

**Supporting students to achieve their employment ambitions and beyond
– aided by technology**

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The ABS Policy Network is part of a series of events that are being held by the ABS across the UK. These events provide a platform for key stakeholders in higher education (HE) policy and business school practice to engage in debate and discussion around pressing issues. The Policy Network aims to directly engage with stakeholders, to influence policy, and to increase media profile.

This second annual series of events focus on one central question:

“Is it Possible to Balance Student Demands with Business Needs”

That question has been broken down into focused sessions with specific topics. This event centred around the topic:

*“Supporting students to achieve their employment ambitions and beyond
– aided by technology”*

To help us negotiate these discussions, the ABS invited key players from stakeholders in the HE sector.

Profiles



Marie Clark is Marketing and Communications Manager EMEA at Hobsons, leading the development and implementation of their communications, public and media relations strategies. Previously she worked for four years in policy communications, leading a team that provided communications consultancy, research and events to partners in the higher education, skills and business sectors.



David Edmundson-Bird, a dot-com casualty from 2001, is Principal Lecturer in Digital Marketing Communications, Director of the MSc Digital Marketing Communications at Manchester Metropolitan University and founder of MMU Agency Life. He has enjoyed several spells in academia as well as senior management roles in the digital media industry.



Richard Hong is the Business Manager of Bloomberg for Education in the UK. His main responsibility is to understand the teaching and research needs of the higher education community, and to leverage Bloomberg's technology to bridge the gap between theory and practice in students' learning experiences. Since he started the current role, he has been proactively engaging with the academic community and become a corporate member of ABS.

Key Themes

Don't waste students' time

For a student comparing financial information on a number of companies, internet research can give you the answers but it takes a lot of work. Software can do this in a matter of seconds and this is the way that analysts operate in the workplace.

Free to use aptitude tests are also available that use real world examples to give students the chance to find out if they are suited to working in certain industries. These tools can also be used by companies for recruitment in a way that is much more accessible for small firms not used to dealing directly with universities.

Digital literacy and enterprise education by stealth

Launching a marketing course with the word 'digital' in the title can prove difficult, because of an association with programming. Success can be had by designing curriculum to include the creation of digital artefacts – the trick is not to single out digital marketing as special. This also gives students the equivalent of a portfolio that they can show to prospective employers. This proof of skills, combined with good links to industry can give students an excellent chance of finding the job they are looking for, or the confidence to start their own business.

An entrepreneurial mindset is important for all careers, not just those of people wishing to start a company and a similar approach to enterprise skills can also be effective.

Extra curricular activities can also be important in students learning skills when curricula are being squeezed to include more and more.

Using data to understand student ambitions

Analysis of survey responses of prospective international students can give a business school important insight into what matters to people thinking of studying with them.

Students from different countries can be interested in different things and market intelligence can help an institution direct their marketing accordingly, and even adapt courses.

Conclusions

Business schools are working in a variety of ways to equip their students to be successful, but there is still some rhetoric from employers that graduates do not always have the required skills. Technology can help institutions to understand their students and help them engage directly with employers in order to close this gap. The challenge for business schools is to develop strategic partnerships to enable this process while engaging existing faculty.