

Higher Education: More than a Degree

Academic Communities

Case study 4: Virtual Academic Events in the School of Life Sciences

Lauren Wilson, School of Life Sciences President, University of Dundee

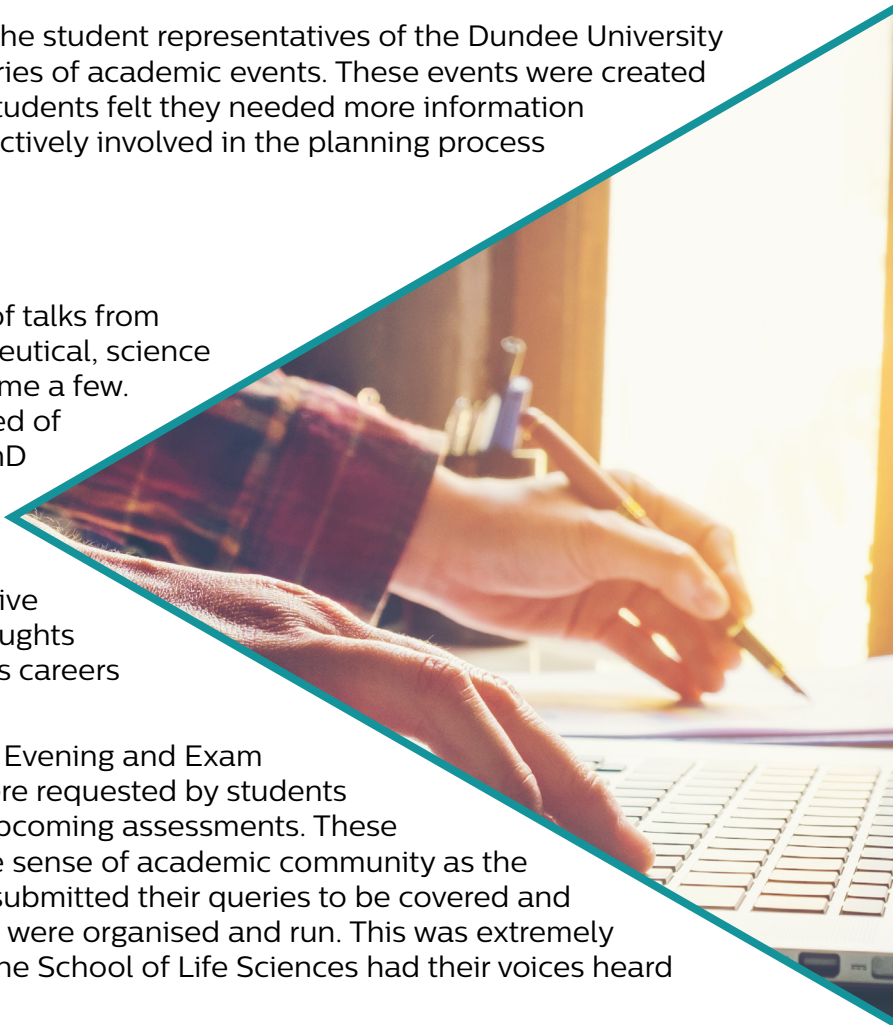
What was the issue?

At the start of the 2020-21 academic year, the student representatives of the Dundee University School of Life Sciences set out to host a series of academic events. These events were created after receiving feedback about areas that students felt they needed more information about, ensuring that they were heard and actively involved in the planning process of each event.

How was it solved?

The Graduate Jobs Careers Fair consisted of talks from professionals regarding careers in pharmaceutical, science communication and scientific writing, to name a few. The Further Education Careers Fair consisted of talks from academics regarding masters, PhD and healthcare programmes. Both events fostered a sense of community as they were organised and produced by a student committee in addition to having an interactive format, allowing students to share their thoughts and ideas with each other about the various careers paths that were discussed.

Moreover, the Honours Project Information Evening and Exam Revision Question and Answer Sessions were requested by students in the school who were concerned about upcoming assessments. These events were a huge success in adopting the sense of academic community as the students requested the topics in advance, submitted their queries to be covered and therefore had full control in how the events were organised and run. This was extremely important in ensuring that the students in the School of Life Sciences had their voices heard and felt supported as a community.



The School of Life Sciences student-led social media pages on Instagram and Facebook were used to promote these various academic and careers events that were hosted by our student representatives this year. The success of the pages allowed the events to get greater attention, resulting in a total of 12 hours of streamed talks from over 20 external speakers and an audience of almost 1,500 students. These events have undoubtedly helped to ease student anxieties about academic and careers-related issues, strengthened the sense of community in this digital era and created an excellent foundation for future student representatives to host similar events.

What comes next?

In the following academic year, we have a variety of events lined up. Due to the success of this year's events, student representatives within the School of Life Sciences have been contacted by alumni regarding hosting application workshops for specific careers paths. This has prompted the idea of starting a mentorship programme designed to connect students with alumni that are at the forefront of their fields and will encourage continued employability success of our students.



University
of Dundee

Find out more

This case study is one of 13 published as part of the Student-led Project from the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme.

The project in year 1 explored issues and themes relevant to how higher education institutions and students' associations/unions have recreated student communities in an online environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, what enablers and barriers this has created, and provides the opportunity to showcase and share examples of practice.

You can find further case studies and resources on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).



QAA
Scotland