

## Ask Aberdeen Episode 14 Transcript

**Georgie** [00:00:07] I'm Georgie.

**Michaela** [00:00:08] And I'm Michaela.

**Georgie** [00:00:08] And we're here to tell you about the University of Aberdeen.

**Michaela** [00:00:11] In each episode, we will discuss frequently asked questions about topics such as applications,

**Georgie** [00:00:15] Go abroad,

**Michaela** [00:00:17] Student life,

**Georgie** [00:00:18] Sports and Societies,

**Michaela** [00:00:19] Budgeting for Uni,

**Georgie** [00:00:20] And life in Aberdeen

**Michaela** [00:00:22] We will be speaking to current Aberdeen students, those who really know what it's like to study and live here.

**Georgie** [00:00:27] And we'll be getting exclusive tips from members of our amazing staff.

**Michaela** [00:00:31] Join us for this episode of Ask Aberdeen.

**Georgie** [00:00:36] Hi, and welcome to this week's episode of Ask Aberdeen. Today, we're discussing the all important next step after university, Careers. We have with us a University of Aberdeen graduate, Lewis, and Regina who is a member of our careers team. So let me come to your first Regina. Can you just tell people who are listening, prospective students, what is the career service? What do you guys do?

**Regina** [00:00:56] OK, so we actually, a couple of years ago renamed ourselves as the Careers and Employability Service, and that actually tells you a little bit more about what we do. So we kind of fly under three different flags, explore, develop and connect. So under the explore section, we do the kind of stuff that people expect, you know, helping to work out what kinds of things you might want to do after university, what kind of careers are right for you and how you get towards that as well. The develop part, that's actually a really big part of our work now. So we run quite a lot of co-curricular programmes, so things that basically help people develop their skills. And that could be work experience, it could be volunteering, but also programmes just to really help you understand what skills you're developing through all the different things you do at university. And then the connecting is obviously connecting up with employers and opportunities, whatever is right for you and the help with that, you know, so helping with applications and things like that.

**Georgie** [00:02:00] Brilliant, that's really interesting, and how can students or when is it best for them to utilise your your services? Should they start in first year or should they wait until they're about to graduate? When should they speak to you?

**Regina** [00:02:11] I would certainly say it's never too early, but it's also never too late. So we definitely have things available for first year students. So see, for example, if you're a class rep, you can do programmes with us to get extra credit for that. Not academic credit, but sort of other things that will appear on your transcript at the end. And so there are things we can help you with there. But I guess we do quite intensive work with people who are sort of honours years, you know, where the work experience becomes more important than the job search becomes more important, but we definitely have things available for students really throughout the years and postgraduates as well.

**Georgie** [00:02:53] Brilliant, I suppose what you say is a lot of things, it's building your CV beyond just your degree. So it's doing those extra things and getting that work experience. So do you help students connecting with employers and things? Can you help students get summer work and that sort of thing?

**Regina** [00:03:10] Yeah, absolutely. So we do quite a lot of different things in terms of connecting, we advertise really right from the start, part-time opportunities and we're hoping to do quite a bit more with that over the next year or two. But we also help students work out what the right work experience is and supporting them in their volunteering. So we have a programme called ABDNConnect Community. So two programmes there, one is more focussed on work experience and supporting you in your work experience and giving you some credit for that, but also people who were doing volunteering. So that can be really at any stage. We have a lot of employers who come to us who want us to advertise internships. So, you know, for maybe honour students after their third or fourth year, depending on who you are and what you're studying and also who are then advertising graduate opportunities. We run fairs, so there's a law fair coming up, and a Northeast Scotland fair coming up. And we also have a lot of employers coming to us for presentations, you know, who want to connect up with our students. So these things are all advertised through our website. So it's quite easy to find.

**Georgie** [00:04:23] Brilliant and Lewis I'm going to come to you because you are an Aberdeen graduate, so you've sort of been through doing your degree and finding your career afterwards. So you did an undergraduate degree and then you decided you wanted to do teaching. So can you just explain kind of what your route was?

