

Committee for Employment and Learning

Inquiry into Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in Northern Ireland

Further evidence from The Open University as requested by the Committee

- **A detailed breakdown of the types of institutions, that the University's students have attended such as schools, Further Education colleges, etc. and details of the geographical spread of students across Northern Ireland including by constituency when the information is available.**

Response

The Open University does not currently gather information on the types of institutions that students have attended. It does, however, collect information on the levels of qualification that students have on entry, and which is provided in Appendix 1.

Constituency data is not currently available but we have provided details of the geographical spread of students across Northern Ireland by postcode in Appendix 2.

- **Details of any models of good practice used in England, Scotland and Wales.**

Response

Operating in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and The Republic of Ireland, The Open University is uniquely placed to inform and advice the Committee about practice outside of Northern Ireland.

Scotland

The [Scottish Higher Education Employability Forum \(SHEEF\)](#) is a strategic partnership which aims to advance the development of employability, employer engagement and entrepreneurship across the Scottish HE sector. The SHEEF mission is to provide an authoritative voice, knowledge base and central resource for employability related issues and practices in Scotland and to inform and advise on the future of HE and government policy. Central to this mission and vision is the notion that Higher Education delivers employable graduates not just through the provision of skills, but also through the inculcation of attributes and dispositions.

The Scottish Funding council strategy [Learning to Work 2](#) is to promote, enhance and improve employability for graduates from Scotland's universities. The strategy supports initiatives and practices in higher education which contribute to enhanced graduate career and employment opportunities.

SHEEF and SFC work together to provide four work placement projects (links below) which build upon extensive employability work developed through LTW1 initiatives and practices, including the Employability Coordinators Network (ECN) and the Scottish Higher Education Employability Network (SHEEN), which was the forerunner to SHEEF.

A report on the placement schemes is available on the SHEEF website, and follows an event that was held on 31st May 2012 entitled 'HE student work placement in Scotland: developing professional learners and employable graduates'.

[Education into Enterprise \(EIE\)](#)

E-Placement Scotland

Third Sector Internships Scotland (TSIS)

Queen Margaret University and The Open University in Scotland coordinate this project.

Making the Most of Masters (MMM)

The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services hosts a website entitled [Graduate Careers Scotland](#). The website is designed and managed by staff members who work for the careers services of the sixteen Scottish universities which make up the membership of AGCAS Scotland, the Scottish arm of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) which is a UK and Ireland association.

The website offers information and interactive opportunities including a virtual careers fair, a shared vacancy service for graduates – all universities contribute to this except Queen Margaret, RGU and The Open University in Scotland at present – a graduate placement programme, graduate profiles and labour market information.

Wales

There are no formal good practice arrangements for higher education institutions and schools working together for CEIAG in Wales. However, all HE widening access/ reaching higher type projects have Welsh universities working with schools and there is usually some employability content/activity.

A colleague from The Open University in Wales attended an event at the Welsh Assembly in November 2012 at which the Deputy Minister for Skills and Education launched the new remit for Careers Wales. Under this remit there will be an expectation that University Careers Services in Wales will work much more closely with CEIAG provided to schools and young people. Welsh University Careers Services will be invited to the start of consultations on linking up delivery in Feb 2013. This activity stemmed from a career services review at the Welsh Assembly, where Open University colleagues in Wales presented evidence, and resulted in the publication Future Ambitions: Developing Careers Services in Wales (Appendix 3).

- **Details of the university's on-line forums moderated by careers advisers**

Response

The Open University Careers Service produces a report per forum, therefore unfortunately there is no single overall forum report. However for information, we attach two forum reports, in order to give a real flavour of how the process works.

The first report is of the 'Quick Queries' forum, which is run each year. It allows students to post quick questions to the service (see Appendix 3). The second report is of our themed forums which ran for the first time in July on CVs (see Appendix 4). Also attached is a summary sheet outlining titles and user numbers of previous forums (Appendix 5).

The forums confirmed so far for 2012/13 are:

- Volunteering and Work Experience
- Quick Queries
- How to make an impact at interview

- STEM
 - 'Windmills' forum
 - Disability and employment issues
 - Law
 - Self -employment/ Entrepreneurship
- **How much cooperation there is between The Open University and the Educational Guidance Service for Adults**

Response

Recently The Open University has been working hard to develop closer links with EGSA and the Careers Service of Northern Ireland (CSNI) in order to raise awareness of The Open University as an attractive higher education choice for students.

