

Acknowledgements

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Higher Education Careers Services Unit (CSU)

The Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT) is extremely grateful to the Higher Education Careers Services Unit for sponsoring the publication of this guide.

Formed by Universities UK (formerly CVCP) in 1972, CSU is now a multimillion-pound turnover business in the graduate and postgraduate recruitment market. Each year its trading arm covenants its surplus to the charity (CSU), which in turn redistributes around £1m of funds back into the HE sector in general and the careers services in particular.

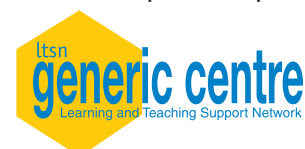
CSU not only supports financially the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) but works in partnership to produce careers information products for students and graduates, and engages in robust and relevant research, such as *Careers Services: Technology and the Future* (2001) and *Careers Services and Diversity* (2002-3).

CSU produces the Prospects Series of commercial publications, and the sector's leading graduate employment website, www.prospects.ac.uk (3,727,060 page impressions, 227,637 unique visitors - March 2003 ABC-E audited). The website is also home to the UK's official postgraduate database of 17,500 taught courses and research programmes, as well as Careers Advice for Graduates, careers information, advice materials, and information about part-time and temporary vacancies.

CSU also owns the National Council for Work Experience and its associated website, www.work-experience.org, the UK's official central source of information on work experience.

To find out more about CSU, visit www.prospects.ac.uk

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www.prospects.ac.uk

National Union of Students (NUS)

Founded in 1922, today the NUS represents 5.2 million students - approximately 1 in 10 of the current UK population - and provides members with a united voice, excellent benefits and helpful research and information. NUS works to constantly improve the lives and experiences of students in the UK: by ensuring their voice is heard and effectively represented; by developing democratic and strong students' unions; and by providing collective benefits and access to information for all students.

Within NUS, the Development Projects Department's work focuses on student development activities, encouraging opportunities for developing outside of the lecture theatre. This department has two key projects:

Stadia, which is a national network of student activities and development practitioners. Through its many forums it aims to provide and support anyone who participates in, or organises student activities and student development.

The National Student Learning programme (NSLP), which is now into its seventh year, is established in over 80 unions. The overall objective is to provide key skills development through peer-based training. To date, NSLP has trained in excess of 22,000 in one or more key skills.

Log on to www.nusonline.co.uk/aboutnus for further information.

LTSN Generic Centre

Assessment, widening participation, e-learning, employability - these are just some of the issues which concern everyone in higher education today. No one person or institution has all the answers, and yet plenty of answers are out there. Within the UK's higher education institutions, there are some excellent learning and teaching practices. Many of these practices are common to a number of subject disciplines and are easily transferable. The LTSN Generic Centre aims to broker this expertise and promote effective practices in learning and teaching across all disciplines.

The LTSN Generic Centre team is just one part of the much larger Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN). This larger network includes 24 Subject Centres whose role it is to address learning and teaching issues specific to their subject areas.

To find out more visit our website at www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre

Briefings on Employability 2

Are your students employable?



national union of students

Briefings on Employability 2

Are your students employable?

Introduction

Graduates complete Higher Education (HE) with a degree certificate. A few years ago, it was widely felt that this was enough to start the job-hunt. However, the job market is changing. Increasingly competitive, today's knowledge-driven economy is seeing a downturn in the number of traditional recruiters offering graduate training programmes and a stable career ladder.

That said, the graduate labour market is larger than ever and continuing to grow. Much of this expansion comes from the growth of the service and retail sectors, which opens opportunities and presents new challenges for graduates. The range of requirements in respect of knowledge, skills and training needed to fulfil these roles and to continue to power the economy is enormous. Technology has facilitated the concept of the 'mobile office' and it is no longer essential that all work be carried out on company premises. Such changes mean that individuals may be encouraged to apply for positions that they would previously have ignored owing to geographical restrictions.

Today's IT-powered society has altered the application process. Job seekers are often encouraged to forward CVs and applications via email. In some cases, applications are first screened by intelligent systems programmed to reject those that fail to conform to a basic specification.