**Lewis** [00:04:38] So I started my undergraduate and I always had an eye on careers. I didn't know exactly then what to do but I had an eye on the sorts of various parts I could take after my degree. So it got to probably about second year, between second year and third year at uni. And I started to look a little bit more closely at what I could do to choose a career for me. So the career service helped me in finding a summer internship. So I did two summer internships in the field of transport. And I also went and did the BP Student Tutoring Scheme, which is something that the careers service still offer, I believe, whereby students from various universities in the Aberdeen area are placed in schools in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, and it helps people not necessarily decide whether they want to do teaching or not, but just to become more employable by committing to the community and going week in week out, working with young people who perhaps want to go to university or want to go to college and, you know, explore whether that may be a path you want to take. So I had two different paths in my mind at coming towards the end to my degree. And I explored just, you know, various things, such as going to university open days and things like that, and eventually I settled on teaching. So I did the BP Student Tutoring Scheme, which is something that the university Career Service offers, which matches students who are wanting to go into schools in the local area, to schools that want to take in students. And the advantage of that is the schools gain them, the knowledge and

expertise of a student who can encourage people to go to university, go to college, for example, and the students gains experience in a school, working with young people, developing transferable skills like communication skills, and, you know, arriving places on time, things like that. But for me, it was an opportunity to explore teaching as a career path that I was interested in. And so I spent a couple of terms in a local school and I really, really enjoyed that. I really enjoyed my summer internships as well. But I found that the work I did in schools. It just you know, I've really enjoyed it and I wanted to continue that, I wanted to take that a bit further. So I then went and applied to the PGDE, I had the career service, look over my CV, things like that. And I was accepted to the PGDE and then did that and then I'm now a teacher and that's where I am just now.

**Georgie** [00:07:17] Brilliant, thanks Lewis. I think it's interesting that you did a Geography degree and then moved to teaching because a lot of people on degrees like Geography and History and English, they're not necessarily sure what they want to do with it. So it's not as straightforward as a degree like Law or Medicine where you might have a career path in mind. Even though I did a Law degree, and I'm not a lawyer, so you could go anywhere that's not necessarily set in stone, but it tends to be clearer or people have an idea when they start perhaps what they want to do, whereas with other degrees, not necessarily as true, they might feel a little bit more uncertain. So it's really good to see that you've got some experience whilst you're at Uni, and that helped you direct your idea of careers afterwards.

**Georgie** [00:07:55] We've mentioned internships quite a few times. Regina, sometimes people ask about placement years and obviously we don't have many courses at Aberdeen that actually have a sandwich placement year. The internships, presumably are a different kind of alternatives that they can use in their summer breaks, because you get huge summer breaks at university. Is that something the university do a lot of or support students with?

**Regina** [00:08:18] Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. So we obviously have some degree programmes where people take a whole year in industry, but for most of our students it is the summer breaks. So depends a little bit on what you're interested in. Depends a little bit on what you're studying, when they're most interested in you from the employer perspective. I mean, you know, in some things, obviously, you kind of need to know a few things before they really want to employ you. But others really just want you to be the right kind of person, have the right kind of basic skills, transferable skills and that's that's absolutely fine. So, yeah, we advertise quite a lot of these. And again at fairs and so on. That's not really just aimed at people in their final year. So if you're a second year, third year, you can definitely go along to these things and discuss, you know, work experience, opportunities are available. What's right. Um, I have to say, though, if anyone's listening to this and thinking, yeah, but that's really tricky, particularly at the moment, you know, where a lot of things are virtual, I wouldn't worry too much about that because, you know, everyone's in the same boat for starters, some things have happened virtually, but a lot of stuff got pulled as well. So if you can't do a full internship, you can't find that, one of the sorts of things that have developed hugely over the pandemic were virtual internships. So these are usually shorter experiences. You just do them online and they're offered through really, really big employers as well as smaller ones. And that looks really great on your CV as well. And the advantage you can do that again, right from the first year, usually they don't have any restrictions on them, the sort of longer internships where we're talking six, eight, sometimes 12 weeks, a lot of the time they are more for people after their third year, so once their into their honours years. Apart from maybe the Aberdeen internship, I should mention that. So we have an internship programme that runs at the university, mostly in

the professional services department. So careers, we have an intern at the moment and that's open to second and third year. So not just in the last stage, but a little bit before as well.

