

# The Encouragement of Career Management Skills



This is an Employability CETL resource which draws upon existing good practice in the faculty of Development and Society (D&S). It comprises examples of good practice, questions which teams can collectively consider and discuss as well as recommendations for addressing the employability agenda when writing for validation. It draws evidence from evaluative work on the validation documents submitted by course planning teams and is intended primarily as part of a pack for teams preparing for validation.

## Examples of good practice

The encouragement of career management skills (CMS) in students is an integral part of preparing students for the world of work. Career management skills include tailoring CV writing to different roles, covering letter writing, job interview skills, identifying opportunities in the graduate job market, researching careers and employers, the ability to self-assess skills and personal attributes and match these to appropriate employment and willingness to engage in continuous professional development (University of Reading, 2008; Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007). Validation writing within the faculty of D&S has demonstrated that the most successful approach to teaching and learning CMS is found in active collaborations with the careers service and with the profession. Where such collaborations exist they work to expose students to a large resource of knowledge and expertise to guide their career management learning.

Examples of good practice in this respect were found within several validation documents. The Geography subject group gave evidence of maintaining strong links with the careers service:

*'students participate in workshops which support them in identifying their employment skills, qualities and knowledge, using the resources of the Careers Centre; developing assessed CVs and application forms; and practicing their interviewing skills'*

(BSc Hons Geography, 2007: 15)

These workshops provide an active intervention into CMS learning which involves both targeted content as well as face to face contact with advisers and the careers service. Another good example is found in the area of Business Law, where CMS is delivered using a number of methods:

*'Strong links are maintained with the SHU Careers Service. The Law Group is adopting an increasingly structured approach to careers education. The Law Programme has a careers tutor who works closely with the careers service, career talks and visits are regularly arranged for students, and a legal careers Blackboard site is soon to be in operation. It is planned that timetabled sessions will take place for students to develop career skills, for example CV writing and interviewing skills.'*

(LLB Business Law, 2007: 17)

*'There are some well established links with legal firms and institutions who contribute to the law programme in a number of ways, for example by giving career talks, guest lectures, judging moots and giving work placements to students.'*

(LLB Business Law, 2007: 17)

This is an excellent example of a programme of study which takes career management skills seriously, involving a number of key stakeholders: teaching staff, expertise from the careers service, as well as expert speakers giving advice from the profession. Through assigning a member of staff a dedicated role in creating liaisons and developing teaching and learning targeted at career management skills, the department shows dedication to CMS learning and conveys its importance to the students. This approach is likely to be most successful in promoting student engagement with CMS learning as well.

Further examples of good practice involve learning resources being developed either in collaboration with the Careers Service (BA History, 2007; BA Hons Geography, 2007), or with the support of the CETLs (F FdA/BA Early Years, FdA/BA Education and Learning Support, FdA/BA Professional Learning in Children and Young People's Services, 2006: 138). These resources are tailored to the needs of the subject which further contributes to student engagement with the learning material.

## Questions to consider/discuss

Are there opportunities to create further and stronger links with the Careers Service in order to access their knowledge and expertise in the area of CMS?

Are there opportunities to collaboratively set up events, presentations and workshops with the participation of employers in the relevant subject area and with the involvement of the careers service in organising this and determining delivery approaches? A good example of similar work can be found on the e3i CETL website: <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/cetl/e3i%20case%20studies/JudithPeel.pdf> (Sheffield Hallam University, 2009).

Are there possibilities to develop online resources tailored to the needs and employment prospects relevant to the specific course? Alternatively, could the existing resources which Sheffield Hallam University currently provides for CMS learning be used as part of taught programmes of study? Two new resources are currently being made available for such use by the Careers Service and the Employability CETL:

- **Careers Central:** <http://destinations.shu.ac.uk/index.shtml>  
Careers Central is a new resource aimed at students and new graduates which targets the development of their employability. There are a number of downloadable worksheets, guidance on CMS, as well as interactive video material.
- **STARS Resource:** [www.starsprocess.ac.uk](http://www.starsprocess.ac.uk)  
STARS is an interactive personal development tool for students in higher education and recent graduates. Students are guided through the process of identifying, understanding and describing skills that are relevant for the 21st Century workplace.

## Recommendations for addressing the employability agenda when writing for validation

In writing for validation it would be useful to explore how courses have worked with and consulted key stakeholders with expertise in CMS learning with the Careers Service and employers. Active liaisons with these stakeholders would ensure that CMS provision is of high quality and engages the learner. The positive experiences of Business Law courses of having a dedicated careers tutor shows how active communication between academic staff and central department could be valuable.

Such collaborative work with the Careers service and with employers can be supplemented with online employability resources (such as Careers Central and STARS). Where the use of such resources is built into lesson plans and programmes of study it would be most successful in ensuring student engagement as well as providing them with autonomous learning tools such as they could gradually begin to use not only as part of academic study but as part of career development learning as well.

## References:

1. Dacre Pool, L. & Sewell, P. 2007, "The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability", *Education and Training*, vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 277-289.
2. Sheffield Hallam University (2009) <[www.starsprocess.ac.uk](http://www.starsprocess.ac.uk)>
3. Sheffield Hallam University (2009) e3i Case Studies. [Internet] Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, PDF available from: <<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/cetl/e3i%20case%20studies/JudithPeel.pdf>> [Accessed 25th February 2009].
4. University of Reading (2008) Destinations. [Internet] Sheffield, University of Reading, URL available from: <<http://destinations.shu.ac.uk/index.shtml>> [Accessed 25th February 2009].

## References to definitive documents:

1. BA (Hons) History/BA (Hons) History and Criminology/BA (Hons) History and Politics revalidated April 2007
2. BSc (Hons) Geography validated February 2007
3. FdA/BA Early Years, FdA/BA Education and Learning Support, FdA/BA Professional Learning in Children and Young People's Services validated December 2006
4. LLB Business Law validated May 2007