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UNION

STUDENT VOICE REPORT

CAREERS SUPPORT



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Foreword.

Jack O'Neill, Students' Union President

The reasons why students attend university are ever-changing, and it would be foolish to ignore the variance in motivations. There is a strong consensus, however, that students want to finish their time in higher education gifted with more knowledge, equipped with new and developed skills and, finally, to leave inspired for post-education life. Universities are in a unique position where their role is to help shape students for the world, but they also help students shape the world.

For students, university life should be a time when they can expand their knowledge and learn how to effectively voice and challenge ideas, but they should also be given the opportunity to adequately prepare themselves for whichever path they wish to take after, or during, their time at Royal Holloway. This report has been careful to distinguish between employability and recruitability. This distinction helps articulate the shared responsibility across the entire Royal Holloway community who prepare our students for the future and inspire them to change the world for the better.

The environment students enter after graduation is constantly evolving. It is our responsibility to ensure the University continuously builds on the portfolio of career opportunity available, and provides relevant support for students so that their Royal Holloway experience truly adds value for them. As a provider of an array of student leadership roles at Royal Holloway, the Students' Union is fully aware of our own role to make students more employable. We want to lead the way in enabling students to learn and better understand their professional development, and we also have a role to ensure that the University is doing this too.

This Student Voice Report presents student insight about their experiences of careers support at Royal Holloway, and aims to provide a positive agenda for building careers support that is cutting edge and accessible for all.

Executive Summary.

This Student Voice report examines the current provision of careers support at Royal Holloway across professional and academic departments, the Careers & Employability Service, and the Students' Union. Our Policy Inquiry into this area of the student experience began in May 2019, and our research and engagement with students shaped the recommendations included in this report. Importantly, each recommendation lends itself to improving students' experience of career support at Royal Holloway, or addresses degree outcomes for students. In some instances, it is a combination of both. The Students' Union is aware that the list of recommendations suggest a significant amount must change with the way academic departments and the Careers & Employability Service provide careers support for students, and the implementation of these recommendations would occur over an extended period of time.

Below are a summarised list of recommendations, which can be found in full at the end of the document.

- 1.1** The University should consider removing 'Employability' from the title of the Careers Service.
- 1.2** The Careers & Employability Service should establish a greater distinction between introductory beginner's events with ones that are more advanced.
- 1.3** The Careers & Employability Service should coordinate a more varied events programme throughout the academic year.
- 1.4** The Careers & Employability Service should conduct a full, comprehensive review of the annual Careers Fair held in the autumn term.
- 1.5** The Careers & Employability Service should introduce a separate Careers Fair for postgraduate taught and research students.
- 1.6** The Careers & Employability Service should incorporate more talks and workshops which discuss the importance of soft skills development.
- 1.7** The Careers & Employability Service should provide a more thorough calendar of careers talks and events on their website.

- 1.8** The Careers & Employability Service should upload all content from training talks and workshops to the website.
- 2.1** The Careers & Employability Service should create and upload CV templates, guidance and a submission box online for electronic feedback.
- 2.2** The Careers & Employability Service should consider the employers perspective when planning and running workshops.
- 2.3** The Careers & Employability Service should create cover letter templates and guidance online.
- 2.4** The Careers & Employability Service should improve information and upload content on assessment centres online.
- 2.5** The Careers & Employability Service should improve information and upload content on psychometric tests and aptitude tests online.
- 2.6** The Careers & Employability Service should improve digital guidance on interview preparation as a gateway to in-person support.
- 2.7** The Careers & Employability Service should provide clear and accessible online content which outlines the traditional timeline of a job application.
- 2.8** The Careers & Employability Service should offer personalised support during the job application process.
- 2.9** The University should consider creating a LinkedIn network for the Royal Holloway community to embed the culture of LinkedIn to the institution.
- 2.10** The Careers & Employability Service should provide a clearer understanding between graduate schemes and graduate jobs online.
- 2.11** The Careers & Employability Service should build or work with a third-party to provide a service where students can complete online quizzes or activities to help match their interests and skillsets with potential jobs.
- 2.12** Academic departments and the Careers & Employability Service should work directly with the Centre for the Development of Academic Skills (CeDAS) and advertise how their courses help students in their professional development.
- 3** The Careers & Employability Service should produce general introductions to sectors and upload this content to the Careers & Employability Service website.
- 4** The Careers & Employability Service should create a mentoring programme which links current students with alumni or other employer connections in various sectors.
- 5.1** All academic departments should conduct a review of all modules which relate to professional skills development.
- 5.2** All academic departments should conduct audits of their courses and create a supporting document which outlines learned skills students are expected to gain.
- 5.3** The University should consider reviewing courses and module validation materials to ensure skills development in any existing and all new courses.
- 5.4** All academic departments should seek to introduce 'X-in action' modules where students are supported in finding year-long work experience with an assessment at the end of the module.
- 5.5** All academic departments should be encouraged to utilise industry advisory boards.

- 5.6** The Careers & Employability Service should collaborate with all academic departments to incorporate bespoke careers information into a departmental monthly email.
- 5.7** The Careers & Employability Service should coordinate with academic departments and list all careers-related activity on their calendar.
- 6.1** The University should expand the micro-placement scheme to all departments and, where possible, increase the number of available placements in existing programmes.
- 6.2** The Careers & Employability Service should create a guidebook on the micro-placement scheme.
- 6.3** The University should provide a financial bursary to support travel arrangements for students who have undertaken unpaid internships.
- 6.4** The University should create a one-stop shop for casual job positions within the University.
- 6.5** The Careers & Employability Service should ensure greater clarity on the differences between work experience, internships, shadowing, and placements on their website.
- 7.1** The Students' Union should further their work on communicating information to students about their rights when undertaking work experience, internships, shadowing, and placement opportunities.
- 7.2** The Students' Union should expand their leadership support with new development opportunities for students in leadership positions.
- 7.3** The Students' Union should work more closely with the Careers & Employability Service.

Section A:

The Context.

A1. Overview.

In today's higher education environment there is a genuine concern among students that their university provides them with good value for money – a concept which extends beyond the confines of the classroom and impacts every element of their experience. Aysha Divan, Elizabeth Knight, Dawn Bennett, and Kenton Bell discuss this issue in their article, 'Marketing graduate employability: understanding the tensions between institutional practices and external messaging' (2019), and they explain how this perception as well as the political and economic events in the last decade have impacted the way universities function:

On the one hand, universities are a source of intellectual enquiry, deep and critical thinking and production of new knowledge. On the other hand, they are under pressure to work in an increasingly marketised educational system in which they must compete for prospective students and prepare graduates with more economically relevant skills.¹

While the majority of students have decided to undertake a degree in a subject they are passionate about, there is an additional transactional view shared by students that the degree will provide them with the necessary skills to successfully gain employment after graduation. This is a consequence of '[t]he official government approach to graduate employability' as one which is 'skills-led', although this has 'been increasingly called into question' by education policy makers in recent years.² Students expect departments to offer career advice, but the bulk of responsibility in the past has always fallen on university professional services to successfully deliver careers support to the student body across all years of study. Our engagement with students throughout the duration of our Policy Inquiry highlighted that careers support is lacking at Royal Holloway – both at the departmental level as well as the University Careers & Employability Service.

¹ Aysha Dixon, Elizabeth Knight, Dawn Bennett and Kenton Bell, 'Marketing graduate employability: understanding the tensions between institutional practice and external messaging', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 41.5 (2019) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2019.1652427>> [accessed 1 October 2019] (p. 486).

² Geoffrey William Hinchliffe and Adrienne Jolly, 'Graduate identity and employability', *British Educational Research Journal*, 37.4 (August 2011), <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23076340>> [accessed 26 September 2019] (p. 565).

This section of the report will discuss the evolution of careers support within higher education institutes in the last few years.

A2. The Language of Careers Support.

One of the major changes to the way careers support is articulated and manifested across UK universities is seen in the shift in language used by education policy makers and university professional service staff. Terms like ‘employability’, ‘graduate outcomes’ and ‘transferable skills’ were once buzzwords when marketing careers support at universities, but in today’s higher education climate these terms have various and, at times, competing interpretations. William Hinchliffe and Adrienne Jolly surveyed 100 employers for their paper, ‘Graduate identity and employability’ (2019), and one participant discussed why these terms are misleading and no longer have a place in careers support for students today: ‘Everybody talks about transferable skills and nobody knows what it means. That baffles me. What’s a transferrable skill – they’ve never transferred anything’.³

This argument for more transparent language within university careers support is repeated in in Doug Cole and Maureen Tibby’s report for the Higher Education Academy, *Defining and developing your approach to employability* (2015). Cole and Tibby still use terms like employability in this report, which they define as ‘a university-wide responsibility’ that supports all students ‘to develop a range of knowledge, skills, behaviours, attributes and attitude which will enable them to be successful not just in employment but in life’.⁴ Cole and Tibby maintain, however, that universities have a responsibility to make ‘the components of employability explicit to students to support their lifelong learning’, and they maintain universities need to plainly explain how their careers support will prepare students in this way.⁵ While some of their arguments are compelling, the language and terminology used by Cole and Tibby in their definition reveal the intangible nature of the ideas surrounding employability, and throughout the rest of their report they try to create a cohesive understanding of its meaning. This ambiguity is the reason why most universities have moved away from focusing on employability in careers support, and Mike Grey maintains in his article, ‘Has Employability Become a Toxic Brand?’ (2018), that ‘many of the leading Careers Services in the UK no longer have “employability” in their service title’ because of its elusive nature.⁶ Divan, Knight, Bennett, and Bell also discuss the difficulty of defining the concept of employability in their paper:

³ Geoffrey William Hinchliffe and Adrienne Jolly, ‘Graduate identity and employability’, p. 485.

