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Learning from the career stories of international graduates

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What do Salford's international graduates do? Learning from career stories.

Fiona Christie

Senior careers consultant

PMI2 project funded via Association of Graduate
Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)



What we were asked to produce?

- An enhanced resource of success stories/ case studies about international student and graduate employment to be available on the AGCAS website international community pages.
- An expanded list of employer contacts to be available through the employer database currently under development by Higher Education Careers Service Unit.



What we said we would produce?

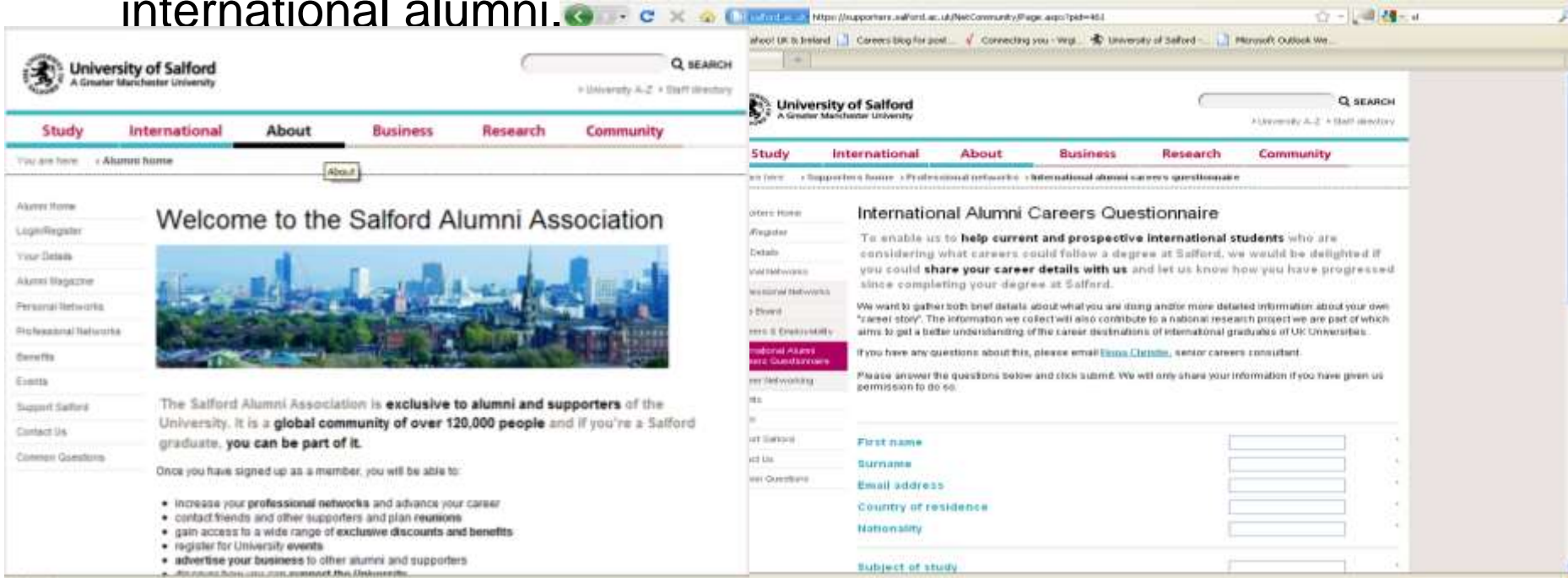
- At least 30 high quality case studies.
 - <http://www.hihohiho.com/storyboarding/sbwhyitworks.html> - Bill Law - the power of narrative
- Up to 100 employer contacts provided via specific information about a wider number of our international graduates.

Achieved over these
numbers ✓



Project methodology – stage 1

- Brief online questionnaire sent to up to 5000 of our international alumni.





Project methodology – stage 2

- Why did you choose Salford University?
- Please outline the key steps/stages in your career since leaving Salford University.
- What relevant skills and experiences did you gain during your time living and studying at Salford?
- Why did you choose your particular career?
- How easy did you find it to get a job after your studies in UK?
- How relevant was your subject of study in securing your position?
- Do you have any tips for getting into the career you are in?
- Do you have any tips for getting a successful career in the country you live in?
- What tasks are typical in your job?
- What are the most favourable and less favourable parts of your job?
- Is there any other careers advice you would give current international students when they are planning for their future?
- Any other comments



Some unexpected outcomes

- Positive response from alumni from many years ago (pre-1990); however, in selecting case studies for the project we chose to prioritise more recent graduates.
- Considerable response from postgraduate alumni; this may well be a reflection of high number of internationals who are represented in our postgraduate community which is similar to other universities.



