Student Transitions
Institutional activities 2014 - 2017

University of Stirling
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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

The University of Stirling focused on five projects over the three years of the Theme. Each project had a specific type of transition as its main topic. The transitions identified were:

- transition into first year from college to university
- international transitions into honours
- transition into, and out of, placements and the workplace.

These projects aimed to investigate key points in the student journey. They also considered matters such as widening access, social inclusion and student expectations.

The project work involved the scoping and identification of examples of good practice. The University also piloted new activities and conducted results based action planning. This work will allow the University to embed successful activities after the conclusion of the Theme. In year two, the University worked, with other Scottish institutions, on developing its Student Transitions Framework. In year three of the Theme, the University finished work on the projects started in year one.

Key areas of work

Application and First Year; Widening access; Employability and skills; Colleges and articulation; International and mobility; Honours; Expectations

Outcomes

This report combines the outcomes produced by the University of Stirling and includes:

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

Title: Access to Undergraduate Study

Three Key Words: Access, Learning Strategies, Widening Participation

Transition(s) the practice supports: Access into Undergraduate study.

Abstract: The University Stirling part-time Access Programme is aimed at mature students with few or no relevant qualifications for entry to a degree. Throughout the programme there is an emphasis on the transition into studying for an undergraduate degree. An essential part of the programme is the inclusion of two ‘Learning Strategies’ modules. These modules aim to build confidence and motivation as well as focus on key academic ‘skills’. The classes are workshop-based with high levels of student activity, group work and integrated opportunities for self and peer assessment. Alignment of these modules with other aspects of the Access programme is key to their success and feedback on the modules is always highly positive.

Description: The University Stirling Access programme is aimed at mature students who have been out of education for some time and have few or no relevant qualifications for entry to a degree. Run by the School of Education the course provides students with both the academic requirements to get into university and the study skills they need to become a successful university student. The course has compulsory ‘Learning Strategies’ modules and then a choice of core modules related to the student’s intended degree subject. All students who successfully complete the access course with the relevant grades gain entry to a degree at the University of Stirling.

This successful part-time (2 evening a week for 9 months) Access Programme has now been running for a number of years. During its development, it had been noted that Access students often reported feeling underprepared for the academic demands of an undergraduate study and did not have adequate ‘learning strategies’ to cope with a transition into a full-time undergraduate programme. In response to this, a key component of the University of Stirling Access programme is the inclusion of two ‘Learning Strategies’ modules.

Module 1 (Learning Strategies, SCQF Level 6) takes place in the first 4 weeks of semester 1, after which the students continue onto their two core disciplinary modules. This module provides an opportunity for students to explore various aspects of learning within a higher education context. Students are encouraged to discuss their expectations of higher education and identify aspects of learning that they anticipate will be most demanding. Considerable time and effort are devoted to the challenges of time management, independent learning, the demands of academic reading and writing, and building confidence and motivation. There are a number of opportunities for formative assessment before a final writing-based assessment.
Module 2 (‘Advanced Learning Strategies’) then takes place at the start of semester two before another two disciplinary modules are chosen. The module is delivered at a higher level (SCQF Level 7) in order to prepare students for the demands of undergraduate study. In this module there is a greater emphasis on group work and negotiation, evaluation of performance and progress, and critical thinking, reading and analysis. Again, there are a number of formative assessment opportunities including reflective writing and group presentations linked to the final summative assessment.

The two ‘Learning Strategies’ modules therefore aim to provide a solid foundation to academic life and there is a strong emphasis on building confidence and resilience, and prompting autonomous learning. The modules are interactive with group work and oral presentations with a strong emphasis on self assessment, peer assessment and reflective practice. The work carried out in the ‘Learning Strategies’ modules is then carried forward into the discipline specific modules to reinforce the learning and provide more feedback opportunities. For example, in the Learning Strategies module students review journal articles, give oral presentations and use Turnitin as a learning tool. These aspects are then embedded and reinforced within their core modules.

Feedback from the students and the external examiner is always very positive and these modules are seen as crucial in the transition into undergraduate study.

