

FACULTY OF SCIENCE: STUDENT DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT WITH ALUMNI EVENT



June – July 2017

Study aimed at Enhancing Student Transition from Study to Employment through Student Driven Engagement with Alumni.

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Student Driven Engagement with Alumni.....	3
3. Conducted Staff Departmental Interview Sessions.....	3
3.1. Pure and Applied Chemistry.....	4
3.2. Mathematics and Statistics.....	7
3.3. Computer and Information Sciences.....	10
3.4. Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences.....	13
3.5. Physics.....	16
3.6. Alumni and Development Office.....	19
3.7. Careers Service.....	22
4. Conclusions.....	26
5. Objectives for Moving Forward.....	27
6. References.....	30
7. Appendix.....	31
7.1. Staff Departmental Interview Questions.....	31
7.2. Alumni and Development Interview Questions.....	31
7.3. Careers Service Interview Questions.....	32
7.4. A&D Relevant Contactable Science Graduates.....	33
7.5. Timeline for Mathematics Alumni Event March 2016.....	34

1. Introduction

In June 2017, a student intern was appointed initially over the course of three weeks to investigate the possibility of establishing an annual event in the Consolidation and Development week in January. This would involve five events being held to represent each department within the Faculty of Science: Pure and Applied Chemistry, Physics, Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences (SIPBS), Computer and Information Sciences and Mathematics and Statistics. Here, current students could interact with recent Alumni in a variety of ways – Q&A sessions, invited speakers, presentations on their journey after graduating or their work placement experiences. This would enable an opportunity for students to query graduates within their degree area on best means for employability after university. In addition, there would be an increase in communications between Science and Industry as a whole.

The student intern appointed is based within the Faculty of Science in the department of Mathematics and Statistics. She carried the project out alongside Dr Debbie Willison and Cheryl Beattie. Students' Transitions beyond Strathclyde was the title instigated by the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) Student Transitions Enhancement Theme within Strathclyde. The QAA is an independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education.

The intern worked on the project for 12 hours a week for a duration of 3 weeks. Her name is Georgina Beavan, a current 4th year undergraduate student working towards a degree in MMath Mathematics and Statistics. She has previously partaken in the Spring Telethon within the Alumni Fund to gain donations from Strathclyde Alumni. She will return in first semester of 2017/2018 to continue the project each Wednesday. Here, she will endeavour to establish a student committee across each department to then collaborate together. The developments of this stage of the project will be compiled in a following report.

Research began by conducting staff meetings with departments and within the Alumni and Development Office and the Careers Service. This provided a basis to construct an informal interview to notify previous events held and thus establish forward steps to take in creating a network of Alumni to collaborate with. Results and findings from these interviews are discussed from Page 5.

2. Student Driven Engagement with Alumni

During the academic year of 2015/2016 the Careers Service successfully delivered alumni events for the departments of Mathematics and Statistics, SIPBS and Physics. All of these events gained positive feedback from students who attended. The aim of this project is to introduce a sustainable annual event in all five departments that is of paramount, student led with mild guidance from appointed staff members.

Each department currently engages with their alumni network. This includes activity on a one-to-one basis, work placement interaction, guest speakers and alumni events.

It is important to note the advantages if an annual event for each department were to be established. These include the exposure of engagement between students and alumni working for major employers, which could inspire students to pursue similar methods to enhance their employability post-degree. An increased link for students to transition from study to employment efficiently. Within a student-led system, students can become involved in the organisation of these events to further improve their project management and communication skills (also a respectable addition to any CV). This could also generate other Faculties within the University of Strathclyde to adopt a similar approach/event to promote a widespread employability increase for students about to graduate. Students could additionally be given advice on applying to large companies, possibly including hints and tips for the application process to progress through the early online stages. Finally, an ability for alumni returning to the campus to scout out high quality applicants that could help their company in the future is an additional benefit.

3. Conducted Departmental Staff Interview Sessions

Members of staff from each department as well as the professional services of the Alumni and Development team and Careers Service were invited for a brief interview session. Information was gathered from the five departments to gather local alumni contacts they may have, and to discuss previous alumni events (if any) and suggestions on how to tackle a successive event. A meeting with the Alumni and Development Office could query how to go about acquiring relevant personnel from their database, aligning to data protection. The Careers Service could advise a strategy of how to deliver a successful event, an aspect this area has prominent experience in. Also, they could suggest the optimum way to advertise the event to students, and discuss several ways of channelling the information to students.

Each staff member representing their department/service was sent a draft of questions to prepare for the interview session which is available in the Appendix. Some questions were open, allowing them to express their views and input any ideas. Others allowed for a yes/no response which went down a line of progressive questions relating to their answer.

3.1. Pure and Applied Chemistry – *Dr Debbie Willison*

Q1 – Previous Alumni Events: **YES**

- What were these events?

The department of Pure and Applied Chemistry has degrees in Chemistry, Forensic and Analytical Chemistry, Chemistry with Drug Discovery, Chemistry with Teaching and Applied Chemistry and Chemical Engineering (ACCE) which allowed for four 'streamed' events to take place previously (where the teaching course adjoined with Chemistry due to small intake).

These were networking events where graduates shared experiences of their industrial placement or their year/semester of study abroad. The department offers study abroad schemes within ERASMUS, United States of America, Canada and occasionally New Zealand and Australia. Recently, ERASMUS has brought opportunity to study in the likes of Slovenia and Slovakia but students have been found to struggle with the language barrier. Thus, affecting their overall student experience. Debbie noted that it was not easy to stay in contact with graduates once they had left the university and suggested the establishment of an 'Alumni Club' may help to entice them to return to campus to support events.

