Student Transitions
Institutional activities 2014 - 2017

Scotland’s Rural College
Contents

Introduction
- Institutional activities
- Key areas of work
- Outcomes

Case studies
- Grow Careers Scotland
- Raising Awareness of Employment Opportunities in the EU
- Supporting the transition from Higher National Diploma to degree level study
- Enhancing employability through assessed work placements
- Supporting Distance Learning Students
- Careers Information, Advice and Guidance at SRUC’s Ayr Campus
- Providing Information Literacy support across a multi-campus HEI
- All Campus Sustainability Programme
- Accreditation of BA Rural Business Management by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
- Using Moodle & Mahara to support project work
- Innovating Equine Graded Unit 1

Student commentaries
- Raising Awareness of Employment Opportunities in the EU (Podcast)
- All Campus Sustainability Programme (YouTube video)
- Innovating Equine Graded Unit 1 (YouTube video)
- Providing Information Literacy support across a multi-campus HEI (YouTube video)
- Enhancing employability through assessed work placements (YouTube video)

Collaborative work

Multimedia resource
Introduction

The Student Transition Enhancement Theme ran for three academic year from 2014-2017. During this Enhancement Theme we explored the transitions of students into, through and out of study at university. All Scottish higher education institutions took part, with staff and students working together to support key transition points in the student journey.

Institutional activities

During the Theme, Scotland’s Rural College ensured that staff and students from all campuses got involved in a range of projects and activities. This helped them support and embed new practices as they continue to develop and enhance their provision for students. The College focused on three priority areas:

- transitions within SRUC’s flexible Higher National/degree programmes
- transitions from study to employment
- transitions from employment to study

In the final year of Theme, the College put specific emphasis on student-led projects. They ensured that all departments and subject areas got involved so they could benefit from sharing good practice.

Key areas of work

Colleges and articulation, Honours, employability and skills, postgraduate, returning to learning, key progression points

Outcomes

This report combines the outcomes produced by Scotland’s Rural College and includes:

- Case studies
- Student commentaries
- Collaborative work
- Multimedia resource
Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Grow Careers Scotland

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transitions within HE and Transitions to Employment.

Abstract:
Grow is a UK-wide initiative set up by a group of influential organisations within the horticulture industry to inform people about horticultural careers and the range of fantastic opportunities that the horticulture industry has to offer. The web portal is backed by a videos, posters and careers information leaflets including links to college courses and employment opportunities. Grow Careers Scotland is run by the Scottish Branch of the Chartered Institute of Horticulture with SRUC as the major partner. The event is unique in Scotland with over 100 attending the first year’s event. Attendance over the last two years has been around 250 with the majority of attendees being SRUC students.

Description:
This year’s event will be the 4th in Scotland and will be held on Wednesday the 18th of February. SRUC has played an integral role in hosting the Grow Careers Scotland event for the last 2 years at its Edinburgh campus at King’s Buildings. As well as hosting the event, key staff and ex-students also play an important role in organising the event. Out of the seven members of the organising committee, three are employed by SRUC and an additional three are ex-students employed in the industry. Key speakers are often ex-students of SRUC. For example, in the 2015 programme, ex-student Cameron Tasker will be talking about his experiences of being an apprentice at The Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh while attending SRUC on a day release basis. Each speaker gives a short 10-15 minute presentation describing their own career developments. For current students of SRUC, this should provide inspiration from hearing successful industry practitioners describe their transition from student life to successful employment, plus the need to continue with lifelong learning. The main benefits to our students are:

1. Listen to inspirational speakers from industry about their own experience within horticulture and landscaping. Speakers will specifically promote the wide diversity of the sector, and the employment and training opportunities it offers.
2. Meet and talk to industry representatives from a wide range of organisations. Ample time is allocated on the day to allow students to seek individual guidance on their possible career paths. This may also result in potential employment opportunities.

3. Meet and talk to college lecturers and tutors about future training and study options. For some attendees the event may be the starting point to study and a career in horticulture, landscape management or garden design. For others, existing students, the event highlights opportunities to the next stage in their career development.

The event is free to anyone who wishes to attend. All Scotland’s colleges that deliver Horticulture and Landscape qualifications are contacted, and have attended previous events. For students within SRUC the event is timetabled and there is strong encouragement to attend. Career Advisers are notified and have attended, and we are also delighted to see any additional people who may be interested in a future career in horticulture.

