

SUPPORTING WP STUDENTS WITH CAREER PLANNING: CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES

Alex O'Driscoll, Student Inclusion Manager

Amy Whiting, Careers Consultant



TODAY, WE WILL DISCUSS:

- University of Bristol context
- How data informs our work
- Barriers to careers planning faced by WP students, and how we support
- Challenges
- How we evaluate this work
- Looking forward – our APP planning year
- Questions and comments

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL CONTEXT

- Responsibility for access, success and progression interventions sits within ‘Student Opportunities’
- The University has made significant progress in diversifying its student body in recent years.
 - Strategy as outlined in our Access and Participation Plan (APP)
 - Investment of higher fee income into access, student success and progression interventions.

DATA AND EVIDENCE BASED APPROACH

Ensuring a robust evidence based approach

- Analysis of gaps at all stages of student lifecycle
- Research into student experience
- Institutional specific
- Targeting and eligibility criteria for opportunities

CAREERS SERVICE AT BRISTOL

Helping students get to where they want to be when they graduate.

Support from day 1, to 3 years after finishing their studies.

We offer careers advice, workshops and resources to support students to:



Explore their options



Develop skills,
gain experience



Apply for roles / further study



Build a professional network



Prepare for interviews and assessments

Careers Service support includes:



Resources,
workshops, 1:1s



Tailored support



Employability in the curriculum



Bristol PLUS Award



Engage with employers



Business start-up support

CHALLENGES FOR STUDENTS



Figuring it out – suddenly an overwhelming number of options.

Understanding **what they want** from a career.

Broadening their horizons in a rapidly changing job market.

Securing valuable **work experience** – advertised or not.

Time to dedicate to career thinking and planning alongside other commitments.

Career anxiety – uncertainty, influence / expectations from family, friends

Lack of self-confidence in value of degree and wider experiences.

Some **opportunities better advertised** than others.

CAREER PLANNING BARRIERS FOR WP STUDENTS

We recognise the labour market can advantage some students over others. We're here to help.
We provide targeted support to help level the playing field and address barriers.



Flying Start, targeted opportunities and advice



Support for under-represented students resources



Specialised appointments for disabled and neurodivergent students



Targeted events

We want to support students to move past barriers such as:

Lack of professional networks

Finding inclusive employers

Time to spend on career planning alongside other commitments

Cost of gaining work experience

Discrimination and bias concerns

Asking for adjustments in the recruitment process and job (for disabled and neurodivergent students)

Explaining CV gaps



Bristol Mentors

- WP students apply to be mentored by an alumnus, often a first industry contact.
- Students and mentors receive training to optimise the relationship.
- Reflection built in with termly reports.
- Bristol Mentors community: mentee brunches, launch and end of year activity.
- Celebrating [five years](#), growing from 50 to over 150 partnerships per year.
- Students regularly report increased confidence, agency and motivation.

FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP

- Scholars receive £3,500 in bursaries.
- £1,000 of funding allocated per Scholar for employability opportunities, such as internships, work experience.
- Named contact for tailored careers and employability support.
- Includes:
 - Futures Scholarship
 - Black Futures Scholarship
 - Employer / specific alumni sponsored strands