⁴ Doug Cole and Maureen Tibby, *Defining and developing your approach to employability* (2015), <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Employability_framework.pdf> [accessed 3 October 2019], (p.3).

⁵ Doug Cole and Maureen Tibby, *Defining and developing*, p. 3.

⁶ Mike Grey, ‘Has Employability Become a Toxic Brand?’ Wonkhe, 16 January 2018, <<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/has-employability-become-a-toxic-brand/>> [accessed 2 October 2019].

there appear to be rich and diverse understandings and practices in relation to employability. These are evident within and across institutions and between geographical locations. Second, how employability is understood and enacted internally appears to vary considerably from its representation to external audiences.⁷

The authors further maintain there are currently ‘two competing constructions of employability within higher education: a university-student transaction view, and a learning view’ which ‘at best misinform and at worst mislead potential and current students’.⁸ Royal Holloway 100 (RH100), a panel of approximately 100 Royal Holloway student members recruited to be reflective of the student body, encapsulated this confusion within pre-work undertaken ahead of a feedback session. The quotations below are a few examples of answers written by RH100 members to the following question of pre-work: ‘What do you understand by the word ‘Employability’?

Ensuring you are as prepared as possible for the working world/looking for a job. Having a good range of skills and being able to show them off.

The ability of a worker or candidate to present themselves in a positive light, highlighting desirable qualities and experiences, whilst adapting to the needs of the employer.

One’s skills that make you more or less likely to be employed. To me it is a scale: you can have high or low employability, which is whether one is likely to get employed or not. Crucially, it has many different factors: transferable skills, experience, qualifications and personality.

The above quotations reveal that current students at Royal Holloway have somewhat of a vague understanding of the attributes associated with employability, which reinforces the argument for more transparent language and specific practice within university careers support about the ways they are preparing students for post-education life. Many students in the pre-work referenced ‘skills’ as being a major component of employability, but few went into detail about which specific learned skills make them more employable. Marilyn Clarke touches upon this in her paper, ‘Rethinking graduate employability: the role of capital, individual attributes and context’ (2019). Clarke maintains it is common for universities ‘to incorporate generic skills into programme and course learning objectives based on the assumption that students will develop the requisite skills by the time they graduate’ which will help them gain employment.⁹ Clarke suggests the problem with this model is that, for example, ‘many courses assess communication skills (written

⁷ The Aysha Dixon, Elizabeth Knight, Dawn Bennett and Kenton Bell, ‘Marketing graduate employability’, p. 492.

⁸ Aysha Dixon, Elizabeth Knight, Dawn Bennett and Kenton Bell, ‘Marketing graduate employability’, p. 493-4.

⁹ Marilyn Clarke, ‘Rethinking graduate employability: the role of capital, individual attributes and context’, *Studies in Higher Education*, 43.11 (2018), <<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1294152>> [accessed 23 February 2020] (p. 1927).

and oral) within assigned tasks, but do not teach the theory or practice of effective communication' which is an attribute employers will look for in applicants.¹⁰ The RH100 responses reveal that Royal Holloway continues to follow this generic model Clarke references. The University has failed to utilise more innovative practices that would not only more effectively improve students' potential to gain employment after graduation, but also help them better understanding their capabilities as a potential employee when applying for positions.

A3. A More Institutional Approach to Careers Support.

In their report, Cole and Tibby argue that departments, professional and academic staff, and university careers services are all responsible for providing careers support for students. In the past, this task was primarily associated with a university's central careers service, which subsequently removed the other parties from contributing to this element of the student experience. Placing the entirety of careers support on university careers services is problematic because many of the services they provide focus specifically on what Grey argues is 'recruitability' rather than career development. While recruitability has the potential to fall into the elusive categories like employability and transferable skills, Grey defines recruitability as '[t]he ability to understand the job market, your options and successfully articulate your skills and experiences to achieve success in the recruitment process'.¹¹ He maintains this is one strand of work which should be offered in university careers support, but should not be the only service offered to students. Universities UK maintains in their report, *Supply and Demand for Higher-Level Skills (2015)* that '[g]raduates pick up an array of subject-specific, core and employability skills throughout their courses, though the specific skills they feel they have developed the most vary from course to course, with no one subject coming out on top'.¹² A university-wide approach to careers support would more coherently incorporate what students learn in the classroom with the recruitability training they receive from the university careers service, thereby creating a more comprehensive approach to careers support.

Various pieces of literature published in the last decade repeatedly note that centralised careers services at universities frequently undergo changes to their policies and the types of events and services they provide students. This is often a consequence of updating outmoded practices, as well as reactions to shifting trends in the labour market. The most recent change occurred after the financial crisis of 2008, wherein universities experienced an increased amount of pressure and demand for accountability from students, parents, alumni, the government, and employers that the degree was, in fact, preparing students properly for life after

¹⁰ Marilyn Clarke, 'Rethinking graduate employability', p. 1927.

¹¹ Mike Grey, 'Has Employability Become a Toxic Brand?'

¹² Universities UK, *Supply and Demand for Higher-Level Skills*, (December 2015). <<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/supply-and-demand-for-higher-level-skills.aspx>> [accessed 30 September 2019] (p. 33).

graduation. Farouk Dey and Christine Cruzvergara state in their article, 'Evolution of Careers Services in Higher Education' (2014) that these events influenced the way university careers support transformed from 'the traditional transactional model of careers services towards a customised connection model that promises specialised career development support to students, and meaningful connections to internship and employment opportunities as well as mentoring and experiential learning'.¹³ Our engagement with current Royal Holloway students highlighted that the University has incorporated some elements of these changes, but there is still much more that could be done to offer a more personal, and innovative, careers support for current and prospective students.

A4. RHUL Graduate Outcomes.

In 2018, the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey was replaced by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) with Graduate Outcomes. The DLHE was implemented in 2002 and contacted UK and EU domiciled graduates from universities six months after graduation. The purpose of the DLHE was to better understand the types and levels of employment and further study graduates were participating in, and student responses contributed significantly to university league tables. Because we feel the data collected by the DLHE looks backwards towards careers support of the past, we have not included the results in this report.

In contrast to the DLHE, Graduate Outcomes surveys graduates 15 months after receiving their degree. More than just the name has received a rebrand, and many of the questions in this new survey have been re-worded so that they are suitable to graduates across a variety of jobs – including those who are self-employed or are undertaking freelancing work. There is also a movement away from a focus on graduate scheme positions and collecting salary data as a priority. Anita Jackson, Director of Planning and Student Information at the University of Kent and a member of the HESPA executive committee, maintains the Graduate Outcomes survey is 'not just about whether you are in a graduate-level job or how much you earn. Does your value to society get counted in that way?'¹⁴ Jackson hopes the data universities receive from graduates will help 'inform student choices' in their career planning.¹⁵

The Graduate Outcomes Provider portal was opened in December 2018, and the first collection of data should be published later in 2020. The Students' Union hopes these positive changes in the collation of data in the coming months will

¹³ Farouk Dey and Christine Cruzvergara, 'Evolution of Careers Services in Higher Education', *New Directions for Student Services*, 148 (Winter 2014), <<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Portals/0/Clearinghouse/advisingissues/documents/Dey%20Cruzvergara%202014.pdf>> [accessed 29 September 2019] (p. 8).

¹⁴ qtd. in Laura Greaves, 'Graduate Outcomes—the changes and challenges', *Prospects Luminate* (June 2018), <<https://luminate.prospects.ac.uk/graduate-outcomes-the-changes-and-challenges>> [accessed 31 January 2020].

¹⁵ Laura Greaves, 'Graduate Outcomes'.

positively shape careers support across academic departments and the Careers & Employability Service so that students gain the necessary knowledge and experience towards their personal and professional development. For now, this Student Voice Report presents our own data taken from our engagement with current Royal Holloway students over the last year. The subsequent sections of this report examine the ways the Careers & Employability Service and academic departments offers careers support, and address the areas which need improvement.

Section B:

Methodology.

Our Policy Inquiry into careers support at Royal Holloway began with initial research into pre-existing data sets, such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and Student Barometer. While no question within either of these surveys specifically asks students about careers support at Royal Holloway, the topic did emerge in the student responses in the open comment sections of both. The Students' Union wanted to better understand the issue and decided to include seven questions about careers support in our annual Rate Your Union survey in May 2019.

Rate Your Union is open to all students and is their opportunity to assess and provide feedback on activities run by the Students' Union. We often include additional questions on the wider student experience outside the Students' Union, and we do this with the aim to explore areas of policy which need improvement like careers support. The seven questions we included in the 2018-19 Rate Your Union survey was our initial step to engage with students for this project, which gave us the opportunity to better understand their personal and professional development in their relevant academic departments and the Careers & Employability Service. The seven questions in the survey that related to careers support were structured as open comments, which allowed survey participants to provide detailed responses about their experiences. The questions we included in the 2018-19 Rate Your Union survey are listed below:

1. Has your academic department supported your personal and professional development? Please explain how.
2. Has your personal tutor or academic supervisor provided career support? If so, was this helpful?
3. How frequently do you use the Careers Service, and what was your experience of this service?
4. Have you attended any talks or events run by the Careers Service? Which ones were most helpful?
5. What would encourage you to interact with the Careers Service from your first year?

6. What does the Careers Service not currently provide that you would like to be made available?
7. What sort of career support would you like to see made available by the Students' Union that isn't already offered by the Careers Service?

Table 1: Careers questions, Rate Your Union 2018-19

Overall, 1231 students participated in the 2018-19 Rate Your Union survey, which was approximately 12 per cent of the total Royal Holloway student population for that academic year. The survey ran for a two-week period, and respondents encompassed all levels of study from first-year undergraduates to postgraduate research students. Their responses to the above questions provided us with valuable insight about current students' experiences and opinions of the available careers support at Royal Holloway. It additionally increased our dataset for the project and shaped the direction of our research into the ways the University and Students' Union could improve careers support for students, regardless of their current level of study.