The changing face of the job market illustrates the need for graduates to be diverse in their search for employment. Diminishing pathways to work demand a flexible approach to potential career paths. Employers are eager to see such flexibility during the recruitment process and seek adaptable staff who do not fear change. Recruiters are no longer convinced of an individual's ability to work effectively solely by a degree certificate. Demand today is for graduates to be 'ready for work' with clear evidence of job specific skills.

What is ESECT?

HEFCE's Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT) is a network of networks, bringing together a range of specialists and organisations committed to developing student employability. The National Union of Students is a member as are the Association of Graduate Recruiters, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, the Centre for Recording Achievement, the Generic Centre of the UK Learning and Teaching Support Network and experts in several English universities.

The ESECT team has been funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to help higher education institutions in England enhance student employability. This team began work on 1 September 2002 and finishes at the end of February 2005. During this time, ESECT will:

- Research existing employability practices and literature
- Summarise and disseminate findings as specifically written briefings for eight clearly identified audiences, including student union (SU) staff and sabbatical officers
- Identify necessary mechanics to enable each sector to participate effectively in employability practices
- Offer support and guidance in establishing and schemes

The National Union of Students has two staff members on ESECT who are primarily involved in working with SU staff and officers to increase opportunities for students to develop strong claims to the achievements employers value.

1. What is employability?

Employability is a term in increasingly common use, especially in relation to students and graduates.

When seeking a definition, it is important to establish the difference between employability and employment. Employment refers to having a job, whilst employability, or being employable, refers to the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace. (Lees, 2002)

A widely used definition of employability is ‘the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain employment if required.’ (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). Whilst many would agree with this statement, it does not consider the following external factors:

- current supply and demand of the job market
- the individual’s ability compared with the abilities of other applicants
- personal circumstances
- the global recruitment market

2. Employability and Widening Participation

It is important to note the link between these two concepts. The UK government has set targets that by the year 2010 over 50% of those aged 18-30 will have benefited from post-16 education. Localised and national strategies are now in place to reach these targets and form the basis of the widening participation (WP) agenda.

Current practices focus around helping individuals from the following key groups under-represented in tertiary education to be aware of all available choices on finishing school:

- Socio-economic groups III - V
- Black Caribbean males
- Bangladeshi females
- Females following certain courses
- Students with disabilities
- Students from rural and isolated communities

For the purposes of its work, ESECT uses the following definition:

A set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes - that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

This definition can be developed by referring to the ‘USEM theory of employability’ (Knight and Yorke, 2003).

Understanding of subject matter, sometimes because the job needs specific subject expertise, often because a degree certificate attesting understanding is taken as an indicator of baseline ability to handle complex material.

Skills - employers today are eager to see evidence of generic skills. Subject-specific skills may also be required in some instances.

Efficacy beliefs - people with legitimate self-confidence who believe that they can make some difference in most situations, tend to succeed.

Metacognition - the ability to reflect and think strategically.

This briefing will identify how employability can be enhanced through student union and development activities and look at some of the range of practices currently in operation.

Many WP initiatives encourage those involved to think diversely regarding future choices and to consider options previously disregarded through lack of knowledge and preconceived ideas. Widening participation initiatives are encouraging entrants from a variety of backgrounds, and with a wide mixture of experiences and expectations, into post-16 education. Universities and colleges need to cater accordingly for such diversity, and employers should be aware of these factors when establishing recruitment practices.

With many WP schemes now firmly in operation, the number of entrants into HE is steadily rising. As participants need to remain focused and eager to succeed educationally, it is crucial that graduate employment figures remain high in order to encourage retention. With many students incurring severe debt, some are likely to become disillusioned should they feel that a job is unlikely upon graduation. Nevertheless, graduates need to be open minded about their career plans because of the decline in the proportion of jobs associated with traditional graduate career paths. Today’s graduates need to be flexible in their approach to job hunting.

