

CAS Evaluation Results 2006/7

Purpose of the report

To examine the work of the University of Reading's Careers Advisory Service through its programme of evaluations in 2006/7.

Summary of Report

Twelve areas of the Careers Advisory Service (CAS) are identified and evaluated. Where appropriate, each of these areas has had identified its own plan for the further action.

Executive Summary

In this report 11 areas of the work of the Careers Advisory Service (CAS) at Reading are assessed and evaluation. The vast majority of these activities are evaluated by survey but a number are assessed by other methods such focus groups. The areas of work evaluated this year are: information, individual careers interviews, courses for Research staff at the University, Career development courses for postgraduate research students, the career management skills programme for undergraduates, recruitment fairs, the Headstart programme, role of ICT in CAS, annual CAS Marketing survey, survey of Employers who send vacancies to the CAS and of the CAS Lending service.

As well as reporting the findings of the results each section outlines a plan for CAS to undertake over the next year.

In addition to reporting these results on this website the Director of CAS will also present them to the Careers Advisory Board and the University of Reading's Board for Teaching and Learning for their comments and suggestions at their scheduled Autumn meetings.

Carey Widdows

1. Introduction

The following report has been prepared for the Careers Advisory Board. This is the fifth time such a report has been made. All evaluations are carried out to help the CAS improve services for students, staff and employers. In addition surveys, and the analysis of the results, help us to comply with the MATRIX Quality Standards for information, advice and guidance.

2. Guidance

2.1. Results

The survey on CAS's Careers Interviews was distributed from 6 November (week 5 – Autumn Term) until before the Christmas closure, on 21 December and 47 forms were completed (46 forms at Whiteknights and 1 at Bulmershe Court).

Whiteknights

Totals by degree discipline were: 27 UG, 13 PG and 3 G. Plus, 1 student doing Foundation Science, 1 member of staff and 1 unknown.

To the general question “How would you rate the interview on the following” the answers to specific questions were:

1. Agreeing what you wanted to discuss at the start of the session?

34 students said “Very Good”, 11 “Good” and 1 “Neither/Nor”.

2. Discussing your needs and interests?

29 students said “Very Good”, 16 “Good” and 1 “Neither/Nor”

3. Providing you with information?

33 said “Very Good” and 13 “Good”

4. Discussing the alternatives open to you?

22 said “Very Good”, 15 “Good” and 4 “Neither/Nor”. 5 students said N/A.

5. Helping you decide what to do next?

24 said “Very Good”, 15 “Good”, and 4 “Neither/Nor” 2 students said the question was N/A and 1 did not reply.

Bulmershe

The only student (PGCE Primary) who participated in the survey at BC ticked “Very Good” to all the questions. No suggestions were given.

2.2 Actions

- To make sure that students are given a copy of the leaflet “Making the most of your Careers Interview” when booking an A/I at reception. Please note that this is not possible when booking over

the phone or by email (Suggestion: make the leaflet available from CAS website).

3. Information

The questionnaire was distributed during weeks 7-10 of the Spring Term and during the Easter Vacation. A total of 40 feedback forms were completed by Whiteknights clients and 3 by Bulmershe Court students.

Whiteknights

Those who completed the form were: 27 UG, 8 PG, 4 Grad and 1 member of staff.

Replies from clients:

- 35 students were Very Satisfied and 5 Satisfied with their Initial contact at reception.
- Information most sought: Interviews, assessment centres, psychometric tests – 12; CVs, application forms and covering letters – 7; Careers information – 6.
- 25 students said that they obtained All the information needed; 12 said Most and 3 Some (these were careers in Asia, training contracts/bursaries and examples of questions for behavioural interviews)
- When asked about To what extent they were satisfied with the help received from Reception/Information staff, 33 said they were Very satisfied and 5 Satisfied (2 students did not answer this question)
- **Suggestions/comments (verbatim)**
 - Extremely helpful, friendly advice given!
 - No, very good!
 - They are all great. I have been many times and each time very helpful!
 - Greater selection of information on City law firms in library.
 - No, very impressed as never been in building before but the people were friendly and very helpful.
 - No, I was satisfied with the service, the staff and a well set out office (this comment from a Real Estate student!!!)
 - Excellent, very willing to help students, great staff. Just keep up the good work.
 - More books on loan. Otherwise, the service is extremely helpful.
 - Clear directions
 - None, excellent service! Very helpful. Thank you!

