

## **Career Center at Swansea University**

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During my presentation I will be describing features of Careers Service operations, structure and institutional context at Swansea University in Wales, UK. Employability outcomes have emerged in recent years as a significant performance indicator within UK Higher Education. Many UK universities include employment related subjects within the curriculum, a significant number of these courses are award bearing. Two years ago the UK government published the influential Leitch report, which exhorted UK universities to more actively engage in promoting the 'skills agenda'. As a result many more universities have addressed the need to design curricula and encourage initiatives that demonstrate a stronger commitment towards meeting employers' skills requirements. Students at UK universities all pay £3,000 a year in course fees. As a result many students leave university with considerable debt, increasing their need to find well paid graduate jobs. As a result of these influences most UK universities have invested in developing well resourced Careers and Employability Services. Pressure to find suitable graduate employment opportunities will increase in 2009 as a result of the global economic down turn and the credit crunch in the UK.

At Swansea we have developed our services extensively over the past three years. We offer an all day drop-in service for individual student information, advice and guidance interviews, five days a week. We have a team of four Careers Advisers. Thanks to a European Social Fund scheme, Go Wales, we employ a team of three staff to provide help with paid work experience placements for all students, and later in 2009 we will be offering an accredited Personal Skills Award, available for all students with modules in the following areas, Career Planning, Enterprise Skills and Professional Development.

We are also funded to provide guidance interviews to any graduate living in Wales, either in person or by email. Within the team we employ a Marketing Officer to organise employer events such as an annual Careers Fair and many employer presentations on campus. We also employ a Personal Development Planning Officer to promote reflection on learning and skills or PDP, delivered mainly through an E Portfolio, PebblePad. Our Information Manager oversees our website, our virtual learning environment, or VLE, BlackBoard, and our extensive digital information resources.

Virtually all Careers Services in UK universities are members of Agcas, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, established over 40 years ago. We pay a modest annual subscription and in return we have access to a wide range of resources, including training opportunities and networking events. I am currently Agcas Director of Research and I chair an active Research Group promoting practitioner research activities, evidence based and award bearing. Agcas holds a bi-ennial conference for members and an annual two day Heads of Service conference.