3. The role of student development activities within employability

The Dearing Report on Higher Education (1997) stressed that above all, employers seek a high level of intellectual capability. Degree certification largely reassures potential employers about candidates’ intellectual ability and, ideally, signifies that new graduates are experienced in using research skills. The Report also drew attention to the importance of the key skills of communication, numeracy and capabilities in information technology. In addition, Dearing *stressed* the need for qualities of flexibility, adaptability, the ability to work in teams, and a readiness to manage one’s own career development.

Whilst degree certification indicates academic and research ability - and often key skills too - students also need to be given the opportunity to acquire the other key skills that employers seek. Student unions and development activities offer a diverse range of schemes that are all able to do this. Many unions are already likely to be offering students employability-focused opportunities which contribute to the ‘co-curriculum’, a North American term that refers to the voluntary, elective and extra-curricular activities that higher education institutions provide. As the next section shows, SUs, outside bodies and careers services already organise a large number of co-curricular activities which aim to enhance employability. To help ensure that such practices are accessible to all, SU staff and officers are encouraged to use their influence to make sure that the mainstream curriculum contributes as much as possible to employability. They are also encouraged to consider what a programme of study does in terms of the four headings identified in the USEM model of employability (please refer to ‘What is employability’ in Section 1 above), and should think about the following:

Understanding of a discipline or professional field, which is likely to be subject-specific knowledge arising from academic studies. About half of graduate job adverts do not require applicants to have studied any particular subject. These employers believe that graduates are able to acquire and understand academic knowledge in the workplace.

Skills - subject-specific, and generic skills, including research and key skills. Key skills, also known as employability skills, refer to competencies unrelated to a particular subject or situation. Effective employability schemes should give participants the opportunity to enhance a wide range of skills. SU representatives can contribute to student employability by ensuring that this is the case. Student activities can make enormous contributions in this area. Voluntary work, clubs and societies and SU involvement provide students with opportunities to develop many key skills and to generate evidence to demonstrate their achievements.

Efficacy beliefs - There is significant evidence that individuals who are realistically positive - who have well-grounded efficacy beliefs - succeed in work, leisure and life generally. Curricular and co-curricular activities that promote a belief that hard work and commitment will make a positive difference to any situation are helpful.

Metacognition - How does the programme help students to understand how they learn and to identify self-development goals? By the year 2005 it will be compulsory for all HEIs to implement some form of a student progress file so that students can monitor, reflect and build on their own personal development. Personal Development Planning (PDP) is a structured and supported process undertaken by the student to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal and career development. PDP is one element of the progress file implementation across HEIs. Progress files will also contain a transcript of students’ academic achievements held by the institution. (Please refer to the information on ‘Skills Manager’ in Section 5 for further information regarding PDP.) In some HEIs, personal development planning is offered to students within extra-curricular activities, while others are locating it within the institution.

Change ‘USEM’ to ‘MUSE’ and the model can be summarised: Through effective self-reflection (M), knowledge-based learning (U), involvement in activities to enhance employability skills (S), students can develop a strong justified belief in their own abilities (E).

4. Employability activities within your union

Your union may already be offering students the chance to develop employability skills within existing activities. The following checklist will help you to identify any such opportunities:

1. List all activities currently available within your student union
2. Put each activity under one of the following headings: voluntary focus, society focus, clubs focus, work experience, and Job Shop focus
3. Go through each activity identifying which skills participants will be using. The lists of key skills and employability skills that follow will help you to do this
4. All activities that have identifiable key skills associated with them are already helping to enhance students' employability
5. Consider if there is there scope to have a greater influence on curriculum developments in your university or college

When helping to suggest schemes for students to attend, the individual's experiences and requirements need to be considered. These vary in particular between international students, postgraduate students, mature students and part-time learners. Some may need to consider employability from an international perspective whilst others may be looking to consider combining further studying with employment. Mature and part-time students are likely to have work experience that will affect their employability skills.

Key Skills

The following list will help you to identify the skills that students will be utilising in their extra-curricular activities. It is likely that you will be able to identify further skills from your extra-curricular activities, which is great. This is not an exhaustive list, but offers suggestions to help you in identifying skills building opportunities in your own unions.

