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Short articles (around 600 words), news, tips, quotes, cartoons and other contributions of particular relevance to students are most welcome. Send to: Nicola Hills, c/o the Society's Leicester office. E-mail: Nicola_Hills@hotmail.com

Careering ahead

BY STEPHANIE MORGAN

In the past, students have suggested that the BPS could improve the level of advice it gives to student members regarding careers related to psychology. The Wessex and Wight Branch recently organised a full-day careers conference designed to fill this gap. Here I highlight the aspects of the day that students found most helpful, with a view to helping those who might be interested in putting on similar events – and encouraging you to keep an eye out for one.

The event was held on a Saturday at Winchester University College, from 10am till 4pm. All students were given a welcome pack, which included the BPS brochure 'So you want to be a psychologist?' (also available to download, via www.bps.org.uk) and a full guide to the day (with synopses of the talks and brief CVs of the speakers). Speakers came from Portsmouth, Southampton, Roehampton, Sussex, and London Universities, and there were also practitioners, from primary care, education and private practice.

First came a welcome from our Branch chair, Alan Gilbert, followed by a keynote speech from Dr Kim Bard (Portsmouth) regarding facial expressions and emotions in chimpanzee babies. The aim of this session was to demonstrate the importance of research in psychology, and give students a taste of comparative studies. There were then three lots of parallel sessions, each lasting 25 minutes (including five for questions). These sessions covered clinical, forensic and educational psychology, and talks on human resources and psychology, doing and funding a PhD, and human factors.

After a sandwich lunch there was another plenary session – 'The first destinations of psychology undergraduates' by Dr Darren van Laar, (also from Portsmouth). In this extremely interesting talk Darren highlighted the fact that many psychology graduates move into non-psychology careers, such as training, management, health and retail work. This was the logic behind having talks from a broad range of areas, and in the afternoon session students heard about the links

between psychology and work in marketing, management, and management consultancy, as well as careers in sports psychology, occupational psychology, counselling psychology and health psychology. A session on carrying out



Do you know where you are going when you finish your exams?

research was also included, with Sam Green (University of Sussex) outlining her research on risk taking in the elderly.

In each of the talks the emphasis was on what it is actually like to work in these areas, as well as on the regulations and guidance for gaining chartered status in the area. All of the speakers were highly experienced in their field, and gave excellent talks that students agreed were stimulating and insightful. During the breaks there were stands from other universities as well as Winchester, and a Hodder & Arnold bookstand.

Over 150 students attended, and we received 61 feedback forms. The feedback was almost totally positive, commenting on the range of subject topics, the succinct and informative lectures and short sessions, the pedigree of the speakers, and of course the free lunch! Naturally there were some things we could improve on, and we have learnt a great deal from running this day. Interestingly, some of the feedback we received suggested improvements around advertising the day more and having a larger venue so that we could accommodate more people – indicating a very high demand for such sessions!

The most important things that students said they had learnt about were:

- the wide diversity of jobs in psychology;
- getting into the fields they are interested in;
- the difficulty getting into some areas of psychology: their competitive nature, and the importance of planning;
- the importance of supervision;
- the usefulness of psychology in almost any career choice;
- what each of the jobs actually involves;
- future prospects in areas such as human resource management and marketing for psychology graduates

We have produced a workbook evaluating the event and making suggestions for those interested in running a careers day. We strongly recommend starting early – a year before, getting high-quality speakers, and having a team of people involved in developing the day (it is too much for one person to organise). If anyone would like a copy they can contact me on s.morgan@bbk.ac.uk. Branches do hold these events every so often and there may be a centrally organised day under development. We suggest students who would like to attend such a day contact their branch to find out the latest!

■ *Dr Stephanie Morgan is a committee member of the Wessex and Wight Branch, with overall responsibility for the careers day. She is a management consultant, and an associate lecturer at Birkbeck College.*

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