Other events included group sessions, where tables of 6 were dotted around a room and alumni would perform a round-robin which worked effectively for students to get a rounded view of the graduate experience and interact efficiently. These all took place on Wednesday afternoons, which are always free for students at the university. However, most sports clubs either train or have matches on those afternoons so may be averse to attending. So, to prevent students being unable to attend, possibly an event held in the evening would be better suiting.

- Were they staff/student/alumni led?

These events were lead and facilitated by Debbie. She would ask speakers to give a talk of around five minutes of their experience, no presentation slides needed. Then it would be

open to the floor for any questions the students may have but Debbie commented that almost certainly none of the students would ask, so she would always endeavour herself to have a question up her sleeve. Afterwards, refreshments would be offered in a more informal environment where students would feel more open to ask the alumni any questions they deemed daft to express in front of an audience. This also created a networking environment which is beneficial to students.

- Advertisement to students:

Information was emailed to relevant students, an accessible platform of communication which allows everyone to read the invite. With an event being student-led, it would establish interaction over social media – a means that some staff may be unfamiliar with. Each course has a class page on Facebook, which is a good way of promoting and building interest for an event. Also classmates may be more supportive if a fellow peer was hosting the event, possible increase in attendance.

- Number of Attendants:

For each streamed event, a maximum of 40 students were present. From the department having around 650 undergraduate students, it was only a reflection of 24.6% (160/650). It would be great to see more students engaging in these events, as they are very useful as a guide to give options throughout or after completing their degree.

- Feedback:

Overall, students who attended found the event very helpful. Particularly, over the less formal refreshments session where they could interact with alumni. It also benefitted the alumni who came to share their experiences as they were given the opportunity for personal development outside their working environment. Also, a sense of pride to return to campus and support students from their old course to go on to realise their potential in the world of work.

- Improvements:

Re-evaluate the way in which to contact students, possibly through social media where Debbie admits isn't within her expertise. She feels students would be much more comfortable to respond by being contacted on a more informal platform than email. As mentioned, student-led events would enable support from peers. Possibly a better venue,

previously held in student common room. Perhaps looking into better equipped room would encourage a higher number of students to attend. The opportunity for students to register for events online would provide a gauge of how many students are likely to attend. This would also allow for the amount of refreshments to be accurate to save on budget for the event as a whole.

Q2 – Established Contacts:

A previous speaker that has shown a keen interest in staying in touch with the university has been an ACCE graduate named Hannah Marshall who lives locally in Renfrew. She shared her experiences after graduating. All other courses within the department have a 12 month industrial placement. This opportunity is usually available to approximately 70 students per year, which means the department also has established placement contacts.

To establish more contacts who may be interested, once graduated student email addresses are active for three months. This window could allow an email to enquire graduates about what companies they are going on to work for. Thus, creating a database for contacting.

Q3 – Established Companies:

The University of Strathclyde works very closely with GSK, who have been a major employer for graduates within the department. Others include CLL in East Kilbride and spin out companies where employees are given the opportunity to investigate their own ideas. Companies of these sort include BiogelX.

Q4 – Staff Involvement:

Debbie is happy to act as the contact for the Chemistry department. Here, she suggests she can set-up a committee and interact with students. This will be particularly useful when the establishment of a student project team is needed in Semester 1 of 2017/2018.

Q5 – Any other comments:

In future, a document could be processed as a guideline of how the student project team should approach the planning and delivering of successive events. This could include a timeline to help the team plan when to have deadlines for confirming speakers and how much notice to have the room booked out for example.

Important to express why it is beneficial for students to be involved in the project team. Advantages include; an addition to their CV which would enhance their employability once they graduate, opportunity to interact with other students within the faculty and to improve their communication and project management skills.

Equally, it is also paramount to highlight the importance for the alumni. Such as, an opportunity for personal development and the ability to give back to the university in a way to help fellow students from their old course.

Thoughts on what type of event this department could hold would be based on either a speed-networking event and/or advice on applications for graduate schemes and other jobs.

3.2. Mathematics and Statistics – Dr Elizabeth Dombi

Q1 – Previous Alumni Events: **YES**

- What were these events?

Usually the department tries to hold three alumni-related events each academic year. Previous events held have included Engage with Strathclyde which is a week-long event at the beginning of May that hosts a large array of different disciplines. This takes place in the Technology and Innovation Centre and hosts over 50 events each year. The events enable a window for alumni and external contacts to become aware of the University's world-leading research and technologies advancements, as well as how to benefit from the knowledge exchange with industry, the public and third sectors (Strathclyde, 2017).

In May 2015, the launch of the Statistics and Mathematical Advice, Research and Training (SMART) allowed alumni to return to campus for further advice and/or training. A speed networking type of event was held in March 2016 which allowed third and fourth year students to engage with alumni in an informal way. Here, six alumni attended enabling them to rotate amongst groups of students. There is additionally an Annual Lecture event, where most recently Prof McBride was a guest speaker. Another alumni event was a tour of the campus, including the Technology and Innovation Centre led by a group of alumni who were fourth year classmates.

- Were they staff/student/alumni led?
Events varied in hosts but were never student-led. One of the more successful events which was alumni orientated was delivered by the Careers Service. Engage with Strathclyde events were led by staff. A group of alumni who were previously classmates also decided to arrange an event for fellow alumni as a fourth year reunion.
- Advertisement to students:
An email was sent round to class lists of students within the department to advertise each event. Suggestion of invite to be displayed across more platforms of communication. For example, the department has recently launched a Twitter account and each class year has a Facebook page. This would be useful as not all students check their emails regularly, and displaying the details of the event across as many means as deemed appropriate would make it more notifiable to students.
- Number of Attendants:
Launch of SMART saw 53 attendants but the Alumni networking event only saw 20-25 students. These events lasted around 2 hours and varied the time of day. The Annual Lecture was originally planned for the Development and Consolidation Week but the guest speaker could not attend. It was rescheduled to November of Semester 1 but only saw staff and alumni attend, very few students. This could be due to the fact that students felt swamped with work, especially with examinations approaching in December. The event was held in the evening from approximately 6-8pm.
From the department having around 500-600 undergraduates, the turn out for events lacked significant numbers. This could be enhanced by a student-led committee to enable a support base from fellow peers to attend. Also, events could be more rounded and general to allow relevance for 1st/2nd year students to attend.
- Feedback:
Feedback from events included the number of emails sent out in relation to the number of students that then went on to open the email and thus attended the event. The most recent Engage with Strathclyde week in May 2017 could have been more successful. Feedback from the Alumni Event organised by the Careers Service in March 2016 was very positive. Students were asked to note down what they had learnt from the session that they perhaps weren't aware of before.