- Communication
- Design abilities
- Evaluation
- Leadership
- Negotiation
- Organisation
- Planning
- Questioning
- Research
- Support
- Problem-solving
- Critical analysis
- Presentation
- Time management
- Team work
- Equal Opportunities
- Emotional intelligence
- Global awareness
- Working under pressure
- Using initiative
- Resolving conflict
- Creative thinking
- Money management
- Self-management
- Using IT
- Self-awareness
- Confidence
- Public speaking

Having done this, the next step is to further define these skills and recognise characteristics that students should exhibit to demonstrate the skill in question.

It is important to note that employability skills requirements are likely to vary depending on sector and industry. There may also be variation in the requirements between large companies and small business recruiters. The following list (Hawkins, 1999; Harvey et al., 1997) summarises and defines employability skills as well as giving examples of behaviour indicative of the skill in question. Don't forget that this is merely a guide, and is by no means a list of essential criteria and skills.

Employability element	Definition	Students should be...
Team working	Ability to be an effective team worker, and to work effectively in more than one team at once.	Organised, open-minded, imaginative, able to delegate.
Leadership	Ability to take control of a situation and to empower peers.	Dynamic, team-builder, energetic, optimistic, confident, able to instil confidence in others.
Interpersonal skills	Ability to relate to and feel comfortable with people at all levels, and to maintain relationships as circumstances change.	Listener, adviser, politically aware, co-operative, assertive.
Customer orientation	Ability to establish a confident and flexible relationship with those important to the business/organisation.	Approachable, diplomatic, friendly, tolerant, accommodating.
Oral/written communication	Effective communication - written and verbal - at all levels.	Effective communicator, promoter, trainer, has good telephone skills, sense of humour.
Foreign Language	Effective oral and written communication in more than one language. An appreciation of other cultures and how they effect career decisions as well as the working environment.	Cultural awareness, international experience, sensitivity, written and oral ability in a second language.
Self-awareness/confidence	A strong self belief and awareness of achievements and abilities.	Purposeful, realistic, balanced, reflective, focused.
Self-promotion skills	The ability to advertise strengths and skills effectively.	Positive, persuasive, proactive, ambitious.
Self-motivation	The ability to self-start and act on initiative.	Resourceful, energetic, self-disciplined.
Networking skills	Essential for personal development, the ability to build contacts throughout working life.	Trustworthy, personable, resourceful, respected.
Willing to learn	The ability to learn and continue to learn throughout life.	Continual improver, inquisitive, enthusiastic, motivated.
Action planning	The ability to prioritise workload and manage several tasks at once.	Organised, able to prioritise, decision-maker, planner.
Problem solving/intellectual skills	The ability to analyse information to solve problems.	Project management, practical, logical, creative, agile mind.
IT/computer literacy	The ability to accommodate new technology and to benefit from the opportunities that it presents.	IT skills, common sense.
Flexibility/adaptability	The ability to respond to change positively.	Flexible, versatile, obliging, multi-skilled.
Numeracy skills	The ability to gather statistical data and to present figures in a clear and accurate way.	Accurate, logical, problem-solver, analytical, thorough.
Business acumen	Skills appropriate for a commercial environment.	Competitive, enterprising, able to budget effectively.
Company-specific skills	Either being able to meet the skill requirements of the company at recruitment stage, or showing the potential and willingness to adapt and learn new skills.	Specialist according to nature of industry and role in question.
Understanding of commercial goals of company	An understanding of company and organisational values.	Business acumen.



5. Some existing employability schemes

This section gives examples of the range of employability schemes currently in operation within the extra-curricular arena. The information provided includes: background; outline; objective; tools used; where the scheme is running; is scheme accredited; benefits to students; commitment required by student; contact details.

These case studies have been selected to illustrate the diversity of existing employability schemes both nationally and locally. All of the following examples have identified ways of effectively enhancing employability skills, thereby helping participants to progress within the workplace. Use these examples to give you ideas for either setting up a new scheme within your union, or to help you to decide which practice would be best suited to your students' requirements.