Career stories

- Responses from across the globe...for example



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Bas Hollander, Chief executive, Dynamic Logistic Systems (DLS), USA

Flacia Nyamu, Freelance fashion consultant, Kenya



Joseph Rurangwa,
Freelance conference
interpreter, Rwanda



Sabine Liu, General
Manager, UBM Asia
Ltd's Taiwan Office



Daniel Santos Reyes,
Head of Postgraduate
Studies, Universidad
Tecnológica de la
Mixteca, Mexico



George Natar, Trainer
and Compliance Officer,
Alpha Insurance Ltd,
Cyprus



Rami Al-Awartani,
Project Manager, Omnix
International L.L.C, ,
Jordan



Gang Cheol Yun,
Project Manager for
HanmiParsons in
Seoul, South Korea



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Xia Jing, Post Doctoral Researcher in Health Informatics National Institutes of Health, United States



Mariusz Andreasik, Product Improvement Specialist, at Smart Education Limited, Poland



Michelle Paz, Project co-ordinator, Student Life, University of Salford



Key messages from the career stories

- Capitalise on what being an international graduate represents – your language skills, cross-cultural awareness...
- Get experience – qualifications are not enough
- Engage with life in Salford – volunteering, student societies ...
- Develop soft skills
- Understand the job market
- Network – understand the significance of contacts at all stages of a career



Capitalise on what being an international graduate represents – language skills, cross-cultural awareness...

- “My careers advice to current international students is to use your foreign language to your advantage when looking for jobs, even if your goal is not to return to your home country or use your language for your job. It’s what sets you apart.” Bas Hollander, Dutch, Modern Languages, 1997
- “It is extremely important that international students are aware of how different life is in a country that is not their own, and that they learn positively from the experience. This process will have started as a student in the UK. Use this awareness.” Pablo Ibarquengoytia, Mexican, PhD Computer Science 1997



Get experience – qualifications are not enough

- “It is useful to do an internship with an organisation to see how it works and then decide whether or not this is what you want” - Sophie Parron, French, Modern Languages 1997
- “Also, work paid jobs during your university years, even if you don’t need the cash. It’ll look much better on your resume and allows you to compete with other applicants who have more work experience!” Bas Hollander, Dutch, Modern Languages 1997



Engage with life in Salford – volunteering, student societies ...

- “My advice to current international students is to do volunteer and part time work, do extra courses” - Michelle Paz, Brazilian, Media and Performance 2008
- “While doing my studies, I was involved in Student Union activities as Student Liaison Representative, which was a great way to gain confidence as it involved speaking with a number of high ranked people. Then as part of the [SIFE](#) (Students in Free Enterprise) Salford Society, I was Vice President, Project Leader and Team member; it was here that I learnt how to organise people, time and projects.” Mariusz Andreasik, Polish, MSc Project Management 2010



Develop soft skills

- “I’d advise you to work hard to make yourself stronger and more knowledgeable. Also hone your presentation skills and communicate well with others about your research. Finally, be prepared to take chances and face challenges as this field is full of new findings” – Xia Jing, Chinese, PhD Health Informatics 2010
- “For anybody who is thinking about working as a project manager, I’d advise that you not only have to be a well organised person, but you also need to have excellent presentation, communication, interpersonal and team leadership skills.” Rami Al-Awartani, Jordanian, MBA 2008



Understand the job market

- “My advice to current international students is to start understanding the market right now. Asia is the place to head for as it offers more job opportunities than the developed world as their culture is more accepting of risk taking.” Nauman Noor, Canadian, Civil Engineering 1993
- “...in need of professionals who have specialisms in technology...” George Natar, Cypriot, MSc in Marketing in 1996,



Network – understand the significance of contacts at all stages of a career

- “During my PhD, I always maintained contact with the telecommunications industry by posting my CV on several specialised jobsites, networking with my ex-colleagues and employers” - Sebastian Beyh, Lebanese, PhD Built Environment 2005
- Whilst at Salford, I took the opportunity to contact and visit companies relevant to my future career. I also visited a lot of mechanical engineering exhibitions, and I was keen to gain as much knowledge as possible - Dimitris Orfanidis, Greek, BEng Mechanical Engineering 1999
- “... be willing to make and keep friends because they come in handy in many ways...” Joseph Rurangwa, Rwandan,, PG Translation 2005



And from the heart...

- “For international students thinking about their future career, my advice is to be motivated by what you “want to do”, and not by what you ‘must do’. We are all shapers of our future, so always follow your instincts. I also recommend giving the priority to family and home life.... I believe that the right balance between work and family time can add to a successful career, since a good career offers better family life, and a better family life can motivate an evolving career.”

George, Natar, Cypriot, MSc in Marketing, 1996



Where next?

- Graduate career stories to be put on our website – www.careers.salford.ac.uk
- Report available on www.careers.salford.ac.uk/students/phd/blog and www.agcas.org.uk
- Contact me direct – f.christie@salford.ac.uk