主题4: 参与、归属和身份

数字媒体的‘参与歧视’：在南安普顿大学人文学生中接触

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**Introduction**

本文探讨在2014年7月至2017年6月期间的项目中，如何通过数字媒体实现对研究生的接触。该项目，‘Mission Employable’，旨在鼓励学生-职工合作以创建就业能力活动，使用标语‘了解、成长和展示职业成功的技能’。Mission Employable位于南安普顿大学的人文学院。该学院拥有超过3,000名学生，研究单一或组合学位的七个学科：考古学、英语、电影、历史、现代语言、音乐和哲学。

虽然分类‘难以接触’通常集中在具有潜在较低参与度的群体中，例如成年学生、远程学习者、国际学生、黑人和少数族裔（BME）学生，那些居住在家庭中或为他人提供护理的人，一个共同的标志是缺乏在校园内的时间（McVitty, 2015）。这些学生既在概念上‘难以接触’，因为他们的差异将它们分开，又在实践上‘难以接触’，因为他们的差异要么导致他们远离校园和不加入，或者在成熟学生和看护者的情况下，实际防止他们参加。

我们不能将南安普顿大学的人文学生全部贴上“难以接触”的标签，但就实践而言，大多数学生都难以吸引。人文专业的学生拥有相对较少的联系小时，这与需要大量独立学习的组合，导致学生常远离校园。这些学生经常感到与大学经验脱节，不愿意参与。有效地与这些学生沟通是一个具有挑战性的问题；积极参与到课外活动是更难的。对于在STEM-导向的大学（南安普顿大学占65%的STEM）学习的学生来说，这是一个双重障碍：额外的信念是，提供的支持不是为他们，而是为科学学生（Medland et al., 2015）。初步的工作决定了一种新的就业策略，为南安普顿大学的人文专业，这导致了Mission Employable的启动，用于收集数据以证明仅在2012/13学年就有807名学生参与了职业相关的活动。2015/16学年，1,588名学生参与。

**Mission Employable and social media**

核心Mission Employable团队由二名职工成员和五名学生合作伙伴组成，每个合作伙伴都专注于一项发展活动。核心团队由一个强大的学生工作小组支持，代表我们的七个学科。该项目结合了学生和职工的知识和想法，我们合作以提供活动。作为职工-学生合作伙伴项目，具有学院范围的使命，Mission Employable已经处于最佳位置，以寻求接触和参与学生群体的替代方法。我们的活动需要广泛的学生参与和领导，合作伙伴关系工作迅速导致认识到社会媒体是未被充分利用但有效沟通渠道之间的开发活动。职工-学生合作伙伴项目与学院范围的信徒，Mission Employable在2014年夏天成功建立了一个强大的社会媒体存在，使用Facebook、Twitter和（最近）Instagram（Medland et al., 2015）。这一合作，第三年并得到强化，使我们能够参与其中。
frank dialogue regarding what will and will not engage the student body. Social media has since formed the foundation for much of our activity, providing the means to reach out to our students when they are off-campus.

Using Facebook

It is estimated that 99% of 16-24 year olds use social media at least once a week (Business Insider, 2017), and confirmation of this came from Southampton’s Humanities students, who regularly form their own Facebook Groups for modules to keep in touch outside class, share ideas and ask questions. Facebook was therefore the first social media account that Mission Employable created. The Facebook Page provides a means for our content to be published directly to students' Facebook newsfeeds, so that information published by Mission Employable appears alongside other news, celebrity gossip and friend posts. Facebook, as a recognised, intuitive and accessible medium, has put a friendly face to the Mission Employable brand. We have created a dedicated account, named ‘Charlotte’ (after our employability coordinator), which can be contacted directly with any queries or information shares. Whilst email is central to many contemporary businesses and, indeed, the main means of staff-to-student communication within the institution, we have found that students are far more likely to send us an instant message online than to dispatch a formal email. Facebook provides the means for a more relaxed and personal approach to communication, providing a safe space to ask questions and fostering collaborative working.

Sharing on Twitter

In addition to Facebook, Mission Employable has a Twitter account. Although tweets are limited to 140 characters, the platform provides a regular means of interaction with our students. The fast-paced nature of Twitter enables us to distribute a wide range of information rapidly. Using Twitter, we can retweet information from the University’s central Careers and Employability Service, as well as Faculty updates, articles and links to opportunities which students may find helpful. The use of targeted hashtags and Twitter account tagging enables us to channel relevant information to different disciplines, maximising interest.

Adding Instagram

During summer 2016, we added a Mission Employable Instagram account. The decision to make use of this platform was driven by student response to surveys undertaken at the end of 2015/16, which suggested that visual material was becoming an increasingly popular access-route for our students. Instagram has enabled us to follow many of the Humanities-based student societies, which now follow us back. As visible Instagram content is based not only on who you follow, but also the content the people you follow choose to ‘like’, it is a fast way to get messages across and grow engagement. In recent months, as more students opted to ‘like’ our content, our posts appeared more often on the ‘Images You Might Like’ section of the application, resulting in a rapid increase in followers. Instagram engages students who may not be immediately interested in the employability information posted on Twitter and Facebook, but whose attention can be grabbed by visual images and by what their friends like and follow. We have found that Instagram Followers have grown more quickly than Twitter (0 to 115 in four months) and that the majority (76%) of our followers are female. Whilst our Twitter and Facebook bases are bigger (with 581 followers and 414 ‘likes’ respectively), Instagram routinely provides more click-throughs to events and activities.