AIESEC

Background

AIESEC is the world's largest non-profit educational organisation. Established in 1948, this student-run organisation was created to help develop youth cultural understanding following World War Two. AIESEC is now present in over 700 campuses in 84 countries, including 23 campuses in the UK. It has a current membership in excess of 30,000.

Objective

The main function of AIESEC is the co-ordination of the Global Exchange Programme which aims to give students the opportunity of a professional work placement in one of the 84 countries within the AIESEC network. This programme takes students through a three-year learning cycle, focused around preparation, development and assessment.

Benefits to students

- experience life in another culture
- enhanced employability skills
- experience of an international internship

Contact

National President
T: 020 7549 1804
E: national@uk.aiesec.org
W: www.uk.aiesec.org

Business Bridge

Objective

Run jointly by Liverpool Hope, University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores, this extra-curricular programme aims to increase student retention and graduate employment within Merseyside through offering students paid work experience placements. Since its start in 1995, over 7,000 students have registered on Business Bridge.

Outline

Students are placed in work placements directly relevant to their course work and career ambitions.

Upon registering, participants are given a tailored induction, which includes identifying personal skills, advice on CV construction as well as information about tax, National Insurance and working as a student.

Having identified a possible placement, the student is given information regarding the company, type of vacancy, key tasks involved, skills required, person specification and advice on interview techniques.

Students on placement are carefully monitored and have an assigned Student Liaison Officer who is available for support and advice.

Benefits to students

- enhanced employability skills
- paid for work experience
- part-time hours offering flexibility around academic commitments
- first-hand knowledge of the business environment
- use of the Business Bridge web site to search for a suitable vacancy
- advice on reflecting on skills and how to utilise new skills within the labour market
- participants from John Moores are able to register with Community Bridge which provides placements with voluntary organisations, charities and community groups

Contact

Clair Rigby
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W: www.business-bridge.org.uk

Case study

Paul Green, a second year student in business administration, was recruited by a large Chartered Accountancy firm to assist in expanding the company's client base through marketing and promotion.

He was recruited on the basis of his existing personal skills as well as his academic knowledge of relevant fields. Key tasks in his role included: targeting, managing the marketing database, co-ordinating mail-shots, liaising with clients, and arranging seminars and events.

What Paul has said about this experience: '...everything I hoped for and much, much more. I would urge anyone to get more experience through Business Bridge, as a degree is no longer enough.'

CSV Learning Together Student Tutoring

Objective

To enable students to develop key skills while gaining an insight into the teaching profession.

Outline

Student volunteers work alongside teachers for an average of half-a-day per week for up to twenty weeks to help pupils with studies, to act as positive role models, and to encourage progression through education. All participants receive training prior to taking up their placement. Placements are available in primary and secondary schools.

Where scheme is running

Now into its twelfth year, this national programme annually involves over 8,000 students from more than 160 HEIs and colleges. The scheme is usually co-ordinated by the student union or the student community action group.

Benefits to students

- develops communication, organisational and problem-solving skills
- improves confidence
- enhances employability skills
- provides insight into the teaching profession and experience of working in schools
- helps students to acquire the habit of good citizenship

Contact

Elaine Slater-Simmons
T: 020 7643 1311
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W: www.csvcommunitypartners.org.uk or www.csv.org.uk

Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme at Canterbury

Objective

To provide an introduction to volunteering and personal development activities. Canterbury College operates in partnership with the University of Kent at Canterbury and Christchurch University College to offer students at all institutions this scheme.

Outline

Students fill out the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme application to enrol. The opportunities and benefits that the scheme offers will then be discussed with them. The award is divided into five sections:

- Physical
- Skills
- Services
- Residential
- Expedition/exploration

Participants discuss with a co-ordinator the requirements of each section and look to identify what they have currently achieved with regard to the individual sections. Students pay a £9 registration fee. They are given a record book in which they log activities for the duration of the scheme.

Benefits to participants

- improved self-confidence and a greater belief in themselves
- a stronger sense of identity
- new talents and abilities
- enhanced employability skills
- new experiences
- an understanding of self-development and identifying strengths and weaknesses

The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is a national scheme which is open to all ages up to 25. On average, 2,000 participants receive their award annually.

