

1495



UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

DEVELOPMENT TRUST SCIO

CAREERS AND
EMPLOYABILITY
SERVICE

EXPLORE | DEVELOP | CONNECT

W

O

R

K

I

N

G

WI

TH

W

OR

DS

If you're studying for an MA degree you will certainly be writing a lot of essays. But have you ever thought about applying those skills in a job? How might you go about writing for a living? We've organised two events and collated this booklet to showcase the careers of alumni who work with words in various contexts.

Whether they're writing to inform, to influence, or to inspire, to engage, explain or entertain, these alumni spend their days crafting, conjuring and cross-referencing sentences, utilising different mediums for a range of audiences.

13 & 15 FEB | 17:00 - 19:00 | Craig Suite, SDRL

Thank you

to our alumni for giving their time for this 'Working with Words' event.

With a great, global community backing them, our alumni know no limits.

Find out more about the pursuits of some of our other inspiring alumni in their From Aberdeen To...stories by scanning the QR code.

**SCAN
ME**



www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni/our-alumni/from-aberdeen-to.php



Take a minute to update your details and contact preferences to make sure we can let you know about all the latest news, exclusive alumni events, benefits and services, and opportunities for you to stay in touch with the University and each other by visiting www.abdn.ac.uk/stayintouch

Welcome to our 'Working with Words' event – an opportunity to hear from our alumni about the importance of words in a range of careers. When employers are surveyed about the key attributes they want to see in new graduates, communication skills always appear high on the list. Graduates need to be able to confidently express their knowledge and ideas when both speaking and writing, knowing that these words can enhance understanding or foster considered debate.

The 'Working with Words' events and this booklet have been organised to showcase a range of careers built on words and writing. If you love words and want a job utilising creativity to communicate ideas and tell stories, you don't need to wait until you graduate to get started. Take opportunities whilst at university to share your ideas, publish your work and engage with the content around you. Remember the Careers and Employability Service exists to support your career development both whilst you're a student and after you graduate.

Rhona Gibson
Senior Careers Adviser
r.gibson@abdn.ac.uk

Julia Leng
Careers and Employability Adviser
julia.leng@abdn.ac.uk



2nd Floor
Students' Union Building

abdn.ac.uk/careers

01224 273601 | careers@abdn.ac.uk



AbdnUniCareers

Thank you

A special thank you to our alumni who are giving up their time to speak at our panel discussions and share insight into how they work with words.



Dr Shane Strachan

Writer and Performer; Lecturer in Creative Writing

I 'work with words' as a creative writer and performer, but I have also worked in learning and engagement in school, hospital and community environments (for Aberdeen City Council, national arts charity Art UK, and freelance). I write across most forms (prose, poetry, theatre and spoken word) and across English and Scots (specifically Doric).



Rory Buccheri

Food & Drink Reporter, The Grocer;
and Freelance Journalist

I have years of experience freelancing for national publications (METRO, Financial Times, etc) and, more recently, in a staff role as Food & Drink Reporter for the UK's top specialist magazine at William Reed.



Eloise Leeson-Smith

Strategic Linguistic Consultant

As a consultant, I work with clients on refining and improving (often simplifying!) their communications output across the board. I work on strategic suggestions, brand repositioning, analysis and auditing of current efforts, and help businesses to build more meaningful relationships, using language, with their employees and clients alike.



Tilda Nilsson

Programmes & Administrative Officer, Cease UK

I support both the Head of Communications in our comms work and the Head of Policy in briefings, events and communications with stakeholders and MPs.



Rebecca Stewart

Centre Fundraising Organiser, Maggie's Aberdeen

My role mainly involves communicating with supporters in the centre in person or via email. I also do a lot of work on our social media channels.



Hannah Nicholson

Writer/Library Assistant
(and contributor to *Speakin' Weird*)

I'm a writer, and words are an essential part of my craft. Additionally I am an employee of the library service here at the University of Aberdeen and communication is a key part of the role.



BBC
RADIO

*From _____
Aberdeen
to...*

BBC
NEWS

Adam Porter, MA History & Politics, 1993

Your Time After Aberdeen

What was the title of your first job after graduating from Aberdeen and what did your first role involve?

Broadcast Journalist, I was one half of the news team at a small local radio station, Wessex FM, finding, writing, and reading the news.

What is your current job title and what is your current role?

Broadcast Journalist - I work in the BBC Radio Newsroom, which provides the news for the BBC national radio networks. I write and compile summaries, and also read the news on Radio 2 and 6Music.

Please briefly describe the journey from your first job after graduating to where you are now.

