) is developing a **register of expertise** database. This enables us to efficiently and effectively put individuals who approach the Centre with a learning and teaching **question**, in-touch with relevant experts in our disciplines. So, if you would like to know more about computer-based assessment, integrating C&IT in fieldwork, subject benchmarking, running overseas field trips etc., or if you have any other question or query, then please contact Judith Gill at the Subject Centre on: 01752 233530 or email: info@gees.ac.uk. We **guarantee** a response time of no more than **48 hours**.

A careers module for final year Geographers

Brian Chalkley

LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences

Mandy Burns

University of Plymouth

The QAA Code of Practice on Careers Education, Information and Guidance (CEIG), asks institutions to consider embedding careers guidance and planning within the academic curriculum. This article illustrates one way by which this can be achieved. The Plymouth University Geography degree includes a compulsory third year ten credit module (for 140 students!) in Geography, Employment and Careers (GGY 3004) which was introduced in 1999 and for which we can therefore now derive the lessons of the first two years of experience.

The GGY 3004 module was designed in response to the original Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1998) recommendation on embedding careers education in the discipline-based academic curriculum. Geography at Plymouth has a long established commitment to key skills and a small component on careers was already included in a stage two skills module. Despite this platform, many departmental colleagues were initially wary about a full-blown careers module (our debates pre-dated the QAA Code). It was not considered sufficiently 'academic' and some colleagues were only won over because half the module focused on economic geography, particularly the academic study of changing patterns of employment.

Lesson one: Consider trying to win over sceptical staff (and students) by the inclusion of an 'academic' subject-based component. Avoid isolating careers education from the rest of the curriculum: build bridges not fences.

The principal rationale for the module is to act for the students as a link between academia and the world of work. It helps them to prepare for the process of job searching, applications and interviews and enables them to place their own experience within the context of some general employment patterns and trends.

On successful completion of the GGY 3004 module, students should be able to:

- demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of changing employment patterns and labour markets;
- reflect critically on the value of a geographical education (particularly in relation to careers);
- prepare a good CV and give an effective account of themselves at interview.

The module is taught jointly by Mandy Burns (Careers Advisor) and Brian Chalkley (Human Geographer). Mandy provides the specialist inputs on topics such as CVs, assessment centres and interviews. Brian provides the economic geography and is able to develop links to other parts of the students' geography curriculum.

The module learning outcomes are achieved and the curriculum is delivered through a variety of teaching and learning methods. These include lectures, talks from employers and former graduates, a video on assessment centres, role-plays, reading and web-based materials.

Of these, the students consider the guest lectures from outside speakers to be the most effective and valuable.

Lesson Two: The inclusion of talks by local employers/professionals is vital in enhancing students' awareness of how organisations work. Talks by former graduates can give present students a real sense of where they might be in a few years time.

This module is assessed by an unseen examination (focused mainly on the academic component dealing with employment change), by a piece of reflective coursework and by a mock interview, which is conducted one-to-one by a member of staff. The interview questions demand evidence of the students' skills and experience in areas such as team working and problem-solving. With 140 students taking the module, the interview workload is shared equally across the 26 departmental staff.

Lesson 3: Despite the artificiality of the occasion, students greatly appreciate the experience of going through the mock interview and value the feedback on their performance. This is a form of learning and assessment we would certainly recommend.

The first two years of GGY 3004 have confirmed our commitment to this kind of approach to embedding careers in the curriculum. However, there are limitations and problems. Academic modules, and especially those with large student numbers, do not allow the one-to-one careers guidance which most students still need. They can enhance but not replace the services traditionally provided by specialist careers advisors. Some students see this kind of module as not sufficiently subject-based (not enough geography!) and also as too 'standardised' to meet their particular careers interests or needs.

Overall, however, we feel the approach is still worthwhile. Although we have no follow-up data on our students' medium-term careers progress after the first destination survey, we feel that they are leaving University better equipped to succeed in taking forward their personal career development. They have, for example, an improved understanding of the changing world of employment, of assessment centres, interviews, and the kinds of career opportunities open to them.

Finally, we would underline that modules of this kind, require, in line with QAA expectations, close collaboration between careers staff and subject-based academics. Although working together necessitates compromises, it can also be exciting and innovative.