The Students' Union anonymised student responses and spent the summer period analysing the Rate Your Union data. During this period we also undertook research on sector trends in careers support, which was split into three directions for this project – education policy, the changing needs of careers support and, finally, we benchmarked established and successful university careers support at the following higher education institutes:

University of Surrey
University of Reading
Loughborough University
Swansea University
University of Sheffield
Cardiff University
University of Bath
Queen Mary University of London
University of Kent

Table 2: List of benchmarked universities

Our research was presented alongside a brief explanation of the Rate Your Union data in a briefing document, 'Policy Inquiry: Careers Support' (2019), in October and was published on the Students' Union website.¹⁶

¹⁶ To access the briefing document see: <https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/news/article/surhul/Policy-Inquiry-Careers-Support/>

The Rate Your Union analysis and our subsequent research into these various strands of careers support provided a solid foundation for the consultation phase of the project, which began with a deliberative event in November 2019. The purpose of this event was to discuss the briefing document and to begin the process of identifying potential recommendations with students. We continued to build momentum around our policy inquiry at a RH100 panel in January 2020, although the Students' Union did not discuss the project nor the potential recommendations directly with the students in attendance. The RH100 team shared with the Students' Union pre-work students were required to submit about careers support, which offered further information about current students' experiences at Royal Holloway.

The Students' Union anonymised students' pre-work before we began analysis. The first section of the pre-work asked RH100 members to define the terms 'careers' and 'employability', and also asked students to describe their experience of careers support before enrolling at Royal Holloway. The second section of the pre-work asked students to identify which career support services or activities they have engaged with at Royal Holloway. Many of the RH100 responses were consistent with the answers provided for Rate Your Union. The final section of pre-work asked students to compare university careers services at three institutions: The University of Liverpool, Loughborough University, and Queen Mary University of London. The students' discussion in the pre-work identified areas of high satisfaction and low satisfaction with university careers support, and proved a useful benchmarking exercise of the three institutions.

Following the RH100 panel, the Students' Union ran a final consultation event in February where potential recommendations were discussed in more detail with students before being published to the Students' Union website. In total, our online and in-person engagement with current Royal Holloway students was approximately 1500 students.

Section C:

Findings.

C1. Overview.

Throughout this Policy Inquiry, the Students' Union has worked to capture current sentiments to the careers support at Royal Holloway. Primarily, as highlighted in Section B, this was captured via the Rate Your Union survey at the end of the 2018-19 academic year. Further reflections and feedback were provided through RH100, which added another layer to the analysis of the current experience of careers support. This section will examine the results of the 2018-19 Rate Your Union survey and is sub-divided into areas where careers support could be improved at Royal Holloway: events, recruitability and application support, mentoring skills development, industry knowledge, internships and placements, departmental careers support, and finally, improved communication.

During this project, it was evident that certain areas of careers support have effectively evolved at Royal Holloway, while others have not. The success of the micro-placement scheme cannot be understated enough – the initiative is incredibly well-received from students involved, and those who are not wish they were. It is clear there needs to be an expansion of opportunities for this scheme to involve more students from different backgrounds. Despite this success, there is room for improvement in other areas of careers support. A common theme found in our engagement with students is that there is a lack of accessible information available, predominately in relation to the amount of online material. Increasing online content in careers support would create significant opportunities for students in a variety of ways. Primarily, it would increase student interaction with the service, especially for students who are unable to visit the service in-person, and it would also solve other challenges relating to the variation in skills and experience levels for talks and workshops.

Crucially, student responses in our 2018-19 Rate Your Union survey highlighted a need for a positive culture and agenda for careers support across the institution. While a majority of careers support does situate largely with the central service, there are other opportunities for students to gain professional skills development

within academic departments, other university professional services, and the Students' Union. This report and subsequent recommendations will discuss the way these separate services can work together to create a solid plan for careers support at Royal Holloway. It needs to be noted, however, that our Policy Inquiry found that a large majority of students are indifferent to careers support at Royal Holloway, and it is the aim of this report to explore what more can be done to improve the service and engage these students.

C2. Rate Your Union.

Below is a summarised breakdown of the seven careers support questions we asked current students to respond to in the 2018-19 Rate Your Union survey. The table below presents the quantitative analysis of our first question, which asked students to comment on their department's involvement in careers support. The table below shows the breakdown of student responses for question one.

Question One: Has your academic department supported your personal and professional development? Please explain how.	
Positive response	56%
Negative response	15%
Neutral response	5%
No response	24%

Table 3: Student responses to 'Has your academic department supported your personal and professional development?'

The majority of positive comments for this question related to respondents' experiences and interactions with individual members of staff, rather than the department as a whole. It was encouraging to read about instances where academic staff engaged with their students and encouraged conversations about their personal and professional development outside the course. Other recurring positive comments which highlighted the departments' involvement in career support included advice about modules, discussion about postgraduate study, departmental career days, micro-placement schemes, and the distribution of online weekly newsletters. Due to the variation of responses, however, we noted there was a large inconsistency across departments. Below are a sample of survey responses which present students' positive experiences of personal and professional development in their department.

My academic department has been very supportive of my development, through running various courses for careers and employability, as well as many work workshops to help with the academic side of things.

As a department, I couldn't say, but individual members of staff have.

The negative responses to this question touched upon numerous areas. Firstly, there is a strong perception among students that departments do not talk enough about life after graduation, and give little-to-no guidance or information on job hunting, or the application process. Secondly, the experience with personal tutors differed greatly across the board, and this is a theme that reappeared throughout the survey responses. Other negative comments related to a lack of support for international students and the international job market. First-year status was also discussed, as was the lack of direct opportunities within departments to explore the industry. Finally, students also mentioned they did not have conversations about their professional development with departmental staff. Below are a sample of survey responses which present students' negative experiences of personal and professional development in their department.

I have not had that much support with looking for careers especially because [department redacted] has so many different paths to pursue. I'd like an evening where they discuss these options with us.

I've been supported academically but not personally or professionally. There is a general lack in meetings with students and understanding their concerns and issues.

Neutral responses to this question often referred to inconsistencies in experiences. For example, some stated that there is adequate support within the department for personal development, but very little on professional development. It is evident that a culture change needs to occur within academic departments in order to fully support students in their career development. Again, many respondents referred to helpful individuals in the department, although there is a concern among students that if these individuals leave Royal Holloway, or become involved in other time-consuming responsibilities, this support will be lost entirely. Personal and professional development should not be the burden carried by a handful of individuals, and the responsibility of careers support should be shared across the department. Below are a sample of survey responses which present students' neutral experiences of personal and professional development in their department.

They have supported my professional development however there has not been many opportunities for them to support my personal development.

Not really. I have enjoyed my course from an intellectual point, but don't think it has delivered the job related skills I was expecting.

Mainly yes, I feel that they are there for me and give helpful lectures. However I don't always feel like I can approach them as they often seem so busy or my times don't work out with their allotted appointment times so can't always meet my tutors.

We narrowed the focus of our second question and asked students to comment on whether they received careers support from their personal tutor specifically. The table below shows the breakdown of student responses for question two.

Question Two: Has your personal tutor or academic supervisor provided career support? If so, was this helpful?	
Positive response	34%
Negative response	30%
Neutral response	11%
No response	25%

Table 4: Student responses to 'Has your personal tutor or academic supervisor provided career support? If so, was this helpful?'

As was the case with the first question, student responses to the question on personal tutors demonstrated there is an inconsistency in support. Positive comments described personal tutors who offered specialist help with CV support and wrote letters of recommendation for students. Interestingly, this activity is a core component of the Careers & Employability Service, but many student responses showed they sometimes turn to their personal tutor for support in this area. Other comments revealed some students consider their personal tutor as someone they can freely discuss and explore career pathways with during meetings. While this is less measurable, students' positive experiences explore a possible direction in the way personal tutors provide careers support. Below are a sample of survey responses which present students' positive experiences of receiving careers support from personal tutors.

Yearly meetings with Personal Development Plans have been helpful in lining up opportunities, specifically with the help of my tutors [sic] connections. They have also been very helpful in reading through cover letters when a slightly more academic approach was needed.

Yes, the use of tutorials with practice CV and interviews, presentations etc has been really good. Tutor really knows me and could give a very personalised reference.

Yes, they sat down with me to discuss options and career routes. This helped me to pick the masters I'm currently studying.

Negative recurring comments related to the lack of engagement between students and their personal tutors, which demonstrates students' experiences vary greatly on an individual basis. Many respondents recounted instances of minimal interaction with their personal tutor. In some cases, students mentioned they did not know who was assigned as their personal tutor, their personal tutors forgot their name, and there were multiple students who explained their personal tutor was repeatedly changed throughout their studies. Unsurprisingly, all of the above contribute to a weakened student-personal tutor relationship, and this results in students' unwillingness to engage with their tutor on any level, including career development. In contrast to positive comments where informal guidance was useful, a handful of respondents revealed their personal tutor openly mocked them when discussing their career aspirations. Below are a sample of survey responses which present students' negative experiences of receiving careers support from personal tutors.

No. I emailed her in May 2018 and never received a response. I have not seen her in person since December of 2017.

No. I haven't had any meetings with my personal advisor since my first term of year one. In my final year I have had no contact from them.

He has been so unsupportive, passive and does not show much interest despite myself reaching out to him many times.

The majority of neutral comments in question two were provided by first-year students who believe they do not need career advice at this stage in their academic studies, and that it wasn't necessary to discuss this topic with their personal tutor. Other reasons for not discussing career development with their personal tutor ranged from general indifference, international status, and year of study.