**Contact details:**

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Vice Chairperson of The Chartered Institute of Horticulture Scotland and Lecturer in Horticulture at SRUC (Oatridge Campus)

Grow Careers website - [http://www.growcareers.info/](http://www.growcareers.info/)

Also attached is Grow Careers Scotland Careers Day 2015 programme.
GROW CAREERS
SRUC KING’S BUILDING CAMPUS, EDINBURGH
WEDNESDAY 18th FEBRUARY 2015

Programme

10.00   Arrive, Registration at SRUC Arcade
10.30   Swan Lecture Theatre, Talks
12.30   Lunch
13.30   Individual Discussion with Industry representatives
15.30   Depart

Speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horticulture Sector</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ornamental Plant Production</td>
<td>Mike Norris, Managing Director, New Place Nurseries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscaping</td>
<td>Stuart Dillett, Director, Land Engineering</td>
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<td>Commonwealth War Graves Commission</td>
<td>Robert Ross, CWGC</td>
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<td>Landscaping/CIH Mentoring</td>
<td>Michael Thomson, Mr and Mrs Gardens</td>
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<td>Retail Horticulture</td>
<td>Colin Barrie, Managing Director, Caulders Garden Centres</td>
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<td>Horticulture Science</td>
<td>David Kenyon SASA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horticulture Therapy</td>
<td>Kate Traherne, Trellis</td>
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<td>Botanic Gardens + apprenticeship</td>
<td>Cameron Tasker, Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh</td>
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<td>Historic and Botanic Gardens Bursary</td>
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<td>Scheme</td>
<td>Chris Smart</td>
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Other Confirmed Industry Representatives:

Colin Wren, National Trust for Scotland
Neil Cummings, Horticultural Trades Association
Susan Russell, Professional Gardeners Guild
Thomas Angel, Angel Landscapes
Stan Green, Growforth Nursery
Graham Rolph, The Garden Design Centre
Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Raising Awareness of Employment Opportunities in the EU

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition to Employment

Abstract:
For students studying Sports Coaching and Development, SRUC’s 2015 Erasmus+ project to Sweden provides an opportunity to enhance and develop employability skills in a European setting. Based at Bosön on the outskirts of Stockholm, home to the Swedish Sports Confederation, the students gain an insight into a national training academy which includes hotel, conference and multi-discipline sports and training facilities.

From this base, participants in the project travel out each day to link up and work with Swedish coaches in a variety of sports. The students specialise in their preferred vocational area and have opportunities to work at grass-roots, intermediate or club level – or even with international level performers in school, club and elite athlete programmes.

Description:
The “Sweden Project” is now in its fifth year of being offered at SRUC Elmwood Campus where it was previously funded through ESF Leonardo Project Funding. The current funding through Erasmus+ aims to develop “social mobility”, with its key aim to offer opportunities to undertake a learning or professional experience in another country.

To fulfil the requirement that educational institutions link with employers both in the home and host country, SRUC Elmwood has worked closely with AMsportstours Limited as the home employer through which the link with the Athlete Sports Academy in Stockholm, as host employer, was established. AMsportstours specialise in football tourism offering teams from around the globe the opportunity to travel, train and compete in venues around the world. The Athlete Sports Academy (ASA) specialises in supporting and developing sports performers in a variety of sports from grass-roots to international level competition.
This partnership emerged from close work between Elmwood and AMsportstours “Soccer Schools” programme where the vast majority of AM staff are former students of Elmwood. Working more closely together and utilising AMsportstours expertise and overseas connections was an obvious progression, and following an initial successful bid for Leonardo funding the partnership has strengthened. This year will see the largest ever travelling cohort from SRUC and includes students from both Elmwood and Ayr campuses.

Through recurrent successful funding bids this link has created opportunities for students from SRUC to travel and work alongside Swedish sports coaches in a variety of disciplines, and across the spectrum of athlete development from grass-roots participation to elite level performance and competition. There is a direct link to their studies, as students put into practice the skills, knowledge and expertise they have developed - and further enhance their understanding, confidence and ability in a different international setting.

A key component of the programme is for students to develop independence, confidence and competence in working within their specific vocational area of interest. This starts with a thorough recruitment process which this year has been extended to students studying at SRUC’s Ayr Campus. Students are invited to apply, stating the specific vocational benefits the project may afford them which they are expected to expand on in a final selection interview. Successful participants identify the specific opportunity that would most benefit them and, working with ASA, we seek to match students with appropriate host country coaches.

This led in the past to students securing opportunities to shadow elite swimmers and coaches during final preparations for London 2012. Furthermore, students have worked with athletes preparing for European Athletics League competitions and shadowed Strength and Conditioning coaches’ work across multi-discipline sports with national level players and squads. Participation over the years has seen numerous football coaches work with Svenska developing school and club grass-roots football, and work with coaches across the player development pathway through age-grade clubs and leagues leading to professional level performance.

These opportunities are not easy to secure, so the aim of the trip in developing awareness, confidence, enhancing employability and establishing links and sharing of practice is one of great value to the staff and students. Engaging in such an environment develops awareness and opportunity for students as they seek to progress their studies into employment and a career. The benefits to student are numerous and could not be achieved in a typical home country period of work experience.

The range of highly individualised placements allows the participating students to fully engage in a very specific aspect of their chosen industry. They can seek and gain hands-on experience, working with performers and coaches in exactly the context where they would like to gain future employment. The novelty of working in another country brings opportunities for comparison, sharing of practice, establishment and fostering of support networks and the consideration of employment overseas.

