WHEN A DEGREE IS NOT ENOUGH

Employers are becoming increasingly selective in recruiting graduates: a degree is now rarely enough. Carolyn Morris, Associate Director of the Career Development Unit (CDU) describes some of the changes going on 'out there' and how students can best be prepared to cope with them.

Interviews, group discussions, presentations, psychometric tests – it’s these aspects of selection which attract attention. Anyone who watched BBC2’s recent series Situation Vacant will know they can be fascinating and horrifying in equal measure – a London advertising agency’s marathon case study not least among them. One of our finalists in Contemporary History got through this gruelling selection procedure a month ago.

“We please tell us about an occasion when you have had to overcome difficulties to achieve something. Tell us how you approached the issues and managed to overcome any obstacles.”

“Good creative thinking skills are as important to successful managers as good problem-solving and analytical skills . . . please use the space below to outline any previous examples of your ability to find new solutions to existing problems.”

“We are interested in your ability to think logically and clearly; construct logical and coherent arguments; both orally and in writing; absorb and analyse complex information; keep track of multiple argument.”

“Relevant evidence includes details of projects you have undertaken, papers you have written . . . problems solved in work or work related activities . . .”

We often expect these procedures to be challenging and think paper applications are the easy bit. Especially for undergraduates. After all, they can write, can’t they? These days it’s not so simple.

With more graduates on the market, employers are using more ways to select them. The methods used range from the arbitrary – first 500 CVs to reach us (Carlton TV) to more formal classification systems of evaluating application forms. And those forms may ask questions which demand considerable reflection, and a capacity to articulate one’s skills in a confident way. Striving for objectivity, many employers score forms. ‘A’ level grades may be included. A minimum of 22 UCAS points were sought by a quarter of employers in a recent CDU survey. Some resort to machine readable forms for initial sifting (City Solicitors, Norton Road) or screening by structured telephone interviewing (Gallup).

Criteria vary: what’s interesting is that more employers are explicit about what their criteria are. Good practice is for employers to give guidance on how candidates present themselves, present their evidence. Typically, they’ll provide a sort of worked example with comment – and with the instruction to seek help from your careers adviser. These employers, influenced by equal opportunity policies, demand from their candi-

Roger Silverstone, who was appointed to the first Chair of Media Studies at Sussex in 1991, is to give his professorial lecture Television and Everyday Life on Thursday 25 May at 6 pm in MOLS Lecture Theatre.

The place of television in our everyday lives is much debated over, but much misunderstood. The debates generally take place in an atmosphere of public concern following alleged copycat crimes, but they are just as likely to be prompted by wider cultural anxieties over the moral state of the nation and television’s capacity to undermine all the values that we hold most dear.

Academic research has for many years been investigating the effects on those who watch, but without reaching convincing solutions one way or the other. In most of this research television has been seen as a discrete influence, uncompromised and unqualified by its complex role in society and by any appreciation of the ability of viewers to deal intelligently or critically with what they see on the screen. Yet television, as industry, technology and medium cannot be isolated from the society which creates, produces and consumes it. An understanding of its power in contemporary culture depends on our capacity to make better sense of the complex social relations that form around it.

Roger Silverstone’s most recent book, Television and Everyday Life, which forms the basis of his lecture, was published last year.

Continued on page 2
What the papers say

IN A RECENT OBSERVER article (7 May), Erik Millstone from SPRU slammed the selection procedure for government-appointed scientific advisory committees such as the Committee on the Safety of Medicines as suspicious and unsatisfactory. He said "I have the impression that people are chosen for being what is known in Whitehall as a safe pair of hands...the kind of people who can be relied upon to give the kind of decisions that government and industry are looking for." He questioned the 'entirely lawful' situation where committee members may also be paid consultants to the companies whose compounds they are judging, and suggested that the 'countless specialists in the NHS, medicine and academia who could be relied on to provide objective judgements' are often ignored "because they have no industrial links.

STEVE THOMAS, also from SPRU, was quoted in a Times article (10 May) concerning the recently announced sell-off of eight nuclear power stations in the UK. He suggested that the public would be hard to convince of the desirability of nuclear privatisation because "it appears such a cynical, tax-cutting exercise" and pointed out that due to the age and mixed record of the reactors involved, "the City is going to ask for a detailed analysis before it buys these plants.

Festival Fetish

BRIGHTON MUSEUM'S current exhibition Fetishism: Visualising Power and Desire has been described by the Guardian as 'an ambitious attempt to show how fetishism went from being a form of idolatry to a branch of aesthetics' To complement the exhibition, the Graduate Research Centre in Culture and Communication (CulCom) is putting on a conference at the Sussex Arts Club on Monday 25 May. This will see the return to Sussex of Homi Bhabha from Chicago, along with Emily Apter from UCLA, Hal Foster from Cornell, and Sue Golding and Laura Mulvey from London. The response has been very positive, reports the organiser, James Donald of Media Studies, and the conference is already fully booked.

Media Studies has also advised the Duke of York's cinema on its season of films that explore (or celebrate) fetishism, from Murmurs's Nosferatu to Russ Meyer's Faster Pussycat, Kill! Kill!

News

JULIA NEUBERGER ON 'CARING AND CURING' 

The Trafford Centre and South Downs NHS Trust were delighted to welcome Rabbi Julia Neuberger to the University when she gave the Trust's annual health discourse on 4 May. In her lecture Caring and Curing: Is healthcare doing a good job? Rabbi Neuberger asked whether caring was not just as important as curing, and said patients and user groups should be more fully involved in measuring the outcomes of treatments. The results, she added, should be widely known.

Julia Neuberger was a Rabbi at the South London Liberal Synagogue for 12 years before going to the Kings Fund Institute as a visiting fellow. She is a member of the NHS Advisory Service and the General Medical Council, and was a member of the Secretary of State for Health's Complaints Review.