These included:

- Unaware of the role of an Actuary, and the years it takes to become qualified.
 - What grade is good for your Bachelors and the opportunities that follow.
 - PhDs are pass or fail, some students feel academia is their ideal career path.
 - Not knowing what route to take after your degree is okay.
 - Would have liked to hear more about the technical aspects of each job.
 - Differences between a real job and a graduate program.
 - So much focus on teaching, interesting to see other people in different fields.
- Improvements:
In terms of the Engage with Strathclyde week, it would be better to target our own alumni and to advertise the department's own programs within the event would be desirable.
Following on from a previous interview with Pure and Applied Chemistry, Mathematics and Statistics would also encourage an email to be sent out to recent graduates' student email accounts before they expire to gauge what sort of industry they are going/have gone into.

Q2 – Established Contacts:

It has been difficult to establish contacts out with the university as the department doesn't have a database of alumni. This means there is no platform for communication between department and alumni.

Q3 – Established Companies:

Again, the department is unaware of where the graduates end up unless told personally. Hard to keep up which companies are hiring to communicate to students where they are eligible to apply to.

Q4 – Staff Involvement:

Elizabeth is happy to represent the department of Mathematics and Statistics where she could pioneer some sort of student committee to assist in the planning and delivering of the prospective event.

Q5 – Any other comments:

Desirable to have some sort of database to allow the department to interact with their alumni, which is currently not established. The ability to have a streamlined communication network to ease the organisation of future events. Informal contacts would be useful also.

It is noted that a student survey would be useful to determine what students are wanting to gain from this event, a good time to do this has been suggested during the induction meetings with each year group during the Welcome and Development week in first semester. After this has been designed, the year coordinators can distribute questionnaires to collect during the inductions.

Thoughts on what type event this department could hold be focused on a speed-networking session. Dr Young within the department indicated that he could ask a student to discuss what actuarial work involves and Dr Corson voiced that he could get in touch with a few others from a good spread of backgrounds. Since the annual lecture is currently held in the Consolidation and Development week, should look into the possibility of incorporating the two.

3.3. Computer and Information Sciences – *Dr Alex Coddington*

Q1 – Previous Alumni Events: **NO**

- Why?

No specific alumni events have been held previously, although department has several established contacts. These are members of staff who are Strathclyde alumni who still have contacts with prior course mates in other fields of industry. A lot of graduates are employed by JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley and Verant Identification Systems. Here, selected students are invited to present their 3rd year group project to allow companies to scout talent for prospective recruiting.

However, the department does hold an Annual IT Fair. At this event students present their projects and companies (JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley mostly) use ex-graduates to attend and present about their experiences first hand. This acts as a networking experience for students and is a more formal approach of an event which is being established in this project. The department consists of around 600 core students (including postgraduate

students). There are also students enrolled on joint degrees (for example, Mathematics and Computer Science) where they take half of the classes within the department.

- Establish Engagement:

Previous engagement between staff and students for previous IT Fairs have been initiated through the use of their student email. Students have set up their own class pages on Facebook but no members of staff have access to these, possibly something that can be looked into. There is speculation that students visit Anna Selwood in Careers' Facebook page to research upcoming events of interest.

- Previous Attempts:

Special departmental careers events have been held in the past, but they have always been not as well attended as they would have hoped. These events look into enhancing students' CVs and generating interest into students applying to industrial/work placements or graduate schemes.

- Student/Staff Queries:

The suggestion of a targeted alumni and student event has never surfaced within the department. This makes it hard to gauge level of interest with students to deliver a successful event.

Q2 – Established Contacts:

The department has members of staff that are alumni. They have particular connections with others who have gone on to work in industry, meaning they keep in touch. There are also industrial advisors that are alumni who could be relevant individuals to communicate with regarding the prospective event.

JP Morgan is integrated within Strathclyde where they offer an optional class that they teach to undergraduates. The lecturers and tutors of this class usually tend to be alumni.

William (Billy) Wallace is involved with Knowledge Exchange within the department and has contacts with the industry who may be possible alumni to branch out to.

Q3 – Established Companies:

Certain degree courses take part in compulsory or encouraged placements through their university career. MEng Computer Science enrol in a three month summer placement either between their 3rd and 4th years or between their 4th and 5th years as undergraduates. To remain on this course, students are required to achieve a yearly average of 60%. This means a lot of these students are focused and driven into acquiring a placement with reputable companies. BSc Computer Engineering students participate in a one year industrial placement aligned with – for instance – JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley and Verant who have been previously mentioned.

Q4 – Staff Involvement:

Alex regards herself as being the best contact for the department of Computer and Information Sciences. She would be happy to coordinate a student committee within her department to assist with the upcoming event in January.

She also referred to an upcoming recruitment in August for new teaching staff within the department. She thought she would mention this to new members for their possible involvement within the project. She noted that a lot of staff are involved in research so are often quite tied up in their current commitments.