**Georgie** [00:10:33] I think it's always good to try and get things on your CV from the beginning of uni, isn't it? Because you get a bit more stressful and a bit busier towards the end of your degree, so the more you can do in first and second year, they're just good things to have on your CV because otherwise you've done your degree and you might have had a bit of part time work, for most of us it's retail, but it's good to have something maybe a bit more kind of professional or a bit more applicable to what you might want to go onto afterwards. So that's great, so there's lots of things people should look out for.

**Regina** [00:11:01] I mean, I think it's it's great if you can do that, but sometimes also people afterwards change their mind. So if you don't have experience that is absolutely relevant to what you want to go into, it's also not the end. So, you learn something from everything you do. And, you know, there are also people who, you know, if you want to go into something a bit more customer focussed, if you've got some retail experience, those employers will really appreciate that. So, you know, everything has its place. And as long as you can understand what you're learning from these experiences, what you're bringing to the next thing, that's probably more important than what it was.

**Georgie** [00:11:39] Yeah, so pulling out skills rather than necessarily an actual job.

**Regina** [00:11:41] Yep.

**Georgie** [00:11:42] Perfect. Lewis, I think you did some modules, didn't you? Was it a careers module whilst you were at university as well?

**Lewis** [00:11:48] Yeah, there were two careers modules that I had studied. If I remember rightly they were first and second year and they were focussed on, you know, how can you make yourself more employable when you leave university. Like you said, you do get busier towards the end of university, so the more that you can spread these things out, the better. So one of the modules was looking at things like how can you develop generic transferable skills that apply to any and all career paths? Because like you say, no, everybody is sure what they want to do. People change their mind. And so it's good to be able to develop generic skills that you can take from one career path to another career path and take with you as you go on. And the other module was looking more at how do you gain work experience, how can you get through interviews and how do you apply for specific opportunities and things like that. And when you combine those together, it sort of creates a sort of holistic experience whereby you know how to become qualified for a career path, for a particular job, how to apply for it and then how to go on and perform in that job. But, as well as those, I don't know if this applies for every degree, but in our third year in Geography, we had a careers element integrated into one of our modules. So we had to look at some example career paths that we may or may not have been interested in. And depending on where you were in deciding what you want to do, and submit a mock application for these, and have these assessed by the Careers Service, have feedback given to us so that we knew what we needed to do specifically for a Geography focussed application. I imagine that will be the same no matter what degree you do. And that really helped in giving us specific feedback at a time where we were looking to apply for things like internships or volunteering opportunities.

**Georgie** [00:13:39] That's interesting, you say about thinking about the career you want to go into, because we have two examples of students. Those who know before they've even chosen their degree, the career they want at the end, so they're saying, 'what degree do I need to take to get to my end goal?' And others that are saying, like, I want to do Geography and where's that going to take me? So we have two different types of students that we try and advise. So I don't know, Regina, from your perspective, but I know in the prospectus that students can often see on a degree page kind of careers that our graduates have gone into so they can at least see, if I took this degree I could potentially do this sort of role. How do you advise students if they're not sure where their degree is going to take them? Where can they look to get ideas?

**Regina** [00:14:23] We have quite extensive information on that on our website. So there's a tab that says, 'explore options', and if you go into that, you can select the degree that you're hoping to study. And that then gives you some career areas that you might be interested in and you can have a look at what other people have done in the past as well. So that might give you some tips. I have to say, though, you know, everyone's different. Everyone has different experiences, has different ideas, comes from different backgrounds, wants to go and work in different places or study particular things. So I would say, yeah get some basic information, have a look at that, develop maybe a few ideas. But, you know, whatever stage you're at, you're always welcome to make an appointment with the careers adviser for your subject area. And then we can discuss more in detail. What are your ideas? And, you know, who are you? What skills do you think you're really good at? How does that fit together with your plans? So, yeah, you probably want to back that up with a with a bit of a discussion individually.