In addition, there are opportunities for travelling staff to engage in professional development with a strong focus of this year’s trip on SRUC staff developing their own practice by working with colleagues from ASA and Bosön.
This trip, and a similar project SRUC runs to Spain for its Professional Golf students, has now become a very powerful tool in developing our learners into confident, independent and employable citizens of Europe. They have the benefit of the insight and the experience of working life, culture and opportunities that exist within the EU, and the skills and knowledge to identify and pursue these opportunities and develop a lifelong career in their chosen industry.

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Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Supporting the transition from Higher National Diploma to degree level study.

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition within HE, in particular from SQA Higher National qualifications to degree level study.

Abstract:
The transition from the competency based SQA Higher National Units to third year degree level study, and then often to Honours, is challenging for many students. They typically consider it to be a major step both in terms of the increased academic demands and the different ethos of teaching and learning. It is therefore essential that students are provided with additional academic support to develop the necessary study and assessment skills as they enter the third year of a degree, as well as ensuring that they are exposed to a wide range of learning, teaching and assessment approaches during the first two years of SRUC’s degree programmes (which comprise HNC/D qualifications).

Description:
Students typically consider the transition from SQA Higher National qualifications to degree level teaching as being a major step both in terms of the increased academic demands and the different ethos of teaching and learning.

HNC/HND SQA teaching is competency based. Students at SRUC are normally permitted two attempts at an assessment during term time (with a third attempt available, at a cost, during an assessment week in the summer). SQA Units are prescriptive in terms of the evidence requirements for each learning outcome and students must pass all learning outcomes to pass the Unit. Assessments tend to be restricted response or short answer exams, or short essays/reports (apart from the Graded Units which involve more extensive assessment). (Note that the difficulties around articulation have been recognised by SQA and there is currently a project, Piloting Enhancements to HN Qualifications, being undertaken in four subject areas. SRUC is participating in this.) There is also no expectation to grade assessments, other than pass or fail, the only exception being Graded Units which constitute three credits in a HND (10% of the total credits) where a student can achieve an A, B or C. This contrasts with the ethos of degree level teaching and learning with its greater emphasis on individual learning and on background reading. There are also
more opportunities to use a wide range of assessment instruments at degree level, and all assessments are graded according to the agreed marking scheme.

The difficulties around this 'step up' has been recognised by teaching staff for many years, and has been highlighted by students through various routes including their Advisers of Studies who provide both academic and pastoral support. Some students are anxious that they will not be able to cope with the perceived increased demands of degree study, and occasionally this has prompted a decision not to progress but to graduate with their HN qualification. External Examiners have also noted the change in learning, teaching and assessment practices between years 2 and 3 of SRUC programmes and the difficulties that this transition can place on students. It is also an issue often discussed at subject review and revalidation events.

To support this transition SRUC offers a series of workshops to third year students at its Aberdeen campus during semester 1. This practice has been in place since 2004, with continual updating to reflect the changing needs of students. The workshops are not part of a formal module and they are not assessed. However, they are time-tabled and it is expected that all students attend the sessions.

The workshops include; What is Degree study?; Improving your Study Skills; Tackling assessments; Writing Skills; Group Work; Referencing and Plagiarism; Revision and Exam Technique; Presenting and Chairing Seminars; and Electronic Literature Searching.

Teaching staff and library staff present the workshops, with staff then providing an 'open door' policy should students wish to discuss or get further information on any of the material covered. The workshops are designed to be interactive with a range of short exercises used to support the teaching material. For example, students are provided with a piece of coursework to grade according to the marking scheme used for degree level assessments – this helps to clarify what is expected of work which would be judged as first class, upper second etc. There are also activities within a couple of the workshops which focus on feedback on assessments, and the mismatch that often occurs between student and staff perceptions of what constitutes feedback. Feedback is an integral part of the learning process, and it is important to encourage students to read and reflect on the feedback they receive on assessments.

A 'Study Toolkit' has also been produced to support the workshops. The toolkit includes sections on; What is Degree Study; Assessing and Improving Skills and Study Habits; Taking Notes; Finding and Using Information; Writing Skills; Referencing; Assessing your Numeracy Skills; Giving Presentations and Leading Seminars; Revision and Exams; and Additional Resources.

Students are also pointed towards appropriate web-based resources such as the Skills4Study Campus. This is an interactive e-learning resource hosted on the VLE, Moodle, and there are currently six modules available:

- Getting Ready for Academic Study
- Group Work and Presentations
- Exam Skills
- Referencing and Plagiarism
- Projects, Dissertations and Reports
- Employability and Personal Development

All of these activities are of great benefit to the students in easing the transition and aim to 'demystify' degree level study by providing support and explanation of what is expected. Although, as indicated above, the workshops are not assessed or attendance compulsory it is interesting to note that the attendance is near perfect!
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Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Enhancing employability through assessed work placements.

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition to employment, but additionally transition within HE in terms of progression to Honours study.

Abstract:
The third year of BA Rural Business Management includes a core module, *Industrial Management Placement*. This provides real-life work experience consistent with degree level study, and the placement is structured to aid development of a wide range of skills that enhance employability. It also develops an understanding of the issues facing businesses within the rural sector and complements the taught aspects of the course. Students often have a career route in mind by this stage in the programme and seek a placement within an appropriate rural sector. As well as enhancing employability, the skills that students develop while on placement better enable progression to the Honours year and, for some students, transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study.

