

University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol

At UWE students register for the UWE Bristol Futures Award through the web site and have to participate in a minimum of 3 different activities from an extensive list. Students can select one activity that is a compulsory part of their degree, e.g. the placement on a teaching or nursing programme. Students are also required to engage with the Academic Personal Tutoring arrangements in their faculty and to keep a record of these (there are around 2 meeting per term with their personal tutor).

When students have completed their activities they have to write and submit an activity log within which they need to write a reflection for each activity. The word counts for these reflections are between 200 and 500 words, and require a focus on how the activity has developed the students' skills and attributes that can then be used in applications for jobs and further study. In order for the activities to be "verified" students have to include contact details of someone who can provide evidence such as a certificate, contract, chain of emails, etc.

The types of activity that count towards the Futures Award are being a student representative, a Students' Union Executive Officer, a Student Ambassador, a Peer Assisted Learning leader or undertaking some voluntary **work experience** offered by UWE. The timescale over which these take place might be a whole year but will consist of at least 25 hours of involvement.

There are also a series of **employability events** on offer to students. If students are using these as evidence for their Futures Award they have to attend a minimum of 5 employability related events/sessions on offer and produce a CV.

Just as Library Services has a Faculty Librarian who works closely with each of our 4 faculties, e.g. on curriculum design, the Careers and Employability Service has four Career Consultants who often attend the same meetings for similar purposes. Having heard, at a meeting in the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL), from a Careers Consultant talking about the Futures Award initiative, our FBL Faculty Librarian invited her to a library meeting to discuss it further. The outcome of this was the inclusion of the following "library-related" content in the Futures Award.

Work experience

Students can opt to become a Westlaw student representative or a Lexis Library student associate. The respective company selects students for these two posts, at the start of each academic year. They contribute significant support to law students and are accountable to the company. The students chosen are always of a very high calibre so it seemed obvious to include this work experience as an activity that provides substantial evidence for the Futures Award. Other similar activities include being an ambassador for Microsoft or for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW).

Employability events

These events include some of the library's information literacy sessions, especially those focusing on finding information about companies. Other evidence would be the certification and proficiency tests for such databases as Lexis Library, Westlaw UK and Justice.

Outcomes

Uptake on the certification and proficiency tests for the legal databases since the Futures Award began in 2013.

Database	2013/14	2014/15 (first term only)
Justcite certification	11	5
Lexis certification	42	65
Westlaw certification	45	30

The outcomes associated with getting existing library-related activities into the futures award are not just related to the students, whose choice of events is expanded by this offering. It has also meant a greater awareness on the part of our careers colleagues about the role of library staff in developing students' skills and learning. A by-product has also been some joint training sessions with library and careers staff for students as part of their programme of studies. This is an opportunity that needs to be developed so that it becomes an integral part of more programmes.

Careers colleagues offer sessions to students on the judicious use of social media to maximise their employment opportunities and there is clearly more our librarians can do, in partnership with them, to improve further their digital literacy in respect of the ethical management of information. This is just the beginning...

January 2015

Jacqueline Chelin, Jacqueline.Chelin@uwe.ac.uk