



**English Subject Centre
Enhancing Careers Services Projects**

English Graduates Success Stories

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Project Report**

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Preface

Enhancing Careers Services to English Students

It is a widespread view that English graduates are not good at 'selling' themselves to employers. This is not to say that they lack the skills, attributes and enthusiasm that employers seek: research conducted by the English Subject Centre shows that English graduates are doing as well as, if not better than, most other graduates three to four years after graduation.

Employers value the skills in critical thinking, communication and analysis that English graduates usually possess, but our students tend to underestimate the relevance of these skills to the workplace. (The 'student profiles' project undertaken by the Subject Centre produced a template which helps students link the skills listed in the English Benchmark Statement to those typically sought by employers.) English students need assistance and encouragement in articulating, in a way that is interesting and relevant to employers, the skills and attributes they have developed whilst studying and engaging in extra-curricular activity.

For this reason, the English Subject Centre has sponsored small projects in Careers Services which tailor materials or events specifically to the needs of English students. Various projects were undertaken, covering such activities as interview technique workshops, alumni presentations, web-based resources and careers open-days. Details of all the projects can be found on our website at:

<http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/explore/projects/archive/careers/careers8.php> . This document is a report on one of these projects.

Jane Gawthrop

The English Subject Centre, June 2008

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Introduction

This project was designed to complement currently available material on careers destinations, gathering and presenting information in a fresh, appealing and inspiring manner to undergraduate students.

Unlike most Careers Service information, the process engaged the user community - the English Undergraduate - directly in the research and publication of this new material, thereby also affording them valuable training and skills development, as well as the opportunity to create contacts with individuals in careers that interested them. Undergraduate English students commissioned, wrote and edited the majority of the case studies of Keele English graduate alumni case studies for web and print publication.

In contrast to the majority of English case studies available elsewhere, these case studies illustrate the diversity of opportunities available rather than focusing primarily upon creative occupations. Unique to most case study collections, the case studies' styles and formats vary to reflect the individual writer's style and the nature of the case study participant.

Implementation

As agreed in the bid, alumni were contacted in September. Thirty alumni responded and agreed to be made available as potential case studies.

A pre-briefing workshop in November was a suggestion made by students. It was well attended with 20 students present.

The training workshop delivered in December was introduced by an English lecturer and the training delivered by a Careers Adviser, Public Relations Officer and Alumni Officer. Seven students attended the session and six students signed up to participate. The training incorporated:

- Professional communications
- Case study analysis
- Writing for non academic purposes
- Grammar and structure
- Case study briefing

Please see attachment for evaluation of the session.

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Given the level of enthusiasm from alumni, a decision was made to ask careers staff to follow up some of the alumni in order to ensure capture of as much material as possible and illustrate the diversity of career destinations.

Outcomes

The project has resulted in the following outcomes:

- Case studies of English graduates from Keele are now available in web and paper format. Please see: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/aa/careers/english-success/>
- Student participants in the project have benefited from the process through developing their skills set in writing for non-academic purposes, editing and professional communications.
- In addition to the benefits available to all students, participants have also benefited from the opportunity to initiate networking with a professional/professionals in their career areas of interest
- The Careers Service and English Department have also benefited from a higher Careers Service profile, an up to date database of English graduates for careers events and curriculum input and case studies to showcase to potential students illustrating the value and versatility of the English degree.

Reflections

- The student liaison committee suggested that the training session itself, originally planned for early November, would be better in early December. They felt that this would fit in with academic deadlines and pressures. On reflection, it would have been more effective to hold the main training session in November and package both a standard careers session and the training in the same workshop. This would have provided an incentive for more students to attend and also have delivered a captive group for the case study training at a time of the year when they did have time to attend.
- Time management and meeting the deadlines set was an issue for the participating students which resulted in a great deal of follow up to elicit the case studies. It would have been beneficial to incorporate a time management session into the training.

Conclusion

This was a worthwhile and rewarding project for students and staff. The Careers Service and Humanities are now considering rolling out this case study mechanism into other subject areas.
