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Enhancing student experience through alumni engagement: building a lifelong community.

BURGESS, K.

2023

Presentation notes are included at the end of this file, after the slides.

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Enhancing student experience through alumni engagement – Building a lifelong community

Dr Katherine Burgess

Lecturer in Sport & Exercise Science

Senior Fellow of the HEA

BASES Accredited Sport and Exercise Scientist



Background

- Peer learning is a widely researched pedagogical strategy and the use of graduates or alumni are a valuable part of this process (Gamlath 2022)
- It has been shown that graduates can be effective in providing valued authentic career support and enhance student engagement (Lawson 2018)
- Graduate engagement in the BSc (Hons) Applied Sport and Exercise Science course had been limited/haphazard.



Aims

The aims of the project are to enhance students' knowledge of possible career pathways, enhance student engagement through relatable real-life applications and to create a lifelong community for our students and graduates.



Initial Survey



The project began by contacting all graduates from the course since its commencement in 2012 (n=329) through the use of emails, LinkedIn and snowballing techniques and asking them to complete a short survey and indicate willingness to be involved further.



As a result, 110 responses to the survey were collected.

Initial Survey Outputs

- Advice Document
- Career Journeys Document
- Placement Opportunities
- Invites to Input into Teaching
- LinkedIn Group



Advice Document

- *Take advantage of every opportunity you are given. Enjoy the process (you will miss it once it's over).*
- *Work experience, work experience and work experience! This will give you an idea of what you are good at and what your interested in, whilst also being able to network with other businesses and companies which could potentially hire you full time after university.*
- *Treat being a full-time student as a full-time job. Regardless of lecturing timetable, committing 35 hours a week really goes a long way*
- *Prioritise your time wisely. Don't leave things to the last minute as that's not when you produce quality work.*
- *I would highly recommend to keep up with the directed study and ask asap to your teachers if you have any doubts or questions, even in front of the class. You think it's 99% clear to you ASK ASK and ASK until it's 100% clear.*
- *Prioritise sleep in fourth year. You can't write smart things if you're sleep deprived.*
- *Never drink Gin and Tonic the night before your morning lecture.*

Career Journeys Document

Students' journeys were categorised by current job role with 12 Categories identified:

- Elite sport
- Active schools
- Clinical physiology
- Coaching
- Education
- Fitness industry
- Physiotherapy
- Public health
- Sports Development/ Community Roles
- Wellbeing
- Transferred to other sectors
- Further study

Elite Sport

Current Job Role:

Endurance Coach Scottish Cycling

Year of Graduation:

2012

Employment History Since Graduation:

Scottish Cycling Pathway coach 2017-19

Endurance Coach 2019-Present

Education History Since Graduation:

MSc Physiology and Applied Nutrition Sheffield Hallam 2012-13

PhD- RGU 2014-2019

Current Job Role:

Sports Scientist - Aberdeen FC

Year of Graduation:

2013

Employment History Since Graduation:

Sports Assistant - RGU:SPORT

Sports Scientist - Leicester City FC,

Hamilton Academical FC, Rangers FC, Aberdeen FC

Education History Since Graduation:

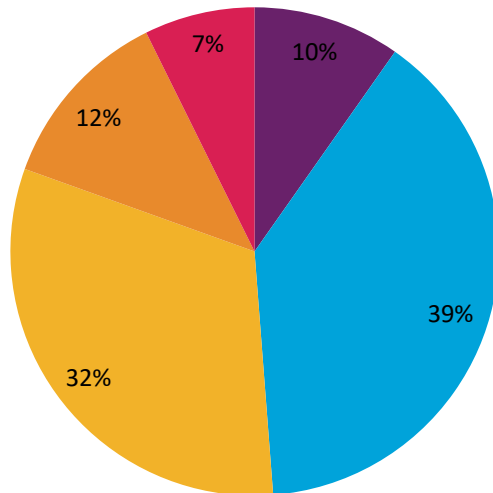
ISAK Level 1

Career Journeys Document - Evaluation

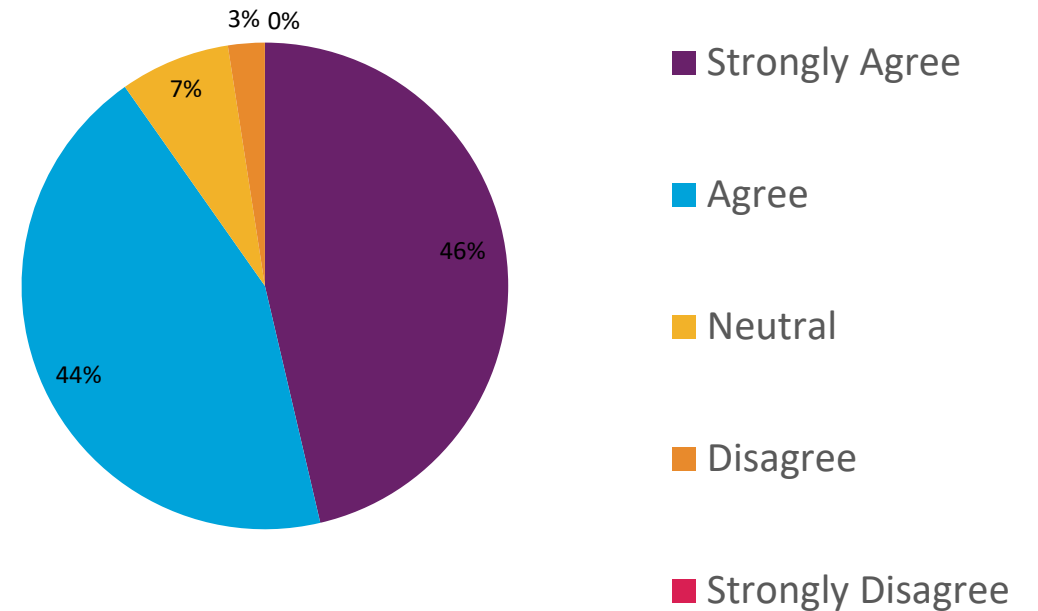
- Evaluation Survey Circulated with the Career Journeys Document.
- 41 student completed the survey

Before reading this document, I had a clear idea about my future career

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

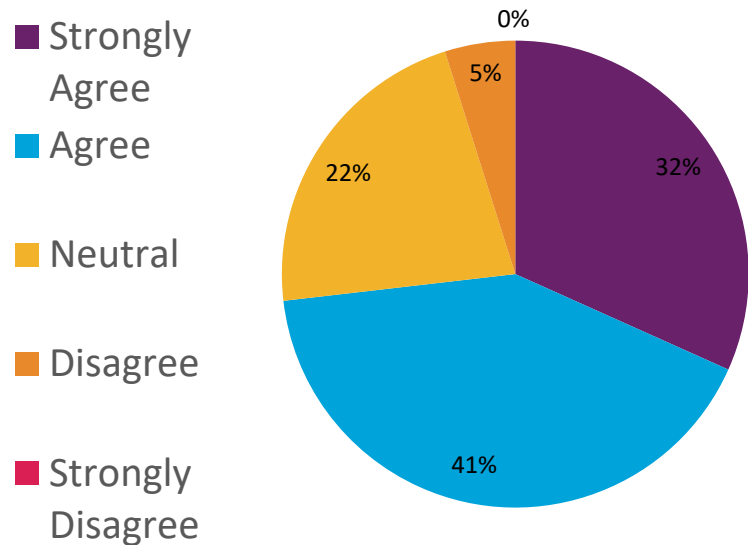


This document has encouraged me to think about my future career

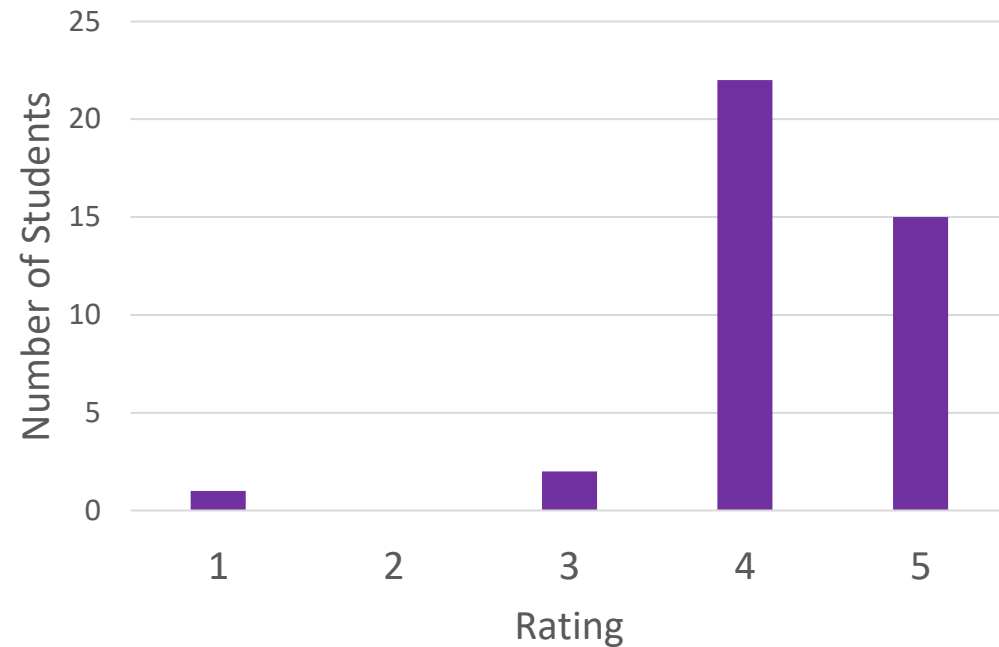


Career Journeys Document - Evaluation

This document has highlighted job opportunities I was unaware of



Please rate the document out of 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent



Placement Opportunities

In response to the survey 59 graduates expressed an interest in finding out more about hosting student placements.