External examiner feedback
- My congratulations to the team and to the students - they are clearly benefitting from your use of high quality teaching and learning strategies
- I continue to be most impressed by the ingenuity of the assessment strategy used for this module (learning incidents and a critical review of learning resources - great stuff!!). This module in particular has considerable value in “reaching across” to other modules and improving assessment performance elsewhere.

Student Feedback
- These classes took us out of our comfort zone and helped build confidence.
- Hands on approach to tackling new ideas and ways to do things. Quite a lot of discussion, which increases understanding and improves confidence
- Intensive but well structured and valuable – feel I will be using new skills for years to come – thanks.
- Don’t think I could have become an undergraduate without ‘Learning Strategies’
- This module is an amazing help, everyone should take this! Very helpful and useful
- Fantastic module to prepare for further studies has been a great confidence boost.

The success of the modules is partly as a result of the interactive nature of the classes, the emphasis on building confidence, and the close alignment between the pedagogical approach, class activities, and the formative and summative assessment. The success is also linked to the fact that the principles of the ‘Learning Strategies’ modules are followed through into the core modules and closely reflect undergraduate practice. Feedback from Access students who are now undergraduate students demonstrates that having taken this Access course, they feel well prepared for the challenges of undergraduate study and are able to make a successful transition.
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Title: Student Peer Support - STEER

Transition(s) the practice supports:

STEER is open to any student in their first year at the university.

Abstract:

STEER is a University-wide student peer support scheme, providing mentors or buddies for any undergraduate or taught postgraduate student in their first year at the University of Stirling. The scheme aims to help mentees make the most of their time at the University and enable them to settle in as quickly as possible, and help mentors gain valuable skills and experience to increase their employability.

Description:

A STEER mentor/buddy is a friendly face for students to turn to for help and advice at any point during their first year at Stirling. A mentor/buddy will be available to answer questions and, if unable to help in the first instance, to guide the mentees to the appropriate resource. They are not expected to be a tutor, social worker, counsellor or financial advisor. They will be able to access additional support and resources through the STEER website, senior mentors and the STEER team during their year of mentoring/buddying. Mentors/buddies are fully trained and Disclosure checked.

STEER was piloted during 2008/09 as part of the sector-wide enhancement theme of The First Year. The pilot responded to research evidence on benefits to the first year arising from personalisation (Knox and Wyper, 2008) and the use of peer support (Black & MacKenzie, 2008). It also draws upon, and intersects with, a number of other enhancement themes and its implementation contextualises the themes within the University of Stirling, whilst continual evaluation of the scheme focuses on current impact and future potential for enrichment of the student experience.

STEER aims to:

- Provide supplementary support for students in their first year of study
- Help first year students to settle in to higher education
- Counter the effects of large class sizes
- Reduce stress levels among first year students
- Identify and tackle common issues/problems encountered by students in their first year
- Increase student retention
- Contribute to the development of mentors’ employability skills.

Mentors/Buddies are recruited, trained and Disclosure checked in March/April to ensure they are in place for mentees when they arrive in September.

Mentees apply for a mentor through the student portal. The application form is auto-filled with details from the portal (e.g. course, year etc.) and asks what kind of support they are looking for (e.g. social, academic etc.), what their interests are, and a few additional questions that may help assign a mentor to them (e.g. whether they are care leavers, or first in the family to go to University).
STEER interns carry out the matching process. If a mentee has asked for academic help they will be matched with a mentor who does the same degree as them, or at the least in the same Division/School. Mentees are emailed with their mentor’s name and told their mentor will be in touch with them. Mentors are emailed the contact details of the mentee and details of the support the mentee has asked for. It is the up to the mentor to contact the mentee and start supporting them.

This year there is a closed Facebook group for Mentors to allow them to ask questions and get advice from other mentors. This has proved an effective way for mentors to support each other and engage further with STEER.