After a couple of years in my first job at Wessex FM in Dorchester, I became News Editor of a new local commercial radio station in Chichester, Spirit FM. After five years there, I got a job in the BBC Radio Newsroom in 2001. A few years ago, the news reading duties for Radio 2 were transferred to the Newsroom, and I was able to become part of the small team which reads the news on air at Radio 2.

Was your degree at Aberdeen essential for getting to where you are now? If so, in what way?

For journalism, having any degree is pretty much essential if you want to get onto the further training courses needed to get a job. My particular degree helped because a knowledge of politics and history is always useful.

One Top Tip

“Make yourself stand out from crowd, because there will be lots of people all trying to get onto the career ladder. Use your time at University to do things which will help you show that you're serious about whatever it is you want to do.”



From
Aberdeen
to...

Creating Murder Mysteries

Alison Telfer

Alison set up own company, Right Here Productions, after graduation whilst working two part-time caring jobs. Her degree and the English courses she took helped enormously with the script writing she does on a regular basis as part of her film, theatre and entertainment business. She now works full-time as Director of Right Here Productions.

Her top tip:

“You never stop learning. If you think you know it all at any point in your career, you’re probably wrong. Always be open to others’ opinions and viewpoints because they have had different life and work experiences that you could benefit from hearing about. There’s nothing wrong with having confidence in your abilities, but it’s also important to be humble and willing to learn more.”



From
Aberdeen
to...

Folk Musician

Amy Papiransky

Amy was honoured as a finalist for the BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year Competition in 2018 and released her first album “Read Me Write” in 2019. A North East singer and songwriter, Amy has made a name for herself on the Scottish folk scene and continues to go from strength to strength.



From
Aberdeen
to...

EMPOWERING CHANGE

*Vivi Brooke, MA (Hons) Film & Visual Culture
(History of Art), 2013*

Your Time After Aberdeen

What is your current job?

Lead Employer Branding Designer at Finders Seekers.

What is your current role?

Employer Branding, Storytelling, Growth Marketing, Employee Experience Design. At Finders Seekers, I help customers to achieve sustainable (talent) growth by uncovering, co-designing and communicating their authentic, diverse and inclusive employer experience and employer brand to build winning teams.

Please briefly describe the journey from your first job after graduating to where you are now.

My journey to where I am now was not straightforward. It has been bumpy along the way but very rewarding. When I was studying, there was no such thing as an Employer Branding specialist role - but with digitalisation new roles have emerged. I had a rough start with looking for jobs and going through many of the traditional struggles candidates and new graduates face while job hunting. At first I only worked short stints of 3-6 months in the creative industries. Then I found the world of tech in 2014 and startups (and I haven't strayed since!).

With several inhouse roles behind me, in my current role I am doing business and management consulting for global tech organisations and startups; helping them design their employee experiences, build up diversity & inclusion mindsets, as well as shape and showcase their authentic employer brands for the increasingly competitive global tech talent market.

Was your degree at Aberdeen essential for getting to where you are now? If so, in what way?

I think university prepares you in many ways for work life, but perhaps not in the way you would assume. For some courses, sure, there are concrete things you need to know to do the job, and that still applies. For me the main learnings have been applying skills to my everyday role. For example, my storytelling abilities, nurtured at university via studying film storytelling or through visual representations of art, come in handy every day.

Another skill thoroughly nurtured at university would be the ability to critically assess and think about your and other people's work; critical analysis is essential when doing my job to improve it further and to help my colleagues, or customers with their work.



From
Aberdeen
to...

Celebrating Scottish History

Caitlin Jamison

Whilst completing her MLitt in Museum Studies, Caitlin took part in the Career Mentoring Programme and gained valuable insights into the cultural sector here in Scotland, meeting with industry professionals and going behind the scenes in places like the Aberdeen City Archives.

She now works for the National Trust for Scotland as a collections care supervisor, responsible for the management and care of the museum collections and archives at Drum Castle. This involves conservation, interpretation, and research, working closely with the regional Conservator and Curator to tell stories through the collections for visitors, now and into the future. She also manages the castle 2 days a week, which means being flexible to the many and varied challenges a heritage site can throw at you.

Her top tip:

“Stay open to different professional opportunities. Your career path may not always be linear or look exactly like you had envisioned it, but you will always come away with a useful skill or new knowledge if you stay flexible.”



From
Aberdeen
to...

Global Learning Champion

Claire Arnott

Throughout her time at the University of Aberdeen, Claire volunteered for the Centre for Sustainable International Development.

“I really enjoyed this role as it gave me the opportunity to learn more about a field of work that I was interested in and meet people working in the sector.”

This role also allowed her to develop key skills such as organisation, networking and writing, skills she employed in her role as Education Campaigns Officer at the Fairtrade Foundation, where she produced education resources and campaigns to inspire young people to change the way that global trade works.

