

Fortnightly newsletter | 29th July 2014 | Humanities

Mission Employable

Knowing, growing and showing the skills for career success.

Employers tell us that they are looking for driven, articulate individuals with a passion for learning. Humanities students fit that bill and we need to be doing more to help them realise it.

This initiative aims to link together all aspects of employability activity for Humanities' students in order to provide them with a coherent, cohesive set of opportunities for personal and professional development with a clear progression, providing a framework which allows them to take ownership of their future from the start of their studies.

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Introduction to the Project

Dr Eleanor Quince

As Humanities' Director of Employability, my remit is, broadly, to develop strategies to help our students make the most of the opportunities they have for personal and professional development within, alongside and outside of their degree programme.

My goal over the summer is to link together all aspects of employability-related activity for Humanities' students, providing a framework which enables them to take ownership of their future from the very start of their studies. This will be achieved through the creation of a module, by the embedding of employability awareness into our support systems, such as our new Peer Mentoring Scheme, and through the establishment of an External Advisory Board and a VIP Alumni scheme to provide us with a range of different views on how we take this work forward.

This summer I am fortunate to have four amazing student interns working with me to help develop this framework for the next academic year. The interns, Amber, James, Verity and Charlotte, have been hired through the University's extremely competitive Excel Placement Scheme following a rigorous process of assessment and interview and will explain more about themselves, their roles and their activities within this newsletter.

The interns have already achieved a huge amount in a very short space of time, and their enthusiasm, constant flow of bright ideas and inspired insights should ensure that we achieve our goal. We will aim to provide regular updates on our progress in these fortnightly newsletters.

Faculty News

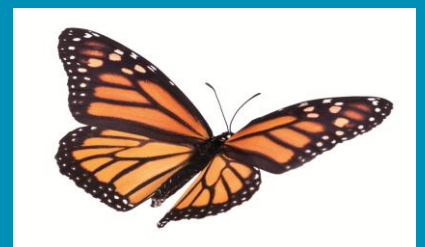
Student consultancy update– Tim Hicks

This scheme, which is being launched in Humanities, gives students the chance to sample life as a Business Consultant and develop employability skills for their CV and career interviews.

Students will work in teams of four over an eight week period in term time on a business issue for a local organisation.


We have had a tremendous response from our students and local businesses/organisations. This week the Mayflower Theatre has requested two projects to commence in October 2014.

Employers have been so impressed with the scheme and can see the benefits of getting an innovative outside perspective on a business challenge as well as the benefits for students when they start thinking about their future career options.



This scheme will serve as one of many student opportunities being profiled and collated by the Southampton Opportunity Project.

To stay updated on our progress:

Follow the Mission Employable team on twitter:  [@HumsEmployable](https://twitter.com/HumsEmployable)

Follow our team blog containing regular updates from all members of the team:  <http://blog.soton.ac.uk/missionemployable/>

Verity Smith- Buddy Scheme Coordinator

My name is Verity Smith. This summer I graduated from the University of Southampton with a BA in History. Through my work as the President of the History society last year, I created the "Histsoc Buddy Scheme". In this role I had the privilege of meeting Dr Eleanor Quince who asked me to be a part of her exciting new Employability initiative for Humanities students. My project therefore stems from this initiative and endeavours to build on the existing 'buddy scheme' in order to create a Faculty-wide mentoring scheme.

As a graduate myself who is about to enter the real world and take a step out of the education bubble, I have seen that employers are looking for graduates who are able to identify, exemplify and showcase their transferrable skills in a confident and knowledgeable manner during interviews. Our "Mission Employable" aims to help students *know* what skills they possess, *grow* and develop these skills and then *show* them. The scheme I intend to implement will therefore be an opportunity for students to develop, nurture and market their skills, which in turn will instil a sense of confidence amongst students and raise their awareness to the overwhelming number of opportunities on offer.

