



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Student-led Careers Conference in the Medical Sciences

Transition(s) the practice supports: This conference assists with the transition of life sciences undergraduate students into postgraduate prospects through talks delivered by professional speakers, making them aware of the diverse career opportunities they could explore after graduating.

Abstract: The School of Medical Sciences (SMS) Careers Conference is a day-long event aiming to introduce the variety of career paths that a student with a Medical Sciences degree could follow after graduation. The conference is organised by students of the related discipline with the support of lecturers within SMS. Participating delegates are exposed to careers in academia and industry as well as medicine and dentistry. Additionally, information about job opportunities in science communication and the profession of physician associate are also covered. The event also shows the importance of work placements and gives delegates the chance to talk with previous placement students that share their experience and provide advice.

Description:

1st Undergraduate Biomedical Careers Conference-14th of May 2014

As an undergraduate student, you must have faced the panicking moment when you have asked yourself “What career should I follow?”; “What do I want to do next?”; “What do I like doing?”; “What options do I have as a postgraduate student with a science degree?” With these questions in mind, and the realisation that not many events/conferences held during university years explored these possibilities in detail, the School of Medical Sciences hosted the 1st Careers Conference aimed at students with science degrees in May 2014. Dr John Barrow and Dr Steve Tucker (Senior Teaching Fellows) oversaw the organisation of the event, which was led “by students, for students”. The Organising Committee was composed of Laura Kutt (2nd year), Ana-Maria Cujba, Christina-Anastasia Christopoulou (both 3rd year) and Janis Sliede (4th year). The event was attended by more than 120 delegates, which was a great surprise to everyone, suggesting that it attracted lots of interest among students.

The event focused on the delivery of talks given by speakers from a variety of areas, including PhD opportunities, Research Prospects, Advice on CV Writing and Interview Behaviour, Working in the Industry, Biotech Opportunities, Starting your own Business, Medicine/ PA Career and STP Training Programmes for Health Care Clinical Scientists in Life Sciences.

The event took place on a weekday (1-5 pm), included lunch and snacks and provided participation certificates.

A current 3rd year medical science student who attended the event commented: "I have to say today's conference was absolutely brilliant. Well-paced, good speakers, good subjects and fantastic organisation." Additionally, the outcome of the event was shared through a press release on the Aberdeen University's website: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/6316/>. Overall, it was very successful, leading to the subsequent organisation of the conference in 2015 and 2016.

School of Medical Sciences Careers Conference 2015

One member of the 2014 Organising Committee, Laura Kutt (3rd year), remained involved with the organisation of the 2015 conference in order to ensure continuity of best practice. Two further students, Josefine Bjorkqvist (2nd year) and James Gale (3rd year) joined the organising committee and Dr Steve Tucker provided additional support.

Some changes were implemented for the 2015 conference but the overall format remained the same. The conference was renamed the "University of Aberdeen Undergraduate Medical Sciences Careers Conference" in a move to be more inclusive of all disciplines within the School. The conference covered Science Communication, Chartered Biomedical Sciences, PhD Application and Student Experience, Forensic Science, Working in Industry, Patent Law and PhD Opportunities.

Similar to the year before, the event took place on a weekday (1-5 pm), included lunch and refreshments and the number of attendees was equal to the 2014 conference. Conference packs were introduced, which contained an agenda for the day with a section for notes, resources from the University of Aberdeen Careers Service and a feedback form. Feedback was collected at the end of the conference and responses were overwhelmingly positive. One 1st year student commented: "The speakers were all very interesting and gave useful advice. I now have a better picture of the range of careers out there."

School of Medical Sciences Careers Conference 2016

For the 2016 conference one member of the 2015 Organising Committee remained, Josefine Bjorkqvist (3rd year), and two new members joined, Audrey Cheng (2nd year) and Abigail Hay (3rd year). Dr Steve Tucker continued to provide staff support for the Organising Committee. Feedback from attendees of the previous conference informed the planning of the 2016 conference and the choice of speakers. There was a move to parallel career talks focusing on three separate strands: Clinical/Health Careers, Careers in Research and Working In Industry. Skills sessions have also been introduced in order to educate students regarding valuable skills for employment. Skills workshops include CV Writing, Science Communication and Motivational interviewing In Brief Patient Consultations. The 2016 conference is set to take place on the Wednesday 24th February and 150 students have registered.

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