Contact

Tony Skates - Student Activities Co-ordinator at Canterbury College
T: 01227 811328
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W: www.theaward.org

Insight plus

Course objective

To maximise part-time work experience, regardless of nature of the work, and to help students recognise the skills that they are achieving through this work.

Course outline

This is a six-month programme that starts and ends with compulsory workshops designed to help students to analyse strengths and weaknesses as well as compiling a personal action plan. Each participant is linked with a business mentor whose role is to offer support and guidance. Mentoring is undertaken mainly via email.

Benefits to students

- an understanding of how organisations work and the importance of the manager's role within the organisation
- opportunity to identify personal goals and career objectives and establish plans to achieve them
- opportunity to gain accreditation through the Introductory Certificate in First Line Management from the Institute of Leadership and Management

Tools used

- personal development planner
- Insight plus website
- online reflective learning log
- support manual
- 'chat areas' for students to discuss issues with their peers
- on-line events, for example presentations from employers on what they look for in a graduate

Where the scheme is running

This is a national scheme which is delivered via student unions, Job Shops and careers services. Now approaching the end of its second year, Insight plus is currently active in 18 universities.

Case study

Faith is a student from the University of Kent at Canterbury. She explained how completing Insight plus taught her to think seriously about, and to write down, short and long term career goals and to identify what she needed to achieve to reach them. As a student, Faith had a part-time job at an Odeon Cinema and viewed this role purely as a way of earning extra money. Insight plus encouraged her to do some research into the company. Faith views this experience positively and feels that it helped her to:

- improve her knowledge of company goals and target setting
- enhance her interpersonal skills with managers
- improve her confidence
- identify how all experiences can be beneficial and help to gain skills to take into the workplace

Contact

Sherry Abuel-Ealeh
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Millennium Volunteers

Background

Millennium Volunteers (MV) is a national government-funded initiative for young people and is open to anyone aged 16-24. There have been 65,000 Millennium Volunteers on the scheme since 1999 and there are over 20,000 current volunteers.

Objective

To encourage participants to get involved in local issues, thereby making a difference to their community and to their own lives.

Outline

Students wishing to participate can do so either individually, or with their SCA group by linking up with their local MV support centre. The MV project organiser will agree each volunteer's commitment, and will record the number of hours worked. MV participants have the opportunity to get involved with a wide variety of projects, including:

- sports
- childcare
- mentoring
- literacy
- media
- environmental
- befriending
- tutoring

Benefits to participants

- increased confidence
- satisfaction of having made a difference
- enhanced employability skills
- opportunity to receive awards for completing a certain number of hours of volunteering.

Contact

Millennium Volunteers Support Centre
T: 0800 085 1624
W: www.millenniumvolunteers.gov.uk

Student Industrial Society

Background

SIS was founded in 1975 by a group of students keen to develop their business awareness and transferable skills. Since then, it has grown to become the UK's largest non-political student society. The organisation aims to ensure that on graduation, students are better prepared for the workplace. SIS has recently become part of CRAC - the Careers Research and Advisory Centre. A national team of three co-ordinates the activities of societies on campuses across the country.

Objectives

- Encouraging skills development and lifelong learning
- Improving students' commercial awareness
- Developing the young managers of the future

Outline

SIS has local societies at a number of universities across the country. The local societies are at the forefront of the SIS and drive the society forward. A student committee runs each local society and organises a range of events including skill workshops, company visits, business games and socials. A national team of three co-ordinates the activities of societies on campuses across the country.

Contact

T: 0121 616 5006
E: sis@crac.org.uk
W: www.crac.org.uk/sis



National Student Learning Programme (NSLP)

Course objective

To disseminate key skills among students through peer-based training.

Course outline

Students are selected by their union to be trained to be effective trainers within their union.

Participants attend a three-day training residential covering the following:

- role of the trainer
- learning styles and training methods
- using equipment
- use and misuse of games in training
- communication skills
- presentation skills
- evaluation techniques
- self development
- dealing with fear and conflict

Students return to their unions equipped with the knowledge needed to effectively deliver training in key skills based on:

- clubs and societies
- equal opportunities
- volunteering
- welfare
- council representatives
- course representatives

Students continue to be supported by regional network days held throughout the year.