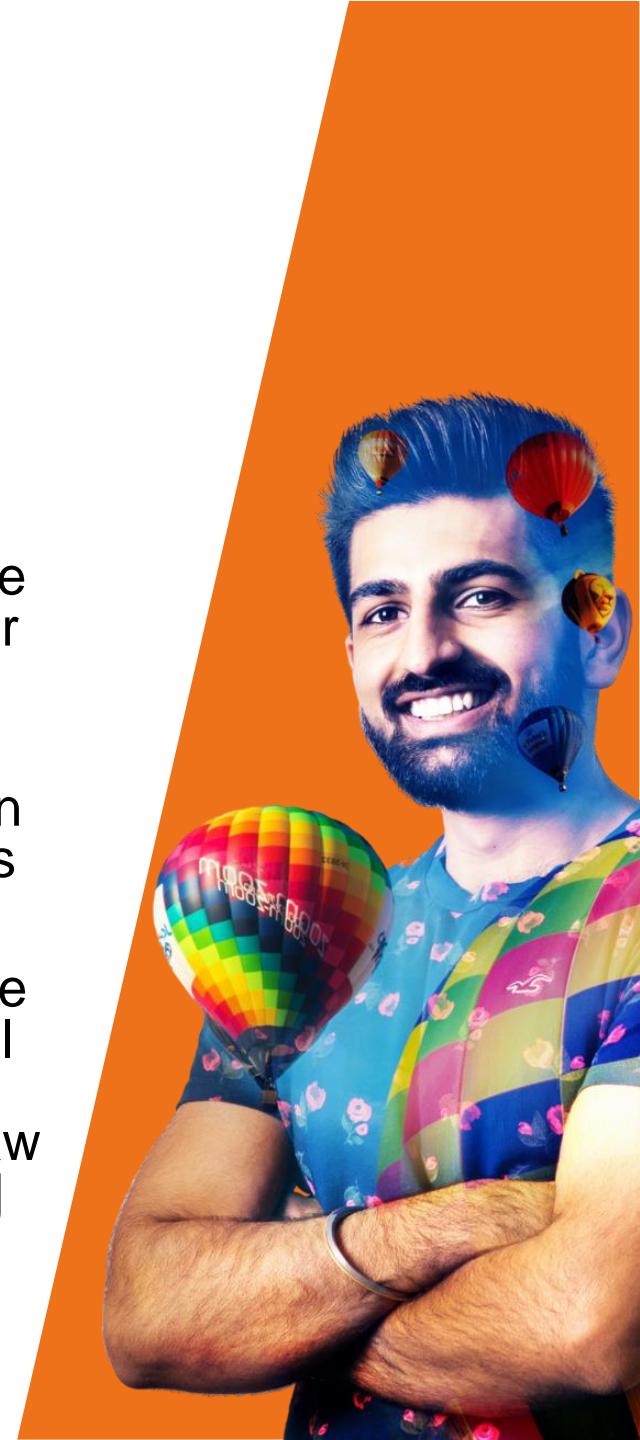
FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP

“ My Futures Scholarship has improved my confidence and made a long-lasting impact on my career prospects.

It was instrumental in paying for transportation and accommodation to attend interviews for internships outside of Bristol.

With the support, I was able to take on two placements: one in a small immigration law firm in Swansea, and the other in the international law firm Allen & Overy LLP. ”

Kanran, Futures Scholar



THE SME INTERNSHIP SCHEME

- Funded SME Internship Scheme enables students and recent graduates to gain quality, paid work experience from small and medium sized employers (SMEs) in the UK, including charities, social enterprises and start-ups.
- Ringfenced WP funding.
- Advertised roles or opportunity to source own.
- See [SME Internship Scheme student stories](#) at our blog



BRISTOL PLUS AWARD

- Extracurricular activity award, recognised on degree transcript.
- 70 hours of extracurricular experience.
- Bristol Futures online course on Global Citizenship, Innovation and Enterprise or Sustainable Futures.
- Engage in career training sessions.
- Complete a reflective report.
- Further opportunities through Outstanding PLUS Award.

*"I would encourage any student, neurodiverse or not, to complete the PLUS for its empowering effect. Bristol PLUS really **helped my self-esteem** as I was being recognized for my skills that are not valued for my degree course but are still highly transferable skills for the workplace."*

REACHING WP STUDENTS

- Engaging **time poor** students in tailored support.
- Recognising **intersectionality** and individual experience, as well as **shared barriers**.
- ‘Positive action’ versus ‘widening participation’.



- Providing a range of entry points of varying time commitments.
- Adapting to more inclusive language that resonates e.g. move away from BAME
- Being explicit in our commitment to WP students.

WORKING WITH WP STUDENTS

Student Inclusion

- **Race Inclusion Advocates** - partnering with Students of Colour to create change
- **WP Summer Research Internships** - hands-on experience of research during the summer holidays

Careers Service

- **Career Peer Support Assistants** – first point of contact for students visiting the Careers Service.
- **WP interns** (pilot) – helping to inform and facilitate our work with WP students.
- **Project interns** – BristolGrad and Bristol Mentors

HOW WE EVALUATE IT

Evaluation Action Group

- Ensuring quality of evaluation practice across access, success and progression activities.
 - Theory of Change
 - Monitoring and evaluation plans
 - Impact reports
- Oversight of evaluation requirements of the APP
 - Standards of Evidence
 - Self-assessment

LOOKING FORWARD – APP PLANNING YEAR

- Increased focus on success and progression activity
- Strategically re-set and invest in areas of greatest need
- Detailed planning underway
 - Informed by analysis of our student funding package and student outcomes data
 - Identify areas for targets and interventions

THANKS FOR LISTENING

Any questions?

Alex O'Driscoll

alex.odriscoll@bristol.ac.uk

Amy Whiting

amy.whiting@bristol.ac.uk

[linkedin.com/in/amywhiting1](https://www.linkedin.com/in/amywhiting1)