Description:
The *Industrial Management Placement* module provides students with relevant work experience in the agribusiness or food sectors, and enables them to complete a project of commercial relevance and potential benefit to the company providing the placement. The placement is generally of 2 months duration and undertaken during July-September i.e. between years 3 and 4 of the BA/BA (Hons) Rural Business Management programme.

It is expected that the student will research the relevant industries and find appropriate work experience. The placement identified must allow the student to carry out a project related to the business activities of the company or organisation. In undertaking this project, the student will be required to:

1. Formulate a project brief (by defining problems or opportunities to be examined and setting project objectives).
2. Evaluate a business's situation within the industry which it operates (by collecting, organising and evaluating relevant information – in particular how the company or organisation operates in its relevant areas of activity, and identifying the exact nature of the problem or opportunity and relevant related issues).
3. Formulate alternative strategies (by developing alternative approaches for tackling the problem or developing the opportunity).

4. Critically evaluate alternatives and recommend change (by the evaluation of alternatives using economic and financial information; appropriate forms of qualitative and quantitative techniques of analysis; sensitivity analysis; and resource and organisational implications of change).

The students complete a written report on their project, give a verbal presentation to their peers and the tutor, and attend an interview with the module tutors.

Examples of the types of placement undertaken by students in recent years include working as:

- Trainee grain merchant
- Grain sampler / quality control lab operative
- Trainee poultry unit manager
- SAC trainee agribusiness consultant
- Potato trials officer with a national potato company
- Harvest assistant
- SAC assistant field trials officer
- Lab assistant
- Administrator with Ringlink Labour Agency
- Equine worker
- Pea and Beans harvest quality operative
- Auction Mart Office trainee
- SAC Food and drink trainee consultant

There are many benefits to the students of undertaking these placements, including the development of interpersonal and communication skills and other graduate attributes that will enhance employability and aid transition to further study at Honours or postgraduate level. Many of the students continue to Honours year and complete dissertations on similar topics to those investigated whilst on placement. This work experience also provides a useful insight to career opportunities, and some graduates then gain employment with the company or organisation that provided the placement.

BA/BA (Hons) Rural Business Management students have the opportunity to enter for the Pinnacle Business Awards, and recently an SRUC student won second prize (£1000) for a report entitled ‘Development of Egg Production Business’ following a work placement with Farmlay Eggs.

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Supporting Distance Learning Students  
SRUC (Scotland’s Rural College)

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| **1** | **Name author(s), and contact details:**  
Dr Lou Ralph ([Lou.Ralph@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:Lou.Ralph@sruc.ac.uk)) |
| **2** | **Key words:**  
Distance learning, blended learning, remote learners, academic support, pastoral support |
| **3** | **Overview:**  
One of the main advantages of distance learning is to widen access to qualifications for students who are unable to attend campus-based programmes due to work, family or other commitments. These students who are learning remotely should have the same positive learning experience as those studying face-to-face on campus (perhaps by blended learning), yet there is a risk that distance learning students may feel isolated unless effective support mechanisms are in place. It is important that remote learners recognise their association with SRUC, and also feel part of a student cohort and study group. This case study will focus on the learning and teaching approach within the MSc Organic Farming, and is accompanied by a short video taken during two study weekends in February and April 2013. |
| **4** | **Background/context:**  
SRUC (Scotland’s Rural College) operates across six campuses and offers a flexible framework from FE through to Higher National Certificate/Diploma (HNC/D) and degree programmes and to postgraduate study. Several programmes (at HNC and at taught postgraduate level) are available part-time in an online distance learning format, with other provision under development and coming on stream in the near future. The majority of the current distance learning programmes combine online remote learning with study weekends and study tours. Generally three study weekends are held per academic session, with one focusing on relevant industry visits. This is a successful format in terms of the student experience, including academic and pastoral support, and forms the basis for this case study. However it is recognised that this format for delivery may limit access to distance learning programmes by UK-based students, and a requirement to attend study weekends (partly for assessment purposes) is a barrier to the recruitment of international students. |
| **5** | **Activities/example of practice (you might also like to include an account of activity to date):**  
Postgraduate Course in Organic Farming (Distance Learning)  
The Postgraduate Diploma comprises eight taught modules, which a student will generally complete over two academic years by studying four modules per session. Following successful completion of these taught modules the student can undertake their MSc project, usually during the next academic year, which provides an opportunity for in-depth individual research on a relevant topic. This is a highly specialised programme which has been offered in a distance learning format for over 10 years. It is delivered by staff from the Education, Research and Consulting Divisions of SRUC plus external consultants and lecturers from specialist institutions. The combination of online learning material (hosted on the VLE, Moodle) along with study weekends is supported by evening tutorial sessions using GoToMeeting. These sessions facilitate real-time interaction between tutors and students. The programme attracts a rich mix of students across a range of backgrounds and experiences, which contributes greatly to the learning experience of the group. The study weekends form a crucial part of the learning experience – both for introducing learning
material and also for building up staff-student and student-student links as well as group identity. They also provide an opportunity for assessment, usually by written examination but also through student presentations. Attendance at study weekends is generally very good, as the students recognise their value. However, should a student be unable to attend an assessment for valid reasons, alternative arrangements can be made.

