Geography ‘Visions’ module – ‘Making a career in Geography’

The rationale for this event is to embed careers education within the curriculum as part of the ‘Visions’ academic module.

**School:** GeoSciences

**Target Audience:**Final year undergraduate Geography students

**Staff Involved:** Three academics from School of GeoSciences, Careers Adviser for GeoSciences and external speakers

**Date/timing:** Annual 1.5-hour session in middle of Semester 2

Key features

The rationale for this event is to embed careers education within the curriculum as part of the ‘Visions’ academic module. This particular model is based on a similar workshop run successfully for several years within the MSc Geographical Information Science (GIS) course.

The workshop provides career-related input in a dedicated session and allows students to focus on careers-learning through:

* a series of careers information and advice sessions delivered by external speakers, giving a personal perspective on their job, their employer, how they got into their line of work, personal tips on getting into their sector/role; and
* a short session from a careers adviser signposting to how and where students can find out more about the featured areas of work (and others) and how the Careers Service can provide information, advice and guidance to help them do this.

The **aims** of this session are to provide:

* an awareness of options after graduating with a geography degree;
* an understanding of what they have to do to strengthen their chances of getting in to the featured areas of work; and
* an understanding of how and where students can find out more about different occupations through resources, contacts and informational interviewing.

Planning

* Academic considers themes to be portrayed and structures session around these.
* Academic invests time in identifying external speakers from alumni contacts.
* Careers Adviser develops the input on signposting & supporting resources.

Event

One session of 1.5 hours which covered:

* **Introduction** – delivered by the organising academic;
* **Broad overview of opportunities in geography** – presented by the Chief Executive of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society;
* **Personal career decisions**– following geography with a MSc in GIS, presented by a graduate who runs his own business designing web sites; and working with GIS for Scottish Water & Forestry Commission;
* **Changing direction but keeping faith with geography** – graduate whose career path was as Regional Archaeologist in Fife > Historic Scotland > Deputy Private Secretary to the First Minister > Christie Commission on Future Delivery of Public Services in Scotland;
* **Why do geographers do well in the financial sector?** – graduate who worked in the financial sector, travelling widely as a commodity trader, before working for the Bank of Scotland; and
* **What we have learned, what next?** – Careers Service input on resources, networking, other options, etc.

Resources

* Academic invests time in organising external speakers from his alumni contacts.
* Careers adviser invests two hours in advance to plan the Careers Service input & materials and two hours to attend the whole session.
* Invited speakers are asked to prepare around 15 minutes of material and stay for whole session.

Evaluation

* Very positive feedback from students – hearing about areas that geographers have gone into from people who are doing the job is highly valued, especially as the options with geography are so diverse.
* Finding out about next steps from the Careers Adviser provides practical advice and reassurance regarding how and where to find out more and plan ahead.
* Meeting people working in and with geography gives students an opportunity to engage with employers, academics and the Careers Service.
* Allows the graduate attributes of research, communication and personal effectiveness to be explicitly developed.

Advice

**Main messages learnt that can be shared with other Schools**

* Models of delivery from one school/course can be transferred/adapted to others.
* If academic staff can see the relevance to students’ professional development then this helps the students see it too. Careers learning is an intrinsic and important part of a student’s development and makes sense within an academic context.

**Do’s and dont's**

* Do get a range of contrasting speakers.
* Do introduce all speakers.  Academic support helps to put the work into context.

**Success factors**

* An academic lead who sees the benefits of supporting students in this way, makes the time to organise the input and works collaboratively with the Careers Service and external organisations/speakers.
* The whole event being part of an academic module links career planning and development with undergraduate academic learning and development.
* Good communication between all involved in this project (academic lead, Careers Service, external speakers).

Key contacts

[Susan Bird](mailto:Susan.Bird@ed.ac.uk), Careers Adviser for GeoSciences

[Bruce Gittings](mailto:Bruce@geo.ed.ac.uk), MSc in GIS External Relations Co-ordinator – Session Organiser

[Andy Dugmore](mailto:Andrew.Dugmore@ed.ac.uk), Professor of GeoSciences, Deputy Head of TO (UG), Degree Programme Convenor

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