Quotes from Mentees

- “STEER is a great opportunity to get support from a student's point of view and it makes the start at University a lot easier knowing that somebody is there to help you through.” (STEER Mentee 2012/13)

- “It was nice to have someone to talk who went through the same things. Everyone should get one, it was good to know they were there.” (STEER Mentee 2012/13)

- “It is so handy to have someone on hand who has already been at the university for a few years and will give you the REAL answers to your questions, not the answer they have been told to give.” (STEER Mentee 2012/13)

Quotes from Mentors:

- [STEER has given me] lots of valuable experience, a feeling of pride after having helped several students settles into University and something useful to cite on my CV. (STEER Mentor 2013/14)

- [My work with STEEER has] developed communication and listening skills which will be beneficial when I enter the job market. (STEER Mentor 2013/14)

- [STEER has given me] a better understanding of how certain things work at the university, as well as employability skills I would not have obtained elsewhere. (STEER Mentor 2013/14)

- Definitely do it [become a mentor]! It is a brilliant feeling and experience helping somebody out with university life. I feel like some of the bad times in first year were made worthwhile thanks to STEER - I was able to help people not make the same mistakes I did! (STEER Mentor 2013/14)

Contact details: Karen Morton k.m.morton@stir.ac.uk
Title: Psychology Literate Citizenship

Transition(s) the practice supports: This is for Psychology students in their final year of an Honours programme.

Abstract:
Psychological literacy is the ability to recognize appropriate applications of psychological theory in the wider world. Psychologically Literate Citizenship is the safe, confident and independent ability and willingness to act on that for the benefit of community, workplace etc. The key to achieving this is the attention given to developing confidence and independence in our students and this has required us to innovate right across the final year programme. Confidence is built by repeated practice within an environment where initial failure is rewarded and reflective learning encouraged. Independence is brought about by a carefully managed introduction of explicit student-leadership and simultaneous withdrawal of academic staff input and support over the year, culminating in a final real-world research project that is entirely unsupervised.

Description:
The final year programme in Psychology is centred on the concept of Psychologically Literate Citizenship – a framework for teaching Psychology that emphasises critical thinking, personal integrity, and the understanding of psychology within complex real world settings.

From our induction day through to graduation, the programme is structured to facilitate student independence, and enhance employability through increased confidence in knowledge and skills. Students engage as partners in learning, for example, by contributing to the design and delivery of peer-led teaching. Similarly, previous student feedback centred on staff performance and resources, but we now use formative evaluations that ask students to reflect on their engagement with various learning opportunities.

Student engagement with this process is probably best demonstrated by the last challenge we set. In the second half of their final semester, and under strict time constraints, students are required to work together on a group project. Each group is given a brief statement of a real world problem to tackle and relevant stakeholders are identified as the audience for the final report. Example projects include identifying how psychological theory and methods can inform conservation, education, or health strategies. Students work collaboratively to develop an intervention, or design a study and collect pilot data, or conduct a review. The outcomes are impressive, not least because the entire process is completed without any staff supervision. If problems do emerge within a group, coaching is provided to support the students in resolving these issues between themselves. This experience enhances our students’ confidence in their ability to act as independent qualified psychologists. This is an important outcome, and it comes at a time when they are about to embark on the next transition.

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Other information:

PLC at Stirling: Higher Education Academy report by Roger Watt

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Watt-developing-psyc-lit-Stirling-v2.pdf
**Title:** Flying Start Leadership Programme

**Transition(s) the practice supports:**
This initiative supports both students transition into their postgraduate studies from their previous university experience, as well as focusing on the development of specific professional skills that are sought after by graduate employers.

**Abstract:**
From day one, the School's innovative Flying Start Leadership Programme supports students in planning for their future career and provides them with the skills to develop into successful global business leaders.

Postgraduate students from across the Management School participate in a wide range of activities, workshops and information sessions during their first few weeks which ensure that their time at Stirling gets off to a 'Flying Start'. The programme is designed to ensure that they will graduate from Stirling with the confidence and cultural intelligence to manage effectively in their chosen future career.

**Description:**

**Programme overview**
The programme introduces students to the skills that will form the foundation of their future career. Introducing students to these aspects right at the start of their course not only leaves them better prepared, but also enables them to focus on how they can use their degree to further develop the key skills and attributes most sought after by graduate employers.

Students participating in the programme will:
- discover more about the exciting period of learning ahead and the expectations of their course;
- discover more about their own personal goals and objectives at the outset of their studies in relation to future career aspirations;
- understand what it takes to work as part of a successful team enabling them to confidently lead any situation in the future;
- develop cultural intelligence and understanding of diversity of attitudes and behaviours, so that they can work responsibly in a global business environment;
- develop business presentation skills and improve public speaking skills;
- develop and enhance levels of self-awareness to cope, work under-pressure, and manage conflict;
- improve time management skills that are applicable to any business environment;
- make new friends and discover all that the University campus and the vibrant city of Stirling has to offer.

