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**The Seven Steps for
Success (7S) - A student-
led employability
programme led by the
University of Portsmouth
SU.**

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Tailored Learning Experience

- As an International Relations student, whose career opportunities are vast and varied, it can be difficult to find career guidance from the university that is relevant to the field. I imagined this could be the case for other nicher courses.
- Recognising the disparity in employability focused support across academic schools, I sought to create an initiative that would provide tailored guidance and opportunities to students' subject areas and/or career ambitions. This was achieved through creating a tailor-made employability programme for each academic school.

Streamlined & Relevant

- The programme was also created recognising the issue of poor student engagement that is seen across the sector, so all opportunities across the university would be contained within this one initiative for students.
- This would alleviate the issue of students being bombarded with information that isn't always relevant to them, and leads to furthers disengagement and the 'wallpaper effect'.

STAND OUT AS A GRADUATE

- Recognising the need for students to graduate with experience that goes beyond their course, as a university degree is moving towards becoming the 'norm' compared to previous decades, the programme was ultimately created to enhance graduate outcomes.



Graduate careers evidenced as the main reason students study in HE (UUK, 2017; Unite, 2017)

Oliver states that employability is about enabled graduates who are equipped for the working world (Oliver, 2015)

The current body of research relating to student and graduate employability is dominated by

- Extra-curricular (Moxey and Simpkin, 2021; Jackson and Bridgestock, 2021)
- Skills (Tymon, 2013; Suleman, 2016; Yorke, 2006)
- Career and development theories (Bandora, 2005; Buckingham and Clifton, 2001; Super et al. 1963)

Yet there is a priority for further work was needed to embed employability into the curriculum and increase student engagement (AdvanceHE, 2021a)

7S Program

Seven Steps to Success

Presented by Jade Underwood - Learning
Experience Officer

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Year 1 - Making The Case

July 2021: Students voted for the creation of a programme like 7S (2021 - 775 votes)

August - December 2021: Met and consulted with members of the Careers and Employability Service (CES) and the majority of HoDs or their representatives across the institution to pitch the initial ideas of 7S, and gain feedback to better inform the programme. All HoDs and CES approved of the 7S model.

February 2022: Student Experience Committee approved a pilot of 7S with 5 academic schools (1 per faculty): A Strategic Steering Group was established, responsible for creating and agreeing on the structure and content of the programme and its moodle sites.

March 2022: Re-elected with 1354 votes to expand 7S into all academic schools.

June - August 2022: In collaboration with academics and CES, Jade Underwood curated, wrote and edited content for each 7S programme to ensure the language was student-friendly, enticing and relevant. Other online resources (statistics) were incorporated. All content was approved by each stakeholder and the 7S steering group.

August - September 2022: Jade Underwood, Alana Aldred (Technology Enhanced Learning) and Tom Lowe (Academic Development) created the '7S Student Engagement Framework', outlining the strategy and deliverables for each stakeholder to increase students' awareness and participation with 7S.



SSTS-SASHPL

SEVEN STEPS TO SUCCESS

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SCHOOL AREA STUDIES, HISTORY, POLITICS & LITERATURE

WHAT ARE THE 'SEVEN STEPS TO SUCCESS'?

Welcome to 'Seven Steps to Success!'.

Through participating in the 7S program, you will be able to gain the key skills needed to achieve your career goals, and receive an official University of Portsmouth & Students' Union joint award of recognition presented at the prestigious black-tie event that is the Union Awards!

This will be an invaluable addition to your CV, proving to employers that you made the most out of your time at university through graduating with both a degree, experience AND the skills that are needed to stand out amongst the thousands of other graduates competing for the same opportunities in an increasingly competitive job market!

The 'Seven Steps to Success'

Step 1: Exploring Your Professional Identity – Career Profiles

Step 2: Developing Your Specific Skill Set – Extra-curricular Activities

Step 3: Developing Your Transferable Skills Set – Societies



How did it go? Engagement Analysis

Despite the barriers to raising awareness, analysis shows that those who did participate had a lot to gain and will be useful in informing the revised model.

The total number of student enrollments & submissions per academic school significantly varies and those with the more proactive awareness & marketing strategy had the highest numbers.

For example, one academic school had over 3x the number of enrollments. This school delivered tutorials on how to navigate the programme. The school with the lowest engagement relied on induction period to advertise at the start of the year alone.

Total: 230 enrollments & 31 submissions

Engagement by Course & Student Characteristics:

- Majority of students were full-time.
- Representative amount of PGM students.
- Some international & mature students.
- All levels of study engaged with the programme.



- 1. Awareness:** Though the designated academic leads for the pilot schools were aware of 7S, being unable to attend course leader staff inductions in most schools meant they were not fully informed of the programme and therefore unable to confidently promote.
 - Though, the two schools I was able to brief had by far the highest engagement rates.
- 2. Technical Issues:** meant course leaders were not given access to the 7S moodle sites until mid-october (past the critical point of when students are highly engaged).
- 3. Embedment:** Comms were not linked to existing activities, so for example, if an academic school was running a student enrichment activity that could allow students to qualify a given step in the programme, this was not being explained to students.
- 4. Partnership Challenges:** which meant the SU and Careers Service were not working in the best collaborative way possible, resulting in a missed opportunity in having the careers service promote 7S.

Though the programme was created collaboratively, marketing wasn't, and so it is the intention that the newly proposed model will have greater staff investment to drive the work and resources.