Q5 – Any other comments:

Comments included other members of staff to note within the department who could be of use. This began with Dr John Levine who is the Associate Dean for Learning Enhancement, he is mentioned for having Facebook pages as a platform for him and his students to interact upon. Certain members of staff within Computer and Information Sciences are Strathclyde alumni such as Dr Murray Wood and Dr William (Billy) Wallace who are notably easy to contact by email and telephone means through working at Strathclyde currently.

Thoughts on what type event this department could hold would be based on either a speed-networking event and/or presentations from alumni about their work placements and experience since graduating.

3.4. Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences – *Dr Anne Boyter*

Q1 – Previous Alumni Events: **YES**

- What were these events?

Events for the department of Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences (SIPBS) are always split into two disciplines: Pharmacy (MPharm) and Biomedical Sciences (BMS). This is because the two degrees are vastly different, where MPharm is a more vocational degree than BMS where pharmacists go through professional registration. Also, the department is very large with around 1200 undergraduates (around equal split between MPharm and BMS) and 200 postgraduates where it makes sense to hold separate events.

For MPharm, one event involves alumni taking students for experiential learning. This allows students to apply what they have learnt in lectures in a clinical setting. The event is held within the SIPBS department. There is also a specific careers fair which is held in week 4/5 of first semester. This event is usually held on a Friday afternoon offsite where students' timetables can be cleared. Pharmacists are given lectures which are delivered by some alumni, but are not necessarily chosen since they are alumni. Assigned invites through personal contacts within the department.

For BMS, a new event was started this year. This was held in the Consolidation and Development Week in January and was a full day event open to all undergraduate students. It was designed as a careers fair, where the department brought in graduates and contacts from industry to help lead the event in the Barony Hall on campus. The event had a mixture of brief talks and speed-networking and was organised by Final Year Coordinator and Associate Dean, Katharine (Kris) Carter.

- Were they staff/student/alumni led?

Most events are instigated by staff, however the MPharm careers fair was planned and delivered by Anna Selwood in Careers. Katharine (Kris) Carter organised the recent BMS event, where she allowed students the opportunity to assist in the run up.

- Advertisement to students:

All events have been advertised through the use of MyPlace and timetabling. This is since all MPharm students have the same course so clearing an afternoon in their timetable allows all students to attend. There has been no attempt previously to advertise upcoming events over social media platforms.

The department has an MPharm Twitter account which acts as a tannoy for announcements to students. Therefore, this account has never been associated with the use for advertising but more for the idea of displaying achievements and congratulating students on their graduations. There is no social media platform instigated for BMS students at the moment through the department. It is known that students connect with each other through Facebook pages, but departmental pages have yet to be established.

- Number of Attendants:

For the experiential learning in MPharm, up to 15 pharmacists are involved. Not every event is advertised for students to attend as sometimes it is more aimed at alumni. For the MPharm careers event, around 140 students in each year attend. This is since it has been timetabled within their week, making it well attended. The BMS careers event held in January saw 400-500 attendees making a vast turn-out for the department.

- Feedback:

SIPBS have developed a lot of feedback forms over their previous events for MPharm so have tapered the event to its optimum. For the BMS event, since this year was the initial start there may be improvements to follow in successive occasions. This includes the possibility of scaling down the event as it saw a significant number of attendees.

- Improvements:

The department feels for MPharm that they have addressed all previous issues and delivers a successful careers event to students. In terms of BMS, Katharine (Kris) Carter could be contacted to discuss what she would have done differently in the organising and delivering of their past event.

Q2 – Established Contacts:

MPharm have a lot of informal contacts where alumni stay in touch with department. This is since graduates feel comfortable being contacted by previous lecturers who they know personally and have been previously taught by. Alumni also get into contact with the department when they are community pharmacists wanting to advertise Saturday jobs to current MPharm students. This acts as great experience for students as they are working part time for people who may end up employing them after they have obtained their degree.

From the previous event held in the Consolidation and Development Week for BMS students, Kris Carter is likely to have established a few links with alumni who attended. All contacts have tended to have been established through the use of the department's personal contacts or through the Careers Service.

Q3 – Established Companies:

MPharm graduates have been known to go on and work for the NHS, Boots, Lloyds Pharmacy, Bannermans Pharmacy and the Pharmaceutical Industry. Whereas, BMS degrees are employed into different parts of the NHS, into industry or continue in further education in the form of a PhD. The department have established contacts across a range of companies and industries to produce a wide representation of careers at their fairs.

Q4 – Staff Involvement:

Anne has allocated herself as the best contact to reach out to for department. This means she can direct enquiries towards any members of staff she feels would be useful when needed.

Q5 – Any other comments:

Currently, there are no postgraduate alumni events. This is since the department is finding it difficult to get hold of alumni addresses after they have graduated. Possibly due to Data Protection issues, but mostly the department have found the use of informal contacts to work well.

In terms of students involved within the department, there is a Pharmacy Society affiliated by the Student Union. It is unknown if there is a similar set-up for BMS students.

It is unknown what added value any additional events for this department would be put across to undergraduate students. Several events are already in place that the students and staff feel that already serve their purpose and support their journey through their degree and transitioning into employment. Possibly more looking at gaining advice from the success of SIPBS' previous alumni events and taking their procedures on board to deliver events for the departments where these events are not so frequent or established.

3.5. Physics – *Dr Nigel Langford*

Q1 – Previous Alumni Events: **YES**

- What were these events?

Previous events have been focused on prospective undergraduate students looking to apply for Physics at Strathclyde. This is because the department feels that the majority are unaware of what kind of careers they can go into with a degree in Physics (non-vocational), so provides an insight into possibilities. Here, alumni give talks on what fields of industry they have gone into, since graduating, to inspire students of the potential after gaining their degree.

