Employability Lecture and Tutorials

The Economics 2 Project was developed jointly by the Careers Service, the Employability Consultancy and the School of Economics following a request by the School of Economics. The School was keen to develop this project in order to stimulate students’ earlier engagement with thinking on their futures – both in terms of choosing Honours courses and how these might relate to potential career choices.

**School/Subject Area:** Economics

**Target Audience:**Year 2 Economics undergraduates

**Staff Involved:** Careers Adviser, Undergraduate Administrator, Course Organiser and six postgraduate tutors

**Dates/timings:** Delivered annually in February

Key features

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The inputs comprised a lecture on career planning delivered by a Careers Adviser, followed by a tutorial facilitated by School postgraduate tutors. The tutorial looked at skills and attributes required for employment, how these are developed through curricular and co/extra-curricular experiences, and linked these attributes directly to Honours options available within the School.

The aims of the project were:

* to increase awareness of the importance of career planning among students;
* to raise students’ awareness of the range and nature of Honours options available within the School and how these might link to future career plans; and
* to get students to consider the skills that employers look for and to complete a ‘self audit’ of their own skills and experience.

Both the lecture and the tutorials are embedded within the core compulsory Year 2 course, delivered in the standard lecture and tutorial slots.

Planning

An initial meeting between the Head of Economics, the Careers Service and the Employability Consultancy scoped out the project, after which the Careers Adviser and Employability Consultant developed the initial pilot material. Following some minor revisions and enhancements in the first year of implementation, the lecture and tutorial inputs have been mainstreamed.

Annually, the Economics 2 Course Organiser and the School’s Undergraduate Administrator agree delivery dates with the Careers Adviser and any changes to input that may be useful in light of current issues facing the School’s students.

Planning work is also undertaken by the Careers Adviser in preparation for the career planning lecture to students and the training session to be delivered to postgraduate tutors.

A one-hour training session is delivered to the postgraduate tutors by the Careers Adviser to discuss the tutorial content and answer any questions they have before the tutorial itself. Tutors then undertake any necessary individual planning work to further familiarise themselves with the tutorial content and supporting materials.

Tutorial materials and handouts are made available for students to access on WebCT

Sessions

The inputs begin with a 50 minute lecture on career planning delivered by a Careers Adviser to the students in early February. This is followed by a 100 minute tutorial facilitated by postgraduate tutors the following week. The tutorial consists of three main exercises:

* examination of the skills sought by employers for a broad range of graduate occupations, some related to economics and others not;
* students discussions on the skills they currently possess, how these are developed within and outside the curriculum, and evidence they could present in job applications; and
* looking in detail at the Honours options available within the School and some of the skills they would develop through these.

Postgraduate tutors were also given a one hour training session from a Careers Adviser prior to the tutorial sessions taking place.

Resources

* Around five hours planning and preparation time is required by the Careers Service for the career planning lecture and training session for tutors.
* Two hours of Careers Adviser delivery time are required for the lecture and tutor training session.
* Postgraduate tutors (six in total) attend a 1 hour training session with the Careers Adviser and then facilitate the tutorial with their usual tutorial groups.
* Tutorial handouts are printed for students to use in sessions (60 students in total) and also uploaded on to WebCT.

Evaluation

Feedback is typically sought from students and postgraduate tutors in the week following tutorial sessions

**Summary of tutor feedback:**

* The timing of the input, content and level of difficulty have been generally felt to be appropriate for the students.
* All tutors have felt comfortable in delivering the tutorial exercises and had found the training session useful.
* The link to choosing Honours options was thought to be particularly useful due to its direct relevance to Year 2 students in Semester 2.
* Not all tutorial groups are necessarily used to group discussions and the participatory format. This can make debates in some tutorials initially difficult to get going, but the School viewed this broadening of experience for both the students and tutors to be one of the benefits of the project.

**Summary of student feedback:**

* The majority of students (78%) found the lecture and tutorial to be useful and worthwhile.
* Over a third of students said they were more likely to start considering their career plans now.
* In the tutorial sessions, students found it most useful to discuss the employment case studies, skills required for specific jobs and the honours options choices.

Advice

Ensure that sessions are advertised well in advance of the date in a variety of ways including e-mail, posters, and mentioning in lectures.

Ensure that students are aware that attendance at the lecture and tutorial is compulsory and expectations regarding their contributing in the tutorial sessions.

Ensure that students are made aware of the reasons why this topic is being covered in Year 2 and the importance of them starting to think about their futures early.

Ensure that tutors feel comfortable with the session materials and that they appreciate they do not need to be career planning experts in order to be able to facilitate a session.

Key contacts

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<http://www.ed.ac.uk/employability/staff-information/how-employability-addressed/good-practice/hss/employability-lecture-and-tutorials>