The MSc project in the final year is a different learning experience for the students, with more focus on self-study. Guidance on timescales and expected milestones is provided, and the importance of maintaining contact with supervisors is emphasised. Study sessions are also included during this year, and are specifically designed to develop research skills and ensure that a relationship between student and supervisor can be established. The students give non-assessed presentations to staff and their peers, providing progress checks and the opportunity for valuable feedback and discussion. The final project presentation is given at the Exam Board, with the External Examiner present. Therefore student engagement and support practices continue into this final project year, with the biggest challenge being to ensure that students remain in close contact with their supervisors – this is not an issue unique to distance learning students.

6 **Key points including challenges:**
The study weekends, and the short study tour, are an integral part of delivery and students are strongly recommended to attend these if they are to get maximum benefit from this course. Attendance at these face-to-face sessions has generally been excellent, especially considering the challenges the students face to be there e.g. full time jobs, families and child care commitments as well as the distance they may have to travel. This good attendance is partly because prospective students are made fully aware of the programme format before they apply and the dates are notified well-in-advance, but far more importantly due to the very positive feedback from student cohorts on the experience. The format of the study weekends has actually been very consistent over the years with any amendments made as the result of feedback from students or staff. So we must be doing something right! (See accompanying video.)

7 **Sharing good practice:**
The MSc Organic Farming was the first postgraduate qualification to be offered in distance learning format, and the programme management team provide ongoing support to colleagues on the experiences of developing and managing online learning. There are now three MSc programmes up and running, together with two HNC qualifications. All use the same format, with taught module delivery spanning two academic years. There is also good practice in the development of online learning materials and supporting distance learning students to be gleaned from colleagues at SRUC’s new campuses – at Broxburn (Oatridge), Cupar (Elmwood) and Dumfries (Barony).

8 **Where to next:**
The HND Golf Course Management at Elmwood Campus is completely distance learning with no mandatory requirement to attend campus-based activities. As already indicated, committing to three study weekends per session may impact on recruitment both in the UK and internationally. It will be interesting to learn from the expertise of the team at Elmwood, especially on their experience in ensuring that students who study entirely by distance learning receive the necessary support for successful completion of their qualification. The need for study weekends is highly correlated with
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>SRUC</strong>: Leading the way in Agricultural and Rural Research, Education and Consultancy. Scotland’s Rural College - SRUC was formed on 1 October 2012 by the merger of Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge Colleges and SAC (Scottish Agricultural College).</td>
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the nature of the subject area and the students’ expectation of the learning experience e.g. with organic farming ‘on the ground’ learning makes an essential link between principle and practice. It also has to be recognised that distance learning delivery, with or without study weekends, does require a strong commitment from both teaching and support services staff. This is an essential consideration for all future developments.
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:**
All examples provided will be posted to the Enhancement Themes website with the intention of including them in the National Transitions map.
Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Providing Information Literacy support across a multi-campus HEI.

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition into HE across a range of entry levels (for distance-learning as well as campus-based students).

Abstract: SRUC is a multi-campus Small Specialist Institution offering ‘escalator model’ provision in rural and land-based subjects from National Certificate qualifications to undergraduate degree or postgraduate study. Regardless of the level of entry, students are faced with an enormous range of resources, as well as a need to develop appropriate academic skills very quickly. These Information Literacy (IL) skills become ever more sophisticated as students transition through academic courses. It is especially vital that distance learners quickly acquire IL skills in order to facilitate engagement with their learning. SRUC libraries at the six campuses aim to ensure that all students have options to access training, either virtually (Skills4Study campus) or on campus. Both formal and informal training is available, as one-to-one or in groups/classes.

Description: SRUC libraries offer a variety of training options for Information Literacy skills, ranging from induction packages which introduce the library resources (physical and electronic) and some basic IT skills, to sophisticated training on e-resources including journals, conference papers, databases, research data etc. There are two main challenges – firstly to provide support in the development of Information Literacy skills appropriate to the level of entry and the demands of the learning, teaching and assessment activities (bearing in mind the style of provision, SQA HNC/D or degree, within the ‘learner journey’) and secondly, to provide parity in this support service across programmes some of which are offered at five of SRUC’s six campuses.

New students entering SRUC are timetabled to receive a library induction session. This is usually early in their studies as part of induction, and the session covers some of the more basic elements they need to succeed – from logging on to the student desktop, introducing library resources and how to ‘discover’ them through the library catalogue or library website, how to access their library account, and introducing the library staff to students to help gain confidence for requesting support at a later date. Although all students should be given this session, they are able to request refresher or further training at any point in their course of study. Increasingly, the number of resources introduced to students in a very short space of time becomes more overwhelming, and it is unrealistic to expect them to either remember everything or to instantly acquire a confidence in searching for, and accessing, resources. Information overload is ramping up all the time, and every effort is made to help all users control it as best they can.