Lesson Four: There are many benefits to be derived by bringing together the experience, knowledge and skills of careers specialists and academics. We have a lot to learn from each other and students can certainly benefit from this collaborative approach.

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Brian Chalkley
LTSN-GEES
bchalkley@plymouth.ac.uk

Mandy Burns
University of Plymouth
m.burns@plymouth.ac.uk

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Developing Personal and Professional Skills in Geology

Will Diver, Colin Williams and Jim Griffiths
University of Plymouth

A 10-credit stage 3 module which focuses on the workplace, has been in operation for 7 years, was developed via an Enterprise in Higher Education project. After some initial antipathy from some students, and staff, the module, entitled Personal and Professional Development, is now accepted as a valid and appropriate part of the geology programme at the University of Plymouth. The focus on workplace skills is a deliberate strategy which places careers indirectly, but clearly, on the students' agenda at the start of their final year in a way that is relevant to all students, including those who wish to pursue further study/research or to travel before starting professional work. This article describes the module, which could easily be adapted for geography and environmental sciences degree programmes.

The Personal and Professional Development module aims to help students to acquire, develop and practise skills and attitudes identified by employers, and the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997), as essential or desirable. Students are also encouraged to develop a self-critical or self-reflective approach to their work and inter-personal behaviour. The objectives of the module are:

- to prepare for the workplace in terms of professional skills, attitudes and behaviour;
- to receive guidance in applying for employment;
- to gain practice in interviews;
- to acquire networking and negotiation skills and to be aware of their importance in the workplace;
- to establish basic concepts of project control and cost management;
- to enhance team building and team work skills;
- to develop professional levels of reporting;
- to produce a professional work portfolio and acquire a self-reflective approach to work;
- to receive guidance and support in the process of recognition of personal strengths, weaknesses, and skills with a view to setting targets, planning personal development and a career path.

The module comprises a series of 3-hour sessions in the Autumn semester of Stage 3:

- Module introduction and briefing, personal skills audit, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis;
- Stress and time management, networking and negotiation;
- Team building, project management. Plymouth Science Trail Team Project: introduction;
- Interviews: techniques, psychometric testing, role play;
- Industrial game: oil exploration exercise;
- Team Project: independent work, optional surgery; (4 weeks)
- Plymouth Science Trail Team Project: Trade Fair;
- Self-perception analysis. Debrief on teamwork;
- Critical Review: analysis, presentation and feedback.

Sessions utilise an interactive style of delivery with staff more often acting as facilitators rather than lecturers. Staff involved with the module have worked professionally outside academia and their experience brings both perspective and credibility to the sessions.

The module is assessed by coursework and comprises 2 elements:

- Personal Portfolio: individual mark (60%);
- Plymouth Science Trail Project: team mark (40%).

The *Personal Portfolio* is not simply an assessment task but an opportunity for personal development and those who invest time and effort find that the rewards are substantial. The precise format depends on personal preference, initiative, imagination and effort but each portfolio is expected to include:

- A log or diary in which the following is recorded for each session:
 - i) summary of the session;
 - ii) evaluation of personal performance/contribution/effort;
 - iii) personal reflections arising from the evaluations;
 - iv) consequent personal action plan.
- Collation of work done during the weekly sessions;
- Examples of work/job applications showing the use of skills/techniques used on the module;
- Notes/reflections on books or articles read in connection with the module.

The *Plymouth Science Trail Project* requires the students, in staff-selected teams of 4 or 5, to devise, produce and present a guided trail for Plymouth, specifically involving some facet of science knowledge transfer.

Team performance is assessed in 4 elements:

- Rationale for the Project/Record of Team Business (15%);
- Town Trail Leaflet (30%);
- Booklet (40%);
- Presentation at Trade Fair (15%).

The climax of the project involves teams preparing exhibits for a Trade Fair at which all other Geology teams are present together with teams from the Earth Sciences programme. Here, they present their projects as products to guests and University staff who act as 'customers'. Some teams have liaised with local schools, charities and tourist enterprises; the quality of both outcomes and presentations is invariably high and the students report a sense of team and personal achievement.

Each year, nonetheless, a significant number of students are negative, even hostile, to a compulsory module which is "not geology". By the end of the module, however, most, but not all, detractors realise that the module is, indeed, relevant and valuable to them. Constructive criticism of the module is encouraged and has been used to inform change and development of the module.