Around ten years ago, the department held an alumni undergraduate event for students. This acted as a careers matching service, where students filled in a questionnaire to allocate them career possibilities. They also received talks from SNP politician Alex Neil and an NHS correspondent who are both Physics alumni. Also, there is a Physics society which is very proactive in organising their own alumni/industry events for fellow students. It is unknown what the exact events have entailed as staff are not involved in proceedings.

- Were they staff/student/alumni led?

All events within the department have been staff-driven with the exception of events coordinated by the Physics society. The department launched a website for 4 years with the intention of students using it for careers advice, but it was taken down after only one person using it. After this, the department have been known to direct students towards the careers service for any further advice.

- **Advertisement to students:**

Students have tended to be notified by email from the careers service or the department for events in the past. Again, social media platforms have not been instigated when staff have driven the coordination of alumni events.

A yearly talk in lectures has also allowed students to see the statistical outcomes of their degree. This has involved a three-way split between the head of department talking about possibilities, then Nigel going on into reasons for looking into these and then it is concluded with a member of staff from careers adding pointers for companies they are eligible to apply to.
- **Number of Attendants:**

Around 60-70 students out of 300 within the department attended the alumni undergraduate event coordinated by staff in the past. This is a 20-23% turn out of students.
- **Feedback:**

The department has not formed any formal document for acquiring feedback after events, but events seem to have been well received by attendents. For prospective undergraduates, after the open evening they send out an email of thanks to keep names on a database. They know that an event has been successful in the turn-around of applications for the department by name recognition. This event also provides a different atmosphere compared to open days, as opposed to students given a tour of the teaching spaces for example.
- **Improvements:**

The department feels that their approach seems to work so would not necessarily adapt how they go about organising alumni events. Since everyone knows what they are doing, they do not feel a drastic change is needed.

Q2 – Established Contacts:

Within Physics, they have revamped an alumni webpage in the past couple of months which sees a lot of interest from graduates. Here, they have an established database to contact their alumni easily for an upcoming event. This includes a mixture of recent and not so recent graduates from a range of companies. Access to names of alumni to contact is

granted by contacting Nigel in the future. Old students are keen to help their department and to volunteer information to upcoming graduates.

It has been noted that it may be of use to get in contact with some current postgraduate students to give their insight into further education. There are currently around 20 taught and 50 research postgraduate students enrolled at Strathclyde. From the Higher Education Leaver Survey, it was found that around 50% of Physics graduates go into further education such as PhDs or teaching.

Q3 – Established Companies:

Graduates have been employed by companies including NHS, Thales and laser companies such as Coherence Scotland and Cascade Technologies. A few have gone into the banking industry. This is since Physics degrees teach students to be numerate and literate, so they are suited to a number of roles where these qualities are highly desirable.

Q4 – Staff Involvement:

Both Nigel Langford and Melanie McInnannay are happy to be respondents for the department. Nigel does tend to travel abroad a lot as he has a role in faculty involved in student recruitment, so Melanie may be more helpful in immediate circumstances.

Q5 – Any other comments:

In terms of coordinating a student project team, it has been suggested to contact the Physics society to recruit individuals. Their student committee has (or used to have) a person appointed for being responsible for careers aspects within the society.

Thoughts on what type event this department could hold are entirely open as staff feel like they should just go with the flow. Perhaps feedback from a student survey will give direction on what they are looking to achieve from this sort of event.

3.6 Alumni and Development Office – Mrs Suzanne Favre

Q1 – Events where students have interacted with alumni previously: **YES**

- Who held these?

Usually staff would initiate events between alumni for the interest of students. Previously, Dr Debbie Willison has been heavily involved in trying to get students to coordinate events solely. However, **these events have never been entirely successful**. Nicola Sutherland, who is the Careers Adviser for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS), has a great deal of background in this area of organising **alumni events** and it has been suggested to get in contact with her during the semester when the intern returns.

- Contact details obtained:

For best practise, it is advised to obtain contact details of alumni through the Alumni and Development (A&D) team. This is since the department holds the central database for alumni, making it the most accessible and efficient way to communicate.  It is best to have the A&D team manage the alumni invites as sometimes if certain are contacted when they are prospective donors, it can cause confusion ~~and the risk of losing donations during telethons.~~

- Contact with Alumni:

There are various platforms that the A&D team have for reaching out to alumni. There is an alumni group page on LinkedIn (a social media site designed for connecting and interacting in the business world). The team promotes into this page, but it has been hard to interact with members of the page and it is not the best means for contacting. Instead, there is the University of Strathclyde LinkedIn page which can post notifications on the news feed. This makes it easier to advertise upcoming events and projects to prospective attendees. The A&D team can also **direct message on this site to make it directed to certain users**. The one-to-one messages have been proven to have a good response rate, maybe adding a more personal touch. Previously to this, letters were sent by post to try and reconnect with our alumni.

- Advertisement to students:

The A&D team tend to be responsible and manage the contact needed between the university and alumni. However, in the past the departments have managed the invitations and advertisement to students.

- Was your department heavily involved?

It has depended on the input needed for certain events to take place, they are very happy to support in whatever way is needed. Particularly in areas of trying to arrange speakers. It is of interest to set-up a table for A&D team to gain contact up to date contact details of alumni who attend. This is since it is increasingly difficult to get a hold of these details once they have graduated.

Q2 – Steps in planning to take into consideration:

Timescale is very important in the lead up to events:

- Get a date agreed
- Begin working back from there to time in other aspects
- Secure speakers firstly
- Draft invitation lists
- Allocate a sensible split between the number of students and alumni
- Know what you are asking of alumni in invites
- Know what the aim of the event is
- Know your audience and what you are trying to portray
- Specify what alumni contribution is needed
- Come to A&D department sooner rather than later for support
- Invitations for events should be sent out 6 weeks in advance

Q3 – Working in the department office:

The department have offered a spare desk in their office, which is available on request. This will make it easier for the run through the aspects of planning during the first semester. It is suggested to allocate an hour each Wednesday to cover all relevant queries. Suzanne Favre and Marie Hansen will be the governing contacts when getting in touch with A&D team. Marie is in charge of prospective departmental reunions in the university so is experienced in the organisation of alumni events.