After having spent 3 years studying at this remarkable institution and having been fortunate enough to experience many memorable moments, I cannot wait to give something back to the University and ensure that future students have the opportunity to reap the benefits of student life just like I have.

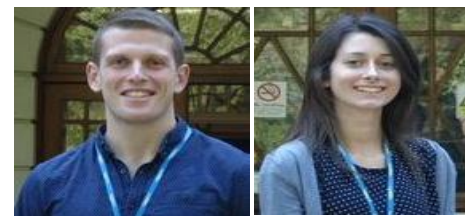


Verity



Charlotte

Meeting the Team



James

Amber

James Tribe-

Educational Development Officer

Having only recently returned from a year of study in Spain as a part of my German and Spanish degree here at the University of Southampton, I am very much looking forward to continuing work with Dr Eleanor Quince and my fellow interns on this project.

Personally, as I now approach my 4th and final year of study here at the University, I must confess that I have certainly not sufficiently considered my own skills development, employability and future career during my first few years of study. For this reason I feel hugely motivated by this task and the learning opportunity it presents.

The project should also serve as a chance to add structure and coherency to the Faculty's employability strategy as a whole, as well as a means of encouraging incoming students to actively engage in their professional development and to be aware of their employability from day one of their degree.

We have already made some very promising progress in terms of the module itself, as will be briefly outlined in this newsletter, and have even begun developing a brand within which to incorporate the module and that we hope to ultimately turn into a faculty-wide employability movement. Given this intriguing potential for expansion I am definitely very optimistic about what we will be able to achieve in the next few months.

Amber Dudley- Educational Development Officer

My name is Amber Dudley. I am a student of French at the University of Southampton and I have recently returned to the UK after having spent an amazing 9 months living, studying and working in Bordeaux, France as part of my third year abroad. This was such an exceptionally valuable experience as it allowed me to not only improve my French, but also to grow enormously as a person. Now I'm ready to throw myself back into university life!

So this summer, I'm working as an intern within the Faculty of Humanities. Along with my colleague James Tribe, I am developing the zero-credit Employability module that will be rolled out to first-year Humanities students this autumn.

I am so envious of the incoming students who will reap the benefits of this module, since the job market is becoming increasingly competitive by the day and it is absolutely essential that students have an awareness of the importance of employability as soon as they set foot on campus. Now the onus is on us to ensure that this module is able to fulfil its promising potential.

Charlotte Medland- Educational Development Officer- Group Activity

I am a third-year PhD candidate in Humanities at the University of Southampton. My role within the 12-week Mission Employable initiatives, is to produce a recommendations report regarding best practice and opportunities for greater student Group Activity on both curricular and extra-curricular levels in the Faculty of Humanities. In addition, I will be producing a tool that will enable Humanities students at Southampton to identify, make sense of, translate, and articulate group work and the employability skills they gain from it.

The ultimate outcome will help our students make an informed decision about how to a) gain group work experience and b) make the most of it. My work is part of a larger project which also includes the formation and launch of a new compulsory Employability module for all first-year Humanities students, as well as the launch of a faculty-wide Peer Mentoring Scheme. My colleagues Amber Dudley, James Tribe, and Verity Smith are working on these initiatives, and I hope to contribute to their work through my research and eventual creation of a reflective tool.

Initial Progress of the Module

Research and Planning- James

During the first week of the project, we began by conducting both internal and external research, in order to establish:

- What resources the University currently offers students concerning development of employability.
- Good practice among fellow Russell Group Universities in terms of employability activity/strategy.
- Nationwide job market/graduate recruitment trends and resultant shifts in general opinion regarding tackling the issue of employability in higher education.
- Ideas based on comprehensive research for the development of our module and how it can best help to ensure that the University continues to produce graduates that meet current employer needs.

Away Day and Initial Developments- Amber

It is hard to believe that we are already coming to the end of the 4th week of our internship and we have already achieved so much in such a short amount of time. During the first 2 weeks, we carried out a substantial amount of research into higher education initiatives designed with employability in mind. These first two weeks then culminated in an away day during which we had the opportunity to present all the research we had undertaken so far. It was fantastic to hear all about what the rest of 'Mission Employable' have been up to, especially as Charlotte and Verity's roles differ slightly from what James and I are doing!