Tools used

- trainers portfolio
- NSLP website which provides online networking facility and encourages sharing of related practices. Web site also provides 'Skills Manager' (see next section)

Commitment by participant

In addition to attending the residential, students must:

- attend two network days
- deliver a minimum of six training sessions
- complete their trainer's portfolio

All students who have completed all criteria will receive their NSLP trainer's award.

Where the scheme is running

Now into its seventh year, NSLP is active in over 80 student unions. Over 800 students have been trained as trainers and more than 22,000 students have been trained in their unions in one or more key skills.

Contact

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National Student Learning Programme Skills Manager

Objective

This is an on-line personal development planning tool designed to give students the opportunity to record, reflect and plan experiences and use them to increase their employability.

Outline

Using 'Skills Manager', students are able to:

- complete a skills audit by assessing existing skills and identifying which skills they need to gain
- record and reflect on all experiences and identify what skills and knowledge have been gained on each occasion
- carry out quick and easy plans for future activities to increase knowledge and transferable skills

Benefits to students

- 'experience directory' logs details on already completed projects and activities. The directory also provides help in goal setting
- online and easily accessible
- provides lots of information and advice regarding key skills
- facility is available to all NUS members
- articulate personal goals and evaluate progress towards their achievement
- become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners
- develop a positive attitude to learning throughout life and relate learning to a wider context

Contact:

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Stadia

Objective

Stadia is a national network of student development practitioners. Co-ordinated by the National Union of Students, Stadia members include student union staff, HE staff, sabbatical officers and students. Stadia welcomes anybody who is actively involved with student development.

Outline

Stadia operates on a regional and national scale, planning events for everyone with an interest in student activities. Stadia annual conference is a three-day event attended by approximately 250 delegates. Regional events have approximate attendance figures of between 15-40 participants. All Stadia events have a strong focus on training and sharing information.

Tools

- 'Stadium' - the flagship publication of this network, which is published bi-annually. 'Stadium' plays an essential role in disseminating best practice from the regions as well as publishing national events within student activities. It is circulated to Stadia members and all student union presidents free of charge
- Stadia web pages - a prominent part of 'nusonline' - inform and disseminate information to regional and national audiences
- Stadia mailbase - this online networking tool with around 300 names provides the opportunity to network on a national scale. Members are able to suggest, discuss and debate relevant issues in a quick and effective manner

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W: www.nusonline.org.uk/aboutnus/stadia

The STEP programme

Objective

To provide paid work experience opportunities for students in small to medium size businesses (SME) and charitable organisations. Through STEP, the employer is offered a short-term solution to a staffing problem and can witness first hand the benefits of recruiting from the graduate market. Participants who have less than six months' relevant work experience are welcomed from their penultimate year of study.

Outline

STEP offers project-based work opportunities that vary in length from four weeks to twelve months. Most placements are for approximately eight weeks. Participants will be given the opportunity to help solve business problems, develop employability skills, and to apply in a working environment what they have learnt through formal teaching. Examples of projects that STEP students have been involved in include:

- Creating marketing strategies and promotional materials
- Developing internal communication systems
- Creating websites and e-commerce facilities
- Analysing and improving production methods
- Researching the feasibility of a new product or service
- Environmental and waste minimisation audits
- Designing and creating company literature
- Researching export opportunities
- Automating accounts procedures/setting up IT systems

Upon completion of a project, students have the opportunity to become a STEP rep. The main objective of this role is to promote STEP around campus using a variety of means, including printed literature, giving presentations, and utilising the campus media and contacts at the Job Shop.

Benefits to participants

- valuable work experience that offers an insight into a specific industry and working environment
- opportunity to develop employability skills
- the adaptability of the scheme means that students can request work placements to accommodate the amount of time that they have available

Where scheme is running

Now entering its sixteenth year, STEP has placed over 10,000 undergraduates in work placements. There are thirteen universities currently running STEP through their careers services facility.