**Making an impact – what our students have to say about this initiative:**
Students who participate in this programme find themselves ready to embark upon their Masters course invigorated, prepared and committed to the learning journey ahead with newly developed skills. Here are just a few comments received from this year's participants:

"The Flying Start Leadership Program was an extremely valuable experience which not only helped set the tone for what was to come but also helped prepare us for the group work assignments we were to face throughout the semester."

"I thoroughly enjoyed the Flying Start Leadership programme, in particular the team building and team working exercises as they gave me the opportunity to meet students and alumni from many different backgrounds and work alongside them on a various range of challenges..."
which I found really engaging and informative. I feel this emphasized the importance of communication and decision-making in the team whilst working with people who brought a range of different skills along in order to complete these challenges."

"I strongly believe that this programme has exceeded all its goals and objectives as, certainly this programme has surpassed all my expectations. It has equipped me with the most valuable properties that every student should have from the beginning of their academic year and throughout their studies at a University."

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CASE STUDY 1

Title: Computing Science - Big Data Dragons’ Den Event

Three key words: Soft skills, Technology, Entrepreneurship

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition out of the University (‘Moving on from there’). This event was designed specifically for students on the MSc. in Big Data but the idea would be relevant to other masters programs in Computing Science and third or fourth year undergrads.

Abstract: Employers expect all computing graduates to have the relevant technical skills. What differentiates the best students are other soft skills. This event was designed to help students think about the business context of the technology they are learning about or, more simply, the business of turning code and data into money. After a series of informative and motivational talks, students were required to envisage a data related business plan and pitch their idea to a Dragons’ Den style panel. The exercise encouraged them to consider how technology relates to customers, revenue streams, competitors and other areas of a business.

Description: The focus of a computing science degree is technical. Students learn how to design, program, test and analyse computer systems but there is little room for developing soft skills and a wider understanding of the business context of that process. This event was designed to give students an experience of business thinking relating to data and technology. The event was a day long and split into two parts. In the morning, there were a number of talks. One covered some aspects of business modelling and was delivered by a lecturer from the School of Management. Scottish Enterprise gave a talk about raising finance for a business and local technology businesses talked about their own work and the challenges they face.

In the afternoon, the students were split into groups and each group was given time to develop a business idea. As the students were on the Big Data MSc, the ideas had to be related to a data business. The students then pitched their ideas to a panel of experts including bankers, investors and tech-entrepreneurs who grilled the students on matters such as routes to customers, revenue models and funding. The students were forced to think on their feet and consider the human and financial aspects of their great technical ideas. The event finished with drinks and snacks, and a chance for the panel to chat informally with the students about their ideas, studies and career aspirations.
Recommendations - The event took quite a lot of organising as the panel and the speakers were all invited from outside the university. I think this was one of the most valuable aspects of the day though, so it was really worth it.

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CASE STUDY 2

Title: Arts and Humanities - What can you do with an Arts & Humanities degree?

Three Key words Alumni; Employability; Film

Transition(s) the practice supports:
Moving on from there. Particularly relevant to final year students.

Abstract: The School of Arts & Humanities commissioned final year film students to produce a film of alumni talking about the diverse careers they had undertaken, which at first sight are unrelated to their degree, but draw on the skills they gained through their degrees to inspire current students to widen their career searches.

Description: In 2015, we therefore sought and won a grant from the Vice Chancellor’s Fund at University of Stirling of £1000 to commission film students in our school to put together a short film where alumni give short interviews, speaking specifically about what an Arts and Humanities degree has given them. This would demonstrate a range of potential employment areas and give students confidence to approach these sectors in their employment searches.

No such resource exists to our knowledge, which is focussed on Arts & Humanities students. Each year we run a Final Year Conference to inspire Arts & Humanities students to do the best they can in their final year and to look forward to graduate employment. This film was therefore premiered at the conference in 2015 and is now used on our website. The project itself was an employability opportunity for the students who undertake the project – showcasing their ability for future employers.

