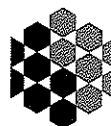


FROM THE MINISTER



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
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AQW 952/11-15

Ms Margaret Ritchie has asked:

To ask the Minister for Employment and Learning what action he intends to take to improve career education and guidance in further and higher education colleges and universities.

ANSWER:

In January 2009 my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Education, launched 'Preparing for Success', the all age Careers Education Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Strategy and Implementation Plan.

To support the strategy, the Department of Education issued guidance to assist schools, further education colleges and training organisations to improve the quality of learning opportunities and to encourage greater cohesion in the provision of CEIAG across schools, further education (FE) and training organisations. The Education and Training Inspectorate has also issued guidance to schools, colleges and training organisations in relation to the quality of CEIAG provision.



Matters relating to the provision of careers education and guidance are the responsibility of each FE College. However the FE Sector continues to work in partnership with my Department's Careers Service to support the delivery of its Careers Policy through a Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Service. Partnership Agreements between the Careers Service and the further education colleges are currently under review.

In relation to higher education, each university is responsible for the provision of student support services, including careers education. There are a number of services and initiatives available to higher education students locally. Details of these are attached at Annex A.

A steering group comprising of representatives from my Department, the Department of Education, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, the Education and Training Inspectorate and the Business Alliance has been established to oversee implementation and evaluation of "Preparing for Success". The further and higher education sectors have been invited to nominate representatives to ensure that the strategy is effectively communicated to and informed by these groups.



Dr Stephen Farry MLA
Minister for Employment and Learning

Queen's University

Queen's University has a dedicated Careers, Employability and Skills Service which offers a wide range of professional support services to help students develop their career potential and to make appropriate career choices.

The Service is open to all students at any stage of their University programme and to graduates for up to two years after graduation. The Service aims to:

- support students in their career preparation and development
- enable/empower them to make and implement effective career choices
- facilitate their successful transition into graduate level work, further study or training.

Specifically, the Careers, Employability and Skills service provides the following:

- professional advice and guidance (between 1 October 2010 and 31 May 2011, 2,409 students participated in one-to-one duty/guidance interviews, and 13,207 student email guidance queries were answered);
- accredited career education and Career Management and Employability Skills programmes;
- careers information (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/careers/>);

- extra-curricular skills development opportunities with accreditation through the University's Degree Plus framework (www.qub.ac.uk/degreeplus). Currently, over 2,500 students are registered with our Degree Plus programme which has been rated highly in a recent benchmarking exercise involving similar programmes at other UK Universities. Approximately 500 students will graduate in July 2011 with the Degree Plus award;
- access to employment opportunities at undergraduate and postgraduate level ranging from part-time employment through to placement/internship and graduate jobs
- access to a range of work related opportunities;
- engagement with graduate employers on campus – through careers fairs, workshops, business games etc. To illustrate, between October 2010 and May 2011, 4,542, students attended ten recruitment fairs which involved 309 employers.

The University aims to ensure that students on all courses should leave the University with graduate attributes and skills which are not only intellectually sound but also employer relevant. To support this, Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance, is embedded at all undergraduate levels with comparable provision in place for postgraduate taught and research students.

Careers, Employability and Skills was accredited in 2006 under the government's 'Matrix' Standard (www.matrixstandard.com) and reaccredited in 2009. It is a member of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services which is the professional association for higher education careers practitioners (www.agcas.org.uk) and Association of Higher

Education Careers Services (www.ahecs.ie) and maintains strong links with government departments, agencies, professional bodies and other external stakeholders.

The Careers, Employability and Skills service is governed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section8/default.asp)

. Careers Advisers are all professionally qualified and engage in continuous professional development activities. In the 2010 High Fliers Research, the Career, Employability and Skills Service was ranked seventh in the UK top thirty universities for student engagement.

University of Ulster

Careers Education and Guidance is provided by the Career Development Centre within the University of Ulster. The Centre aims to provide comprehensive, first-class resources and services that are complementary to and integrated with, the academic provision of the University, enabling our students and graduates to develop, evaluate, and implement career decisions and employment plans for the mutual benefit of themselves, employers and the University community.

The Career Development Centre enables students and graduates to capitalise on their employability by:

- providing information and career guidance services
- delivering career development learning programmes both as an integral part of degree programmes and as a co-curriculum offering as part of the Ulster Certificate in Personal and Professional

Development (CPPD). During 2010/11 2214 students undertook employability modules within the CPPD framework.

- providing opportunities for work-based and work-related learning. Annually over 2000 students undertake placement.
- supporting them, via the Personal Development Planning process, to reflect on their academic, career and personal development
- helping them to identify and apply effectively for employment and further study opportunities

As part of the University of Ulster's vision of leading in the provision of professional education for professional life, the University is committed to supporting graduates to gain stimulating and fulfilling employment. The following two initiatives are recent examples of Ulster's commitment in this area.