Conceptual Analysis Highlights

The conceptual analysis takes the general themes coming through from what students had to write in their submissions to evidence they have completed a programme step, taken from the 22 completed submissions we have.

1. **Step 1:** Successful in helping students understand the skill requirements for their career interests, and tailored their 'MyCareer' profiles to match their goals as a result.
2. **Step 2:** Students listed various extra-curricular activities they had pursued, the skills they gained from this and how this related to their career goals.
3. **Step 3:** Students listed the UPSU societies they have joined, experiences they gained and skills developed from this. However, there were a few students that didn't join a society and merely expressed interest in joining for the future. Despite students being made aware of the benefits joining a society can offer through 7S, the results show that the content of this step isn't diverse enough.
4. **Step 4:** Successful in helping students understand how to recognise and confidently articulate the experiences and skills they have gained through various means e.g. creating or improving their LinkedIn profile, improving their CVs/Interview technique, or attending networking events.

Step 5: Students referenced work experience directly relating to their courses, typically seen during placement and sandwich years, with some students going out of their way to gain as much experience in multiple roles as was possible to them. Some students despite trying, were unable to gain work experience. There was little mention of volunteering or part-time work despite 7S discussing the benefits of each.

Step 6: Students referenced opportunities offered by UPSU, common answers included those such as the SWAIN analysis tool, and voluntary roles within the organisation.

Step 7: Students discussed the Hallmarks of a Portsmouth Graduate they felt they had developed from the 7 Steps. The most commonly occurring of these were: 'Personal Development', 'Society and Citizenship', and 'Personal Competencies'. Less common were 'to be intellectually curious', and to 'think independently, analytically, and creatively'.

Overall, students described 7S as having positively impacted their confidence and growth as individuals, and prepared them for life as graduates. In some cases, these skills and knowledge were previously unknown by the participant.

- Raising of the profile of employment/employability and career thinking with students.
- Engages some students who are motivated to pursue the kinds of extra-curricular activity in 7S.
- Alignment with the employability initiatives embedded at course level and students to gain recognition for this effort.
- Provides students with an idea of the skills needed to succeed in the workplace.
- The focus on student co-creation, visibility and awareness.
- Catches us up with similar schemes at other universities and hosted on Moodle where students are.
- Being contacted by a member of Careers and Employability after submitting for a guidance meeting.
- An opportunity for self-reflection and evaluation of my own competences.
- Provides a simple, structure for supporting and recognising student employability parallel to the degree award.
- There are clear strengths relating to a better reach to students and the partnership between CES and SU could be an ideal middle ground.
- 7S draws together practice across the whole university, which has been rarely done before.
- The break-down approach and clear visuals make the scheme attractive and engaging.
- The reflection tool at the end offered an opportunity to apply learning.

Staff Feedback Areas for Improvement

- Introduce physical support and advice, in the format of workshops and one-to-one support.
- Greater careers service collaboration, engagement and ownership.
- More employer research.
- Wider ranging signposting to other employability building opportunities.
- Ensuring content is fully applicable to all courses within schools.
- Providing data on student stage completion to key staff (e.g. Employability Leads) in Schools/ Departments which may allow individual targeted support mechanisms to be offered to students at different stages.
- Greater means of incentivisation.
- Ensure all steps are applicable and of interest to students.
- A more proactive marketing approach that engages with students directly, as opposed to relying on email reminders.



GAIN A DIGITAL BADGE



GAIN CERTIFICATION



Step 7: Becoming a Successful Portsmouth Graduate

Explore

Growth: How to manage content if the number of schools grew e.g. from the current 5 schools to 15 for example.

Embedding into the Curriculum: Please see below particularly noteworthy comments around the importance of ensuring the programme is embedded into the curriculum and not seen as an optional bonus:

Replicating Academic Leadership: That the early adopting schools were employability enthusiasts with expertise, which may not be matched elsewhere in the Faculties.

The outcome of a workshop that recently took place was a strengthened partnership with Careers in order to maximise the potential of 7S so that it is fit for purpose as a university-wide initiative for the 2024 academic year.

Workshop Outcomes

The enABLE workshop agreed the below steps as a way forward:

- CES and SU to co-badge 7S.
- CES and SU to co-resource 7S, as a flagship partnership project at Portsmouth.
- A revised plan for 7S that would report to the Employment Group, with a potential new name to be decided through a workshop of employers and students.
- 7S to be reviewed to maximise impact and enable greater accessibility to students, with a view to be spread over all Schools for September 2024.
- 7S to maintain its high perceived relatability through ‘bespoke elements’, but the way in which this is achieved is yet to be discussed.
- The lead contact for the 7S would be Natalie Dutka-Bowskill (Head of Student Development - UPSU) and Marc Lintern (Director of Student Employment and Employability - UoP).

Mission Statement: *“To co-create an inclusive employability programme that engages all students to be confident in achieving their full graduate potential”.*

Conclusions

- Students' Unions are often an untapped resource to support with student outcomes initiatives
- There is a need to create holistic approaches employability that are inclusive of all opportunities across large institutions
- Universities have a proliferation of platforms where there may be opportunities in Moodle/Canvas/VLE as often students will only engage with core virtual learning environments
- High relevance balanced with flexibility leads to higher student engagement
- Challenges remain on tailored discipline focused resources, matched with resource implications



Thank you!

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Questions?

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