- More handouts of information to take away.(i.e. from Applied Computer Science student looking for information on presentations)
- Could the quick queries be available earlier say 9:30 or 10:00 am?
- It was a very warm, helpful experience!
- It would be very useful to have more TV-video sets so that more than one person can visualise the video at a time. Please provide more videos about interviews and assessment centres.
- External students support beyond 3 years after graduation.
- Move to the new building so more central.
- Fantastic service, extremely nice and helpful advisers! Thank you!
- No. Very good Service.
- Update computers, extend time my Reading login remains valid after graduation (a year would be helpful)

Bulmershe Court

At Bulmershe the sample comprised 1 UG (Film & Theatre) and 2 PG (Education & Training for Development and Teaching and Learning).

Replies from students:

- All 3 students were very satisfied with their Initial Contact at reception.
- Information sought was (verbatim);
 - About visa. How to use the Careers Advisory Service
 - Careers advice
 - Access to information about applying to film companies
- 1 student said he/she obtained All the information needed and 2 Some.
- 1 student did not find information on working visa.
- All 3 students were Very Satisfied with the help received.
- Suggestions/comments (verbatim)
 - Although I knew this service was here I did not realise the extent of information available – should be included in a tour.
 - Some small seminars would be useful.

3.2 Actions

At Whiteknights:

- To try and get information on behavioural interviews
- Regarding greater selection of information on City law firms

- To consider producing a handout on assessment centres including presentations. Help sheets are very popular – students still like to “take away” things.
- One student suggests having QQ in the morning. Hopefully we will have all our CAs in place for the next academic year.
- One student complained about the restriction to watch our videos (one at a time). Streaming videos will allow us to satisfy the demand for watching our videos.
- One student is asking for more books on loan – we will have more next academic year in the new building.

At Bulmershe:

- CAS will consider organising information tours and other activities to promote CAS at Bulmershe.

4. Careers Management course for Research Staff

4.1 Results

The CAS now runs a number of sessions for early career research staff to develop their career management skills. These sessions are run on behalf of the Centre for Staff Training and Development (CSTD) and forms part of the Certificate in Research Career Development course that is now accredited by the Staff Educational Development Association (SEDA). As part of an accredited course CAS staff are now involved in assessing learning records and personal development plans.

In addition to the main courses more specialist courses were run this year for the first time, such as CV clinics and interview techniques for research staff.

Most of the course 25 out of 32 found the course personally stretching and quite challenging with 15 out of 25 attendees saying that the course was excellent and the rest indicating that it was worthwhile.

When asked would you recommend the session all 22 respondents replied yes.

4.2 Actions

To continue to run the SEDA accredited courses in the new format for another year and then review the career planning sessions in conjunction with CSTD.

5. Careers Management course for Research Students

5.1 Results

A one-day course for postgraduate research students is held each term. Out of 30 students who attended one of the three courses held last academic year, at least 87 per cent of respondents rated each aspect of the course as good or excellent. In terms of the overall benefit derived from the course, 97 per cent of respondents chose one of the top two out of four ratings.

5.2 Action

No changes are needed to course however greater use will be used of technology will be used in communicating with students and of delivering the courses in future. There is a need to change and update some of the participative exercises and this will be done in 2007/8. This will be achieved by the University's system Blackboard and will be similar to the developments being undertaken under the undergraduate programme of Career Management Skills.

The CAS web site for Research Students will also need updating in 2007/8.

6. Career Management Skills

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CMS sessions</u>	<u>Total number of Students seen</u>	<u>Number potentially seen</u>	<u>%</u>
2003/4	120	4658	6745	69%
2004/5	108	4032	5549	72%
2005/6	98	4061	5274	77%
2006/7	83	4063	5288	77%

6.1 Student feedback on CMS

The CMS evaluation is in two parts, both distributed to all students who attend the last of three CMS sessions. The details of the response to the first part are returned at the time that the session is delivered and the overall responses are outlined below.