Our third question explored students' experience with the Careers & Employability Service directly. The table below shows the breakdown of survey respondents who used the service, and the percentage of students who rated their experiences positively.

Question Three: How frequently do you use the Careers Service, and what was your experience of this service?	
Used it	35% (Positive experience: 56%, Negative: 13%, Unknown: 31%)
Not used it	40%
No response	25%

Table 5: Student responses to 'How frequently do you use the Careers Service, and what was your experience of this service?'

While a slim majority of students who had used the service spoke of it positively, the majority of survey respondents had not interacted with the service at all. This demonstrates there is a dramatic need for improvement to increase student engagement with the Careers & Employability Service. The majority of students who used the Careers & Employability Service said their reason for going was for CV and interview help. Some respondents found these experiences useful in themselves, although there were instances where students did mention the service was not personal because they did not receive any further communication from the service following their appointment. For example, some students who attended a mock interview appointment said they would have appreciated an email or phone call afterwards to check in and ask how the interview went. Students highlighted such communication would encourage them to return to the service. Another stream of work with higher levels of engagement were the departmental micro-placement schemes. Below are a sample of survey responses which present students' positive experiences of receiving careers support from the Careers & Employability Service.

Useful for getting started; CV checks and practice interviews are especially helpful for those with no previous experience.

I did a phone call appointment and it was friendly and useful, however, it may have been nice to receive a follow up email saying what we spoke about and maybe with extra advice if needed.

I've used it for the placement scheme, which was helpful for improving my CV, but stopped when I didn't get through. It seemed very tailored to give more opportunities to the sectors they have roles ready for. But the CV help was really great. And I like that I know they're always there, but I don't use them in person often.

Negative responses were given by survey respondents who had both attended the Careers & Employability Service at some point and by those who had not, with the latter group explaining the reasons why they had yet to attend any talks or events. A common complaint from students who had utilised this service revealed the booking system was difficult to use and that meeting times were too short. Many

respondents criticised the online resources, commenting that they were difficult to navigate and provided minimal information about the topic they searched. Their explanations revealed that there was a certain level of expectation, and desire, from students about accessing support directly online that is currently not available. More available online content would prove especially beneficial for students who are unable to visit the Careers & Employability Service during their opening hours. Because of the above difficulties, some students explained they preferred going to staff in their department for careers support. Other reasons given for non-use were cited by first-year, international, and postgraduate students. Below are a sample of survey responses which present students' negative experiences of receiving careers support from the Careers Services.

I have not been able to, unfortunately. Many events in the Careers Weeks often clashed with my timetable, and this is made even more difficult by the fact that I commute in and out of campus every day.

Once in a while, primarily their online portal. They helped me develop my CV, but the meeting was too short, I would have felt more confident if there had been more time to go through things in more detail.

The fourth careers support question in the survey asked students whether they had attended any talks or events at the Careers & Employability Service, and to describe their experiences. Of the seven survey questions, this one received the lowest score in terms of student engagement. The table below presents the breakdown of student responses, and the percentage of students who rated their experiences positively.

Question Four: Have you attended any talks or events run by the Careers Service? Which ones were most helpful?	
Attended	28% (Positive experience: 55%, Negative: 10%, Unknown: 35%)
Not attended	46%
No response	26%

Table 6: Student responses to 'Have you attended any talks or events run by the Careers Service? Which ones were most helpful?'

Like the previous question, a large proportion of respondents explained they had not attended any talks or events run by the Careers & Employability Service and, while they could not comment on the usefulness of this stream of careers support, their decision to skip these events is considered a negative response. Those who did attend often referenced specific events like the micro-placement scheme talks, Civil Service talks, and alumni panels as highly rated events.

Alumni talks have by far been the most helpful. Being able to discuss my current thoughts with ex-students has been a great way to share experience and work out what else I needed to do.

I attended a LinkedIn session run by the careers service and it was catered to the group I was in, citing examples of people that we actually had a connection to. This was very useful.

Negative experiences of the events highlighted that the format of the event was difficult to engage with, for example, students mentioned limited opportunities to directly speak with an external presenter, and there are barriers to attendance for commuting and part-time students. Certain demographics like international and postgraduate students argued there were no careers support events relevant to their situation and, consequently, this is the main reason why they do not use these services. Negative comments also frequently referred to talks or events as appearing too general. Students flagged an issue that events were not targeted at a more detailed level of discussion, for example, a talk on a specific sector would spend the majority of the time discussing why the sector is important rather than discuss explicit job roles. Of course, generic information is important for those who are at the early stages of exploring potential careers, but it can be argued that such information should be available online while in-person talks discuss more detailed information about potential careers. Below are a sample of survey responses which present students' negative experiences of talks or events run by the Careers Service.

Not attended as they were not aimed at my career options.

I have attended talks and events run by the Careers Service, however I could not attend large majority of the event I wanted to attend due to clashes with lectures and seminars. The talk and events by the Careers Services are at random hours during the uni day and so people cannot attend them.

The fifth question in our Rate Your Union survey asked students the following question: 'What would encourage you to interact with the Careers Service from your first year?' One of the prominent themes across the feedback for all of the survey questions was that there is a clear consensus among the majority of first-year students that career development does not apply to them. The Students' Union understands the transition from post-sixteen education into the university environment can be extremely overwhelming. The level of study is more difficult, many students are living away from home for the first time, and career development is not considered 'essential' at this stage of their studies. Many first-year students expressed that careers support as only something they would consider in future years. Interestingly, however, there were instances in the survey where third-year

students expressed strong feelings of regret about their lack of interest in their professional development in their first-year of study. Below are samples of student suggestions about the ways academic departments and the Careers Service could reach out to first-year students and initiate conversations about their professional development while at Royal Holloway.

Greater promotion of opportunity and incentives provided for these. How the service can benefit you earlier on as opposed to waiting to 2/3rd year.

In my first year I felt like the careers service was not aimed at me, and had a higher focus on third years. Maybe having 'entry level' first year specific courses would encourage more people to go.

More information about wanting to pursue postgraduate study from the outset; I was only introduced to this in third year and would've liked more to start with.

The sixth question in our Rate Your Union survey asked students to provide insight into the current areas of careers support that need improvement, as well as new streams of work they would like to be introduced at the Careers & Employability Service. Examples of activity that students showed a desire to see improved were the expansion of the current micro-placement scheme, increased Civil Service talks and, specific, they would like there to be more detailed talks on individual sectors and industries. Students also expressed a desire that they would like improved online resources and information which are more readily-available.

Other suggestions included tailoring support for specific students, such as international and postgraduate students. Throughout the survey, many students who fall into both demographics repeatedly mentioned they felt excluded from opportunities to develop professionally at Royal Holloway. International students repeatedly expressed feelings of exclusion from both their department and the Careers & Employability Service, compounded by the difficulty to engage in experiential activity as a result of their higher tuition fee. Similarly, postgraduate students – both taught and research – felt excluded from Careers Service activity. These students explained the main focus of careers support was targeted directly towards undergraduates, and they would like an increase in services, talks, and events which discuss professional development opportunities for postgraduate and international students.

Finally, as one of our five key aims as an organisation is to make students more employable, our final question about careers support looked inward. We asked students to provide feedback on what kind of careers support they would like to receive from the Students' Union. At present, we do this through our part-

time student staff opportunities where training and professional development are built into all the roles. We also provide training for students in leadership roles, such as our academic reps. In addition to induction training, we provide optional training workshops in other areas like public speaking. Some survey respondents explained they would like us to better explain how students involved in sports or societies relay the skills they learned from their student group into a job interview or cover letter. Other students mentioned they would like us to run talks or publish articles about managing personal finance. The majority of survey respondents, however, argued they did not know what type of careers support they would like to receive from us, or that it is not our responsibility to provide the same support as the Careers Service.

SU should act as a prompt to keep the College Careers Service performing, rather than provide complimentary / rival services.

Don't cross streams. Carry on cross-training your staff and acting as references - but to the wider student body, don't duplicate services.

In our strategic plan, 'What's Next II: Our plan for 2018-2022', we maintain one of our main responsibilities in making students more employable is through our lobbying and representative role. It is our duty to hold academic departments and the University's Careers & Employability Service to account, to ensure that they are effectively supporting students in relation to their professional development. The subsequent sections will discuss in greater detail how departments and the Careers & Employability Service can improve careers support for current and prospective students at Royal Holloway.

C2. Events.

Despite the many strands of careers support within the Careers & Employability Service, students typically see events as one of the primary functions of the service. Current careers events at Royal Holloway manifest in the form of information delivery from speakers, although they also include careers fairs, alumni panels, and skills-development workshops. One of the issues current students have with many of the careers events at Royal Holloway is the introductory, generic tone in which they are presented.

I attended a 'careers in politics' talk. Whilst it was helpful, the information was very basic and the information given most people felt they already knew.

I have attended one. It was interesting but not especially useful in the long run - more of an introduction to a field.

The challenge of finding the right balance at an event with speakers providing a more general introduction to a sector with a specific discussion will always be difficult because students who attend these events will all be at different stages of their career development. More information should be provided in advance on the Careers & Employability Service to inform students on what to expect from the talk. This will help them decide whether attending the event would be of interest to them, while simultaneously giving them a basic understanding of the topic. Overall, though, students would like more online information about industry knowledge to be included on the website, regardless of whether there is a scheduled event. The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) found in their AGCAS HE Careers Services Survey 2018 (2019) that '[a]bout one third of new heads identified new technologies and better use of data as opportunities to improve student engagement and deliver target delivery'.¹⁷ Therefore, the Careers Service should seek to move the majority of introductory information online so students can access this information easily. Not only will it impart useful information about potential career opportunities to a wider audience, it will also give students a better understanding about topics before attending events which provide more detailed information, furthering their knowledge about career development.

