Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (All Submissions)

0357

C11 | Chepstow
Chaired by Fiona Cobb

Wed 11 Dec 2019

14:15 - 15:30

What difference does it make? Using Careers Registration to define and measure student careers learning gain at King's College London

Kate Daubney[1]

[1]*King's College London, London, United Kingdom*

Research Domain: Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract: Data generated by Careers Registration (Gilworth and Thambar, 2013; also subject of a HEFCE/OfS learning gain project 2015-2018) provides a valuable annual snapshot of the career readiness of our students. But that data is largely at a careers service level and does not enable the student directly. At King's Careers & Employability, King's College London's careers service, I have taken the three main phases of career readiness which we call Discover, Focus and Action, and developed a framework of learning gains to help students become aware of and reflect on their career readiness, employability awareness and big picture knowledge, every time they interact with the careers service. Through a new reflective process, students become more self-aware while also generating impact data that helps us understand whether our interventions actually make a difference.

Paper: What difference does it make? Using Careers Registration to define and measure student careers learning gain at King's College London

Kate Daubney, Head of King's Careers & Employability, King's College London/The Careers Group

Careers Registration, the annual snapshot of student careers readiness (Gilworth and Thambar, 2013; also a HEFCE/OfS learning gain project 2015-2018), has achieved two transformative outcomes: the ability of careers services to map the needs of their students; and the establishment of the evidence base to demonstrate that careers service interventions actually make a difference. In contrast to the 'lagging' indicator of graduate outcomes or destinations data, Careers Registration data provides a 'leading' indicator of 'live' student career readiness and levels of work experience, a key factor in effective career decision-making and employment readiness.

However, in the current model rolled out across around half of universities in the UK, the snapshot is definitively annual, at the start of the academic year during the registration process. This generates a lot of valuable data for the careers service, but its impact on the student is limited to the student

remembering how they answered the questions, and entirely dependent on the resource of the careers service to respond to the data with action. This paper describes the innovation of a new phase of Careers Registration to achieve two main outcomes:

- Improving the impact of Careers Registration for the student through learning gain statements that support self-awareness of career readiness
- Generation of a new dataset demonstrating the impact of careers service interventions

Careers services often gather feedback to determine whether the service delivery is 'what students want', but a far more important question students need to answer is 'how will this careers activity help me?' It is much easier for a student to identify how to achieve their chosen career plans if they know where they are starting from, but in fact there is little deliberate, structured intervention to help the student identify this, which can impact students who are not familiar with careers services, or are nervous about engaging.

Drawing on the core career readiness question in Careers Registration below -

What stage of career planning are you currently at?

- I have a clear career plan
- I have a few ideas
- I know what I want to do, but don't have a plan for getting there
- No idea yet what I will do after this degree
- Not planning on working or studying

- at King's, we organise these readiness stages into three phases:

- DISCOVER
    - No idea yet what I will do after this degree
- FOCUS
    - I have a few ideas
    - I know what I want to do, but don't have a plan for getting there
- ACTION
    - I have a clear career plan

Some careers activities seem to naturally align with these phases: CV writing and interview practice are more obviously 'Action', while 1:1 career guidance is useful at Discover. However, learning gain statements that make more explicit not only what the outcomes of a service activity are, but their relevance to the student's stage of career readiness will also:

- enable the student to develop stronger ongoing self-awareness of their career readiness
- establish, support and manage student expectations about what should change on their career journey through different careers activities

This is achieved first through a simple Learning Gain Framework that captures the three phases of the student's journey (Discover, Focus, Action) and juxtaposes them with the type of learning that the

student is doing across their career learning (the reflective journey of discovery and exploration of myself, my future options and the world I would like to enter), their employability development (the portfolio of knowledge, attributes, skills and experience I develop continuously to enable me to achieve my goals) and their understanding of the bigger picture of the working world they want to enter. This gives students a set of learning journey markers, against which they can easily measure their current readiness. For example, a student who is at the Discover phase of their Career learning can self-identify as 'I'm uncertain about who/what I might become? What's out there for me?'. A student who is in the Action phase of their Employability development will recognise themselves as 'I'm confident in identifying what knowledge, attributes, skills and experience I have developed through what I study and do, and articulating what is relevant'. [The full grid will be shown in the presentation]

These learning journey markers are then mapped against our five main areas of careers service activity: Events, Experiences, Information and Online Learning, Workshops and One-to-Ones. Students who are, for example, in the Focus phase in their Career learning going to an Event will 'learn more about my career choices and how that influences the choices I'm now making'. While another student going to a one-to-one can expect that afterwards they will be able 'effectively apply my labour market understanding to how I achieve my career choice' in developing their bigger picture understanding. [Example grids will be shown in the presentation]

Finally, just as formative assessment enables students to evaluate and respond to their academic learning journey, we needed to develop a way for the student to evaluate and respond to their careers and employability learning journey. We used the Careers Learning Gain Framework to create a reflective survey for students to take after 1:1 interactions and events to help them identify and articulate their careers learning gain. Each statement correlates with Discover, Focus or Action, and even if a student feels they are still in the same phase, the 'end point' statement indicates what should have changed and possible next steps. For example, the Discover statements for before and after the interaction are:

- I was pretty clueless about who//what I might become. What's out there for me? [Before]
- I still feel pretty clueless but I know more about myself and my options [After]

Data gathered indicates that the majority of students progress through the readiness stages after interactions, demonstrating the impact of careers activities.

References:

Gilworth, R. B., and Thambar, N. P. (2013). Careers Registration a Data Revolution. Conference presentation, AGCAS Biennial Conference, Exeter 2013. Retrieved from http://www.agcas.org.uk/events/766-Biennial-Conference-2013-Exeter

Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Learning Gain Pilot Projects: "What is learning gain?" Retrieved from website: www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/lg

Shury, J., Vivian, D., Turner, C., and Downing, C. (2017). *Planning for success: Graduates' career planning and its effect on graduate outcomes.* London. Department for Education/Government Social Research. Retrieved from website. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604170/Graduates__career _planning_and_its_effect_on_their_outcomes.pdf.