Q4 – Any other comments:

On attempt to engage with specific A&D contacts, it has been noted that it is useful to check if there has been any previous communications. This means it can be gauged how keen they are in keeping in contact with the university, and thus speaking at or attending an event.

Data Protection rights are very important to take into consideration. As effect of May 2018, new GDPR legislation is taking place. ~~This means that the university is classed as a 'hybrid institution' where they only have the right to contact individuals for certain things. Alumni will have to opt in to receive information from the university, which could result in the number of contacts to deplete. There would also be the inability to send out marketing emails, making it difficult to advertise. Although this will not affect the upcoming event in January, it has the possibility of hindering successive events of this nature. Therefore, the university is looking into other means of contact. Such as there is no permission needed for postal communications. As highlighted earlier, it would be praised if there was an opportunity for alumni to opt in for future communications at events.~~

At an allocation of £75 per event, it has been noted as a low budget. However, this has been assigned as a contribution towards an event where departments can choose to add any additional financial support. This is due to refreshments for guests being quite expensive to produce. It is also dependent on the venue of the events, as some rooms on campus are cheaper to hire than others. It has been instigated that if the events were held on site, being a part of the Science Faculty, that it wouldn't be as pricey. Also, there is an expectation of a low number of attendees to make reason for a low budget. The A&D team suggested allocating five separate rooms in the Technology and Innovation Centre to run simultaneously with the opportunity for everyone to join together for refreshments and networking at the end. This would mean if certain departments have a small turn out, that it can be a more informal gathering to finish.

It is important to try and retain a good ratio of students to alumni. This should be thought out to try and invite the right number of alumni depending on student demand. This can be obtained by creating a student survey for each department to gather what they want to gain from an alumni event. This can also help in being specific in alumni invite for what we want them to present. It has also been stated that it is important to gauge what each

department is after, and an idea of what the event should look like should be clear by the end of summer.

The A&D team provided a document which displayed the relative number of contactable alumni from the science faculty that they have within their database and LinkedIn. These were also targeted as Glasgow based and being a recent graduate. The output is depicted in the Appendix section 7.4.

3.7 Careers Service – Mrs Anna Selwood

Q1 – Previous alumni events: **YES**

- Advertisements:

It is important to feel that an event is backed by academic staff, their promoting is noticed by students. A point of making an event compulsory or nonoptional to students make them also more obliged to attend. When this is instigated, it is usually around a 2/3rds or 50% turn out. This is sometimes less when academic staff are not promoting the event to students through email or MyPlace. Any social media platform to get message across to students would help get the word out. There is also the opportunity to create an advertisement in the form of a slide for an event to be displayed on plasma screens in faculty buildings.

- What makes students attend:

Previously Anna has seen a SIPBS event cancelled as there were not enough sign-ups to go ahead. After establishing why this was the case, it was found because no NHS biomedical scientists were scheduled to attend. So this indicates that including typical job roles associated with their degree entices students to come along and take their advice. Additionally, that they attend because someone will be present that is in a career that they are interested in. Other ways are because students have been informed by academic staff that their attendance is compulsory and valuable.

It is important to also address more diverse career prospects. For example, continuing into academia in the form of a PhD or any irregular job that is not necessarily directly related to their degree.

Students will be more likely to attend when awkwardness is minimised. Anna has experimented with a range of alumni events where one consisted of six alumni being invited to present a powerpoint guided by a briefing statement she formulated. She found this event quite passive for students as they were just getting talked at in an uncomfortable environment.

A better approach has been in the form of assigning students into groups when they arrive. She gave an introduction to the event and welcomed the guests before the speed-networking session commenced. This then allowed each alumni per group around 10 minutes to talk around the brief with the opportunity for students to ask questions afterwards before a bell was sounded which prompted the alumni guests to move on. Students felt more at ease in this environment and the event, overall, had a better response. A drawback to this approach, is that the alumni have to repeat themselves around the room which may put them off attending.

Another perspective to consider is making an event suitable for all year groups to attend. This is important as there are early opportunities that they may not be aware of that companies that available. These include insight weeks, or spring weeks in banking. Making it open up to students who are not necessarily in their penultimate year of study.

- When are these events held?

A good way of allocating time for an event is to free up students' timetables. However, this is not always possible as some degree courses have optional classes which would clash. Through arranging to have a date in the Consolidation and Development week in January means that the only events that could clash are departmental inductions or the annual ski trip.

The service have tended to use the Insight Institute within the Collins Building as a venue for events in the past. This is because this is free of charge and been successful in the past. It is advised to get in touch about booking this space early as it is in high demand. Previous problems with hiring venue out in evening due to an additional security charge which can be resolved. A previous event for SIPBS in the Barony Hall proved quite expensive to rent as it is free for a lecture but not an event. Another space to think about booking out are three interconnecting rooms on the first floor of the Hamnett Wing.

Q2 – Communication channels:

In 2015, the A&D Office allocated a budget for an event which helped pay for the catering. This also helped their department to get involved in gaining information from alumni and they assisted with sending out invites to chosen alumni formally. In the preparation for this event, an intern was appointed to help arrange the event with Anna where they sourced contacts through the use of LinkedIn. This was a platform to pinpoint certain alumni in different fields to give students a more rounded view of where their degree could lead them to. She also approached student representatives to help in the proceedings.