Engaging the disengaged
The goal has been to engage as many students in the Faculty as possible, increasing participation in on-site, careers-related events and with initiatives such as our Peer Mentoring Scheme through the consistent use of digital media to increase student engagement. The various meanings of ‘student engagement’ - a nebulous term with cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions (Trowler, 2010), - the pedagogic strategies developed to increase it, and how effective it is in producing learning gain, have recently come under scrutiny (Macfarlane and Tomlinson, 2017). For the purpose of this case study, student engagement is understood as being:

“based mainly on behavioural expectations that relate to students adopting a positive attitude towards learning actively and more broadly contributing to the life of the institution” (Macfarlane and Tomlinson, 2017:9)

Mission Employable has aimed to encourage this positive attitude by fostering a sense of ownership and, in partnering on delivery with our students, engendered active participation in co- and extra-curricular activity. Having successfully engaged half the Humanities student population, we turned our attention to the remaining 50%. Through focus groups and Facebook-based polling across the student body, we identified three ‘hard to reach’ groups: First, pre-arrival students, a group recognised as crucial to successful engagement with new starters; since students in Induction week are overwhelmed with potential activity and contact, contacting them before they begin is a more effective way of getting them to engage with the project. Second, students on a Residency Abroad (RA). Each year, approximately 10% of our cohort go away to study or work. Mission Employable loses contact with these students and finds it hard to reconnect with them once they return. Third, highly-capable, self-sufficient students. This group was identified as being disengaged because they don’t believe that they need support, but are often the ‘final panic’ students who, following the submission of their dissertations, may realise that they do not know what to do next. Through an exploration of how Mission Employable has sought to engage these ‘hard to reach’ Humanities students with its activities, this case study will consider the use of digital media to engage the disengaged.

New Starters: pre-engagement with peers

The Humanities Peer Mentoring Scheme was established at the start of Mission Employable and is entirely student-led. Students take on leadership roles as Faculty- and subject-level coordinators, and there is a requirement for c. 180 student mentors from years two and three, working in pairs, to mentor groups of ten first-year mentees (Quince and Medland, 2016). Since its establishment, the scheme has made use of social media to engage both current and incoming Humanities students. The student Faculty Coordinator employed Facebook and Twitter in pre-arrivals communications to engage new students, and then throughout the scheme to maintain the engagement levels of both mentees and mentors.

Digital media was used to recruit current students to the Peer Mentoring Scheme and to raise awareness amongst new starters. The Coordinator advertised the scheme on Facebook, pushing it out through existing University of Southampton subject society groups, in order to recruit from all seven Humanities disciplines. Incoming students were engaged through Twitter. In September 2016, the Coordinator created and managed a social media event called ‘Hums Top Tips’ which encouraged pre-arrival peer-to-peer support by asking current students to tweet ‘the things I wish had I known before I began University’ for the incoming Humanities cohort, using the hashtag: #HumsTopTips16. We had a ‘reach' (number of Twitter accounts who engaged at some point with our campaign) of just under 55,000, with over 200 original tweets containing a wide-range of advice tweeted by students, staff and recent alumni. During the #HumsTopTips16 highpoint (September 16th) we were trending in SOUTHAMPTON thanks to the involvement of local businesses, the University
In order to maintain engagement, Facebook was employed to connect with students at every level. The Coordinator created a ‘Peer Mentors’ group on Facebook and used it to signpost key information each week. Updates would reach the mentors instantly on their smartphones, making information both easy to access and more efficiently communicated than it would have been by using email. Additionally, mentors were encouraged to use Facebook groups for their own mentees. Such groups could easily arrange meetings with their mentees and the first-year students could immediately contact their mentors if they had a question or problem. The informal nature of Facebook ultimately meant that the mentees felt less intimidated, as it allowed them to view their mentors as peers rather than superiors.

**REALIE: Online employability support for students on their Residency Abroad**

REALIE ([http://www.realie.org/](http://www.realie.org/)) was set up to provide Humanities students with access to employability support during their Residency Abroad (RA). Students on RA are one of our key ‘hard to reach’ groups, given their distance from campus during one year of their degree. The REALIE website focuses on how the RA experience prepares students for future employment, using three stages - pre-departure (stage one), on residency (stage two) and return (stage three) - offering guidance for each stage. It includes a tool to track development and communicate this to prospective employers. REALIE also contains a blog that posts experiences from current RA students as well as some contributions from alumni to give insight into the role their RA played in their chosen career paths.