**Georgie** [00:15:30] OK, that's really good to know that they can look online, so we'll put a link in the show notes if anyone's listening, and they want to find that, they can have a look there. I think it's also true that you've got to choose a degree that you want to study for four or five or more years. You can't choose a degree because you want the end goal of a certain job. I think you need to want to do that degree because you may not be successful or you may not enjoy it if it's not a degree you've chosen because you love it, it's because you want to earn lots of money at the end or something like that. So I think there's a mix. What do you think, Regina?

**Regina** [00:16:02] Depending on what kind of areas you want to go into, depending on the employers and how large they are and so on. Quite a lot of the larger employers, in particular, the obviously get lots of applications and one of the ways to select is by saying we want people to have a good degree. So if you enjoy what you're doing and what you're studying, you're more likely probably to do well in it. And that can actually be more of a deciding factor. What's open to you in the end than exactly what you've studied?

**Georgie** [00:16:34] Yeah, definitely. So something else we get asked, you've mentioned there are good degree, is do you need a postgraduate degree to get a good job? I think probably more of our international listeners may be wondering this, they potentially go on to do postgraduate degrees more. What's your, I mean Lewis you did your PGDE, but you had to do that to convert into teaching from your degree. Did you enjoy your PGDE? Was it good?

**Lewis** [00:16:59] Absolutely. I think the benefit of the PGDE is that it's split 50/50 into time at university studying academic things and 50 percent time in school, gaining practical experience in school and that's a requirement for the PGD, but a lot of other courses will have significant time working with employers, gaining that experience so that you're not

just jumping from academia straight into the workplace. There's a transition taking place there, and I find that was really useful, at least in my experience.

**Georgie** [00:17:33] Yeah definitely, Regina what do you think about postgraduate? Would you advise people that they should think about it?

**Regina** [00:17:38] Depends totally on what you're interested in. So, you know, like there are some areas like Lewis with teaching where you have to have it. So there are some postgrads like that Social Work or things like that where, you know, there is a requirement for that. There are some areas where I think it can be an advantage just to set yourself apart a bit where, you know, employers might be more interested in you if you have then specialised in something or also where, you know, for instance for some students, you know, they're maybe not quite ready yet and they want that extra year of study or they maybe want to change direction. They haven't studied something. You know, like, for example, I advise the Business School students but I also get a lot of other people who are interested, say, for example, in finance, they haven't studied it, so they want to do a masters just to become comfortable in that area and have the confidence to apply for those things. But there's also plenty employers who are perfectly happy with you straight out of your undergrad, and they say we don't need a postgrad and it won't make any difference to us, so if you're keen to go straight from an undergrad into a particular job and just, you know, ask us and we can tell you whether it's an advantage or, you know, there's different ways of getting into things. And, yeah, different things will be right for different students.

**Georgie** [00:19:00] Yeah, it's interesting you say about changing kind of potentially subject area going into your post grad, because people may assume you have to have done an undergraduate to move on to the post grad level, and that's not true. They can do an undergrad generally in a sort of rough area and then move across. So often the entry requirement are a 2.1 or 2.2 or something like that within an area of subjects. It's not specifically a finance undergrad to do a finance postgrad.

**Regina** [00:19:27] Not even that, so we used to call them conversion courses. But you know what, that has actually kind of gone out of fashion because there are so many of those master's programmes now. So, in areas like business areas, I.T. as well, there are programmes that specifically target people who haven't studied that in their first degree. And that's absolutely fine. You know, but there are also employers who target students who are not from those areas because they actually want the diversity of thinking. So, you know, they don't want people who've just studied that and thinking have been trained in that particular way. They want people from a variety of backgrounds so that, you know, that's actually better in terms of maybe advising their clients or just getting different ideas.