Her top tip:

“Embrace life-long learning! Don’t worry if things don’t go to plan. All of your experiences are valuable learning opportunities.”



From
Aberdeen
to...
BUSINESS
COMMS EXPERT

*Fraser Allen,
MA English, 1986*

Your Time After Aberdeen

What is your current job title?

I am self-employed and my business is called Fraser Allen Communications. I also have an additional role as Social Media Curator for the Library of Mistakes, and produce and host my own podcast series called Scottish Business Network.

What is your current role?

Copywriting (mainly business content) for websites, publications, social media, video etc, and producing/presenting podcasts.

Please briefly describe the journey from your first job after graduating to where you are now.

In 1989, I took a job in Istanbul as a reporter on an English language newspaper called The Turkish Times, and also spent some time there working with a film company. I then worked as a business reporter and then editor for Haymarket Media Group in London, before moving into marketing. This led to a role as editorial director of the publishing division of the now-defunct Chime Communications plc. Then in 2001, I left to launch my own marketing agency in Edinburgh called White Light Media, and ran award-winning campaigns for brands such as Standard Life, Royal Bank of Scotland, Lloyds Banking Group, Channel 4 and Tesco.

In 2019, I slimmed the business down and sold it in an MBO to my managing director, a fortuitous move given what happened with the pandemic crisis. I also had a secondary business called Hot Rum Cow Publishing, which published a beautiful magazine about drinks (called Hot Rum Cow). In 2013, I was voted Scottish Magazine Publisher of the Year and, in 2015, Hot Rum Cow was voted best drinks publication in the world at the 2015 Spirited Awards in New Orleans. I was also owner of World Whisky Day (www.worldwhiskyday.com) from 2015 to 2020. Funnily enough, World Whisky Day was founded by another Aberdeen graduate, Blair Bowman.

Was your degree at Aberdeen essential for getting to where you are now? If so, in what way?

Holding a degree was a requirement for my first job. And spending time at university honing my writing skills was definitely a big help in making headway in my career.



From
Aberdeen
to...

Beano

Grace Balfour-Harle

Whilst at university Grace was a contributing writer with The Gaudie and was Depute Editor of both the Life and Style section and the Features in her third and fourth years. After graduating, her first job was with DC Thomson as an Editorial Assistant where she worked on the Beano comic. There she was responsible for editing scripts, collating artwork, proofing pages, and writing feature pages. She wrote the weekly blog post for the issue and the occasional script, as well as organising the letters page, competition administration and the weekly Beano Boss competition.

Her degree gave her a unique perspective on publishing and a point of view, which she believes to be essential in any future roles she may have. When interviewing for her first job she spoke about her time at Aberdeen and encourages current students to get involved and get passionate –

“if you follow your passions, opportunities will follow”.



From
Aberdeen
to...

the White House

Hailey Lernihan

Hailey’s journey from Aberdeen has included teaching English as a foreign language to school pupils in South Korea and the Czech Republic and operational roles at a global laser technology company and cyber security firms in Virginia and D.C. She worked for a period in The White House as Presidential Stenographer:

“Traditionally, a stenographer is similar to a court reporter who is also familiar with shorthand. We, on the other hand, are more like transcriptionists with microphones,” says Hailey.

“We follow the President in the White House and on foreign and domestic trips to capture audio and then transcribe it for national archives and for the consumption of the press. We are career positions, so we are there throughout many administrations.”



From
Aberdeen
to...

THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

*Lewis Macdonald,
MA History, 1978*

Your Time After Aberdeen

What is your current job?

Member of the Scottish Parliament

What is your current role?

I have been a Member of the Scottish Parliament since 1999, representing Aberdeen Central as a constituency MSP until 2011 and representing North East Scotland as a regional MSP since then. My roles at Holyrood have included Government Minister, Shadow Minister, and convener or deputy convener of several parliamentary committees and cross-party groups. I have been Convener of the Health and Sport Committee since January 2017, and I was elected as a Deputy Presiding Officer of the Parliament itself in April 2020.

What was your first job after graduating from Aberdeen?

Community Relations Officer with the Grampian Community Relations Council

What did your first role involve?

I was the first member of staff appointed by a voluntary organisation which had just obtained start-up funding from the Commission for Racial Equality to promote good community relations in Grampian (Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray). My first priority was to secure, equip and organise a public opening of the organisation's first office in Aberdeen city centre. I also reached out to local authorities and other public bodies to promote racial equality awareness and training, acted as a first point of contact for people seeking help or advice on racial equality issues, and reported to the Board once a month.

Was your degree at Aberdeen essential for getting to where you are now? If so, in what way?