Overall, student feedback has been strongly positive with many students reporting that the skills and experience materially affected their capacity to get jobs and to work effectively and confidently once employed. A student who had been a staunch critic of the module reported, a year after graduating, that knowing about Gantt charts, in project management, actually helped her to stand out in a group interview which later led to her "getting the job". For more information on this module, please contact any one of the authors below.



Tamar Valley Trail

The team devised their trail for tourists by linking heritage sites and other tourist information with commentary on the local geology and its links with scenery and the history of mining in the area. Their trail booklet is distinctive in highlighting the Tamar Valley as an attraction location in its own right. The Valley actually straddles the county boundary and most of the current tourist guides link the attractions to either Devon or Cornwall.



Plymouth Science Trail for the Partially Sighted

This was a highly innovative effort that involved the team in consultation with a local organisation for the partially sighted. The trail was supported by an audio tape and booklet designed for the partially sighted. Guidance was presented on how to recognise features of building stones in the city by touch.

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Will Diver

w.diver@plymouth.ac.uk

Colin Williams

c.williams-1@plymouth.ac.uk

Jim Griffiths

J.Griffiths-1@plymouth.ac.uk

Department of Geological Sciences
University of Plymouth



'It's not what you study, it's how you benefit from your study that interests us'

Andrew Bottomley PricewaterhouseCoopers

This article provides a brief overview of the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) recruitment ethos and demonstrates how students in the Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (GEES) disciplines are well equipped with the types of key skills that PwC seek.

The PwC selection process tests the candidate's ability to relate study, work and extra curricular experiences to the business world, expecting clear articulation of the reflective learning that has led to career choice.

Introduction

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) is established as the world leader in business finance consulting, which includes assurance, tax and legal services, risk management, financial consulting, IT, e-business and actuarial consultancy. The firm is structured along various service lines, each addressing its own aspect of the professional services industry. PwC has a workforce of over 150,000 globally, and each year recruits 1,200 new graduates from any academic discipline, for opportunities in the UK (as such, the firm is the largest recruiter of graduates in the UK).

From the first day that new recruits arrive, they are expected to undergo professional training. Depending on the entry point chosen, the firm offers training towards 32 different professional qualifications. Thus, study does not end at university! In addition, new recruits will be expected to meet with clients within the first few weeks of their job, (including senior management and directors), being expected to work independently as well as in teams, and mix with people from different academic backgrounds and cultures. Thus, the PwC environment is challenging, demanding, but also rewarding.

Articulation of Key Skills and Reflective Learning

Graduates from the GEES disciplines practise and acquire a whole range of key skills during their various programmes of formal and fieldwork study while at university. The skills of numeracy, data interpretation, planning, adaptability, time allocation, interpretation, project management, presenting, report-writing, self-motivation, team-working, information sifting, challenging ideas, creativity and innovation are just some of these skills, and there are many more. These skills, coupled with business skills, professional skills and professional ethics are vitally important in the workplace and help to make the transition to the world of work considerably smoother.

However, despite most GEES graduates being equipped with a whole variety of key transferable skills, it is the articulation and marketing of these skills that is important if the graduate is to be successful in being offered a post with PwC.

What underpins this success is the notion of reflective learning. This itself is underpinned by the 'RAP' theory, that is, 'reflecting' on ones experiences to date, 'appraising' ones strengths and weaknesses, and

'planning' for the future and setting targets. While reflective learning is important in academic studies, it is no less important in the workplace.

At PwC a comprehensive appraisal system operates whereby both line managers and clients that staff have been working for jointly appraise the person in question. There is also frequent access to a mentor and a counsellor. It is therefore vital, if staff are to prepare for their appraisals and reviews, and gain value from them, that they establish their ability to learn by reflecting on experiences.

The ability to self-assess is of paramount importance in this process, as is understanding the full value of their learning and teaching experience within the workplace. This form of experiential learning then feeds into day-to-day assignments, as well as individuals' own career and personal development plans.