REALIE’s blog was established with the aim of providing pre-departure (stage one) students with an idea of what their RA might look like and, in turn, to encourage them to think about what skills they might want to develop during their RA. It also provided on-residency (stage two) students with the opportunity to keep track of the skills they were developing during RA through blogging. For stage three students, now returned and back to their Southampton studies, the blogs serve as evidence of their development. Blogs are updated weekly and shared via Mission Employable social media - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. During summer 2016, interactive content was added to the REALIE site. Stage one students could complete a quiz or read through a checklist and then venture further into the site to find out more. Content was designed to be both visually-stimulating and informative to get these students thinking about the skills they would be gaining on their RA, encouraging them to see their entire RA experience as developmental. These interactive activities were ‘advertised’ to students during lectures preparing them for their RA, as well as on social media.

**Pathbrite.com e-portfolios**

Whilst Peer Mentoring and REALIE were targeted to engage new and distance learners respectively, the third student engagement challenge for Mission Employable came from students who felt that they did not need employability support. The majority of these students are highly-capable, have already worked either part-time or through full-time internships and serve on University society committees. These students are often either too busy to stop and reflect, or are not always able to articulate how they are developing their skills through their activity. This leads to a final-year state of ‘panic’ – they haven’t done enough; they don’t know what they want to do; they don’t know how to approach employers. Pathbrite ([www.pathbrite.com](http://www.pathbrite.com)) is an e-portfolio platform that enables students to build their own ‘story’ around their employability experiences. In Pathbrite, the Mission Employable
team recognised an opportunity to give students a sense of ownership over their skills development by creating personalised portfolios around their curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The platform could enhance students’ CVs, add content to their LinkedIn profiles and make the speculative application process easier, especially for those students focusing on the creative industries. It is an ideal way to engage those who wish to work independently to develop their skills base: those self-sufficient students who have too many commitments to attend on-campus sessions.

Though Pathbrite is not a social network, it allows Twitter, Facebook, and blog sites to be added to the ‘contact’ banner at the top of each user’s profile. Moreover, users can have more than one of these accounts if needed – for example, if a student wanted to share her/his personal Twitter as well as an account s/he used for a University society. Multiple portfolios can be created within one user profile, giving students the opportunity to link to different skill sets or experiences tailored to an application. However, the unique selling point for encouraging student engagement with Pathbrite is that it is a collation tool. Rather than needing to create brand new content (although this is possible), Pathbrite enables users to bring in existing content hosted elsewhere. This can be anything from a Microsoft Word document to a YouTube video, and allows a student’s personality to shine alongside her/his qualifications.

**Digital Badges for Employability**

Alongside Pathbrite, Mission Employable pinpointed digital badges as an innovative means of enhancing student engagement with employability. Digital credentials provide a supportive framework that will allow students to improve and reflect on their employability skills, offering a sense of ownership and self-direction, whilst encouraging students to gain confidence in recognising and evidencing these skills to employers. In addition, by engaging with digital badges, students are encouraged to develop their digital identity and recognise the value of using digital media for employability in a way that they might not have previously been familiar with. In this way, the process of earning badges is as valuable as the completed badge itself.

We identified a variety of ways that digital badges could be incorporated into Mission Employable: for example, as one overarching ‘Employability’ badge or as a collection of badges earned across the degree programme. Badges would be implemented alongside the three established Humanities Employability modules, complementing their content and ensuring the direct engagement of students beyond compulsory attendance at lectures. Alternatively, Mission Employable might incorporate digital badges in a more targeted way as part of the Peer Mentoring scheme, enabling participants to earn a badge for their mentoring that could then be displayed on their digital portfolio. Certainly, there are challenges and obstacles in implementing this form of engagement, primarily as digital badges are a relatively new concept and are unfamiliar to both students and employers. To combat this, sessions on digital badges have been incorporated into the compulsory Humanities Employability modules. Through these sessions, students will gain an understanding of digital badges both within the University and externally, encouraging them to take control of their employability development more broadly.

Incorporating digital badges into the Mission Employable initiative will undoubtedly be a reflective process of refining and improving. Although the experience of other institutions does provide some insight, there is no long-standing successful model that can be followed. Despite this, digital badges lend themselves specifically to crediting the vast and diverse range of skills that employability encompasses, particularly for students of Humanities. They will allow students to tailor and direct their own learning, ‘knowing, growing and showing’ their employability as they earn and display these digital credentials.
Key Findings

The use of digital platforms for student engagement has produced mixed results for Mission Employable. While we have seen increased engagement across the project from two of our ‘hard to reach’ groups, new starters and Residency Abroad students, the highly-capable and self-sufficient students have remained elusive. Although social media now constitute a core engagement tool for the project, the more defined platforms of Pathbrite and digital badges have required more explanation, and more time investment by both students and staff. These platforms highlight the need for ease of use to be a high priority for any digital engagement strategy. Nevertheless, showcase platforms like Pathbrite and digital badges will become more prominent as the job market continues to digitalise. A lesson learned through this project is that it is essential to make legacy explicit within the learning process. If a student believes that by getting involved with a project like Mission Employable and by investing time in her/his digital presence, s/he will be rewarded when entering the world of work, being far more likely to engage.

The authors acknowledge that Pathbrite.com, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are all registered trademarks.

Reference list