Yes – my time at Aberdeen University taught me how to get to the root of an issue, and how to make a difference to the outcomes. The social and extra-curricular aspects of my university education also gave me vital skills: in networking, identifying goals and objectives, and working with other people to achieve them.

Did you hold any student leadership roles, e.g. Class Rep, Club Treasurer, Social Convenor?

Yes, I was as Class Rep a couple of times, helped run a couple of student societies and was elected several times to the Students' Representative Council (now AU Students' Association). I enjoyed all of these experiences at the time, and they have since stood me in good stead in my professional career.

If talking to a group of prospective students, what advice would you give them to help them make the most of their time at the University of Aberdeen?

Enjoy it, work hard and play hard, give new things a try and don't hold back! The more you put in the more you will get out, and the more you will benefit from your time at Aberdeen.



From _____
Aberdeen
to...

Academia

Katy Turton

Katy's passion for Russian history saw her complete a PhD and go on to pursue a career in academia. She has worked at York University and Queens University Belfast and now splits her time between being a University Teacher at the University of the Highlands and Islands and being a writer.

"My degree was absolutely essential. I discovered my passion for Russian history at Aberdeen which set me down the road of learning Russian and completing my PhD in Russian history. Studying English fed my love of literature and, ultimately, helped me when I began to write my novel."

Her top tip:

"Seize every opportunity that Aberdeen University presents to you. Go to every and any talk on offer, go to film screenings, take advantage of the amazing library and read widely, join student societies - and if there isn't one that appeals to you, set up your own."



From _____
Aberdeen
to...

Startup Accelerator

Neil Cocker

Neil travelled after graduating, teaching English in Lithuania and working abroad in Australia before getting a job in packaging innovation and product management at the drinks company Diageo. He spent seven years working in Amsterdam for the company, and then moved on to Luxembourg to work for the Vodafone Procurement Company.

After completing various roles in strategy and change management, and studying for a MBA in his spare time, he co-founded the Tomorrow Street innovation centre in 2017. He now works as Director & Senior Partner for this joint venture between Vodafone and the Luxembourg government. In this role he leads startup scouting, looking for companies for their accelerator programme.

"It's funny, after I graduated in the 90s employers were often quite dismissive of humanities degrees. But I believe that such degrees teach skillsets that are increasingly relevant and sought after. For example, strong communication skills and an ability to take complex information and process it into concise written form or engaging presentations is a vital skill in the tech world. I use what I learned every day - my degree at Aberdeen laid the foundations that I built my career upon."

Employability & Skills Champions



Mr Alan McPherson

Teaching Fellow: Film and Visual Culture
School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture

The joint efforts of colleagues in LLMVC, DHPA, Social Sciences, Careers, Alumni Relations and the Employability & Entrepreneurship Committee have resulted in a brilliant line-up of alumni speakers. These two events will give our current students valuable insights into the ways some of our former students have built diverse careers by working with words, making use of the knowledge and skills they learned while studying here. So much of what we do in our degree programmes involves language, writing, reading, and communicating; hearing first-hand how that coursework translates into life beyond the degree is extremely valuable. It promises to be energising and inspiring for everyone involved.



Dr Helen Pierce

Senior Lecturer in Art History
School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History

The theme of 'working with words' chimes with so many of the specialist and transferable skills which students develop in the School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History, through essay writing and presentations, and by constructing blogs, reviews, source analyses, and case studies. Following their time at Aberdeen, our students go on to pursue a range of opportunities and professions, and it's always fantastic to catch up with them as alumni! I hope that their experiences inspire you to think about how your own expertise could translate into a future career.



Dr Stuart A. Durkin, SFHEA

Director of Education (School of Social Science)

Having been involved in a range of employability initiatives at the University, I'm keenly aware of the impact that former students and the directions they take upon graduation can have upon our current students. It goes without saying that words, in myriad written and spoken forms, are fundamental to the critical inquiry that students are engaged in within the School of Social Science. The wide-ranging experience of the panellists, allied to the networking opportunities at both events, provide our students with an ideal opportunity to see, hear and be inspired by alumni and the successful careers they have built since graduation.

This initiative is being supported with funding from the University of Aberdeen Development Trust SCIO through Development & Alumni Relations. Thank you.

**stay
connected**

Alumni

 @AberdeenUniversityAlumni

 @AbdnUniAlumni

 @universityofaberdeen

Development Trust

 giving@abdn.ac.uk

 www.abdn.ac.uk/giving

 @uoadevtrust

Careers & Employability Service

 careers@abdn.ac.uk

 www.abdn.ac.uk/careers

 @AbdnUni Careers

 @AbdnUni Careers