Conclusion

The value of reflective learning cannot be overestimated in the workplace, and graduates from the GEES disciplines (and others) would do well to routinely assess their own abilities. Encouraging graduates to think about developing their own skills and abilities at an early stage in their academic career, and making use of personal development portfolios, would certainly bode well for their future career development, particularly at PwC. To conclude, it is not what graduates study, but how they benefit from their studies that interests major recruiters such as PwC. Personal development profiling (PDPs) can go a long way in assisting in this reflective development process.

For simulations of business situations constructed by PwC, which may be of interest to those who are teaching transferable skills, visit one of the interactive quizzes at:

<http://www.pwcglobal.com/uk/eng/car-inexp/graduate/fas.html>

Andrew Bottomley

Senior Recruitment Manager
PricewaterhouseCoopers UK

A pilot study using the mini-conference to externalise geo-assessment

Ann Worsley Edge Hill

This article reports on the use of a mini-conference to assess undergraduate work by the Department of Geography at Edge Hill. The pilot scheme involves the participation of external agencies in a one-day conference organised by staff and students. Invited guests were asked to listen to student presentations on the theme of coastal change and several guests made contributions. Student presentations were based on small group research projects. The conference was deemed a great success by both students and visitors.

Introduction

The desire in geography to measure effectiveness in teaching and learning against external agents has prompted several studies which have looked at interactions with the world outside the geography department through work placements, graduate networks, project

and research links and partnership with public bodies (Buckingham-Hatfield, 1995; Church and Bull, 1995 and Jackson, 1995). It is also recognised that higher education institutions and the outside world can work together for their mutual benefit as well as for the benefit of students (Gardiner, 1998).

However, while supporting the student experience through active and co-operative learning, many links are tenuous and take place only through the activity of staff research and consultancy. The students themselves have no direct contact with employers outside higher education.

The Pilot-Study Mini Conference

Set within this context of externalising the student experience of teaching and learning and establishing employer links, the Department of Geography at Edge Hill has used a mini-conference as a form of assessment. The preparation for the conference has facilitated the widening of student access to regional organisations, their research activities and their management and encouraged external participation in student activity through a specific area of study. The pilot project is based on a new, recently validated module 'Coastal Zone Environments and Management' delivered in Semester 1 for Level 3 students. The module aims to look at the nature of coastal processes in the light of environmental fluctuations and human activity and uses the Sefton Coast on Merseyside as the location for much of the teaching and learning material. Students also use this coastline as the basis for group research projects. The validated module assessment includes individual reports based upon the group projects and an interim oral presentation is a preferred means of assessing progress with the research and reports.

Throughout the group project investigations, students are expected to make contact with several external agencies in order to aid and support their research and a list of suggested contacts is provided in the module handbook. Although the mini-conference did not originally form part of the validated assessment, a proposal to inform such agencies about their findings was made to students at the start of the semester. After initial scepticism there was broad agreement that oral presentations at a mini-conference would be a novel and effective way to proceed. It was also agreed that the undergraduates and external agents would evaluate the pilot scheme as a method of assessing student work.

The aims then of the mini-conference were to:

- foster the linkages with local and national external agencies within the context of independent research and encourage students to develop personal links with these agencies;
- prepare level 3 students for the preparation and presentation of research findings to conferences in the world of employment;
- develop an innovative programme of learning through the conference experience.

In order to fulfil these aims it was suggested that the interim oral presentations about the group research projects would form the core of the mini-conference. A number of external agencies were then invited to participate including those who were supporting student work and several of their representatives agreed to speak alongside the students together with other invited guests including academics with research interests in coastal studies.

Delivery

The module itself was delivered to 28 Level 3 Geography students through the following programme of work in order to provide support for assessment submissions and for the conference:

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- Weekly lectures and fieldwork in the first half of the semester together with workshops designed to brainstorm research and conference materials;
- Independent study sessions for undergraduate research activities;
- Workshops designed specifically for the purpose of preparing for the conference.

Assessment

The validated assessment strategy consists of a portfolio of work worth 60% of the module mark and a formal examination worth 40%. The portfolio includes an individual report based on the group research project together with small tasks and problem-solving exercises. Module learning outcomes validated in 2000 as yet do not include conference participation since the pilot scheme was intended for trial purposes only and relied upon the enthusiasm and commitment of the students themselves. However, it was suggested to the students that the outcomes of the pilot would include professional presentations to the conference on the subject of their group research projects, close liaison with local and national agencies and the development of transferable skills such as problem solving, external links and conference organisation.