Students were asked their views on the taught sessions, and the online resources and materials. Responses continued to be at a high level, in the range of 3.6 to 4.3 out of a possible 5.0 in terms of the students' satisfaction. Last year we made considerable efforts to improve on the experience of a CMS course as for a number of years we have low and poor responses to this particular question. This

seems to have borne fruit this year as the evaluation jumped up considerably from all the assessments that we have previously received. Of particular interest is the response to the question on the overall did the sessions stimulate thinking about career planning as this jumped to a new high. Here we compare figures for the last four years for these questions.

Responses to individual questions:

Finding your Profile

Taught session exercises useful to learn about skills/teamwork	3.7(3.5) (3.4)(3.4)
Online resources a useful way of developing self awareness	3.7(3.5)(3.9)(3.6)
Online materials clearly laid out/straightforward to use	3.6(3.7) (3.9)(3.8)

Finding the Fit

Taught session useful way of finding out possibilities with degree	3.7 (3.6)(3.4)(3.3)
Online resources useful way of researching options	3.7 (3.7 (3.6)(3.6)
Online materials clearly laid out/straightforward to use	3.7 (3.7)(3.8)(3.7)

Effective Applications

Analysis job ads useful to find out skills/quals employers look for	3.9 (3.7)(3.8)(3.6)
Online resources gave useful info/advice on applying for work	4.3 (3.9)(3.7)(3.6)
Online materials clearly laid out and straightforward to use	4.0 (4.0)(4.0)(3.8)

Overall

Aims and purpose of CMS clearly stated	4.1(4.0) (3.9)(3.8)
CMS came at just about the right time during degree	3.5 (3.5)(3.1)(3.2)
Overall the CMS taught sessions were enjoyable	3.7 (3.2)(3.2)(3.2)
Overall CMS stimulated thinking about future and career plans	4.0(3.9)(3.8)(3.9)

6.2 Actions

It is pleasing that once again student assessment of their CMS sessions and on-line learning materials has again improved in most areas. Of particular note is the improvement in the number of respondents who felt that the CMS sessions were enjoyable as well as being useful. Several changes have been introduced during the year for example: a brand new approach to CMS was introduced into Humanities courses; extensive training of staff in presentation techniques; use of the University Blackboard Virtual Learning System provided a more stimulating environment for learning during CMS sessions; and the transfer to new Destinations from old CMS occurred on many courses.

To ensure that the 18 courses not currently using Blackboard and the destinations web site transfer in 2007/8 ready to run this system fully by 2008/9 academic year.

7. Evaluation of Fairs

7.1 Results

At the Autumn Graduate Recruitment Fair 2006 1958 students visited the 63 exhibitors who attended the Autumn Fair. This was the largest number of stall holders and visitors that has ever visited a Fair at Reading.

The CV & Careers Clinic at the Fair, that was introduced at the Summer fair 2005, was again busy and extremely well received by the students and graduates who attended the sessions.

At the summer Graduate Recruitment Fair in June 2007 many students commented on the good range of employers attending the fair. Carrier bags and guides were not given out at this year's fair which meant the main reception was easier to manage.

62 exhibitors and 528 students attended the Summer Fair which meant that attendance was a lot lower than previous Fairs held at this time of year. The Summer Fair could reasonably expect to attract between 800-900 attendees.

A lot of new and innovative ways were followed to attract students to the Fair

- Weekly emails and targeted emails.
- A0 Poster in RUSU on poster board that we have hired for the year.
- Facebook event (43 students signed up for the event).
- 2 Marketing reps for the fair. The reps distributed 1000 flyers and put up 100 posters around campus.
- Careers advisors sent fair guides to department links.
- Department secretary email.
- Junction 11 broadcast.
- Event details appeared in Spark.
- Fair guide made available in CAS reception (200 distributed).
- Event placed on RUSU homepage, student and staff home pages and University notices.
- Fair guide made available as a pdf on CAS website.