Library sessions are also delivered to students who undertake their SQA project-based Graded Unit towards the end of their second (HND) year – the Graded Unit expects students to integrate knowledge and skills from other Units studied during the academic session. At
At this point the students may be introduced to new skills and resources plus there is an opportunity for a helpful refreshing of others, just before the students make the transition into the third year of a degree programme (and encounter the different demands that this entails). As part of this service, the Libraries offer proof-reading for any students who aren’t confident in undertaking the task themselves, or are not able to access formal or informal proof-reading by friends, colleagues or support staff.

Information Literacy skills are reinforced with sessions early in third year. At this point expectations from the students are raised as they are in a Junior Honours year or the final year of an Ordinary Degree. This requires sessions which deal with identifying and accessing academic papers in greater detail, and a greater understanding (and practice in) the use of citations and referencing. In general, instruction is delivered by library staff in conjunction with the specialist lecturers, and an exercise covering all the topics above is available to assess students’ capabilities and aid them in a process of self-assessment and reflection. Every opportunity is taken to remind students of Skills4Study Campus as a revision tool which is always available to them through Moodle.

In the fourth year, with the demands of the dissertation, students receive refresher training, with an emphasis on drilling down to more and more specialised information via various abstracting and indexing resources e.g. Web Of Science, CAB Abstracts etc. The concept of scientific or academic communication is introduced by identifying the possibility of contacting lead authors for free copies of papers and kick starting a conversation with them. At this point Open Access is also introduced, in particular SRUC’s Institutional Repository which offers the opportunity to build on research that SRUC is carrying out or has carried out in the recent past.

SRUC also offers Distance Learning programmes at HNC and Taught Masters levels. Library sessions are arranged for delivery when students attend campus-based study weekends. These sessions will cover the same type of work as detailed above but concentrate more heavily on electronic access and on support mechanisms including contact with staff via phone, email and instant messaging, with online tutorials uploaded to our Library Guides on the website. Again, depending on the level of study, sophisticated training will be given on the use of abstracting and indexing databases and the research process in general.

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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.
Student Transitions

Title: All Campus Sustainability Programme

Transition(s) the practice supports: The programme assists in the transition of students of all learning disciplines to employment, both paid and voluntary.

Abstract: The All Campus Sustainability Programme is an extra-curricular, projects-based programme open to students of all disciplines and at all levels of study at SRUC's six campuses. The premise is simple: work with others or on your own to develop a project that improves sustainability in the campus buildings or grounds. Students are free to determine their own topic, and the path the project will take, whilst receiving support from the Environment Officer. Funding is available for projects that complete a successful funding application process, with practical assistance offered to put the projects into practice. The programme won the Highly Commended award in the Sustainability category of the College Development Network Awards in 2015.

Description: The All Campus Sustainability Programme was developed to allow students to learn about environmental sustainability whilst improving their campuses. Students were challenged to observe their surroundings and come up with ideas for small, practical alterations that could either limit negative environmental impacts, or create positive ones. Starting in academic year 2013-2014, the programme saw 36 projects submitted in the first two years, involving over 160 students. The programme is now in its third year, currently with 16 projects underway in academic year 2015-2016.

The programme aims to prepare students for their role as leaders of tomorrow by providing an opportunity for them to hone their project development and management skills. Where projects require funding, the student is tasked with filling in a real world example of a funding application, preparing them for the structure and questions which accompany these processes. The combination of skills students need to develop to complete a project are key to success in the paid and voluntary sectors. The experience also allows students to refer to a practical example when applying for paid work or other projects of interest both during and after completion of their studies.

The project is deliberately as simple as possible, being respectful to the complicated lives that students lead. Paper work is realistic although kept to a minimum, with students guided to miss out the optional sections where it makes sense to do so. Students requiring more guidance are offered a worksheet pack that assists them in developing their ideas and making observations. Students are also encouraged to contact the Environment Officer for direct feedback. Students with learning difficulties associated with reading and writing are invited to submit their applications verbally, or with assistance from another student or member of staff.
Applications come from individual students, groups that have formed for this purpose, established clubs and societies, and students working together on topics in tandem with taught courses.

Within this very successful sustainability programme, the projects have covered areas such as waste reduction and reuse, promotion of biodiversity, conservation, awareness campaigns, green technology, natural habitat management, sustainable travel and ethical procurement of food.

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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.
Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Accreditation of BA Rural Business Management by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition from higher education to employment, with a particular focus on the rural pathway leading to chartered surveyor status.

Abstract: As Scotland's land-based HEI, SRUC has a well-established reputation for education tailored to rural industries. Accreditation of the degree in Rural Business Management by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) is unique in Scotland, and meets the increasing demand from the estate and land management industries for qualified entrants. Prior to the introduction of this accreditation (in 2014) there was no accredited rural-based undergraduate provision in Scotland, and students who studied an accredited course south of the border required retraining to work in Scotland due to differences in legislation.