Initially there was scepticism at the suggestion of formal presentations especially in view of the validated assessment strategy, although there was broad agreement for the need to collaborate with regional public bodies for research activities. However, once the module was underway and as group research activities commenced, enthusiasm for the conference grew. The conference idea was also welcomed by the external agencies themselves and five agreed to speak with a further twenty agreeing to attend on the day.

The presentations by the undergraduates were made in their research groups (each having between two and five members) with every student making a contribution. Two students who felt unable to speak offered posters on their research topic and such was the eventual enthusiasm for the conference that all seven groups who actually presented on the day produced poster evidence voluntarily, in itself a measure of their commitment. Conference day was the 15th December 2000 and included both morning and afternoon sessions. All the invited guests attended together with several others who had seen conference materials. Visitors, speakers and students mingled informally both before and after the conference and during the buffet lunch allowing the viewing of posters and informal talks with students and staff about research and coastal issues.

Evaluation and Conclusions

Evaluation of the project took place throughout the module using questionnaires and informal discussions. The responses of both guests and students have been overwhelmingly positive, all felt that the day itself was a great success and of mutual benefit with all the participants wishing to see the exercise continue. Without doubt the learning outcomes of the module, the student research and the conference participation have been fully realised. The motivation for student activity was certainly enhanced, considerable enthusiasm for the subject material was generated and closer links with several external agencies were established with positive consequences for departmental research activities. A review of geographical pedagogic literature revealed no evidence of the use of mini-conferences as assessment. The outcomes for the department following the conference have been wholly beneficial and constructive and in view of the positive

feedback from this exercise the use of mini-conferences in assessment can be recommended.

If you would like to know more about the conference and all its outcomes please email the author.

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Ann Worsley

Edge Hill

worsleya@edgehill.ac.uk

QAA Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Career Education, Information and Guidance (CEIG)

Foreword

- 1 This document is a code of practice for career education, information and guidance in UK higher education institutions. It is one of a suite of inter-related documents which, taken together, will form an overall Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education for the guidance of higher education institutions subscribing to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the QAA).
- 2 The overall Code and its constituent sections are being prepared by the QAA in response both to the Reports of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education and its Scottish Committee (the 'Dearing' and 'Garrick' Reports) and the consequent remodelling of the national arrangements for quality assurance in higher education. The completed Code will identify a comprehensive series of system-wide expectations covering matters relating to the management of academic quality and standards in higher education. In so doing, it will provide an authoritative reference point for institutions as they consciously, actively and systematically assure the academic quality and standards of their programmes, awards and qualifications. The Code will assume that, taking into account nationally agreed principles and practices, each institution has its own systems for independent verification both of its quality and standards and of the effectiveness of its quality assurance systems. In developing the Code, extensive advice is being sought from a range of knowledgeable practitioners.
- 3 Each section of the Code is structured into a series of precepts and accompanying outline guidance. The precepts identify those key matters that the QAA expects an institution to be able to demonstrate

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it is addressing effectively through its own quality assurance mechanisms. The accompanying outline guidance is provided to assist institutions in maintaining and enhancing the quality of provision for students and other stakeholders. The guidance is not intended to be either prescriptive or exhaustive: its purpose is to offer a framework for quality assurance and control which institutions may wish to use and adapt according to their own needs, traditions, cultures and decision-making processes. Nonetheless, in many institutions the guidance will constitute appropriate good practice.

- 4 To assist users, the precepts are listed, without the associated guidance, in Appendix 1 to the code.
- 5 During the course of its quality assurance reviews, the QAA will consider the extent to which individual institutions are meeting the expectations of the precepts in the available sections of the Code of practice. The QAA will report on how effectively higher education institutions individually are meeting these expectations and are discharging their responsibilities for the academic standards and quality of their programmes and awards. In doing so it will focus on the precepts themselves, and not on the associated guidance: the latter may, however, provide a helpful starting point for discussion. The QAA expects that one year from the date of publication all institutions will be able to demonstrate that they are adhering to the precepts.

