



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Careers Information, Advice and Guidance at SRUC's Ayr Campus

Transition(s) the practice supports: Mainly transition to positive destinations in employment – during study (placements) and after graduation. Also supports transition to further study and transition into HE.

Abstract: SRUC is a Small Specialist Institution offering rural and land-based provision to a diverse and disperse student body. Providing a similar level of professional Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) at all six campuses can be challenging. The CIAG adviser at the Ayr campus offers a flexible on-site service. This augments and facilitates the SRUC Graduate Attribute of *Employability* by addressing the needs of students on an individual and group basis, promoting practical aids such as skills audit/development, CV writing and job search. The ongoing challenge to all HE CIAG services is ensuring early and ongoing engagement with students to best maximise positive destinations, and produce graduates with the skills and confidence to nurture their career development and adapt to an ever changing employment market.

Description: SRUC's presence in Ayr is on a shared campus with the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), thus there tends to be heightened student perception surrounding parity of entitlement regarding access to student services. SRUC's CIAG service (which is now in its third year) was developed in an attempt to replicate the CIAG and Employability services available to UWS students. Agreed goals included the development of:

- A highly visible, user friendly centre for CIAG.
- An appointment and referral system.
- Documentation to record student interactions and feedback.
- Internal and external networks to promote the service, encourage participation and share good practice.

The main benefits to SRUC students include:

- The existence of a readily available, flexible, on site service which, in respect of the adviser's time commitment per week, roughly replicates the time input to a much larger student body at UWS. The adviser also has remote access to emails, enabling contact with students outside working hours and term time. Simple resources such as the ability to group email students regarding careers events, opportunities and availability – a resource surprisingly not available to all HE CIAG advisers –

stimulates demand and engagement with the service, whilst reinforcing the importance of ongoing career planning.

- Access to an adviser who also works for Skills Development Scotland, thus benefitting from relevant continuing professional development and networks with schools, employers, training providers and benefit services.

Some brief Case Studies of students recently supported include:

1. **Additional Needs.** Student with both physical and mental health/emotional needs, referred by part-time counsellor. Approaching the end of a 4 year degree, with no plans beyond graduation. Three intensive one-to-one sessions focused around skills audit and coaching, coupled with the use of adviser networks, resulted in a positive destination within 3 months of graduating – a work placement as a full time volunteer in an environment that is sensitive to the student's physical and emotional needs whilst developing both all round employability and sector relevant skills.
2. **Mature Student.** Highly focussed, self supporting student who is part-way through a second degree course and anxious to secure relevant, well paid employment. Four sessions on CV building/employability skills/networking over a 6 month period resulted in a salaried management post within a large, sector relevant local company – aided by exploiting adviser networks/knowledge of "hidden job market". The company is also paying the remainder of the student's course fees.
3. **School Pupil Transitioning to HE.** Current and ongoing support to a school student to facilitate entry into appropriate level of post school study and progression to HN via the FE route.

Despite the many benefits of the CIAG service for both the students and the institution, there are always areas for improvement/development. These include:

1. Ongoing efforts to engage the wider student body in their career planning and development by:
 - Encouraging better participation in SRUC's Careers Fair
 - Continued links with the Careers and Employability service at UWS to promote shared opportunities.
 - Continuing to be accessible by offering delivery on alternative days.
 - Continuing to take account of "student voice" in the delivery of the service.
 - Reviewing the suitability of the current careers base. This, whilst highly visible, is perhaps lacking in confidentiality for some students.
2. Strengthening the commitment to the SRUC Graduate Attribute *Employability* by replicating the CIAG service available at SRUC Ayr across other campuses. There is an awareness that the provision is not always comparable.
3. Securing the benefits of support and sharing of good practice by joining the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service (AGCAS), the professional body.

Contact details:

Liz Martin, Careers Adviser, SRUC Riverside Campus, University Avenue, Ayr, KA8 0SX
Elizabeth.Martin@sruc.ac.uk

All examples provided will be posted to the Enhancement Themes website with the intention of including them in the National Transitions map.