Since the away day, we have been so busy what with meeting with academic staff to discuss the tailoring of the module to individual departments; setting up our weekly blog and fortnightly newsletter and starting to think about module content.

Next Steps

We already have so many plans for the next few weeks that we cannot wait to get started on. So in the next few weeks, we will be:

- working on the module content in collaboration with Career Destinations;
- expanding on the tailoring options;
- setting up the VIP Alumni and EAB/IAB advisory board;
- and developing Blackboard content.



Creating a Brand

In the past week or so, we have begun to create and develop an employability-related brand through which to market not only our module but also any relevant employability activity within the Faculty of Humanities. The following is our working tagline:

**Mission Employable:
Knowing, growing and
showing the skills for
career success.**

This brand aims to:

- Lend coherency and unity to the Faculty's employability activity.
- Serve as a recognizable symbol that provokes sustained student awareness.
- Create an image that reflects the Faculty's dedication to promoting the importance of employability.
- Aid the promotion of societies and other opportunities available within Humanities, by advertising them through the branding as an integral part of professional development.

Overall, the branding element aims to take employability beyond the module itself, increase its visibility and establish student awareness and ongoing skill development in a clear, coherent manner across the Faculty of Humanities



Both inside the classroom and out, the opportunities are there for students to develop personally and professionally whilst thoroughly enjoying and making the most of their time at University.



Peer Mentoring Scheme

The Humanities Peer Mentoring scheme allows second and final year students to volunteer to support incoming students settle into all aspects of university life.

Group Activity- Charlotte

So far, my project has involved gathering as much information as possible on current Group Activity at the University of Southampton, as well as with our colleagues in other Russell Group universities.

I have also looked at research conducted by the Higher Education Academy and similar institutions to measure the ingredients for best practice and start thinking about how we might enhance our own activities in similar ways. I have concluded that we should define Group Activity for its Employability value in the following ways:

- As involving 3 or more participants;
- As necessitating a working rapport between the student and others;
- As requiring a sustained period of contribution by the student (this may be through one intensive day, or through a few hours every week for a semester).

In this way we can include thinking about the value of Group Activity for students outside of the classroom. This value will vary from the collaborative processes of group presentation projects to the logistics and responsibilities of being President of a SUSU society.

Next, I will delve further into how we already embrace Group Activity within the Faculty of Humanities, and how the value of these activities for future careers can be made more visible to our students.

Aims

- Help new students with their transition into University life
- Improve student interaction and the flow of communication
- Increase the access of practical information to new students
- Increase awareness of support networks (Student Services, Student Societies, Personal Academic Tutors)
- Provide current and new students with a sharing and learning partnerships
- Give tips and ideas on how to make the most of the University of Southampton and Southampton
- Help students make the most out of social opportunities run by the Student Union, SUSU.

Research

- Research took place in the initial weeks to get an overview of other systems and schemes in place.
- External research – looking at other Russell Group universities and some not but with well-advertised schemes.
- Internal research – meeting with both the Management school and Engineering to discuss the format of their very successful buddy schemes.
- Drawing together all the research to tailor the Peer Mentoring scheme to Humanities

Recruitment

- Student applications for mentors will be broken down into departments
- Students apply on an iSurvey form (Deadline 17/09/2014) – applications are rolling in!
- Advertisement will be through email, student societies, and social media networks.

There are still many parts in the buddy scheme which are still to come, and shall be revealed in subsequent newsletters:

- Incentives
- Allocations
- Training
- The role Peer Mentoring Officers/Peer Mentoring coordinator
- Mentor Guidebook
- Reviews

If you would like to comment on, contribute to or simply find out more about our work, please contact us at the relevant address:

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Peer Mentoring Scheme: V.Smith@soton.ac.uk

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