SRUC's accredited programme therefore enhances local employment and allows students, with appropriate work experience, to progress to the RICS APC (Association of Professional Competence) rural pathway to chartered surveyor status.

Description: The Rural Business Management degree provides a strong underpinning foundation in the core business subjects of entrepreneurship, marketing, economics, finance, information technology and human resources alongside specialist rural-related modules. Those students who wish to take the RICS accredited route, which was introduced in 2014, must study specified modules focusing initially on understanding and managing arable and livestock agricultural systems together with agricultural premises.

Students then study specialist degree modules in:

- Rural surveying & land-use
- Multipurpose woodland management
- Rural property valuation,
- Rural planning & land law.

With an emphasis on the Scottish environment and necessary legislation, these modules equip the students with practical skills and knowledge which enhance their personal development and employability in the Scottish sector, both in terms of placements within their course of study and on graduation. The demand for graduates within the estate and land management industries in Scotland remains strong and this degree course helps to meet this need for graduates with training in rural surveying.
At a recent accreditation meeting with RICS, the strength and depth of the industry links within this course was discussed and the role this plays in the development of the students and their future employability emphasised.

Examples of the types of careers and industrial placements undertaken by students in recent years include working as:

- Trainee rural surveyor
- Trainee agribusiness consultant (SAC Consulting)
- Trainee land valuer
- Potato trials officer with a national potato company
- Trainee officer (Scottish Government)
- Assistant field trials officer (SAC Consulting)
- Trainee estate factor
- Auction Mart trainee auctioneer
- Food and drink trainee consultant (SAC Consulting)

Rachel Mackellar - one of the first SRUC RICS students surveying an estate in North East Scotland

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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.
Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Using Moodle & Mahara to support project work

Transition(s) the practice supports: Supporting transition within HE and transition to employment within the equine industry.

Abstract: This example of transitions practice demonstrates the use of Moodle (VLE) and Mahara (e-Portfolio) to provide a flexible model and framework which, although developed within the context of an SQA Graded Unit, can be applied across a range of topics and SCQF levels.

SQA’s Graded Units are mandatory within Higher National Certificate and Diploma frameworks. Project-based units are designed to provide evidence that students have achieved the principle aims of their qualification, by integrating knowledge, skills and attributes from topics studied throughout the academic year. The complexity of these projects can be challenging, and it is essential that students receive clear guidance and support to help them engage them with the project and fulfil the evidence requirements to the best of their ability.

Description: The HNC Equine Studies Graded Unit project involves the students selecting a horse from the yard in which they are working and preparing it for a suitable event, to take place one month from the start of the assessment. The assessment covers feeding, fitness and training, health and welfare, grooming, clipping, trimming and turnout on the day of the event.

The Moodle/Mahara model – allowing a complete move away from paper-based submissions – was developed during academic year 2014/15. Early discussions between teaching staff and the e-Learning Team explored innovative approaches to engage students in the assessment, and specifically the practical activities required. The team also considered the need for the work specified above (feeding, grooming etc.) to take place in a real-life environment yet provide reliable and robust evidence to fulfil assessment criteria.

Key points from the project to develop the Moodle/Mahara model in the context of the Equine Studies Graded Unit are as follows:
• Reconstructing the planning and developing stages of the assessment with a scaffolding framework approach within Moodle and Mahara.

• Extensive research to identify and explore emerging technologies that the students would engage in. These had to be promoted to the students and functionality within the model created – in order to facilitate, organise and clarify digital evidence, and submit this for assessment.

• Utilising social media tools, such as online forums, for support. Additionally, announcements within Moodle which would also send out email alerts to the students. A browser-based, two-way mobile texting facility within Moodle was also employed to send information/announcements and provide personal and speedy student support.

• Developing digital media resources in order to support the students further, including video guides for the three stages of the assessment i.e. planning, developing and evaluating.

• Using Video Conferencing to provide cross campus support and interaction e.g. staff based at Barony Campus delivering a SmartBoard session with the HNC students based at Oatridge Campus.

• Using peer review by HND Equine Studies students – the ‘digipals’. The second year students anonymously peer reviewed the planning stage submissions through Moodle, utilising the online rubrics. It was recognised that this had a positive impact on their own work – comparison between the performance of the ‘digipals’ in Graded Unit 2 compared to the cohort from the previous academic year (prior to this development project) indicated a significant improvement in performance.

• HNC students very effectively utilised image and video based Apps to highlight their evidence in accordance with the assessment criteria. This was stored within their Mahara (e-Portfolio) pages and had the added benefit of availability to showcase to potential employers.

• During the developing stage of the assessment the students created an e-Journal to record their daily routine. They created image and video evidence to upload to their YouTube accounts and then embed within their e-Journals in Mahara.

• As the students’ confidence grew they effectively and efficiently created practical videos with time lapse, explanatory annotations, transitions and voice-overs.