The film can be viewed at http://www.stir.ac.uk/arts-humanities/graduateskillsandcareers/.

Recommendations - The funds required to travel to meet alumni were significant and a budget of at least £2000 would be more realistic.

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CASE STUDY 3

Title: Internal Communication - Non-traditional student blog.

Three key words: Non-traditional student, Blog and Higher Education.

Transition the practice supports –

- Transition into University (‘Getting there and Settling there’).
- Transition through university (‘Being there, Staying there’).

This project applies to students of all years and has a particular focus on widening participation.

Abstract: This is a student-led initiative, carried out by a student on placement within the communications team. As part of the placement, the student created a blog that will be hosted on the universities own website. The blog will focus on non-traditional students and their journey to and through university.

Description: The blog aims to create a space for non-traditional students to access and discover a wealth of support structures already in place. It will provide an insight from a current non-traditional student who has faced many of the issues experienced by non-traditional students and will provide vital information and advice. The blog provides a voice from someone who has been, and is still currently, dealing with those transitions, giving the project a greater sense of validity. The blog will provide links to support and advice services within the university itself and third party organisations that can also help and give advice. Mostly though, this project is about providing a voice for non-traditional students and their transition into, and through, university, ensuring they feel as supported as all other students. The inspiration behind the project it to ensure that non-traditional students do not feel on their own and can relate what they are going through to real person who has had a similar experience.

Recommendations - Having someone who has actually lived through an experience and then advising on it is an invaluable tool. More could be done to promote this kind of activity across the university and within multiple departments.

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CASE STUDY 4

Title: Languages - Compulsory Semester to a Francophone or Hispanophone country (Languages degrees)

Three key words: Study abroad; Languages, Erasmus

Transition the practice supports –

✓ Transition into University (‘Getting there and Settling there’).
✓ Transition through university (‘Being there, Staying there’).

Relevant to all students doing either a Single Honours Degree or Combined Honours degree with either French and/or Spanish will experience this extra support at one point or another in their degrees.

Abstract: The aim is to keep students informed about this compulsory part of their degree from the very early stages of their time with us. In year one, we organize an event where we talk about living abroad and the importance of making the most of the classes here to get a better experience while abroad. In year 2, we run sessions on financial/grants issues. Finally, in their year 3 –just one semester before they go- we run a series of sessions (both general and in groups) to discuss practicalities of living abroad, applying to their host institution, how to find accommodation. Finally, we organize an event where our students going abroad have the opportunity to meet other Stirling students that went to their very same host institution/city and Erasmus exchange students from our partners.

Description:

1-In first year, students are made aware of the time abroad as part of their degree: From this year onwards, a meeting common to both languages will highlight the various routes available to students.

2-In Second year, students are conveyed to a meeting with the International Office to discuss grants and any other financial issues as well as the new requirements from Erasmus +.

3-At the beginning of semester 5, students are invited to choose where they would like to spend their compulsory semester 6 abroad and advise accordingly.
4-Annual meeting with returning and outgoing students along with Erasmus students from our partners currently on exchange. This allows vital peer-to-peer information to be passed on.

5-Study abroad advisors are also available weekly in person or via email to discuss any individual support or need at any stage of the process.

**Recommendations - Study** abroad advisors are also working in collaboration with the International Office to look into the specific needs of students with identified difficulties.

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CASE STUDY 5

Title: Arts and Humanities - Transition to fourth year and beyond - The Final Year Conference

Three key words: Employability; Conference; Final year

Transition the practice supports –

1. Transition through university (‘Being there, Staying there’).
2. Transition out of the University (‘Moving on from there’)

Abstract: This project involved organising a conference for all final year students in the School of Arts & Humanities on the first day of semester. The aim is to focus their minds on the importance of their final year of study and to look ahead to what sort of career they might wish to pursue.