One of the other major difficulties university careers services must deal with is trying to involve those students who remain disengaged from the service. 65 per cent of respondents in our Rate Your Union survey answered that they did not use the Careers & Employability Service, with a further 72 per cent of respondents indicating they had never attend a careers talk or event specifically. Our analysis of the survey revealed this is a consequence of a variety of reasons: talks are too generic, there are a lack of events for certain sectors, speakers do not interact with students, timetable clashes, booking difficulties, commuter status, the website is difficult to navigate, and lack of promotion. Some of these issues are structural, and the Careers & Employability Service should consider the ways they can make their online services more user-friendly and accessible. However, in regards to the format of events, the service should consider experimenting more with the implementation and themes of the events themselves. The current range of talks and events run by the Careers & Employability Service are composed of panel discussions, and this format has led to student complaints about the lack of interaction between the panellists and students. Students who have come to the event are already showing a level of engagement, and opening up discussion between students and speakers would give students the opportunity to ask questions relevant to their interest, allowing the talk to move into a further level of discussion. In addition to altering the format of panel talks, the Careers Service should consider providing a greater range of events. Loughborough University, for example, run TedX style talks which are created around short, empowering topics for students. Another option could be hosting events in the style of Pecha Kucha.

¹⁷ The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service, AGCAS HE Careers Services Survey 2018, (2019), <https://www.agcas.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Resources/AGCAS_HE_Careers_Service_Survey_Report_-_8_January_2019_-_finalV2.pdf> [accessed 31 January 2020] (p. 30).

Besides altering the structure of current talks and events, the Careers & Employability Service should consider developing events outside the confines of individual sectors. Research demonstrates the job market is not proscribed to the degree, and students have an interest in a variety of employment opportunities for reasons other than the actual position. Graduates today are now choosing careers with companies because of their ethical values, environmental impact, female leadership opportunities, or because they have a reputation for diverse employment. The inclusion of an events programme based around employer values in a similar vein to the programme at Loughborough University would be extremely beneficial to Royal Holloway students and show them that there are other aspects to consider when deciding upon a potential career after graduation.

One of the trademark events run by the Careers Service at Royal Holloway and at other institutions is the Careers Fair – it is typically the primary opportunity to have employers on campus and interacting with students. In October 2019, Royal Holloway had 36 employers visit over a two-day period. Many survey respondents who attended a Royal Holloway Careers Fair at some point in their studies mentioned it was a positive experience which allowed them to meet with employers and learn about career opportunities they were interested in.

Yes, I went to a couple of career fairs and all were very helpful as I was able to meet with recruitment consultants and employers. Gained advice and more information regarding my desired career path.

I have attended career fairs hosted by the careers service. They were somewhat helpful in highlighting possible companies to apply for.

However, there are also challenges to these large-scale events in regards to accessibility and student expectations. The event only occurs once every academic year in the autumn term. Some students mentioned in the survey that the infrequency of the fair placed an increased pressure and expectation on the fair itself as the only chance they will have to speak closely with employers.

The Job fair was really exciting! But I felt the lack of privacy and the crowdedness made it hard to successfully "compete" against other job hunters.

I attended all the career fairs. They were the most useful in terms of meeting employers. But the size and frequency of the fair should be increased.

One way to ease this burden would be improved communication of other opportunities where engagement with employers take place. Other issues students raised were the lack of diversity in the current programme of careers events and the Careers Fair itself. A large number of students maintained there was a lack of talks or representation of employers at the Careers Fair in sectors that would be of interest for students undertaking a course in the School of Humanities and the School of Performing and Digital Arts. From a quick glance at the 2019 Careers programme, one can see there is more emphasis on careers in other sectors like finance.

Could do with more events within the arts administration and events management sectors! More sector-tailored advice, and opportunities.

Careers Fair was also very excluding of the creative sectors.

The AGCAS maintains '[c]areer services no longer treat students as a holistic group. A better understanding of students' characteristics has led to most services developing bespoke initiatives to engage specific students.'¹⁸ If the Careers Service is failing to represent large proportions of students at its annual Careers Fair then they should offer alternative, smaller events, and invite employers from these sectors in order to give increased opportunities to students undertaking degrees in underrepresented areas, such as the School of Humanities and the School of Performing and Digital Arts. In addition to concerns about sector bias at the Careers Fair, there is also a strong perception that careers events, talks, and workshops are targeted towards a specific demographic of students – undergraduates. There is, of course, always going to be a challenge of incorporating the needs of postgraduate taught and research students with those of undergraduates in a single event, and it would be more appropriate to develop a separate Careers Fair for postgraduate taught and research students in conjunction with the Doctoral School. Royal Holloway's lack of more niche events like this indicates the University is falling behind other universities who have incorporated more variety in the way they run careers fairs and events. The AGCAS found in their survey that more than half of university central careers services had 'developed initiatives for non-traditional students (NTS), including students from schools/areas of low HE participation, BME students and students from other disadvantaged backgrounds'¹⁹ Heads of careers services also mentioned the rise of more bespoke events for 'female students, PGR/PGT students, final-year students, pre-entry students and graduates'.²⁰ Incorporating a more diverse range of individual events like the examples mentioned above would undoubtedly appeal to students who are underrepresented at Royal Holloway and increase their engagement with the Careers & Employability Service.

¹⁸ The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, AGCAS HE Careers Services Survey 2018, p.32.

¹⁹ The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, AGCAS HE Careers Services Survey 2018, p.22.

²⁰ The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services, AGCAS HE Careers Services Survey 2018, p.22.

C3. Recruitability, Skills Development and Application Support.

As mentioned, the Royal Holloway Careers & Employability Service needs to move away from vague terms like 'employability' and focus more of their attention on developing students' recruitability skills. A suggestion of this would be a service name change to prompt this cultural shift. Careers support should sit across an institution, but the responsibility of professional skills development falls upon the Careers Service. The Rate Your Union survey identified that students who engage with the Careers Service often attend workshops on CVs, cover letters, and mock interview preparation. The majority of students who attended talks or had personal appointments with staff rated their experiences positively.

Yes, I attended to a talk about making the perfect CV, and I learned a lot as I did not know how to make one.

I have attended CV writing workshops and interview skills talks which gave me useful tips for future job applications

I have attended LinkedIn workshops which were very informative.

Despite this, challenges still remain. Some students desire a more personalised approach to support, where they want to feel valued after committing their time to an appointment with a follow-up email or call after an application submission or interview. Additionally, students also commented that the appointments are too short for the issues they want to discuss. The availability of appointments is also a clear challenge for students trying to book one, and the staff are seemingly stretched too thin. These problems all contribute towards students' lack of engagement with the service. Part-time and commuting students also discussed the difficulty of trying to visit the Careers & Employability Service during their opening hours due to timetable clashes and other work commitments. Because of these problems, there is a clear desire among students that more information, especially on recruitability skills development, should be easily accessible online. Having informative content about writing CVs, covering letters, psychometric tests, how to set up a LinkedIn profile, and general information about assessment centres online would increase student engagement with the Careers & Employability Service. It would also free up time for staff to use appointments or workshop training for students who would like further help, or to build upon their general knowledge and advance their skills.

One key element of helping students increase their chances of securing a job after graduation is through the provision of clarity, support, and guidance on the application process itself. Online resources should identify the ways students can better prepare and stand out from applications through research and preparation.

Some higher education institutes like Bath University provide aptitude tests for students in abstract reasoning, numerical reasoning, and verbal reasoning. Having opportunities to take practice tests would give students more confidence in this area of skills development. The online content should also provide support in other areas, for example, the distinction between graduate schemes and entry-level jobs, utilising LinkedIn more effectively, and what to do when an application is either accepted or rejected. If students attended an appointment in-person, the Careers Service should have staff check in with students in an email or follow-up phone call to discuss how it went and the next steps the student should take.

C4. Soft Skills Development.

Recruitability workshops are not the only form of skills development the Careers Service should focus on, and by moving the bulk of their content online it will allow staff to run other workshops and talks in other areas of personal and professional development which employers are looking for in potential employees. This includes interpersonal skills, collaborative work skills, effective communication, problem solving capabilities, and global citizenship to name a few examples. In their survey of 100 employers, Hinchliffe and Jolly found that ‘less is expected regarding technical skills than the one thing that all graduates are presumably good at: the ability to present ideas clearly, both verbally and in writing. Indeed, the ability to demonstrate cultural and social awareness, on appointment, comes ahead of IT skills’.²¹ Courses which address these ‘soft’ skills could be presented as in-person workshops or online courses. Royal Holloway should seek industry guidance in developing quizzes or online tasks which both train and test students so they can measure their development in the above areas.

The Careers & Employability Service should not be solely responsible for nurturing students’ soft skills development, and the above examples are all skills other University professional services like the Centre for the Development of Academic Skills (CeDAS) can help students with. All of the courses offered by CeDAS are marketed as academic skills courses with little reference to the ways the courses can help students in their professional development. Not once in the seven careers questions on Rate Your Union did students identify CeDAS as a form of careers support. This, perhaps, is a consequence of the way the service is marketed, and more crossover should be sought between the Careers & Employability Service and CeDAS. Many students who utilise CeDAS often do so to improve the necessary skills to excel in their specific academic course, and do not see it as a useful source where they strengthen their skills in other areas. Humanities students who might have less experience with numeracy, for example, could attend any of the tutorials or workshops offered at CeDAS. The same could be said for maths and finance students who would benefit from undertaking a CeDAS course that improve their

²¹ Geoffrey William Hinchliffe and Adrienne Jolly, ‘Graduate Identity and employability’, p. 570.

oral and written communication skills. Stepping outside the boundaries of their course also highlights a student's adaptability and willingness to 'to step outside the familiar and the comfortable' of their academic studies, and these are qualities employers look for in potential employees.²² The Careers & Employability Service should consider collaborating more with CeDAS, and promoting their courses on the Careers & Employability Service webpage, with a detailed explanation of the ways students can use CeDAS to further their personal and professional development outside of their academic studies.