• Reflective and critiquing practices were also carried out on their practical videos using Mahara’s online feedback facility.

• This project provided an excellent opportunity for students to develop transferable skills that would aid employment.

Although development focused on use within an SQA Graded Unit there is now a flexible model and framework with the potential of wider use e.g. in work experience units, and other projects where a structured scaffolding framework would be beneficial.

A poster illustrating this work is also available.
Note that SRUC’s Equine Graded Unit 1 Project was awarded Highly Commended in the Learning and Teaching category at the College Development Network Annual Awards 2015. This category recognises imaginative and creative ideas to improve the quality and effectiveness to learning, teaching and assessment.

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Innovating Equine Graded Unit 1: Peer Assessment ‘Digipals’, Moodle & Mahara

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Introduction

SGA’s Graded Unit is a mandatory element of the framework of all HNC and HND frameworks. Both staff and students find the complexity of the Graded Unit requirements in comparison to other units within the framework challenging.

With the funding from SRUC’s Pedagogical Funding Stream, the project team have created a transferable and flexible online model in Moodle, which includes the use of Mahara (e-Portfolio software) to collect and collate information for the investigative and practical elements of the HNC Graded Unit. The delivery also includes student support through anonymous peer assessment.

The project has the full backing from SQA who wish to use the model for the sector and is also involved with their Digital Evidence Project.

New Scaffolding Framework Design

The team reconstructed Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Graded Unit assessment with a scaffolding framework approach through analysing SQA’s assessment descriptor and hand-picked student’s highly graded paper based Graded Unit 1 assessments from previous years.

Peer Assessment Anonymous ‘Digipals’

The Moodle Workshop activity was utilised as the online Peer Assessment tool where the HND Equine students successfully anonymously peer reviewed the HNC Equine student’s draft Stage 1 document submissions.

Evidence states 50% of the HND students passed Graded Unit 2 last year, whereas 91% of this year’s HND students passed their Graded Unit 2 assessment.

Graded Unit 1 Support & Statistics

- Video User Guides – A total of 14 Video user guides were created.
- PDF User Guides – A total of 21 PDF document user guides were created.
- MoodleText - Over 1200 mobile texts sent and received, which contained announcement and support related texts.
- Moodle Support Forum - A total of 113 discussion/announcement posts and replies.
- Questionnaires - A total of 8 questionnaires were created for all stages of the Graded Unit assessment.
- Average Graded Unit 1 Stage’s Grades:
  - Stage 1: 61.17% (B Grade)
  - Stage 2: 68.50% (B Grade)
  - Stage 3: 70.75% (A Grade)
- Overall Graded Unit 1 Average Grade – 66.98% (B Grade), with a 27% increase of A-Grades compared to last academic year.

Equine Graded Unit 1 Project Online Report

Access the interactive Equine Graded Unit Project Online Report, which provides highlights of the project including the new scaffolding design, Peer Assessment phase, Examples of HNC Student’s submissions, Moodle gradebook and much more...

http://goo.gl/MYMY2E

Moodle & Mahara

- Stage 1 Planning – The students fruitfully engaged with Mobile Image and Video Apps populated their media rich Mahara pages and submitted these to Moodle for assessment, which were marked using online Rubrics.

Fig 2.0: HNC Student Stage 1 Mahara example with embedded images created through mobile Apps

- Stage 2 Developing - The HNC students created their own Mahara page for an online reflective Journal and an additional Mahara page self critiquing their annotated, time-lapsed, voice-over videos for their practical based assessment.

Fig 3.0: HNC student Stage 2 Mahara Part B Page with embedded practical videos and self reflection

- Stage 3 Evaluating - HNC students used Word processing packages and saved their completed Stage 3 Evaluating reports as a PDF documents. These PDF document reports would be uploaded to the Stage 3 Moodle Assignment, this allows the Lecturer to annotate directly within the student’s PDF documents in Moodle. All three stages marked using online Rubrics within Moodle automatically synchronising to the Moodle Gradebook.

Fig 4.0: Lecturer’s view of Stage 3 Moodle Assignment Submission Panal with Annotate PDF and Turnitin

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Student commentaries

**Raising Awareness of Employment Opportunities in the EU** (Podcast)

**All Campus Sustainability Programme** (YouTube video)

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**Innovating Equine Graded Unit 1** (YouTube video)

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**Providing Information Literacy support across a multi-campus HE** (YouTube video)
Enhancing employability through assessed work placements (YouTube video)
**Collaborative work**

Transition from year 3 (General degree) to the Honours year - [University of the Highlands and Islands](#)

Transitions from Higher National programmes to degree level study - [Edinburgh Napier University, University of the Highlands and Islands, University of the West of Scotland](#)

Digital literacy and engaging distance learners - [University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University in Scotland](#)

Non-continuation - [University of the Highlands and Islands, University of the West of Scotland](#)

Commuting students - [Robert Gordon University](#)

Digital literacy and engaging distance learners - [Open University in Scotland](#)

**Multimedia resource**

A short video around transitions that students experience at Scotland’s Rural College.

[Watch the video](#)