1) Ulster EDGE Award – Engagement, Development and Graduate Employability

The Ulster EDGE Award is an exciting new initiative for undergraduates which will be launched in September 2011. The Award is designed to enhance the employability of Ulster students by providing engagement with, and official recognition of, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and achievements. It is in addition to the degree programme and enrolment is free to Ulster students. The EDGE Award will support students to develop their graduate skills and attributes within a supportive flexible framework throughout their time at Ulster.

The EDGE Award recognises and rewards students who wish to reach their full potential by undertaking a programme of employability related activities over the course of their degree programme. Activities can be undertaken at

any time and include a wide range of opportunities including volunteering, work experience, study abroad, peer mentoring and engagement with clubs and societies.

By successfully completing four activities, from a minimum of two separate categories (listed below), students can apply for the EDGE Award. This is a critical part of the Award process in which students have to clearly demonstrate, via a written reflective account, their experiences and how they have enhanced their employability.

- Category 1: Accredited co-curricular modules
- Category 2: Work Experience, Study Abroad and Enterprise
- Category 3: Activity Pathway (Internal & External Opportunities)
- Category 4: Formal University Wide Opportunities

2) Professional Experience Programme

In June 2011, in response to the current economic downturn and the ongoing difficulties for graduates to find employment, the University of Ulster developed and launched a Professional Experience Programme. The programme is specifically aimed at supporting current graduate leavers from Ulster who are unemployed or underemployed .

The programme includes a 6 month graduate internship with a local employer, integrated with study for Ulster's Graduate Certificate in Professional Practice. There is no cost to the graduate and the University provides each participant on the programme with a £5000 bursary. Employer costs are minimal (approx.£2000) and include course fees, appropriate travel expenses and a contribution to a student bursary.

The web page on the programme is available to view at

<http://adl.ulster.ac.uk/lll/pep>

St. Mary's University College

Some of the activities in which the College's Careers Centre engages with students are described below:

Organised Classes

These take place for both the BEd and Liberal Arts students. The classes for BEd are held in 4th year and for the Liberal Arts in years 1 and 2. The classes are well attended. Students have the opportunity to complete the Certificate in Careers Management Skills as part of the Degree Extra programme. This is running very effectively.

Careers Information and Teacher Recruitment Fair

These are arranged twice per academic year. A wide range of recruiting agencies and Postgraduate course providers attend and provide students with valuable information.

Daily "Drop-In" Sessions

One hour per day is set aside for 'drop-in' sessions when students can have 'quick queries' answered. If longer, more detailed answers are required, a lengthy guidance interview is arranged.

Workshops arranged for BEd4 students

These were arranged outside the main timetable schedule. Many of them were organised in conjunction with ATL (Association of Teachers and Lecturers).

The workshops held this academic year included the following:

- Finding your first teaching post
- English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Discipline within the classroom
- Voice Projection

They were extremely well attended (attendance had to be restricted to a manageable size on a 'first come, first served' basis) and the feedback was extremely positive.

Practice Job Application

In year 4 the BEd students have the opportunity to apply for a fictitious teaching post. The applications are screened and shortlisted for interview by a panel consisting of a school principal, a member of ATL and the Careers Officer. The shortlisted candidates are interviewed and a candidate recommended for appointment. All candidates then receive feedback on the process. This is found to be very beneficial and very much appreciated by the students.

Simulated Assessment Centre Activities

During second and third year, Liberal Arts students have the opportunity to participate in Simulated Assessment Centre activities. These include role play, interviews, psychometric tests, group activities and in-tray exercises. This is an important part of the selection procedure for graduate employment.

The Careers Service works very closely with schools both in Northern Ireland and outside Northern Ireland. Schools in Northern Ireland are very complimentary regarding students' preparation for interviews etc. Involvement with schools mainly involves marketing the College, attending Careers events in schools and visiting Liberal Arts students undertaking Work Related Learning placements.

In addition very complimentary reports have also been received by schools outside Northern Ireland regarding the degree of preparation of students for interviews. The Careers centre is involved in opening up opportunities for BEd students to apply and in many cases be appointed to teaching posts.

Hosting Schools and Teacher Employing Authorities

(from Kent, Medway, Manchester, Southampton, London, Madrid and Gran Canaria).

This proved very effective and resulted in 34 BEd graduates securing employment in schools commencing in September 2010. So far this academic year (2010-11), 18 students have secured employment with another 16 having interviews arranged. Feedback from both employing authorities and students has been very favourable.

Presentation by employers and postgraduate course providers

For Liberal Arts students (mainly second and third years) presentations are arranged for alternate Wednesday afternoons during the first semester. These highlight employment opportunities and postgraduate study provision.

One of the College's new initiatives is aimed at ensuring that BEd graduates will be able to offer advice to pupils on the subject of 'STEM' focussed careers. In tandem with this Initiative the College will also be seeking to actively promote possible STEM based career pathways to our Liberal Arts graduates.

Stranmillis University College

Careers education and advice is provided to Stranmillis University College by Queen's University. Two of the University's staff work on the Stranmillis campus providing services equivalent to those in the University but tailored specifically to meet the needs of Stranmillis students.