These 59 received a follow up email with full information of how to become involved in placements.

This resulted in:

- Eight new placement providers for academic session 2022/23
- Two graduates interested in offering placements for 23/24

In addition 10 investigated further but their employer was not in a position to take on placement students at this time.



Invites to Input into teaching

- Eighty-three respondents expressed an interest in finding out more about guest lecturing.
- Further contact with these 83 graduates lead to 21 indicating which aspects of the course their expertise and job role best aligned.
- From this 13 were selected to present to current students spread across the full range of stages and modules on the course.
- Out of this 13 only 3 Sessions occurred
- Barrier included: Other priorities for module leads, responsiveness of graduate to communications, matching availability.



LinkedIn Group

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn group page for 'RGU Sport and Exercise Science Alumni'. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, My Network, Jobs, Messaging, Notifications, Me, For Business, and Learning. Below this is a search bar and a group header section. The group is owned by Dr Katherine Burgess, created in July 2012, and has 60 members. The group description includes the RGU logo and the text 'RGU Sport and Exercise Science Alumni Listed group'. There is a 'Start a post in this group' section with options for Photo, Video, and Poll. The right sidebar shows analytics for the last 15 days, including 3 active members (0% growth) and 0 new members. At the bottom, there is a 'Pinned by admin' post with an 'Unpin' button.

in Search for posts in this group

Home My Network Jobs Messaging Notifications Me For Business Learning

Dr Katherine Burgess
Owner
Created group: Jul 2012

Pending posts 0
Requests to join 0

Manage group
Edit group

Recent

- RGU Sport and Exercise Scienc...
- American College of Sports M...

Groups

RGU

RGU Sport and Exercise Science Alumni
Listed group

60 members
Including Bryan McCann and 54 other connections

Invite connections

Show all →

Analytics
Last 15 days activity

3 Active members ● 0%
0 New members

0 Posts

Messaging

Pinned by admin Unpin

Future Work

- Feedback graduate journeys document – greater range from other year groups (perceptions may differ)
- Student videos/testimonials
- Greater use of the LinkedIn Group
- Project with the RGU Alumni team to gather best practice across the University



Questions or Ideas



References

- GAMLATH, S. 2022. Peer learning and the undergraduate journey: a framework for student success, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 41(3), pp.699-713.
- LAWSON, T.J. 2018. Tapping Into Alumni as a Source of Authentic Information and Advice on Careers in Psychology. *Teaching of Psychology*, 45(1), pp. 67-74

Enhancing student experience through alumni engagement: building a lifelong community

Slide 1

No notes.

Slide 2

- Limited to engagement through focus groups for school reviews/revalidations.
- Contacts where industry partners were past graduates (i.e. contact due to job role, rather than alumni status).

Slides 3-5

No notes.

Slide 6

- PDF given to all year groups at year induction.
- Opportunities: volunteering, work experience, class engagement, networking.
- Working hard and working smart.
- It takes effort to do well.

Slide 7

- Document distributed via email and highlighted in year tutor sessions.

Slide 8

- In addition, 1st years encouraged to complete in class - 28 responses from this (68%).

Slide 9

- Average rating 4.25
- The one student saying "1" strongly agreed that, "before reading this document, I had a clear idea about my future career".
- Students generally wanted to know more about jobs in Elite Sport, Physiotherapy and PE teaching (aligns with 1st year majority feedback).
- Anything additional to add to the document:
 - What they did while at university, e.g. placements and extracurricular activities that helped.
 - How long it took them to find a job.
 - How and where they found their job (LinkedIn, Twitter, job advert through websites)

Slide 10

- These placements are currently taking place and so evaluation is not yet available.
- In addition, this highlighted that some graduates were already taking placement students.

Slide 11

- Barriers: payment/funding of "guest lecturers", contract logistics, etc.
- Students were willing to contribute for free, but matching availability difficult even with the option of doing remotely, because graduates are working.

- Potential moving forward for pre-recorded elements of graduates' input to be used in class, with some form of asynchronous communication.
- Sessions: Sports Nutrition (Kirsty Reynolds), varying pops (Lyndsay Parsonage), sports development (Jo Murphy, Hannah Clews).

Slide 12

- Group created: 60 members, primarily graduates.
- Link to group was circulated within "Graduate Journeys" document.
- Need to push with 4th years at graduation.
- Not done much with this; need to learn more about LinkedIn. Advice appreciated!

Slides 13-15

No notes.