

Research Showcase

Evolving practice, embracing innovation in WBPL

Day 2: Thursday 5th September

10:05-11:05

	Block BC – Lower Ground – Lecture Theatre 2 Research Showcase	Presenter(s)
1	Improving Accessibility to Placement Years	Jamie Bradbury, <i>Bath Spa University</i>
2	How securing a placement is increasingly challenging for Widening Participation students ...and what we can do to address it	Hannah Charlton, <i>Nottingham Trent University</i>
3	Providing equity of access to work-integrated learning for students with disabilities	Clodagh Kerr, Shay Nolan, <i>University College Cork</i>
4	Conceptualising Social Mobility on the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship	Joanna Booth, <i>Nottingham Trent University</i>
5	Bridging the Gap: Empowering underrepresented students in career exploration through targeted insight events	Aimen Mahmood, <i>Leeds University</i>
6	Supporting Returning Students: a case-study supporting students to transition back into their final year of UG study after completing a placement year.	Mary Crossan, <i>Ulster University</i>

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1.

Title: Improving Accessibility to Placement Years

Presenter(s): Jamie Bradbury, Bath Spa University

Abstract

At Bath Spa University, we've had Professional Placement Years (PPYs) available to every course for six years. Yet we still find large numbers decide not to do a placement and switch back to a normal 3-year degree.

Last year we undertook research into why students were opting out of doing a PPY and are implementing actions to tackle some of the barriers identified. In this showcase, we'll share our findings and tell you about an exciting and innovative idea to help overcome students' financial worries which we're introducing next year.

2.

Title: How securing a placement is increasingly challenging for Widening Participation students ...and what we can do to address it

Presenter(s): Hannah Charlton, Nottingham Trent University

Abstract

When analysing data illustrating Nottingham Trent University (NTU) student behaviour, we find that Widening Participation (WP) students sign up to sandwich courses at roughly the same rates as non-WP students. However, when we look at the wider student journey, we find WP students are significantly less likely to have secured a placement opportunity. Seemingly, WP students are less likely to be able to convert their intention to do a placement into reality.

Last academic year, CenSCE was commissioned by The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) to explore this issue. We conducted exploratory research to understand the main barriers, and corresponding solutions, to converting WP students' intention to complete a sandwich course into work placement or year in industry. As part of this research, we developed an accompanying Theory of Change model to map the main factors in securing a placement and produce recommendations to address these challenges. This map in itself is unique and innovative, using a bi-directional approach to change. This allows us to demonstrate how change comes from both working with the individual students, and the structure of the university and placements themselves.

3.

Title: Providing equity of access to work-integrated learning for students with disabilities

Presenter(s): Clodagh Kerr, Shay Nolan, University College Cork

Abstract

Over the past twenty years, UCC has seen evolving practices around recruitment and selection of students through internships and work placement programmes. More recently, the Access UCC EmployAbility Programme has endeavoured to support students with a disability to develop their employability skills and ultimately to progress from third-level education to the workplace. In addition, the programme is focused on empowering employers and managers to create disability-inclusive workplaces through Inclusive Recruitment training which has been developed in conjunction with students with a disability.

In this showcase we will present on the delivery of this training which has been developed specifically for our external stakeholders in WIL based activities. The EmployAbility programme was developed to enhance participation and encourage equity and inclusion for students in their transition to work and future career through programmes such as work-integrated learning. WIL is currently being developed further within UCC and representation from staff within the Access EmployAbility Programme is an important element of our cross-university WIL Working Group to help eliminate barriers that inhibit students access to workplace experiences. The concept of Universal Design has been core in the development of inclusive recruitment processes that feature elements that are essential for some, but useful for all.

4.

Title: Conceptualising Social Mobility on the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship

Presenter(s): Joanna Booth, Nottingham Trent University

Abstract

In England, 48% of apprenticeships started in 2022/23 were by people aged 25 and over (Powell, 2024). Of particular interest are those literature classes as 'upskillers', that is apprentices with a diverse range of backgrounds and experience, who are seeking to advance their career through this programme.

Building on the recent CABS (2024) report, this short presentation will explore notions, conceptualisations and lived experiences of social mobility of mature Chartered Manager Degree Apprentices. This is particularly important as Business & Management apprenticeships form the largest part of apprenticeships at levels 6, providing educational opportunities for individuals where engagement with Higher Education has previously suffered. Indeed, apprenticeships have significant impact in extending opportunities to mature learners at a scale nearly twice that of standard undergraduate programmes. Specifically, the CABS report highlights the potential for degree apprenticeships to drive social mobility among learners and offer opportunities to those who might not have otherwise had opportunity to engage with Higher Education.

5.

Title: Bridging the Gap: Empowering underrepresented students in career exploration through targeted insight events

Presenter(s): Aimen Mahmood, Leeds University

Abstract

The University of Leeds' Insight Events project aims to empower underrepresented students by providing tailored opportunities through targeted events. Designed with inclusivity in mind, our project seeks to break down barriers to career exploration and foster a culture of professional curiosity among students of all disciplines and academic years.

Our Insight Events offer interactive experiences where students can explore diverse industries and connect directly with industry professionals. To deliver these events, we collaborate closely with stakeholders, including Widening Participation services, internal and external employers, and teams within the Careers Service. Key pillars of our approach include demystifying industries, promoting cross-team collaboration, and empowering student engagement.

During our presentation, we will delve into how we have propelled our project to the success it has seen in 2023-24, furthering institutional aims related to progression and widening participation. We will also share tangible outcomes, such as increased student engagement and stronger employer relationships, demonstrating the impact of our Insight Events.

Join us as we showcase how our Insight Events are making a difference in the career journeys of underrepresented students and contributing to a more inclusive professional landscape.

6.

Title: Supporting Returning Students: a case-study supporting students to transition back into their final year of UG study after completing a placement year

Presenter(s): Mary Crossan, Kathryn White, Colette Murphy, Ulster University

Abstract

The aim of this presentation is to consider placement students in full context of their student journey not just whilst out on placement, but also when returning to university. The project has looked at supports for students transitioning back into student life for their final year of undergraduate study.

Adopting a co-design approach, the project has worked with current or recent placement students to find out what they perceive as their main concerns when returning for their final year of study. The key findings in this project were then addressed and Ulster University created a video to let students know these concerns are not isolated to them and that there is help and support available. The main aim of this project and presentation is to showcase how interventions and signposting of support can make a difference to the experience of returning placement students, with the ultimate aim of supporting students sense of belonging and wellbeing.

Ulster University students Hannah McGinley and Maria McDevitt, who are currently on placement, will join this session.