C5. Mentoring.

One of the ways in which students can be further supported in their professional development is through a mentoring scheme run through the Careers & Employability Service. Some students are lucky throughout their studies in that they make informal connections with academic or professional university staff, but this is not a universal experience for all students. Mentoring schemes, however, provide students with an opportunity to form this type of professional relationship with a person in a sector they are interested in. This is something multiple students brought up in the 2018-19 Rate Your Union survey when we asked respondents to provide suggestions for professional skills development they would like to see introduced in their academic departments and within the Careers & Employability Service which do not currently exist.

Opportunities to apply for mentorships and work experience.

Guided mentorship and CV clinics.

I seriously believe that mentors being allocated to specific schools will greatly improve this system. This would allow mentors to have a stronger connection with academic departments and be able to provide more specific and relevant guidance to students.

A mentoring scheme offers students who are certain on the type of career they want to undertake after graduation a direct link to that industry, and students who are less sure are given the opportunity to gain insight into a possibility. Other benefits of mentoring schemes are that they provide underrepresented students the guidance of career professionals, and it can offer continuing developmental opportunities for alumni who are commonly sought to provide mentorship. Paul Gratrack maintains in his article, 'The careers service demonstrates value beyond metrics' (2019), that providing students with 'real-life stories and examples' from alumni or mentors shows students 'the benefits of hindsight and the impact that an institutions graduates are having (and the value they gained)'.²³

²² Geoffrey William Hinchliffe and Adrienne Jolly, 'Graduate Identity and employability', p. 570.

²³ Patrick Gratrack, 'The careers service demonstrates value beyond metrics', 24 July 2019, Wonkhe, <<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/the-careers-service-demonstrates-value-beyond-metrics/>> [accessed 16 September 2019].

One of the most successful higher education mentoring schemes is 'Thrive', run by the University of Reading. At Reading, second-year and postgraduate taught students who are willing to spend one or two hours each month meeting a mentor are eligible to apply for the scheme and are sent anonymous profiles of mentors, many of whom are alumni, that might be suitable for them. Both mentors and mentees are required to complete a training session. Following this, students are given the contact details of their mentor and asked to introduce themselves via email. The University then hosts a welcome drinks event where students are introduced to their mentor. The expectation is that they meet or Skype once a month throughout the year. The success of the scheme has proven strong, with many students gaining important contacts, confidence, and sector knowledge. Royal Holloway should urgently consider planning and developing a scheme in a similar vein to Thrive.²⁴ Not only would it re-energise the Careers Service, but it would provide students with the opportunity to make valuable network connections and gain knowledge through their mentor's experiences.

C6. Industry Knowledge.

Increasingly, students in higher education are perceived as having a knowledge deficiency about their chosen sector. The Institute of Student Employers, formerly known as The Association of Graduate Recruiters, maintained in their submission to the House of Commons' Briefing Paper: 'Higher Education Green Paper Fulfilling Our Potential' (2015), that commercial awareness is one of the major skills lacking in current graduates, but it a skill that is difficult to teach students.²⁵ This deficit is more noticeable in recent years because of the expansion of non-higher education streams of access into the job market, where opportunities like apprenticeships allow participants to gain first-hand experience of how a sector operates, and gain a competitive edge over graduates.

The challenge in attempting to tackle this supposed shortfall in graduate quality is that industry knowledge is far and wide, and it is also more difficult to implement. Moreover, student understanding about different industries is on varying levels, which is a recurring theme with careers support. Still, commercial awareness is an issue that universities, including Royal Holloway, will have to tackle imminently as student expectations of careers support and value for money only continue to rise. One way to increase students' knowledge in this area is to increase online content of industry knowledge in collaboration with academic departments and ensure it is regularly updated. These pages can also include links and guidance on ways students can gain more knowledge of an industry through part-time work or internships, which will be discussed further in the next section.

²⁴ For further information on Thrive see: https://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/careers_and_professional_development/grow/mentoring/thrive-mentoring.aspx

²⁵ David Stanbury, 'What Does Good Employability in the Curriculum Look Like?' (2016), <<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/teaching-and-learning/employability-in-the-curriculum-and-beyond/employability-research-and-publications>> [accessed 26 September 2019] (p. 2).

C7. Internships & Placements.

Internships are an excellent career-progression activity and another avenue for students to gain more commercial knowledge of a given sector. Internships and placements provide opportunities for students to experience a work environment and gain useful contacts. One of the common barriers preventing Royal Holloway students from participating in these programmes is the lack of available opportunities, or the costs associated with them. Many students at Royal Holloway are unable to undertake internships due to financial reasons because internships and placements are usually unpaid or only cover travel costs. One obvious way to tackle this issues is for the University to develop an internship and placement bursary for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Such a bursary should have an open application period throughout the academic year as well as the summer period, and it would allow students to apply for financial assistance to alleviate some of the costs associated with the internship.

One of the most successful streams of work in careers support at Royal Holloway is the micro-placement scheme. Students who participated in the scheme were clear that it was a beneficial and positive experience, even if they did not successfully land a placement.

Micro-placement scheme - placements officer has been very helpful and understanding in seeking a placement that I would benefit from the most.

So far I've only used the careers service as part of the microplacement scheme, and it has been a really positive experience that's helped with professional development.

Have only used [the Careers Service] a few times when undertaking the Micro Placement Scheme but they were wonderfully helpful and got me an internship that has shaped what I want to do with my future.

Because of the scheme's success, the Careers & Employability Service should prioritise expanding the micro-placement scheme into more departments and, where possible, expand student opportunities within already-existent arrangements. In doing this, the Careers & Employability Service and academic departments would increase student participation in this area of careers support, and hopefully open the door to further engagement with the Careers & Employability Service.

One thing we learned from our engagement with students is that there is a conflation of terminology with internships, work experience, placements, and shadowing opportunities. Because many students do not understand the nuances and differences of each of these types of experiences, there has been reported

difficulty about trying to find the most appropriate work opportunity and going into these experiences with the wrong expectations. The Careers Service should consequently provide more information and resources online which outline the distinction between each of these experiences and students' rights if they were to secure a position.

C8. Academic Departments.

Universities UK argues in *Supply and Demand for Higher-Level Skills* that graduates 'are said to lack general employability skills and workplace experience, while on the other hand, the top cited reason for skill shortage vacancies across all occupations is "technical, practical or job-specific skills"²⁶. Universities UK rightly states the process of trying to reconcile these two ideas is 'an exercise in frustration' for academic departments and university careers services.²⁷ Overall, graduates across all subjects learn a variety of skills in the classroom, such as:

problem-solving, critical analysis and entrepreneurial skills. However, the provision of these is not, as far as we can tell, evenly spread. For example, creative arts students report that through the course of their university education they developed high-level entrepreneurial skills, but not necessarily logical thinking, and maths students reported that they developed high-level problem-solving skills but not necessarily presentation skills.²⁸

The debate around the inclusion of professional skills development into the academic curriculum is complicated, especially when students' understanding of academic career development has largely been mistaken with recruitability training, which should be the responsibility of the Careers & Employability Service. Academic departments should, instead, be exploring ways students are provided with the relevant skills and knowledge of industry in their coursework. Therefore, it is essential that a full-review be carried out within departments on the ways each course examines students' professional development, and this should be done in collaboration with the Careers & Employability Service to avoid duplication of services. Such a review would be conducted with the aim to introduce better methods of implementing students' professional development, or the ways they can build upon their strengths or improve weaknesses with other services like CeDAS.

One of the challenges of such a review is that academic departments foster students' soft skills, and these can be more difficult to identify than more technical skills like IT. Regardless, students should have a general understanding of the

²⁶ Universities UK, *Supply and Demand for Higher-Level Skills*, p. 23.

²⁷ Universities UK, *Supply and Demand for Higher-Level Skills*, p. 23.

²⁸ Universities UK, *Supply and Demand for Higher-Level Skills*, p. 1.

ways their course does prepare them for work after graduation, and a document identifying these skills could be useful. There were instances in the survey where students admitted they did not know whether their course provided them with professional skills development.

I have enjoyed my course from an intellectual point, but don't think it has delivered the job related skills I was expecting.

One reason the above student might have felt this way is because they lacked an understanding of the ways the course had provided job skills, even if it was not obvious to the student at the time. While 'graduate identity, of its very nature, is something that is malleable and plastic' and 'cannot be something that is merely a series of attributes that can be enumerated and ticked off', students should have a basic understanding of the ways their degrees are preparing them for life after graduation.²⁹ Cardiff University is one institution which identifies the types of skills students will gain while undertaking their specific course. Providing a similar breakdown for courses at Royal Holloway could be extremely useful for both prospective and current students. We have included an example of one departmental audit at Cardiff in Appendix A for further information.

Another way to improve professional skills development within academic departments is through work placement schemes. As outlined previously, hands-on experience is incredibly valuable for students, but there are still barriers to participation in this form. Therefore, academic departments should seek to introduce mechanisms for similar experiences. Some departments at Royal Holloway have created modules based around work placements. One of the more successful ones is 'Politics in Action' which is run through the Politics and International Relations department. This module is open to third-year undergraduates and gives students the opportunity to undertake work in areas of interest to them like Parliament, NGOs, media organisations, and the policy or communications divisions of local companies. A full explanation of the course, including a syllabus, can be found in Appendix B. These optional modules would be credit-bearing, and students would still be responsible for providing academic work through reflective exercises, as well as a final assessment at the end of the course. The benefit of incorporating work placement modules across departments is found in the positive response from students who have undertaken modules already in place. Current iterations of modules have resulted in students forming close relationships with organisations they have worked with, and they have gained first-hand insight into that particular sector. Students also mentioned their professional skills developed and their academic studies improved while undertaking the module. This was a consequence of their ability to produce academic work that related directly to their work experience.