Description:

There were a few challenges to bringing this conference together. Colleagues were sceptical. Nothing had been done across the school on this scale before and many academic colleagues were sceptical about its value. Professor Watt helped to convince them of its merit by speaking passionately about the conference at a Learning and Teaching meeting. The numbers involved were challenging – 400-500 students had to be accommodated, which is beyond the capacity of our largest lecture theatre. Fortunately, University of Stirling has the MacRobert Arts Centre on campus which can hold this number and which has a range of breakout rooms available: this provided a hub for the conference. We wanted students to feel special and acknowledge the importance of the beginning of their final year by taking them out of their usual environment. Resourcing a conference of this size required a large number of speakers to run the programme. Our Careers Service agreed to run several sessions themselves and invited a number of external speakers. Academic staff from each discipline were asked to present a session for their own cohort on academic matters, which were important to final year students; many chose to focus on dissertation preparation. As always, we were running with a very limited budget. We agreed that there would be no catering at the event; we put together a conference pack of “goodies” from donations of items from employers and a few sweeties!
The format of the day is set out in the attached timetable. We wanted to start the conference with an inspirational keynote speaker, preferably an alumnus, who had gone far in life and had useful messages to inspire the students. At our first conference, we had John McLelland, ex editor of the Scotsman and in the past year, we invited Lord Jack McConnell.

Both gave very personal but equally inspiring addresses.

The morning is completed with two careers/skills sessions. The students can chose the sessions they wish to attend at the time of booking the conference and a synopsis is made available of each session. The sessions range from basic CV writing and interview skills sessions to developing presentations skills with an external trainer, with a background in drama, who puts the students through their paces.

A small exhibition is available over the lunch break with personnel from Careers Service giving careers advice and postgraduate opportunities.
We have learnt quite a bit from the first conference from our own experience of running the event and from student feedback, which we captured through Survey Monkey, shortly after the event. We made a few adjustments this year. These included incorporating a session on library skills with the whole cohort, as a key skill for success during fourth year. We also encouraged subject areas to be more creative in their own sessions in the afternoon and so we saw Film and Media run a mini-conference of their own, bring together recent alumni with students as a contrast to the “statesman” address earlier in the day. This chimed well with student feedback on the first conference where some students struggled to relate to the keynote speech, from a person old enough to be their father! Students wanted food. As we run the conference on the first day of semester, food outlets are stretched on campus. We noted Domino’s pizzas were handing out free pizza on campus and so invited them down to do so in the conference, at no cost to ourselves. We also abandoned the “goodie” bags which were time consuming to produce and were seen as irrelevant to the students. As the conference runs on the first day of autumn semester encouraging students to book the conference is challenging. We refined our on-line booking process for the conference and opened booking in early summer to capture students before they left campus for vacation, this worked well.

Overall, the conference has been a great success and has helped bring the School together as a body and raised the profile of employability with students and staff alike. It also gives final year students a moment to pause and reflect on the importance of their final year and preparations for life after graduation.

Areas for development include considering accommodating mature students, perhaps in a session considering potentially different paths available to them on graduation and ensuring that not all role models for the keynote speech are white, middle aged and male and maintaining relevance in the employability sessions. As a school we are integrating employability into the curriculum and all our activities to a far greater extent than before and therefore our students are becoming more sophisticated in their needs by the time they reach their final year. I anticipate that basic sessions on CV and interview will no longer be required at the conference in the coming years if the rest of our strategy is working and therefore the possibilities of introduction of more generic skills development will be possible.

School of Arts and Humanities Final Year Conference

Monday 15 September 2014
MacRobert Arts Centre
09.00–09.20  Registration

09.20–09.30  Welcome & Aims – The year ahead and beyond
Ms Alison Green, Director of Learning and Teaching
School of Arts and Humanities
MacRobert Main Theatre

09.30–10:15  Key Note Speaker
The Right Honourable Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale
First Minister of Scotland from 2001 to 2007
Alumni of University of Stirling
MacRobert Main Theatre

10.15–11.00  Library – Supporting Final Year Success
Librarian team
MacRobert Main Theatre

11.00–11.15  Break

11.15–12.15  Careers Workshop 1 (see below)

12.15–13.15  Careers Workshop 2 (see below)

13.15–14.00  LUNCH – FREE Pizza (MacRobert Foyer)

