

## Case Study

**Title: Careers In Sport website tool ([www.ulster.ac.uk/careersin/sport](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/careersin/sport)) for pre-entry through to graduated sports students on their employability journey at Ulster**

### Summary:

This case study details the Careers In Sport website which I created to enhance and facilitate the employability journeys of students at 5 different stages of their employability development, from pre-entry students thinking about studying sport at Ulster, through to students who are studying on our degree programmes, are doing a placement year or have graduated. This website has numerous sections all of which are designed to signpost students not only to our School specific opportunities but also those within Ulster University. Furthermore, the website contains a graduate destinations map, job role information and graduate profiles of our alumni. There is also a live chat feature so that there is a personal and interactive aspect of the website available to support students as they use this resource and plan their employability enhancing activities.

### What was done:

I created this website with the support of the Careers and Employability department and Digital Marketing as a result of feedback from students who were having issues with how to access information on how to develop their employability within different years of their degree programme. I therefore carried out a review of careers in sport advice and guidance both in terms of websites available and what other universities offer. It therefore developed as a resource which helps students plan and track their employability journey from being a prospective student through to a graduate. It provides a careers destinations map which I collated from all of the careers websites on the internet as well as from industry knowledge. It has graduate career profiles which allow students to learn from our graduates' experiences but also crucially link in with them via the LinkedIn function so that they can ask advice, set up work experience and maybe even a placement or a job. The website also has the ability to link to Ulster's employability portal, Advance HE's employability toolkit for employability to develop action plans and also to live chat with careers advisors.

I use this website with our prospective students by linking with Careers teachers via their EdLink platform but also through the Ulster Careers Teacher conference and through our marketing events such as our student advice days and Insight night. This resource is novel as I use it with my first years in their Foundations for Future Success module when they begin to plan their first steps on their career journey. I also use it with second years in their prep for placement and employment classes and with our final years on the Graduate Transitions Programme. The website is also a unique resource within Ulster University as it also supports the one to one CV and interview help that I give to all year groups of students in partnership with the Careers and Employment department. The Digital Marketing team are also able to provide Google Analytics so that we can track usage of the website, demographics of the users and their locations around the world. Therefore, from pre-entry through to graduation employability enhancement is a central part of our sports degrees at Ulster.

In the Five and Fifty Strategic Plan it showcases how Ulster plans to transform lives, stretch minds, develop skills and raise ambitions of our students whilst encouraging a diverse university community and helping our students to make a lasting contribution to society as

a whole. I am extremely passionate and believe whole heartedly in this approach and feel like these goals are what epitomises the usefulness and power that the Careers In Sport website can have for our students as they make their way along their employability journey into meaningful careers which inspire them. These students then can become part of our alumni who complete graduate profiles and who can help and advise our current students. The Careers in Sport website also not only contributes to the civic contribution element of the strategy but also the global vision and academic excellence aspects as all of the employability resources, help and advice on this website facilitates our students becoming fantastic contributors not only to their local communities through work experience and volunteering but also helps them plan and explore international opportunities to help them become more globally relevant and transferable. Linking in with our graduates all over the world also helps them to realise not only a global vision for themselves but enables them to become fantastic global ambassadors for Ulster University. Furthermore, a central objective of Five and Fifty is “employment and widening access” and this website is a tool which focuses on this and delivers exactly what the strategy aims to do by helping students “to develop workplace readiness balanced with lifelong skills and to help to improve educational attainment and ambition particularly from communities that have previously been disengaged”. The graduate profiles I feel are a particularly important part of this objective as they have the power to inspire and raise the aspirations of students to develop their skills to attain a career they maybe never thought possible due to their backgrounds.

Overall this website is an example of a leading and subject specific approach to employability development as not only does it incorporate School specific guidance but that this content is aligned to the Careers Portal within Ulster as well so that refinement rather than duplication of careers information is available to students. Having all of this careers information in one place therefore meant that I could design the website so that students at different stages of career development could be separated out and focussed upon, which has never been done before at Ulster. The website also facilitates a community of current students and alumni to help each other in a positive and proactive manner so that careers information and employability information becomes more relevant and applicable to each individual student as they progress.

**Motivation and aims:**

This website was developed in response to student feedback which indicated a limited understanding by potential/current students of the career opportunities for sports graduates and how to develop towards different career options. Support from a wider suite of stakeholders including students, employers, alumni and post- graduates was also utilised so as to create an effective and useful website resource for students. Furthermore, the change which this website has been intended to make is to help support students and inspire them towards developing their employability in a way that is meaningful and achievable.