²⁹ Geoffrey William Hinchliffe and Adrienne Jolly, 'Graduate Identity and employability', p. 564.

C9. Communication and Promotion of Careers Support.

During our Policy Inquiry, it was apparent that certain activities run by the Careers & Employability Service and academic departments were not well-known to students, and it is evident that particular groups of students do not believe the communicated activities run by the Careers Service apply to them. When we asked students to explain what would encourage them to engage with the Careers Service from their first year, one of the most repeated answers was better communication and advertising of events.

Promoting their services more through emails.

More advertising of what is available and emphasis of usefulness of careers service.

More advertising of talks maybe, I didn't really realise they did big talks as opposed to just one on one.

More advertising about it. Within departments as well.

Students we engaged with mentioned how they paid attention to departmental emails because they are more personal and address matters of interest. Moreover, students explained they considered the all-student email from the Principal as the main form of communication from the University, and emails from other professional service teams like the Careers & Employability Service were sometimes disregarded. The Careers & Employability Service should make a more concerted effort to tie-in their communications about careers support with academic departments, wherein central activities are posted alongside information about career opportunities more specific to the department in a monthly email.

Another communication barrier students identified was the lack of visibility for certain events. While large events like the Careers Fair and Part-Time Jobs Fair are more well-known and have a record for high attendance, it is easy for students to overlook more niche events that are happening more regularly throughout the year. In line with the complete overhaul of increasing careers content online, there is a desire among students for there to be an accessible coordinated calendar of events on the Careers Service website. Such a calendar would allow students the opportunity to search for specific events and to access a complete list of talks or events happening throughout the term in order to personalise their calendars. With the proposed changes and recommendations to both the Careers & Employability Service and academic departments, it is essential for there to be clear communication between the University and students as the recommendations are implemented so students remain aware.

C10. Students' Union.

Whilst our Strategic Plan includes the aim of 'making students more employable' this has typically been through employing students, and providing engagement opportunities (such as student group leaders and representative roles). This focus was demonstrated throughout the Policy Inquiry in that students were appreciative of the opportunities offered by the Students' Union, but were not clear on the role that we played in wider career development.

Students highlighted that one of the main responsibilities of the Students' Union is making them aware of their rights, so that students can be aware of expectations and know when something has gone wrong. Within this, students often referred to the development of the 'Student Rights' series which has highlighted what students should expect to receive in multiple areas of their academic experience. It was often discussed that a similar awareness campaign should be replicated to cover student rights when participating in work experience or placements within their degree.

Many students view the Students' Union as one of the central points of contact to gain opportunities and new experiences. However, it was evident that there was not clarity on how the Students' Union should then support students in reflecting and developing from these experiences, with many suggesting that the Students' Union should provide services akin to the Careers Service. Throughout deliberative discussions, it was established that the Students' Union should run development sessions, under the banner of 'Leadership Academy', in order to expand leadership support and developmental reflection for those in Students' Union leadership positions.

Lastly, students were abundantly clear that the Students' Union should increase the lobbying focus in careers related activity. This report was viewed as a starting point for this, but it was clear that the role of the Students' Union within careers support is multi-purpose, both providing, and lobbying.

C11. Conclusion and Next Steps.

We are confident that we have undertaken some insightful initial research into the careers support at Royal Holloway, and we believe that we have articulated a number of recommendations which, once implemented, would have a substantial and long-lasting positive impact on current and prospective students at Royal Holloway.

Recommendations.

1. Careers Service Events.

There are issues with the style and format of the Careers & Employability Service's current events programme.

- 1.1** The University should consider removing 'Employability' from the title of the Careers Service. Employability is a difficult and vague term, and many university careers services are distancing themselves from using the term 'employability' on their websites and in their titles.
- 1.2** The Careers & Employability Service should establish a greater distinction between introductory beginner's events and ones that are more advanced. The Careers Service should also consider utilising their online platforms more effectively by uploading more content about talks and larger events so attendees have a more general understanding about it before attending the lecture.
- 1.3** The Careers & Employability Service should coordinate a more varied events programme throughout the academic year. This would include panel discussions, talks in a more varied style, such as those seen in TedX and Pecha Kucha, and more bespoke events for BAME students, postgraduate taught and research students, first-year students, and final-year students.
- 1.4** The Careers & Employability Service should conduct a full, comprehensive review of the annual Careers Fair held in the autumn term. The Careers Service should consider including a more varied spectrum of employers at the event, including companies which have strong ethical values, environmentally-sustainable operations, and promote diversity in the workplace.
- 1.5** The Careers & Employability Service should implement a separate Careers Fair for postgraduate taught and research students. This event should incorporate further study information for postgraduate taught students as well as career opportunities for positions for both academic and non-academic career routes.

- 1.6** The Careers & Employability Service should incorporate more talks and workshops which discuss the importance of soft skills development. Some examples of events students would find useful are ones which present collaborative work skills, problem-solving skills, effective oral and written communication, diversity awareness, workplaces with ethical values, and environmentally sustainable operations.
- 1.7** The Careers & Employability Service should provide a more thorough calendar of careers talks and events on their website.
- 1.8** The Careers & Employability Service should upload all content from training talks and workshops to the website. This would allow students to have the ability to access professional skills development training if they are unable to attend these events.

2. Recruitability, Skills Development and Application Support.

One of the Careers & Employability Service's main streams of work should be focused on recruitability training, skills development, and providing students with job application support.

- 2.1** The Careers & Employability Service should create and upload CV templates, guidance and a CV submission box online. This would allow students to digitally submit their CV to a member of staff at the Careers Service who can give them personalised feedback electronically. This would allow students who are unable to visit the office the same access to this service. Moving this information online might reduce appointment bookings in this area, which would allow staff to devote time to students who would like more in-depth discussion or help with their CV at the in-person workshops.
- 2.2** The Careers & Employability Service should consider the employers' perspective when planning and running workshops.
- 2.3** The Careers & Employability Service should create cover letter templates and guidance online. This would allow students who are unable to attend the workshops in person to have access to the same material online. It would also allow staff to devote time to students who would like a more in-depth discussion of cover letters at the in-person workshops.

- 2.4** The Careers & Employability Service should improve information on assessment centres and upload the content online. The Careers & Employability Service should also consider incorporating different forms of media to this service, like short videos from employers who discuss what they look for from candidates at assessment centres.
- 2.5** The Careers & Employability Service should improve and upload content on psychometric and aptitude tests online. Students should also be given the opportunity to take practice tests online, giving them the opportunity to gain confidence in this area of work.
- 2.6** The Careers & Employability Service should improve digital guidance on interview preparation as a gateway to in-person support. Providing this introductory information prior would reduce in-person appointments and allow University staff more time to work with students who would like further, or more personalised, support in this area.
- 2.7** The Careers & Employability Service should provide clear and accessible online content which outlines the traditional timeline of a job application. It would be beneficial if this chart was interactive, and had annotated advice at each stage of the process, such as initial research of the organisation, supplementary documents, submitting the application, the interview, and what to do with an offer or a rejection.
- 2.8** The Careers & Employability Service should offer personalised support during the job application process.
- 2.9** The University should consider creating a LinkedIn network for the Royal Holloway community to embed the culture of LinkedIn to the institution. This would allow students to make contacts with alumni who work in sectors or organisations they have an interest in.
- 2.10** The Careers & Employability Service should provide a clearer understanding between graduate schemes and graduate jobs and upload the content online.
- 2.11** The Careers & Employability Service should build or work with a third-party to provide a service where students can complete online quizzes or activities to help match their interests and skillsets with potential jobs.
- 2.12** Academic departments and the Careers & Employability Service should work directly with CeDAS and advertise how their courses help students in their professional development.

3. Industry Knowledge.

Students should be provided with accessible, specialised, and live information relating to industries and sectors to enhance their industry knowledge.

- 3.1** The Careers & Employability Service should produce general introductions to sectors and upload this content to the Careers & Employability Service website.
- 3.2** Each page should also include links to useful resources, and staff should update information as the sector changes.
- 3.3** Online information could also include person specifications created by high-profile alumni in that particular sector.

4. Mentoring.

The Careers & Employability Service should create a mentoring programme that is open to all students and connects them with alumni and other Royal Holloway employer connections in a variety of sectors. Our research into successful careers services at other higher education institutes has highlighted that mentoring programmes are an extremely successful form of careers support. This scheme should:

- 4.1** Form a large part of the Careers & Employability Service work, adopt University branding and resource.
- 4.2** Involve an application that enables students to set priorities for their mentor. These can include personal characteristics, sector or job role.
- 4.3** Consider including PGT students alongside second-year undergraduates in the scheme.
- 4.4** Involve a development training opportunity for both students and mentors. This will allow alumni to participate in continued lifelong study, while allowing students to further their professional development.
- 4.5** Begin with a networking event at the start of each term for new mentors and students, followed by the expectation that students and mentors will meet in-person or communicate electronically once every four to six weeks.

5. Careers Support in Academic Departments.

The Careers & Employability Service is not the sole department responsible for providing careers support for Royal Holloway students, and academic departments have a crucial part to play in shaping students' professional development.

- 5.1** All academic departments should conduct a review of all modules which relate to professional skills development. All modules which are considered outdated or ineffective should be taken out of the curriculum and replaced with one that is more relevant.
- 5.2** All academic departments should conduct audits of their courses and create a supporting document which outlines the learned skills students should expect to gain while undertaking the course.
- 5.3** The University should consider reviewing courses and module validation materials to ensure skills development in any existing and all new courses.
- 5.4** All academic departments should seek to introduce 'X-in action' modules where students are supported in finding year-long work experience. The module would be evaluated through reflective writing and an appropriate academic assessment.
- 5.5** All academic departments should be encouraged to utilise industry advisory boards. Information from these should be communicated to students on a regular basis.
- 5.6** The Careers & Employability Service should collaborate with academic departments to incorporate bespoke careers information into a departmental monthly email.
- 5.7** The Careers & Employability Service should coordinate with academic departments and list all careers-related activity in their calendar.