The Open University held a meeting in our Belfast office on 3rd October 2012 for EGSA and CSNI staff. Some Careers teachers from the post-primary sector also attended and they were very impressed by The Open University's different approach to learning, the methods which it employs to deliver its programmes of study and the built-in support mechanisms for students.

They were also impressed by the availability of financial support to those students on benefits or on low incomes. In our current economic climate, and due to the costs of study, the meshing of learning and working is an option that more and more people are prepared to consider in order to "earn while you learn".

As a result of the event in October, The Open University was invited to present directly to more EGSA staff (including some from the north-west and mid-Ulster areas). They will be reciprocating this in 2013 when they present to The Open University frontline staff about their operation and scope.

Seven people attended the event (one from EGSA), and in order to encourage further attendance at future events we have planned a similar event in February 2013 and we will consider different timings to encourage better attendance. In order to maximise teachers' attendance we are holding the event at 4pm.

The aim of the event is to present information on the qualifications, courses and support and teaching methods offered by ~~the~~ The Open University. Information on fees and financial support is also particularly relevant for young people so will be a central part of the presentation. There will also be a chance for networking and information sharing among those present. The invitation will be sent to teachers and FE colleges in mid-January 2013.

- **Details of the Careers and Employability Project and when the project will be concluded.**

Response

The Careers and Employability Project (CEP) is part of the overarching strategic priority, the Study Experience Programme (SEP), which has been established at The Open University. It has 4 work streams and will be operational until July 2014:

1. Design, recommend, implement and deliver an extended Careers Advisory Service;

2. Adopt and implement the Student Employability Policy (S/2011/3/08) recommendations;
3. Establish Personal Development Planning (PDP) as one vehicle for employability support within the new delivery models in the University;
4. Identify and recommend Open University measures for student employability and organisational performance in terms of study and service provision.

The following summarises progress within each work stream:

1. A proposal for a 3 year staged approach to the extension of the Careers Advisory Service based in 2 Central Academic Units was presented to the SEP Steering Group on 28th November 2012.
2. All Faculties are actively engaged with implementing the Student Employability Policy and Faculty Employability Strategies have moved through the approval processes in most Faculties. The CEP team are continuing to work with each Faculty to establish through workshops, meetings and working with Associate Deans and programme teams to establish where additional support can be provided. The CEP team are delivering an Employability Seminar Series throughout the Spring of 2013 and also planning a Careers and Employability Network which will be established in 2013 to share good practice and progress. Employability contacts with all nations are established and the CEP team is working with each of the Nations to support employability activities which are nation specific.
3. A model for PDP will be presented to the SEP Steering Group on 28th November 2012. It proposes that PDP will be established within future Level 1 modules and thereafter offered to students via the Careers and Employability Service at levels 2 and 3. Qualification teams will have the option of including PDP within level 2 and 3 modules if they wish to do so, particularly where there are requirements to support professional accreditation. Pilot support materials for an online version of a PDP will be tested with Arts students on the Open programme in 2013.
4. A paper on measurement for employability was approved at the SEP steering group in October. An implementation plan is in preparation and will reflect appropriate measures around work streams 1 and 3 if proposals are approved.

The Open University has recently adopted a Student Employability Policy, the most relevant sections of which are included in Appendix [64](#).

- **Provide information on what changes could be made to improve CEIAG to pupils and parents.**

The Open University emphasises non-prescriptive approaches to careers education, information and guidance, whereby students have access to relevant and current career information, in order to make informed choices about their future training and employment.

In order to provide this information, and equip students (and parents/carers) with the necessary knowledge and options, we make several suggestions for consideration:

Enhance the existing NI Careers website to include:

- more graduate and career profiling
- current and quality information on the labour market in Northern Ireland
- provide a clearer picture of the economy and economic trends

- Facilities and opportunities to undertake skills planning

Foster and facilitate a joined up approach to CEIAG in Northern Ireland

- Provide a forum to share practice between HEIs, schools, employers etc.
- Create a CEIAG focus when implementing Graduating to Success working groups
- Create a CEIAG focus specifically in the implementation of the Raising Aspiration theme in the Access to Success strategy