Introduction

- 6 The Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Career education, information and guidance (CEIG) is intended to help higher education institutions to ensure both that they are meeting students' expectations in respect of their preparedness for their future career, and that they are producing graduates equipped to meet the demands of the employment market of today and tomorrow. It does so by seeking to ensure that institutions have a strategy for CEIG that is adequately quality assured.
- 7 The CEIG code will complement other QAA developments including the Code of practice on placement learning and the guidance produced by the QAA in respect of programme specification and progress files.
- 8 The employment market is changing in ways which make it more important than ever for students and graduates to take personal responsibility for managing their own career development throughout life. For this they need to develop the skills to manage their own career including the abilities to reflect and review, to plan and make decisions, to use information resources effectively, to create and to take opportunities, and to make provision for lifelong learning. Career guidance is one essential component of the overall support which students need. There is, however, an important interrelationship between career education, information and guidance and the development of employability and career management skills. The role of higher education career services has been expanding in response to these trends and the scope of this code therefore encompasses career education and information, as well as guidance.
- 9 Both the nature of employment and the way in which the employment market functions are undergoing ever more rapid, technology-led change. The range of opportunities taken up by graduates is now broader than ever; their career patterns are more varied, less predictable and more volatile; and the nature of the student population in higher education is becoming more diverse and more representative of society as a whole. The choices which students face are becoming less certain and more complex. There is therefore a critical need to prepare students to face the future, and for CEIG provision to be forward-looking and innovative.
- 10 The role of technology - in particular Information and Communications Technology (ICT) - is becoming critical to the provision of effective CEIG. The future quality of CEIG will therefore be increasingly dependent upon a strategy for resourcing and quality assurance which includes ICT. Such a strategy will need to encompass the planned use, in an integrated way, of both ICT and human resources (including recruitment, training and development of staff).

- 11 Students in higher education need clarity about their entitlements to CEIG, and confidence in the student-centred values underpinning the provision of CEIG. The expansion and diversification of higher education makes it all the more important that such provision is underpinned by a commitment to equality of opportunity and of access to CEIG provision, and to meeting the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and students engaged in different modes of study, including part-time and distance learning.
- 12 The career preparation of graduates is important not only to students themselves but also to their families, to employers, to Government, to the tax-payer and to the economic prosperity of the country. These various stakeholders are entitled to expect that the provision of CEIG is quality assured with the same rigour as other aspects of academic provision. It is in the interests of institutions themselves to adopt transparent quality standards which are appropriate to this area of higher education activity.
- 13 This section of the Code also stresses the importance of integration, coherence and internal collaboration as part of an institution-wide commitment to preparing students for their future career. This should be reflected in the institution's teaching and learning strategy and should include links between CEIG services and academic departments, personal tutors, admission tutors, placement tutors, student employment job shops, and other student support and welfare services.
- 14 This code recognises that a dedicated career service is not the only appropriate way of providing CEIG. In some monotechnics, especially where there are strong and specific vocational links, a dedicated career service may not be the best form of provision. This code does, however, identify in its precepts the minimum features which it would expect any set of procedures to be able to demonstrate.
- 15 Institutions vary in their focus and orientation towards external relations, partnerships, and markets, and this may be reflected in both their student intake and the destinations of their graduates. It is important therefore that a relationship of collaboration and partnership exists between providers of CEIG and external agencies and organisations locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, which is appropriate to, and supportive of, the institution's role and mission.
- 16 If CEIG, as well as the employability aspects of course content and of curriculum-based skills development, are to be relevant and up-to-date, then they must be informed by accurate labour market information and by the experience and perspective of employers. This is especially important in the context of a rapidly changing employment market. Systems and procedures should therefore be in place to ensure that these feedback loops operate effectively both at the level of CEIG provision, including staff development and training, and of curriculum design and programme specification.
- 17 These are the key themes which are reflected in the precepts and guidelines which make up this section of the Code.

Glossary

Career education, information and guidance (CEIG). An amalgam of processes, facilities and opportunities designed to enable individuals to prepare for, and make effective decisions about, their roles in present and future labour markets. It encompasses personal transferable skills, development and articulation, self-assessment and personal review, labour market information, career goal setting and decision making, action planning, and the communication and self-presentation skills necessary for career management. CEIG services/provision may be delivered through a dedicated career service (see below), or by other means.

Career education. A range of teaching and learning activities associated with career preparation, development and planning.

