

NOTE TO Mr W M Dhanapala, Director CGU & the Careers Advisers
with copy to Vice-Chancellor, SJP
FROM Charles Fernando
DATE 26 Jan 2007
RE Continuation of Staff Training & Development
Moving towards Planned Study Modules – draft for discussion

With workshops being prepared, pilot ones being delivered, the Employability Skills Lab & the resource center getting into form, and a positive working culture becoming a reality, **I believe it is time to move into what has been our dream since several years – study modules in Career Guidance.**

The issue of study modules in Career Guidance has been discussed very much also at national level at the **Standing Committee**. We need to accept that (*in spite of what was stated in the 'National Policy for Higher Education' of 1996*) there has been a trend of increasing curriculum content and student workload, and that the system continues to foster the 'examinations' orientation which has become part of the student mindset. The Standing Committee has been very clear in its view that those who come for Career Guidance programmes on their own are in fact the ones who are motivated and do not need such in critical manner ... and that **the only practical way of increasing participation in Career Guidance activities is to use a few modules that carry credit.**

Already years back we were proposing the idea of such modules which the academic study programmes could adopt as credit bearing. The Faculty of Medical Sciences is moving in that direction within the new BSc Medical Laboratory Science. But until other programmes begin accepting the idea, we can **now seriously consider a transition stage where we would offer two stand-alone modules which will not bear credit but on the basis of which a Certificate of Participation issued by the Career Guidance Unit can be envisaged.**

The details on the conditions for issuing the certificate can be dealt with later. If I were to briefly indicate the reasons for a Certificate of Participation as opposed to one of 'Satisfactory Completion' or one with a result: The assessment in a module of this type cannot be done through an examination as such. A Project and a Progress File (Personal Development File) will need to be essential components of assessment. The project may need to be both group and personal. A presentation (including 'poster' type) may be required too. But we do not yet have the staff nor the time to devote to these. It is better to concentrate on delivering the content in as interactive and lively manner as possible and reach a wide group of students ... and leave it at that for now. Thus the proposal to limit ourselves to a Certificate of Participation (based on a minimum of 80% attendance).

In order to make a start and begin planning, I propose the following which can be prepared for quickly and which can be announced with the opening of the Skills Lab and Resource Centre and run from that moment onwards.

Two modules are proposed. The first targets students of Years 1 & 2 and is 20 hours in duration involving 10 sessions of 2 hours each. The second is shorter, is of 10-hour duration with 5 sessions of 2 hours each and will target students of years 3 & 4. The second will initially use some content also from the first as it will be assumed that the participants did not attend the first. But in a year or two, the content of the 2nd module can be altered as needed.

The use of the employability skills lab and the resources available will be integrated within the workshops ... within the sessions, and with facility for students to use such afterwards on their own. In similar manner for some topics such as 'Study Skills' more advanced workshops with practice sessions will also be available in addition as optional.

MODULE 1: PREPARING FOR ONE'S FUTURE CAREER

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20 hours:10 sessions at 2 hours a week

Separately in English and in Sinhala depending on demand

Prior registration required. Groups of maximum 40 (students of Years 1 and 2)

Contribution of 2-3 hours if possible from academic staff and/or external resource persons

Outline of content:

1. Profiting from the University and Enhancing Employability

What employers want of graduates? Developing employability skills. Gaining industry experience even without doing a full-time job. Being SMART and competitive

2. Study Skills

Structure and purpose of university education

Profiting from Lectures, Tutorials, Assignments

Reading, Note-taking, Using the Library, Internet Search

Graphical tools for study (e.g. mind maps, fish bone diagrams, structure charts etc.)

Referencing guides

Assessments, Exams

Issues relating to plagiarism

3. Self-evaluation

Learning Styles, Personality and Interests, Self-assessment, Aptitude Tests

Making and maintaining a Progress File

4. My degree – what the future holds?

Using CGU and other resources to exploring opportunities and options

What do past graduates do. Jobs, Self-employment, entrepreneurship

Flexibility and lifelong learning

5. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Helping students to discover how academic programmes can support developing these

6. Communication Skills

Including presentations and report writing

7. Time Management and Project Management

The essentials and relevance for university life

8. Team work / working in groups

Assignments, Projects

Discussions, Meetings, Managing them

Conflicts, assertiveness, negotiation

9. Dealing with problems

Health issues, stress, memory and concentration

Relationship issues

10. Leadership Issues:

Changing One's World

Through brief exposures to articles, presentations and video clips etc:

An introduction to contemporary issues such as development, democracy and inclusiveness, equity, corporate & social responsibility, business ethics, environment

Brief reference also to current controversies

Changing and Managing One's Future

Exposure to role models.

Usefulness of action plans

MODULE 2: EMBARKING ON ONE'S CAREER

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10 hours: 5 sessions at 2 hours a week

Using a combination of Sinhala and English (unless specific demand exists)

Groups of maximum 40 (students of Years 3 and 4)

Prior registration required

One or two 1-hour slots for internal academic staff and/or external resource persons

1. Enhancing Employability (*combining sessions 1 & 4 of Module 1*)

2. Employability Skills: (*combining sessions 5, 7 & 8 of module 1*)

Critical Thinking, Problem Solving,

Time Management, Project Management & Teamwork Skills

3. CV Writing and Applications

Presentation, Video & Interactive sessions

4. Aptitude Tests, Assessment Centres and Facing Interviews

Presentation, Video & Interactive sessions

5. Leadership Issues (*similar to session 10 of Module 1*)

CONCLUSION

More can be done as things advance. But it is strongly recommended that this offer of two modules as leading to a 'certificate' (albeit of participation) be considered the next step ... profiting also from the Employability Skills Lab and the resources available (or on order).

The Management Programme conducted some years back by WUS was pretty similar and was successful.

While I will be ready to help with the background work on material for the other sessions, the two Careers Advisers will need to work hard now itself quickly particularly with regard to sessions 5-8 of module one. Some work has already been done and the sessions conducted so far have gone well. But more pilot projects and trial runs would be useful to fine-tune things. We should try to find opportunities for such by getting a few more students groups to participate and provide feedback.

All that should help us to provide a good quality programme to our students ... which will no doubt increase further in quality and relevance with time.