The Employer Services Officer undertook some research for CAS on the reasons for the low turn-out of students from Reading. The project aim was to determine student opinion of careers events. In total 200 questionnaires were completed. The results have provided the Careers Service with vital information to help ensure the success of this event in the future.

The Service will investigate:

- Changing the date of the fair to an earlier time in the final term.
- Having the fair on a different day of the week.
- Liaising with Summer Breaks UK, the company who books the Newquay trip to ensure there is no clash.
- The need to monitor the success of our marketing, to try and see how successful our methods are. This could be trying to find out how many students read the weekly emails or listened to the student radio.
- Collecting and using facts and figures about the number of students getting jobs from the fair to market future events. For example, saying that 20 job offers were made to students attending the fair, 80% of students attending the summer fair got a graduate job etc.
- The timing of the event on the day. Employers' commented on the timing of the event. They felt it got a lot busier towards the end of the day.

7.3 Teachers' Recruitment Fair

This event is held on the Bulmeshe campus each year.

26 of the 27 expected stands attended representing over 40 LEAs. The Independent Schools Council, and London Diocesan (C of E) Board also attended, as well as a large local secondary school. Once again, comments from delegates were very complimentary about the quality of students and the event itself.

269 students attended. Attendance by course: BA(Ed) 46, PGCE (Primary) 47, PGCE (Secondary) 154, with all subject specialisms represented, (representing 87% of the total ITT cohort), 20 Graduate Teacher Programme and 2 others.

The CV checking service once again proved very busy. 36 CVs were checked by and 8 info queries received. Last year the corresponding figures were 25 and 23 respectively.

7.4 Actions

LEAs are still very keen to attend, although with the increasing number of available teachers fewer expressed an interest than in the past. The PGCE Primary and Secondary and BA(Ed) staff support the event and students find it a good opportunity to chat to representatives face to face. It is likely the event will be held at a similar time next year, after liaison with the course leaders. It will be interesting to see if more schools want to attend, although there are not many unfilled spaces.

Law Fair

7.5 Results

Held in the Students' Union 3Sixty 33 Stands this year up from 22 two years' ago with 700 students attending against 500 who attended the year before..

7.6 Actions

Needs more Careers Service staff to run the reception and evaluation areas. This Fair has outgrown the space available in the 3Sixty but at present no suitable venue has been found. More employers would be interested in attending this event at Reading than we could accommodate them.

Mini Construction Fair

7.7 Findings

Historically CAS has run a series of presentations for the Real Estate and Construction department. The interest in these events dropped as the term progressed. To help improve student employability and opportunities, the Employer Liaison Officer organised a mini recruitment fair in the department. The pilot was a great success with very positive feedback from employers, the department and students. Employer comments included "thank you for arranging a very successful event", "I had very positive feedback from your students" and "we certainly had a good response on the day".

7.8 Actions

This was a pilot for a larger event that she plans to run in the autumn term.

8 Headstart Report 2006-07

8.1 Findings

'Headstart' is the central programme of careers related seminars and workshops run by CAS. Over 75 events have run compared with 60 during the same two terms in the previous academic year. This increase has been in response from students requesting more psychometric ability tests and due to student demand more seminars looking at occupational areas, for example; 'Careers in the Environment', 'Careers in the Media' and 'Working in the UK for International Students'. Student numbers have also increased with over 1660 attending workshops during this academic year

compared with 1605 for the previous year. The involvement from employers has also increased with more than 20 leading sessions during this academic year compared with 15 during the previous year. This was mainly due to an increase in the demand for mock interviews.

Around 90% of students who completed an evaluation form at the end of each Headstart session rated the session to be 'useful' and 'interesting'.