Career information. A coordinated provision of print, electronic and personal contact resources designed to enable users to develop an accurate factual and subjective understanding of occupations, of employment types, sectors and employing organisations, and of employment, further study and training opportunities.

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Career guidance. A process - whether delivered individually, in groups, or via hard copy or electronic media - which aims to help individuals to a clearer understanding of their career development needs and potential, to an appreciation of the processes of career planning and decision-making, and to clarify and attain their career objectives.

Dedicated career services/ CEIG provision and dedicated CEIG staff. Specialist services, processes and staff which are provided by a higher education institution expressly for the purpose of career education, information and guidance.

Employment. Includes self-employment.

Opportunity providers. Individuals and organisations providing students and graduates with opportunities for employment, work-related experience, further study, voluntary work and other structured opportunities for personal development.

Statement of service. A formal statement which both documents the CEIG services to be provided, including the standards to be applied, and also defines the client groups entitled to them (students, graduates, employers and other internal and external 'customers'). It may also include statements of the responsibilities of clients as well as their entitlements.

Graduate destinations. The situation or status, in respect of employment or other activity, of graduates at a certain time interval after leaving higher education study or research. Most commonly used in the context of 'First Destinations' data and statistics which are collected by higher education institutions, and collated and published on a UK-wide basis by the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

Precepts and guidance

General principles

- 1 The institution should have a clear, documented and accessible policy for career education, information and guidance (CEIG), including statements of the institution's objectives and of students' entitlements and responsibilities.
- 2 CEIG provision should be impartial, client-focused, confidential, collaborative, accessible and in accordance with the institution's equal opportunities policy.
- 3 CEIG provision should be subject to the institution's quality assurance procedures.
- 4 The institution should seek to identify and cater for the special needs of students who may be disadvantaged in the labour market.

Institutions should consider

- ensuring that statements of service make clear who is responsible for the delivery of different aspects of CEIG, including definitions of the role of academic staff and the expert contribution of any dedicated career service staff;
- providing explicit statements of service that set out clearly and concisely how their CEIG provision is intended to meet the individual needs of students;
- the extent to which their policy on equal opportunities is integrated with their career provision to avoid discriminatory practices which disadvantage individuals, or groups of students;
- how best to make CEIG provision, as detailed in their statement of service, available to all students including part-time/overseas/distance-learning students/students based on different campuses;
- implementing procedures to support a collaborative approach, which strengthens and supports links with relevant internal contacts (eg other student service staff, academic staff etc) and with relevant external organisations (eg career companies in the public and private sector, other guidance and counselling services, adult guidance networks, further education sector etc);

- the adoption of national quality standards for CEIG services, such as those of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) and/or the Guidance Council;
- the impact of relevant statutory requirements or UK-wide and regional policy on CEIG provision.

Institutional context

- 5 The institution should ensure that its CEIG provision is designed to prepare its students for a successful transition to employment or further study and for effective management of their career thereafter.
- 6 The institution should ensure that CEIG interests are represented in appropriate internal decision-making forums.
- 7 CEIG should be promoted internally, with mechanisms in place to support and encourage collaboration with academic and other appropriate departments for the benefit of students.

Institutions should consider:

- integrating CEIG within the curriculum for all higher education programmes of study, eg through incorporating CEIG into their learning and teaching strategies; and making explicit the links between CEIG and a particular programme of study by means of the programme specification;
- ensuring that CEIG providers have effective and appropriate mechanisms for referring students, should it be necessary, to other internal or external expert sources of information and assistance;
- promoting understanding and mutual support for the distinctive and complementary roles of CEIG, academic and other appropriate staff through, for example, staff development;
- Adopting the HE Progress File initiative developed by Universities UK (formerly CVCP)/SCOP/Universities Scotland (formerly COSHEP) and the QAA.

Students

- 8 Students should be provided with information on the services available to them while registered at the institution and those which will continue to be available to them when they have left.
- 9 The institution should make clear in its information to prospective and present students how the skills and knowledge acquired during study are intended to be of use to them in the development of their careers.

Institutions should consider:

- promoting the importance of skills development for students in relation to employment and lifelong learning through, for example, progress files;
- making reference to statements of transferable abilities contained in relevant subject benchmark statements;
- ensuring that responsibilities for providing references for students, including their format coverage and quality, are clearly located and effectively discharged;
- how best to promote CEIG provision as detailed in the statement of service to part-time/overseas/distance-learning students/e-learning students/students based on different campuses;
- how best to use new technologies to promote and deliver CEIG.