14.00–15.45  Subject based workshop
Communications, Media & Culture – 2B85
English – Playhouse, MacRobert
French and Spanish – Workhouse, MacRobert
History – Iris Murdoch Centre
Law – Cottrell 3V2
Philosophy – Pathfoot, E26
Politics – Cottrell 2B88
Religious Studies – Pathfoot E9
11.15 – 12.15
Skills – analysing, defining and articulating
Teamwork (including Belbin games)
Interview Technique and Assessment Centres
CVs and Application (including using Social Media)
Postgraduate study and funding
Internships
Vision and Values
Presentations skills
Project Management
Life After an Arts & Humanities Degree

Evaluation –

Each year we undertake a student survey shortly after the conference to evaluate the conference. Response is overall positive but responses do reflect the different stages of development some students are at in terms of preparation for employment, so while some students think the event is too basic, others think it is too high level. We are therefore attempting to provide a range of seminars with very clear descriptions to allow students to choose the right sessions for them. Here are some comments from the students themselves on the best aspects of the day:

“It was very well organised and the speakers made you feel very positive about life after uni. I liked how the speaker was a graduate from the University.”

“The workshop on "vision and values" - it was absolutely excellent”

“Focusing on our last year expectation and tips about how to start improving and boosting our working experiences: focusing on our skills and what we can offer to future employers”

“The fact that most of it was held in MacRoberts. Having everyone together to ask questions to directly. Being able to share ideas with peers.”
**Recommendations - Plan** early to ensure students sign up well in advance, managing numbers is challenging, particularly at the start of semester.

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CASE STUDY 6

Title: Making the Most of Masters Legacy Project: supporting postgraduate students to develop and transition to work.

Three key words: Collaboration, Work based projects, Employer engagement

Transition the practice supports – Transition out of the University (‘Moving on from there’). Students participate from a wide range of disciplines across the universities, and projects are sourced across disciplines and economic area.

Abstract: The MMM Legacy Project is a market led employability innovation with strong stakeholder engagement to enhance graduate attributes, and competencies at masters level to build capacity in the workforce. The project supports collaboration between universities, enterprise agencies, employers and post-graduate taught Masters students. It aims to disseminate the MMM approach to student work based projects and engage employers, HEIs and Masters level students across Scotland. MMM strategic project supported 1000+ student work based projects 2010-2015 across a range of economic sectors in Scotland. This case study emphasises the principles of MMM Legacy Project and its benefits to students, employers and HEIs. The video at http://www.stir.ac.uk/mmm/ supports these transitions to work from postgraduate taught programmes.

Description: Making the Most of Masters (MMM), is an THE award winning strategic partnership, funded by the Scottish Funding Council, and has generated significant economic, employability and educational benefits for businesses, Universities and Masters students. An economic impact study of MMM estimated its total value at between £3.75M and £6.2M for academic years 2011/12 and 2012/13.

The MMM model, of credit-bearing Work Based Projects as an alternative to a traditional academic Masters dissertation has resulted in almost 1000+ masters students undertaking work based projects with a wide range of businesses and other organisations across Scotland over the last five years.

The benefits from MMM Legacy for the postgraduate Masters students include:

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1 “Economic Impact of Making the Most of Masters”, A final report to the Institute for Academic Development, University of Edinburgh, BIGGAR Economics, 30th July 2014
Enhanced employability, sharing knowledge and expertise

Academic credit for student placements aimed at ensuring work-based learners have the academic and graduate competences needed to succeed in the workplace and further study.

Enhanced university-business engagement to support students

Management of risk through a structured programme of activity

Real World Projects and opportunity to gain fresh perspectives of the workplace

**Evaluation** – Making the Most of Masters (MMM), is an THE award winning strategic partnership, funded by the Scottish Funding Council, and has generated significant economic, employability and educational benefits for businesses, Universities and Masters students. An economic impact study of MMM\(^2\) estimated its total value at between £3.75M and £6.2M for academic years 2011/12 and 2012/13.

The MMM model, of credit-bearing Work Based Projects as an alternative to a traditional academic Masters dissertation has resulted in almost 1000+ masters students undertaking work based projects with a wide range of businesses and other organisations across Scotland over the last five years.