8.2 Actions

- To run a session looking at Civil Service opportunities for graduates and to offer a more 'coaching' style service for those wishing to apply for posts and who would like to have further support.
- Launch the new 'Headstart Events' programme, a glossy A5 brochure funded by employer sponsorship (HP, Baker Tilly, Ernst and Young and KPMG). This also includes employer recruitment focused events.
- Continue posting Autumn and Spring programmes to home addresses as student feedback good.
- To work with newly appointed Careers Education Manager to involve CMS into the Headstart team to ensure CMS and Headstart programmes complement each other
- To investigate on-line ability testing sessions
- Offer more skills-based sessions and investigate further employer involvement in the programme

9 Use of ICT in CAS

9.1 Website usage

Usage of CAS websites (www.reading.ac.uk/careers/ and www.reading.ac.uk/careers-cms) continued to grow during the period 2006-07, most notably in the number of unique visitors (+41% from 2005-06) and number of visitors (+29%). The number of pages being viewed has bottomed out (-16%); this may seem disappointing, however, the increase in visitors suggests that users are finding what they want more easily and quickly than before, especially with our introduction of subscription services such as RSS Feeds, and thus are not having to browse too many pages to get to what they need.

The table below shows year on year increases in website traffic since 2003-04.

Year	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages Viewed	Hits
2003-04	94,005	160,197	1,004,987	3,323,541
2004-05	99,826	187,522	1,608,845	4,897,091
% increase from 03-04	6%	17%	60%	47%
2005-06	151,023	263,005	1,880,168	12,311,246
% increase from 04-05	51%	40%	17%	151%
2006-07	212,905	338,749	1,575,175	14,537,534
% increase from 05-06	41%	29%	-16%	18%
% increase from 2003-04 to 2006-07	126%	111%	57%	337%

Website developments:

There have been a number of website developments during 2006-07, including:

- The introduction of RSS feeds for jobs and events;
- Improvements to the Jobshop website menu with new sections on Recruiters in Reading, Know your rights, Keeping safe and information for international students;
- Improvements to the job search screens;
- The launch of 'Destinations', the replacement for the Career Management Skills (CMS) website, together with the development by careers advisers of pilot Blackboard websites to assist with taught CMS sessions, leading to better targeting of resources and learning materials.

In addition to the above, over the summer months the CAS student interns have undertaken the groundwork to enable CAS to migrate its website into the new University branded templates in early November 2007.

Other ICT developments:

- October 2007 launch of the E-Guidance management system using software from Graduate Prospects. This significantly enhances the Service's effective management of the ever-increasing number of online requests for advice and guidance. The system includes a searchable archive of responses and a knowledge bank to assist careers advisers;
- Development of the RISISWeb Portal to enable front desk staff to book quick query and careers interview appointments for students, with automated confirmation emails. The system also enables careers advisers to create guidance summaries which are then emailed to students to comment on. As well as the reduction in maintaining paper-

based records, the CAS will have access to much better management information on who is using the Service which will greatly assist the future planning of CAS service activities. This will be launched in November 2007.

9.2 Hardware developments:

The move to the Carrington Building has seen the CAS investing significantly in new hardware for staff and students. Careers advisers have been provided with laptop computers to enable them to work more flexibly. The number of PCs available to students has risen from six to 10 in the new Careers Resources Centre, while each of the interview rooms also has PC access for careers advisers to use with students during quick queries and/or careers interviews. In the student area of CAS significant support was received from the Student Services Directorate to purchase flat computer screens and cradles to house CPU's to give a clear and modern look to this Resources Area.

9.3 Actions

To continue to monitor the use of the Web site particularly in the light of the development of the Destinations web site and the changes required to be introduced with the University's branding exercise.

10 Annual CAS Marketing Survey

Each year CAS undertakes an on-line survey of all final year undergraduate students.

10.1 Findings

In the main, students appear to be satisfied with the level of support and range of services that the CAS offers.