6. Internships and Placements.

Internships and workplaces are considered one of the more successful streams of careers support at Royal Holloway, and the recommendations below were created with the intent to build upon these activities.

- 6.1** The University should expand the micro-placement scheme to all departments and, where possible, increase the number of available placements on those already in existence.
- 6.2** The Careers & Employability Service should create a guidebook on the micro-placement scheme which details the application timeline, support provided to students, and the expectations on student output once assigned a placement.
- 6.3** The University should provide a financial bursary to support travel arrangements for students who have undertaken unpaid internships.
- 6.4** The University should create a one-stop shop for casual job positions within the University.
- 6.5** The Careers & Employability Service should ensure greater clarity on the differences between work experience, internships, shadowing, and placements on their website. The uploaded content should also include information on students' rights within each of these work opportunities.

7. The Students' Union.

Our engagement with students highlighted areas where the Students' Union could provide more support for students in their professional development.

- 7.1** The Students' Union should further their work on communicating information to students about their rights when undertaking work experience, internships, shadowing, and placement opportunities.
- 7.2** The Students' Union should expand their leadership support with new development opportunities for students in leadership positions.
- 7.3** The Students' Union should work more closely with the Careers & Employability Service.

Appendix A.

Employability Skills & History.³⁰

The following is an extract from the Employability & Enterprise Policy/Strategy:

The University has accepted the following definition of employability as articulated in 'Future Fit: preparing graduates for the World of Work' published by UUK/CBI (2009)

“A set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider economy”

The University has agreed the following attributes as important in the development of an employable graduate: self-management; teamworking; business and customer awareness; problem solving; communication and literacy; application of numeracy; application of information technology.

Self-management – readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, resilience, selfstarting, appropriate assertiveness, time management, readiness to improve own performance based on feedback/reflective learning

Teamworking – respecting others, co-operating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions, and awareness of interdependence with others

Business and customer awareness – basic understanding of the key drivers for business success – including the importance of innovation and taking calculated risks – and the need to provide customer satisfaction and build customer loyalty

Problem solving – analysing facts and situations and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions.

Communication and literacy – application of literacy, ability to produce clear, structured written work and oral literacy – including listening and questioning

³⁰ Course audit sourced from https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/740599/Audit-of-History-november-2010.pdf

Application of numeracy – manipulation of numbers, general mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts (e.g. measuring, weighing, estimation and applying formulae).

Application of information technology – basic IT skills, including familiarity with word processing, spreadsheets, file management and use of internet search engines

Underpinning all these attributes, the key foundation, must be a positive attitude: a 'can-do' approach, a readiness to take part and contribute, openness to new ideas and a drive to make these happen.

SO

HOW WILL THESE SKILLS BE DEVELOPED THROUGHOUT YOUR HISTORY DEGREE?.....

OVERVIEW OF HISTORY COURSE

Throughout the degree schemes in History students progress in their acquisition of study skills and their intellectual understanding of the subject. In tandem with this, students steadily develop their **employability skills**.

Information technology and application of number are an essential component of a history degree as you will be expected to use technology in the research and production of assignments while complying with school guidelines.

Self-sufficiency or **self-management** skills are vital for the successful completion of a history degree at Cardiff University. In order to encourage you to manage your own development, you are expected to maintain a PDP file in which you reflect upon your performance and put together a pro-active and ongoing programme of improvement.

The employability skills of **communication and literacy** will be developed in many ways throughout your years of study. You will be required to learn the different written communication styles of essay writing, which will take effort and practice to perfect. Studying History will teach you a questioning approach and you will learn to discuss concepts in written and oral form.

Your **problem solving skills** will be developed in several ways throughout university. Firstly, you will need to approach the daily problems of balancing life as a student with the increasing necessity amongst many for part-time work and involvement in extra-curricular activities. From an academic point of view, history

involves the development of critical thinking and intellectual problem solving. You will learn to critically analyse source material (both primary and secondary) and question preconceptions while giving evidence for independent thinking and analysis. Problem solving skills are highly sought after in the recruitment of graduates. **Teamworking** is an essential part of any degree today. You will learn to work with others to give group presentations and tutorials, whilst seminars will involve open discussion and presentation which will also enhance these skills.

HOW WILL YOU DEVELOP THESE SKILLS THROUGH YOUR COURSE IN THE FIRST YEAR?

Self-management forms a large part of your academic study. Your Personal Tutor will provide you with a PDP form in enrolment week in Year 1. PDPs are designed to help you plan for your personal, educational and career development. The progress file that you compile will be a useful resource in helping you during your degree as well as when you apply for a job afterwards. The file can, for example, assist you to develop and refine your CV by highlighting the transferable skills you have acquired and improved as a student. It will also encourage you to develop a positive attitude to learning throughout your professional life.

Teamworking is an essential part of any degree today and you will gain experience of this in seminars which will involve group work, discussion and presentation. History involves intellectual **problem solving** and your first year will prepare you to develop this skill, particularly in Core Modules such as Medieval Europe and Making of the Modern World.

During the first year you will also start to develop the essential employability skills of application of **numeracy and information technology**. You will be expected to submit assignments in accordance with school guidelines and much of this work will often be produced electronically.

Your **communication and literacy skills** will be developed throughout your History degree. In the first year you will be introduced to different styles of written communication and analysis and considerable time will be spent throughout your years of study in perfecting this skill. Written examinations and coursework will form part of your assessment throughout Level 1.

HOW WILL YOU DEVELOP THESE SKILLS THROUGH YOUR COURSE IN THE SECOND YEAR?

Your **self-management** skills will continue to develop at level 2 as you build upon the body of your history knowledge. At this stage, reading outside core text books will become important and continuing to prioritise your workload and manage

your time will be vital. Personal Development Planning with your tutor will help you to further evaluate your self-management skills.

Communication, literacy and teamworking skills will be enhanced via tutorials. In these small groups you will be encouraged to reflect upon reading and make presentations, sometimes with the use of audio-visual aids. The two hour tutorials allow for substantial discussion and some groupwork. Essay and report writing skills will continue to be developed through your second year.

Numeracy and information technology abilities are expanded at level 2 with the continued use of technology to research and prepare assignments and ensure their submission ahead of set deadlines.

At level 2 you will be encouraged to start questioning what you are learning and critically analysing through the core modules of 'Approaches to History' and 'Exploring Historical Debate'. In this way you will learn to synthesise and amalgamate information and so develop your critical thinking and **problem solving** skills. Practicals and tutorials will provide many opportunities for continued development of this important employability skill.

HOW WILL YOU DEVELOP THESE SKILLS IN THE THIRD YEAR?

In your third year you will continue to develop your critical appraisal and **problem solving** skills across all modules. Your dissertation will be the culmination of the experience of "doing history" at Cardiff.

Throughout this final year of your degree, the self-management skills you have learnt up to now will stand you in good stead for the academic rigour of the course and for the necessary post-degree planning that will underpin all your learning.

CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS (CMS)

CMS sessions delivered in years 2 and 3 will show you how to make sense of the **employability skills** developed throughout your degree and will help you articulate these skills effectively on paper and at interview to an employer. This link between academia and employment is essential, especially for those wanting to enter employment straight after their study. The Careers Service is available to help you further with this throughout all stages of your academic degree.

The Careers Service has a full programme of fairs, employer presentations and employer-led skills sessions that give undergraduates opportunities to meet employers and start developing their **commercial awareness** skills. Furthermore, this insight will allow you to better prepare for the job search and application process.

Appendix B.

Course Information for 'Politics in Action' at Royal Holloway.

Syllabus Information.

PR 3100P - Politics in Action: The Politics and International Relations Experience
Placement Associated Term: 2019/20 Academic Session

Learning Objectives.

Whilst a University degree opens many doors to careers, the experience and skills enhanced during a placement provide an extra dimension to the qualification. The Politics in Action placement scheme is a third year undergraduate, assessed, full unit course module. It has a novel structure which combines participation in a workplace environment for one day a week during term time (and three days a week for each term's reading week) with scholarly reflection on the nature of the organizational, professional, and policy contexts of the placement. Placements are organised in settings such as Parliament, local government, the offices of MEPs, NGOs, campaigning and activist organizations, political parties, media organizations, and the policy or communications divisions of local companies working in relevant fields.

Learning Outcomes.

- Demonstrate their understanding of how academic study illuminates aspects of working in organizations of different kinds, and vice versa
- Evaluate their placement experiences and transfer that learning to other situations and other people.
- Communicate and present ideas effectively and clearly, orally and in written format
- Identify, analyse and resolve problems in a logical manner and use knowledge to develop new approaches to problem solving as well as deal with customers/clients/government bodies.
- Take the lead and responsibility when appropriate as well as demonstrate self-motivation and initiative.

Technical Requirements.

The total number of notional learning hours associated with course are 300. These will normally be broken down as follows:

- 176 hour(s) of Placement
- 10.7 hour(s) of Seminar(s) across 4 week(s)
- 113.3 hours of Guided Independent Study

Summative Assessment:

- Reflective Log (2500 Words) - 25%
- Report (4000 Words) - 60%
- Presentation (15 Minutes) - 15%

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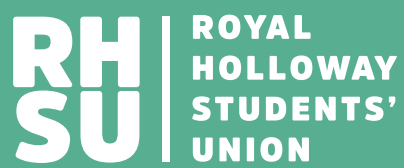
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