Possibility of posting events in Careers Calendar where students are able to sign up for events. This would create another channel but with the drawback that it would not necessarily be department specific, where it is open for any degree discipline to attend. Any addition of an event in the Careers department is also uploaded onto the university app. Although, it is unknown how much this app is used for that purpose.

Q3 – Strategies in planning:

Anna provided an example timeline (see Appendix 7.5.) for a previous alumni event collaborated with Mathematics and Statistics. This had about a 6/7 week turnaround but since the event is scheduled shortly after the Christmas break, it is paramount to give a lot of notice. This is because students would not be checking their student email regularly during their time off.

Need to keep in mind when asking alumni to attend that they may need to take around 4 hours out of their day. An ideal time previously noted for alumni to attend is between 5.30-7.30pm, but this may not be relevant as event is in a free week for students in January. Should pinpoint what alumni to target, to allow for a more focused event. Sometimes alumni are worried that preparing for an event involves a lot of work that they may not have the time for. Employers are often happy for new graduates to attend these events as it is a personal development opportunity for them to grow from. A format used in the past of brief bulletpoints for speakers to outline has been provided:

- The route your career has taken
- Why you were successful in securing your current job
- Whether you consider your course to have been a key factor in your ability to get the job you have and, if so, to what extent
- What your current job involves
- What you like about your current job
- What advice you would offer to students who want to get into your area of work
- What you did at university to help secure a job in this sector (extra-curricular + networks, any other info)
- How you hope to see your career develop in the future

Q4 – Student benefits:

Feedback from previous events have highlighted what students have gained from interacting with alumni:

Physics 10th March 2016

- Often encouraged to go into research after their degree, opened up other possibilities.
- Discussing of interview techniques
- Hints for applying outwith Scotland for better opportunities
- Use of Careers Service in future
- Learning about science outreach programmes

Mathematics and Statistics 24th March 2015

- Enjoyed hearing from people in different fields
- Felt they could relate more to younger graduates
- Made students feel better about not knowing what career they want to pursue
- Opened eyes to different careers not previously considered.

Q5 – Enhancement in CV for student committee:

There are lots of transferrable skills to gain from a student signing up to be a part of a committee. Communication skills from working in a team which can be applied in employment to team meetings and are key in developing positive work relationships amongst colleagues (University of Manchester, 2017). Project management and problem solving skills enable leadership qualities to develop which is a desired quality amongst employers. It also makes a great difference when a student has volunteered themselves to be involved rather than being forced into it.

Q6 – Any further advice:

Strive to make event as easy as possible for alumni, give them plenty of notice and guidance of what is expected of them on the day. Advised to stick to a networking-based event over a careers fair. Make the event more casual and informative rather than for the purpose of recruitment. This does not mean employers cannot bring leaflets to advertise their graduate schemes or so forth.

4. Conclusions

Previous events have been focused on networking opportunities between current students and alumni. This has allowed students to broaden their horizons on what direction a science degree can take them. Informal approaches surrounding refreshments has been well received since students feel they can ask questions without seeming inapt in front of an audience. Leaning towards a speed-networking orientated event which has been well received in the past. This would mean around 6 alumni from different fields would be asked to come and rotate their talks amongst groups of students.

Since a large number of students tend to be involved in sports on a Wednesday afternoon, it should be looked at forming an event on a weekday or weeknight. Since this is during the Consolidation and Development week in January, it would also need to avoid any other commitments such as departmental inductions. A possibility of a simultaneously running of departmental events over one afternoon could bring everyone together after for refreshments and enhanced networking opportunities. This would only be able to run smoothly if rooms are booked out closely together, possibly Hamnett Wing or Technology and Innovation Centre.

The opportunity for students to register before attending events could be useful to gauge the level of demand within each department. This would also allocate the correct amount of refreshments to save on budget. The Careers Service offer the opportunity to advertise an event within their careers calendar which is available online or through the university app where students can sign-up. Some events could be more rounded and targeted to all years instead of 3rd/4th years to allow younger students to engage and establish what sort of direction they want to lead towards the end of their university career. This would allow students to plan ahead and be more prepared to apply for the job they want when they are eligible to.

For sending out invites to prospective alumni attendants, the Alumni and Development team will handle those proceedings. This will prevent confusion between several different emails being sent to prospective donors, thus them being swarmed by the university trying to get in contact. Contacts can also be reached via LinkedIn.

For the department of SIPBS, the possibility of looking into not holding an event. Therefore, they could serve as a contact and resource for setting up events in other departments to reach same success rate. This is since other events are already in place but there could be a possibility of looking into establishing an alumni event for postgraduate students instead. This is since an event of this kind is not yet established, so could add another dimension to the events that they hold.

For contacting alumni in years to come for the planning of successive events, the new GDPR legislation should be taken into account to follow the correct procedure.

5. Objectives for Moving Forward

- **Establish a Student Survey**

A survey directed at students within departments would gather information of what they are looking to gain from an alumni event. Look into constructing survey upon intern returning in September, where a question within could query about any students looking to get involved in the project. This would also aid the establishment of a student committee, by those who are interested leaving their contact information. Possibility of linking in a questionnaire for year coordinators to distribute to students in induction meetings/lectures to gain prompt feedback.

- **Forming an 'Alumni Club' within departments**

For future communications, an Alumni Club within each of the five departments would be a useful resource. This could be established by asking members of staff to conduct an email questionnaire for students who have just graduated to relay information of their graduate schemes. Student email accounts do not expire until three months after graduation, so look to email during the summer. Here, a database for staff could be created to allow them to engage with their alumni.

- **Explore grounds for advertising over social media**

Engaging with students over social media could display the information more effectively, without them having to log on to their student email. Most departments have class pages on Facebook which allows fellow students/staff to post notifications for upcoming events. Other grounds could include exploring LinkedIn within the Alumni and Development department and the use of Twitter in some departments such as Mathematics and Statistics. Additional point of notice could be a slide on a plasma screen within a faculty building.