Contact

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W: www.step.org.uk

Summer Training Programme and the role of sabbatical officers

Objective

To provide incoming student union officers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to enable them to effectively fulfil their officer roles in the coming year.

This programme is now into its 25th year.

Outline of courses on the summer training programme:

- lead and change
- people and money
- participate and develop
- support and represent
- present and facilitate
- women and campaigns

Benefits to participants

- improved knowledge on specific areas
- enhanced key skills
- opportunity to receive accreditation from the Open College Network for participation in all courses

Having completed the summer training course, sabbatical officers will continue to build on and enhance employability skills for the duration of their union post.

Contact

The Training Unit
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E: training@nus.org.uk

Tooled up - University of Bristol Union

Objective

To offer students the opportunity to develop key skills through attending training sessions run by NSLP Student trainers, the Career Advisory Service, graduate employers, Community Training Organisations, student union and university staff all of whom are highly competent in their fields. All courses are accredited.

Contact

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W: www.ubu.org.uk/studentdevelopment

The Art of Crazy Paving - Student Volunteering England

Objective

A professional, seven-step career management process designed to identify how skills, knowledge and experiences fit together to create a career path. This process - which is presented in a handbook - focuses on volunteering and how the experience of having volunteered can dramatically enhance employability.

Outline

The seven steps of this process are:

1. **Finding the motivation:** Students are encouraged to think about how volunteering can help them develop the skills that employers seek on top of academic qualifications
2. **Picturing your pathway:** Develop an approximate idea of direction regarding career objectives.
3. **Creating the right pieces:** Examine the different volunteering projects available to discover the most effective way of gaining the required key skills.
4. **Making the pieces fit:** Recognise how to identify skills gained through volunteering and utilise them effectively in the recruitment process
5. **People who can point the way:** Identify the importance of networking and how to build a network
6. **The cornerstones of success:** Tips on CV compilation, effective interview techniques and marketing the volunteer experience
7. **Crazy paving - bringing it all together:** This step encourages reflection on the previous six steps

Tools

- personal development planning tool
- handbook providing flow charts, check lists, mind mapping techniques and tips and action points to facilitate the process

Benefits to participants

- opportunity follow a clear career management plan
- enhanced employability skills
- develop a clear focus regarding how volunteering helps employability

Contact

Student Volunteering England
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E: info@studentvolunteering.org.uk

The DAVE project

Objective

The DAVE (development, accreditation, volunteering and employability) project equips students with the skills they need in the workplace.

Outline

DAVE is a localised version of the National Student Learning Programme and is based at the University of Surrey Students Union. Students are sent on the NSLP Training the Trainers residential and return to Surrey equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to carry out peer-based training in key skills.

DAVE has a team of NSLP trained trainers who work together to promote the DAVE project on campus and ensure that the student population's training needs are being met.

Benefits to participants

- see those listed under NSLP
- recent commitment of the sponsor Sainsbury's means that any student who attends a DAVE session during the next academic year will automatically be given an interview if they apply to the Sainsbury's graduate recruitment scheme
- enhanced employability skills
- accreditation (outside of formal academic qualifications) through the university's employability skills scheme for students

Contact

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Student skills competition - University of Aberystwyth

Objective

To give students the opportunity to promote their skills to employers at the annual graduate fair.

Outline

Each team has to:

- design an exhibition stand that promotes skills developed during their time at university, both academically and through extra-curricular involvement
- make a short presentation to a panel of nationally recognised judges explaining their exhibition stand

Teams compete to win one of three prizes: overall winning team, best exhibition stand, best presentation.

Whilst teams are selected through their academic departments, the student union plays a key role in this event. As well as the SU president being one of the judges, students need to exhibit all the skills that they have gained during their time at university through formal teaching and other means.

Benefits to participants

- training in project planning, stand design, presentation skills, team building and the use of PowerPoint
- opportunity to work with a graduate employer whose role is to assist and advise the team members in preparing for the event
- a unique experience of being part of a key nationally recognised event covered by television and other media

Contact

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