External relations

- 10 The institution should promote close collaboration between employers and CEIG providers to maximise the benefits to both students and employers.
- 11 The institution should ensure that its CEIG provision takes account of developments in the employment market and work opportunities in the community at large.

Institutions should consider:

- working with the core UK-wide professional career bodies, Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS); and The Higher Education Careers Service Unit (CSU), to help develop best practice;
 - working with a range of professional and related bodies*;
 - helping employers and other opportunity providers to publicise information about their organisations and about their opportunities for learning and work in a manner consistent with precept 2;
 - maximising and promoting the value of work experience and work-related learning to both students and employers;
 - developing ways to provide an effective exchange of information and improving understanding between employers, other opportunity providers, and staff delivering CEIG;
- * For example: The Guidance Council; The Welsh Higher Education Career Service; Institute of Careers Guidance; and Association of Careers Advisers in Colleges of Higher Education.
- extending the CEIG network to include external resources such as employers and alumni who can, for example, offer insights into employer expectations and specialist career information;
 - disseminating, as appropriate, available labour market information to cover the local, national and international markets.

Staff

- 12 The institution should ensure that all members of its staff involved with CEIG provision, including academic staff, have the skills, knowledge and training appropriate to the role they are undertaking.

Institutions should consider:

- supporting any staff involved in the provision of CEIG in developing their relevant professional expertise through continuing professional development internally and externally;
- providing the training required for academic and other appropriate staff to fulfil their role in providing CEIG.

Monitoring, feedback, evaluation and improvement

- 13 Providers of CEIG services should be required to account formally and regularly for the quality and standards of their services with the objective of promoting continuous improvement
- 14 The institution should ensure that data collected by the institution on graduate destinations informs its CEIG provision

Institutions should consider:

- incorporating feedback from key stakeholders into CEIG provision;
- setting appropriate targets in order that success in the provision of CEIG, or otherwise, can be measured and used to promote continuous improvement;
- recording unmet requests made to the career service with a view to amending the statement of service and/or making changes in provision of services if appropriate;
- producing an annual report on the provision, performance and outcomes of the CEIG service. This should be publicised widely and considered in detail by the institution;
- collecting data, centrally and through academic departments, on graduate destinations that extends beyond the first destination requirements of statistical agencies;
- undertaking regular reviews of their CEIG policies, to include development, monitoring and resourcing.

Appendix 1

The precepts

(Note: The precepts are printed here without the guidance notes for ease of reference.)

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- 14 The institution should ensure that data collected by the institution on graduate destinations informs its CEIG provision.

Note: This Code of Practice has been reproduced in full with permission from the QAA.

Information for Contributors

The Editorial committee of PLANET welcomes all material of interest to academics and support staff in the fields of learning and teaching across the three disciplines of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences. Generic submissions from other disciplines and submissions with an international dimension are also invited. PLANET also welcomes learning and teaching 'work in progress'.

The audience for PLANET is academics, support staff and educational developers. Therefore, you should write clear lucid English, avoiding where possible the use of acronyms. Where acronyms are used, a full explanation should be provided the first time that it appears in the text. Articles accepted for publication may be subject to editing.

Types of Contributions

Short research papers, notes or short communications, case studies of learning and teaching practice, annotated web-links, software and book reviews, forum commentary, and letters to the editor commenting on an article previously published in PLANET, or on current higher education issues.

Main Paper Submissions:

General: Manuscripts must be typewritten. The author(s) should provide contact details, including email addresses. All submissions should be in electronic format.

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Stephen Gaskin

Operational Editor
LTSN Subject Centre for Geography,
Earth and Environmental Sciences
Room 509, The Moneycentre
University of Plymouth
Drake Circus
Devon, PL4 8AA UK.

Email: sgaskin@plymouth.ac.uk
Tel: +44 (0)1752 233535
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The LTSN Subject Centre for Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences
University of Plymouth
Room 509, The Moneycentre
Drake Circus
Plymouth
Devon UK
PL4 8AA

Tel: +44 (0)1752 233530

Fax: +44 (0) 1752 233534

Email: info@gees.ac.uk

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