I gained a lot of professional knowledge from colleagues and academic literature in the field of TEL and student feedback, crucially as students themselves indicated that they wanted a resource such as this to help them. Academic, pedagogic research was also used from resources available from Advance HE, particularly their Employability toolkit and the professional knowledge which support this resource. Research by Lisa Gray and Peter Chatterton from JISC “Enhancing Student Employability through Technology” in particular

reflects what the essence of my website is aiming to achieve - employability development right from the beginning of the student journey and that active and “real world” learning experiences can take place through the links with our graduates on this website.

**Implementation:**

I approached the Employability and Careers department at Ulster with my idea to create this resource and a project team including representatives from Digital Marketing was created to support the development, implementation and evaluation of the website. The website was launched with the support of the Pro VC for Education Prof Bartholomew and is currently in its second stage of development. This project team were essential as they brought together essential experience to this project and professional knowledge about what could work and how the website should be developed, not only in a way which would appeal to students, but that it would be useful and be able to roll out to other subject areas at Ulster University. The resource is now embedded in our recruitment, induction, core modules, preparation for placement classes and Graduate Transitions Programme.

**Successes and lessons learnt:**

**Successes**

- 1) The Careers In Sport website was a finalist in the AGCAS (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services) national awards in 2017
- 2) The resource has been embedded into careers guidance programmes for 24 Schools and Colleges across Northern Ireland
- 3) The resource has been showcased at 10 open day events (prospective students, parents, career teachers)
- 4) The resource has been embedded as a learning and teaching resource into all undergraduate and MSc sports programmes at Ulster (induction, placement support classes and final year careers modules)
- 5) The resource has supported the development of new a new career development learning programme for Y2 placement preparation
- 6) Over 50 Ulster sports alumni have created case-studies of their career journey so far
- 7) 11 new sports alumni have joined the Ulster alumni e-mentoring programme as a result of this website
- 8) The website has been viewed over 6,000 times
- 9) 200+ students have engaged with the online chat feature
- 10) Being rolled out currently to 2 other subject areas at Ulster (Art & Design and Psychology)

**Lessons Learnt & Further Development**

- 1) New sections of the Careers In Sport website (recruitment section) and a reconfiguration of some section is currently under development based on feedback from users
- 2) Support at a School level and at a University level is crucial to realise the full potential of this resource
- 3) More subject areas to avail of this resource to be developed for their specific subject area and students
- 4) Development of social media (Twitter and Instagram) aspect of the website to keep students up to date with opportunities being posted on the website.
- 5) Develop research aspect of how the website is used and could be improved.

**Transferability:**

This website was designed to be transferable as when the webpages were being developed they were specifically created in a way that would keep the Ulster Careers information in the same place on the webpages (so that this didn't need to be redone each time a new website was created) but allow other subject areas at Ulster to tailor their specific sections and change to photos/graphics to fit their subject area. The project has been disseminated at PVC hosted learning and teaching event (November 2016), Ulster Employability Conference (May 17) as well as at a CHERP lunch and learn session and Advance HE's Symposium "Pedagogy for Employability" (April 19).

### **Positive outcomes**

- 1) The approach has enabled a sustainable infrastructure for other Schools also to develop and manage their own content
- 2) 2 new Schools have started the process of developing their own Careers-In resource i.e. 'Careers-In Art' and 'Careers-In Psychology'
- 3) The School of Sport and the Career Development Centre secured funding to recruit a placement student to develop the resource further in 17/18
- 4) The resource supports engagement with wider institutional priorities i.e. recruitment, placement, outward mobility and alumni engagement
- 5) The project has been endorsed by our External Examiners

All of these positive outcomes and feedback from colleagues in other schools at Ulster events demonstrate a desire for this resource in their school. Indeed, with the right support other colleagues could create this resource for their subject area in a very straight forward manner.

### **Further information:**

[www.ulster.ac.uk/careersin/sport](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/careersin/sport)

### **Snapshot of some positive feedback**

"The careers website made for the School of Sport is really interesting. A lot of students wonder what you can actually do with your degree after graduation however this website is awesome! It breaks down and provides many different types of careers a graduate sport student can work in and understands every student is different." **Year 1 sports student**

"I found it very easy to navigate and everything is laid out in simple and easy to find ways. It is nice that it exists to help students plan their future in a modern way." **Final year sports student**

"It is a truly remarkable piece of work, intuitively designed and easy to navigate and it does one great thing that we don't do enough – highlight the terrific experiences and adventures of our graduates." **Dr Paul Kitchin, Lecturer in Sports Management, School of Sport**

"I'm really proud to be a part of this! This resource is amazing - I wish this had been in place when I was at uni. It would have given me real confidence, perspective and insights

into how to develop myself professionally in a planned and staged manner throughout my degree programme” **Graduate Profile Contributor**