**Recommendations** –

- Build on the existing institutional experience of employability initiatives to develop new and high quality Work Based Project activity;
- coordinate activities across the HEI
- work collaboratively with pre-existing MMM partners as you trial and test the MMM model (e.g. supporting opportunities to shadow or visit equivalent colleagues in existing partners, advise on evaluation and impact activities, updating of printed or online resources);
- share experiences of using the MMM approach through events, workshops and publications, to demonstrate creative and strategic approaches to employer engagement and associated curriculum innovation, including successful networking events and networks with employer and professional organisations.

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\(^2\) “Economic Impact of Making the Most of Masters”, A final report to the Institute for Academic Development, University of Edinburgh, BiGGAR Economics, 30th July 2014
CASE STUDY 7

**Title:** School of Sport Transition through university from third year to Honours year

**Three key words:** Level 10, Transition, Honours year.

**Transition the practice supports** – Transition through university (‘Being there, Staying there’). 3rd year to 4th year transition.

**Abstract and description:** To help with the transition from third year to Honours year. Students in Applied Exercise Physiology (SPSU9D6) have to conduct a research project in small groups – much like the project for the Honours year. This helps with planning, design and execution of a research project. In groups, students must then present their results in a poster presentation, which is required individually in the Honours year. Students in their third year will present their posters alongside honours project students to understand what will be required. Students will also get an idea of what type of projects will be available to them in the fourth year.

**Recommendations - Laboratory** and presenting space is required. Students must also be given the necessary skills to operate equipment under supervision.

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CASE STUDY 8

Title: University of Stirling Management School - What are the key challenges that students face when applying for internships? A study focusing on undergraduate Students at the University of Stirling Management School

Three key words: Research, Insight, Evidence

Transition the practice supports: Transition through university ('Being there, Staying there').

Abstract: This thesis will explore the challenges that undergraduate students at the University of Stirling face when applying for internships, focusing on Management School students in particular. The approach to the research is inductive, through a case study approach, and will conclude with a set of recommendations for the Management School and the Careers Development Centre on how to confront these challenges in the future.

Description: The main concepts which will be discussed throughout the study are the challenges that students face during the application process for internships, and the factors affecting these, the student-employer perceptions of internships, and finally how the university can help students with the process in future. The research objectives for this thesis can be identified as follows:

• To identify the awareness of internships amongst Management School undergraduates and the expectations that students have around these

• To identify the barriers that students face when applying for internships, and the factors affecting these, including social mobility, demographics, and financial capital.

• To identify the student and employer perceptions of internships

• To look at the impact of work-based learning opportunities, including internships, and what students can apply and reflect on when returning to their university studies

• To identify what could be done to improve the experience of an internship application.

• To devise a set of recommendations for the Management School to improve students’ experience in future with internship applications and ultimately increase the success rate of these.

Recommendations: The results will be disseminated to staff and used in work supporting students to gain internships, particularly in the CDC, but also across the Schools

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Come on in is designed to ease the transition of new students into life at the University. The project focuses on the different challenges faced by students coming from school or college, advanced entry and access courses, those taking part in an international exchange programme or those starting a postgraduate qualification. We spoke to new students from each of the different groups to find out about their experiences and to ask how the University and Stirling Students’ Union can do more to help ease the transition into student life.

The key finding of the project emphasises the different needs of students depending on the route they have taken to study at the University. School and college leavers, exchange students and postgraduate students all have different requirements and we’re committed to providing the tailored transitioning support they need.

For more: take a look at our video to hear the students’ own experiences and what they think will help others make the best start at Stirling.
Collaborative work

Scottish Rural College, University of St Andrews, University of Edinburgh, University of Dundee, Abertay University, Edinburgh Napier University - Collaboration involved sharing materials and resources to inform and populate the first stage of the ‘Student Experience Framework’.

Collaboration on support for non-traditional students entering higher education - Glasgow Caledonian University

Work on creative assessment and feedback approaches in a blended learning environment – Glasgow University, University of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University, Glasgow School of Art, University of Stirling and Queen Margaret University

Internship programme exchange which took place in the summer of 2016 - University of Strathclyde

Multimedia resource

The University created a suite of web pages with embedded videos, documents and web links, to showcase the five projects undertaken within the Theme. The website and resources focus on the student journey at key transition points, providing helpful reference points for students and staff. Visit the website