**Georgie** [00:20:10] Yeah, definitely. So the other thing to touch on and to advise people about is kind of post university, and how the Careers Service can still support them. So Lewis I know you said, I'm not sure if it was during or after, but they checked your CV and you can get interview help. Did you find that beneficial to have someone, kind of in your corner, helping you?

**Lewis** [00:20:31] Absolutely, I think these things are unfamiliar for everybody for the first time going for an interview or going for an interview for that particular career path, so having somebody to kind of guide you really helps make you feel more confident if nothing else, makes you feel much more confident and much more ready and equipped to take on whatever it is you've got to do.

**Georgie** [00:20:52] And Regina, what is it that the Careers Service, how long will you help students for and what sort of services do you offer post graduation?

**Regina** [00:21:01] So for how long? Forever and ever, if you need us. So we put absolutely no time limit on that at all. The only thing that might be useful to know is we use a system called Career Connect, which is our booking system, vacancy system, everything is in there. And if you're a student, you can just log in with your student I.D. and password. And when you graduate, it will then send you an email to say, do you want to convert this to graduate? You follow the link and then basically everything is the same and you have the same access to everything, pretty much everything, not the search of student programmes we run, but then you don't need that. But everything else, the vacancies, having meetings with careers advisors and so on. No time limit on that at all.

**Georgie** [00:21:45] Brilliant! Well I think we've covered a lot of information for prospective students. And if anyone listening is still thinking, they're not sure what degree they want to choose because they've got a career path and who can help them, you can contact the Careers Service, you can speak to the Student Recruitment teams and myself and our team, but also just do some Googling, find a job online or speak to employers and say, I really want to do your job, where should I start? How should I begin? And they should be able to advise you and point you in the right direction so that you take a degree that is going to be helpful for you. And equally, if you have no idea, choose a degree you love and then go from there and the career service will help you once you're at university. So Lewis, do you have a kind of final tip that you would give to people listening about careers whilst they're going through uni?

**Lewis** [00:22:30] I think people often think they've got to, you know, leave university, they've got to be set on a particular career path and that is it for life. Or, you know, they can't make a mistake or anything like that at all. I think people should probably realise that as you go through university, you're gaining skills, you're gaining experience of various things that you can use anywhere and you might decide to apply to something and you don't like it or you don't get in. There's always an alternative available. There's always something out there for you, if that makes sense. So it's not that you're doing an engineering degree, you have to get a particular job at this particular firm because that's what you want. There's always something out there for you. And the career service are really, really useful in my experience, at helping you get there.

**Georgie** [00:23:18] Thank you, and Regina do you have a top tip,

**Regina** [00:23:21] That's a lovely tip, Lewis. I would say there are so many things on offer at the University of Aberdeen in terms of clubs and societies and the co-curricula programmes we run and work experience and loads and loads of stuff. So I would say, just think about what you enjoy doing. Pick a few things that you think will be interesting to you and we will help you to reflect on those things and pull out the right skills, and as Lewis is saying, you know, it does all add up to something and it will all help you in the long run. Maybe not for something, you know, if you have something very specific in mind, that's great. But if you don't, you know, just enjoy the experience and you will learn something from everything you do.

**Georgie** [00:24:09] Brilliant, thank you so much. For our listeners, thank you for joining us for this week's episode of Ask Aberdeen. Hopefully it has helped you think about careers or think about what you might do once you start university if you've already got a degree in

mind. You can check out any episodes that you have missed on our website or wherever you listen to your podcast. And anyone who is interested in medicine can join us next week for our podcast, and Michaela will be chatting about our medicine degree. Thank you very much to you, Lewis and Regina.

**Amy** [00:24:38] Thank you for joining us for this episode of the Ask Aberdeen podcast. If you would like to suggest a topic we should cover, please email us at [ukteam@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:ukteam@abdn.ac.uk). We would love to hear from you. To be alerted about new episodes, subscribe wherever you get your podcasts.