- **Timeline for planning of event**

It is advised to develop a timeline alongside organising to prepare future projects of what they need to do by a relative deadline. This includes settling a venue, securing speakers, organising catering and sending out invites to students and alumni.

Advised to look into booking a venue as soon as possible to avoid disappointment, possibility of Insight Institute within Collins Building.

- **Establish alumni/student contribution**

Important to determine what we are asking from alumni in invites to inform A&D team in advance. Whether this may be that we would like them to present, or take part in a speed-networking event or just to be a panel for students to ask them questions. Need to also highlight the advantages of them supporting an event of this kind, how it benefits them personally.

Equally, for coordinating a student committee it should be outlined what their role will be and how this opportunity benefits their career prospects. Also detail in invite to students of what to expect from the event, so it is more focused.

- **Other members of staff to contact**

Nicola Sutherland – careers adviser for HASS, although currently off on maternity leave she will return in first semester of 2017/2018 and is a good contact recommended by A&D team who they have coordinated a lot with in the past. Advised to meet with her for a meeting to discuss her previous approaches and strategies in tackling an event of this kind.

Dr William (Billy) Wallace – lecturer within the department of Computer and Information Sciences who is an alumni to Strathclyde himself. Notable contact for reaching out to other alums. Also Dr John Levine within this department has an established platform for contacting students over social media.

Katharine (Kris) Carter – Final Year Coordinator and Associate Dean in the Department of SIPBS that has recently coordinated an alumni BMS careers event with the help of current students. This has a similar structure in terms of establishing a student committee, useful advice may be gained from a prospective meeting.

6. References

Article title: Engage - University of Strathclyde

Website title: Strath.ac.uk

URL: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/workwithus/engage/>

Article title: Communication skills (The University of Manchester)

Website title: Careers.manchester.ac.uk

URL: <http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/experience/skills/communication/>

7. Appendix

7.1. Staff Departmental Interview Questions

Q1 – Have there been any previous alumni events within your department?

If **no**, why?

- How do you suggest we establish engagement within your department?
- Has there been previous attempts to make an event that were unsuccessful?
- Have students/staff ever queried about events within your department?

If **yes**, what were these events?

- Were they student/staff/alumni led?
- Who was invited to attend?
- How long did these events last?
- How many attendees?
- Did you receive feedback on the events that took place?
- Any improvements or parts that could have been tackled differently now looking back?

Q2 – We would like to gather alumni contacts (preferably local). Can you provide contact details for anyone you think that would be interested in being involved in an upcoming networking event? (Tbc, but likely to take place in the Consolidation & Development week in January 2018)

Q3 – Are there any companies that you could suggest that have a connection to your department who have maybe worked with the university previously?

Q4 – Would you, yourself, like to be involved in the student/alumni networking event that would take place?

If **yes**, what aspects would you like to be involved in? (e.g. planning, co-ordinating attendants)

7.2. Alumni and Development Interview Questions

Q1 – Have there been any similar events where students have interacted with recent Alumni in the past?

If **yes**, who held these events?

- How were the contact details of relevant Alumni reached by the organisers?
- What were the means of communicating with the Alumni? i.e. email/phone

- How were these events advertised to students if you know?
- Were the Alumni and Development team heavily involved in the planning and delivering of these events?

If **no**, do you think this is a good idea?

- What are your thoughts on how this may work?
- What means do you advise is best to reach certain Alumni? (By certain, I mean recent Science graduates)

Q2 – What steps in planning these sort of events should be taken into consideration?

Q3 – Would it be possible to work with your team on occasions to pinpoint prospective Alumni?

Q4 – Any additional comments?

7.3. Careers Service Interview Questions

Q1 – In terms of previous alumni events that you have held for students:

- How have these been advertised? (for example social media/email platforms)
- What do you think makes students attend?
- What sort of events have you found to be most popular with students?
- Do you hold events on a Wednesday afternoon/weekday evenings/weekends?

Q2 – What communication channels are available for the marketing of events?

Q3 – What strategies are involved in the planning of events? (e.g. timeline)

Q4 – How can students benefit from alumni events?

Q5 – How could being involved on a student committee for planning and delivering the event enhance their CV?

Q6 – Any further advice on delivering a successful event for alumni and students combined?

7.4. A&D Relevant Contactable Science Graduates

Alumni Database – Glasgow based Science Graduates

Year of Graduation	Number of emailable Science graduates
2012	204
2013	349
2014	322
2015	409
2016	459
Grand Total	1744

LinkedIn (indicated based in Glasgow)

Year of Graduation	Linked with University on LinkedIn	Member of LinkedIn alumni group
2012	153	38
2013	178	44
2014	188	49
2015	217	54
2016	247	37
Grand Total	983	222

7.5. Timeline for Mathematics Alumni Event March 2016

06-Feb	13-Feb	20-Feb	27-Feb
Save the date to students (Anna)	Linkedin Profiles developed	Linkedin profiles checked (if required)	Alumni speakers finalised
Briefing for alumni finalised	Contact AO with list of alumni req	Alumni messaged	Request for alumni biog sent
Outline for event finalised	Identify alumni to invite, notify Anna - All	Booking for event set up	Event promotion
	Message for alumni via Linkedin agreed	Event & booking promoted to students: MyPlace/posters in dept?	
	Linkedin networking group joined		
	Strath Alumni Linkedin group joined		
06-Mar	13-Mar	20-Mar	27-Mar
Confirmation of participation sent to alumni	Biogs from alumni received	Evaluation forms ready (alumni/students)	Event!!
Event promotion	Shout outs to promote event	Catering booked	Event complete!
	Booking closed?	Student info sent out	Evaluations analysed
		Final briefing sent to alumni	