- 82% of students feel that the CAS is doing Very Well or Well in informing them how to get in contact with the service;
- Finding the CAS building at Blandford Lodge continues to be a struggle for some, with 16.7% reporting difficulties; while 20.2% of survey respondents have never even visited CAS;
- The CAS website remains the most used service (in what is an online survey) – 72% of all users, with the Careers Fair (66%) again close behind. Other services which remain popular include the Job Shop website (38%), Career Management Skills (36%), quick queries (35%) and the Careers Library (32%);
- Contacting students by email appears to be the best way to notify students with nearly 24% saying they found out about CAS services this way. There has been a drop in the perceived effectiveness of the Events Programme down to 12% from 18% in 2006;

- The survey does not ask students about whether they would like to receive SMS alerts for CAS events and services – maybe a consideration for next year;
- Student satisfaction with the quality of service that they have received from CAS remains very high with 32% rating it very good and 47% good (an overall rise in the positive category of 7% from 2006);
- Questions on whether students would find Web 2.0 technologies useful (i.e. blogs, podcasts and RSS feeds) received a mixed response. Blogs received the highest endorsement with 85% replying Yes or Maybe to CAS introducing this on our website, with 10% saying No. Podcasts – Yes, Maybe - 74%, with 20% saying No; RSS feeds - Yes, Maybe - 72%, with 9% saying No.

10.2 Actions

- Review timing of survey;
- Review student comments, eg regarding publicity, information/staff availability through department
- Consider research findings on Blogs/podcasts/RSS Feeds

11 Employer Survey

11.1 Findings

In the past, CAS has relied on annual surveys to gain feedback on the services we provide for employers. There are a couple of problems inherent in this approach:

1. Lack of consistency

Different criteria and questions have been applied and different employers targeted from year-to-year. This makes it difficult to compare results and get a real sense of how the service is performing.

2. Timing

Some employers only use our service once or twice a year, which makes it difficult for them to answer some questions - e.g. “Did you shortlist a Reading student or graduate as result of our advertising service?” The answer to this question may not be fresh in the mind of an employer who recruited 6 to 12 months before the survey was sent out.

To overcome these problems, CAS created an automated survey, which is sent via email to every employer that advertises a vacancy on the Careers website. The questions contained in the survey are:

- How would you rate the service we provide? (Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory).

- What other services could we provide, or how could we improve our existing service?
- Did you shortlist a Reading student or graduate?
- Did you recruit a Reading student or graduate?

These questions are sent to the employer one month after their closing date has passed. If a closing date is not provided (IE: if the recruitment process is ongoing), the survey is sent two months after the advert first appeared on the website. This way, we receive regular feedback from employers throughout the year.

This is a new development within CAS and we have just begun to collect the results (the first surveys were sent at the beginning of August 2007 and the results will be given at future CAS Boards.

12 CAS lending Service

12.1 Findings

During the year CAS piloted a lending service, in a small range of products, to users from the Careers Library. With support from the Centre of Career Management Skills it had been planned that when the Service moved into the Carrington Building there would be a facility to lend career books, videos, DVD's etc to users. Until now CAS had only operated a Reference service so before moving this pilot scheme was undertaken.. As part of the pilot an evaluation was undertaken. An analysis of the findings led to the following recommendations.

12.2 Recommendations

- More publicity for CAS Lending System. Perhaps careers advisers can include this service in their CMS presentations and lists of resources, especially in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. Also to all postgraduate students.
- To continue advertising the Lending System on CAS website and notice boards.
- To keep the present rules (including fines).
- New titles of books on Psychometric Tests should be considered for inclusion in the system.
- Books on subjects such as assessment centres, interviews and CV writing are of relevance to students so their inclusion in the Lending System could be desirable.
- To consider the inclusion of relevant videos e.g. "The Assessment Centre Video" and "Why Ask me That", and/or DVDs, especially "Selection Success in One" (which includes the two mentioned videos and also "Your Job's Online") when we have a stronger operational infrastructure and adequate financial resources.

- To evaluate the efficiency of the Lending System through feedback from students. .

13 Conclusions

In line with recommendations in *Collecting and Using Student Feedback: A Guide to Good Practice* by John Brennan and Ruth Williams report undertaken for the Higher Education Funding Council for England users of CAS will be informed, by appropriate media, of the changes made to CAS practice as a direct result of their feedback. This will be publicised in a number of ways as well as through the University web site.

Carey Widdows
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Careers Advisory Service