Her lecture was the second to be hosted by the Trafford Centre and the South Downs NHS Trust. The lecture series, which strengthens links between the Health Service and the University, comprises specially commissioned work from national figures in the health field.

WHEN A DEGREE IS NOT ENOUGH

Continued from front page

dates evidence of a very concrete kind. They specify the skills and competencies they seek and ask candidates to demonstrate they have them.

The Department for Employment asks for motivation, self-management and self-development. "You need to be able to take responsibility for your own achievement and development, extend the scope of your responsibilities, take the initiative to make things happen." Give examples . . . "key challenges, how you tackled them, abilities demonstrated, what you learnt about yourself." This, you should know, is one of four competencies the Department seeks evidence of, each with its side of A4 for candidates to complete.

This approach is praiseworthy in that it aims to be open and fairer in recruitment with mature students and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. It is also demanding for students. It takes time to do this sort of thing properly. It's demanding for CDU too, as students seek help in making and writing assessments of themselves.

And this is not untypical. More employers are setting quite demanding tasks at the very first stages of the selection process (and recommending students seek help from careers staff in dealing with those tasks). Students have to demonstrate their skills, through concrete descriptions of situations they've dealt with, or by presenting their own ideas. They may, for instance, be asked to make a proposal, whether of a sixth business principle to complement a company's existing five, or for a story for a popular Radio 4 science programme. Sometimes they are asked for critiques of existing programmes or products. Long used by broadcasters and advertising agencies to deter the faint-hearted and to spot talent, this "put a coherent case together, make a proposal and show us how it would work" approach is now also used by employers such as BT and City banks.

Many changes in recruitment practice are driven by employers' attempts to make their selection manageable and equitable. Some practice is questionable: using 'A' levels as a criterion for selection for interview may well be both unfair and irrelevant. Some are more welcome: openness about requirements and methods is now seen as good practice. That helps students.

There is great diversity of practice out there. And it seems to us to be growing all the time. It's not just that employers' criteria vary. Their methods of finding people to meet those criteria are no longer standardised nor easily predictable nor prepared for. CDU has to enable students to demonstrate they have the skills and qualities employers seek.
THE UNDERGRADUATE PROSPECTUS has been given a facelift for 1996 applicants, and has acquired a companion publication – the new 'mini prospectus'. Schools Liaison staff now visit about 65 schools and colleges every year, as well as 40 higher education fairs, and they use the two publications to promote the University. 15,000 copies of the undergraduate prospectus are also sent to UK educational institutions, and many more thousands go to individual applicants worldwide.

MARKETING UNIT EXPANDS

THE BRIGHTON COLLEGE of Technology has joined the Universities of Sussex and Brighton as the third partner in the Joint Marketing Unit.

Between us, the three institutions have a wealth of specialist expertise, technical services and facilities which can benefit business, industry and the community; we can offer a wide variety of research and development, consultancy and training in fields as diverse as biomedical engineering, health and safety and computer graphics.

The Joint Marketing Unit (JMU) provides a focus for our services to business and is currently involved in a number of activities to promote the combined resources of the three institutions. These include:

- setting up and managing a Helpline for Business. This will give commercial organisations quick and efficient access to information about the services to business which the three institutions can offer. The Helpline telephone number is 684846.
- organising a number of promotional events to attract potential users/customers/clients. The second Annual Festival of Innovation is planned for October 16-18, 1995 (note the date for your diary)
- offering marketing advice to members of the universities and the college, to enhance existing or potential marketing activities. JMU can also help with design and production of publicity material relating to services to business
- organising various business/campus networking events, eg. Breakfast Business Briefings

JMU is also producing a cross-institutional Services to Business directory for distribution across the three campuses and is recruiting a representative from each institution to liaise with the JMU Team. That Team currently comprises Sally Hooton Manager, University of Sussex, Sally Atkinson, Marketing and Events Co-ordinator, John Gurney, Internal Marketing, Brighton College of Technology, and Sally Butler – Admin Support, University of Brighton. The team is located in the Tithe Barn at Moulsecoomb Place. For more information please call 643222/4/5/6 or fax through on 642610.

Drivers will be relieved to know that by the time they read this copy of the Bulletin, the work which has been causing delays in leaving campus should be completed.

It is regrettable that the work undertaken at Knight’s Gate Road and on the south side of the A27 to alleviate the problems of leaving campus, has exacerbated the problem and caused a number of unpredictable delays. It is hoped, however, that drivers will now find that the difficulties experienced in recent times will be significantly eased.

CLOSED FOR REASONS OF SPACE

GRADUATION PHOTOGRAPHS

In addition to the normal photographic service offered to graduates and their families at the Summer Graduation Ceremonies, the University Photographic Unit is offering a high-quality graduation portrait service in its studio in Arts C109. This service, available during the summer (but not in Graduation week itself) will offer packages of colour prints taken with appropriate background, gown, etc.

Please contact either Keith Wilson (ext 2233) or Keith Hunt (ext 2232) who will be pleased to discuss your requirements, show you examples of their work, and fix a time for your portrait session.
Monday 22 May — Sunday 28 May

5pm Statistics Seminar: Annual General Meeting of RSSLG, PB2A12 MAPS I and at 6pm: Ashes to Ashes. A. Kimber (Surrey), PB1A6, MAPS I.


Friday 26 May

2.15pm SPRU Seminar: Economic Linkages and Innovation Activities in Italy, France, Canada and China. Prof C. DeBresson (Quebec), EDB 121.

4pm Astronomy Centre Seminar: 3-D Simulation of Accretion Disc Turbulence with Dynamo Action. A. Brandenburg (Nordita), PB1A7 MAPS I.

4.30pm Philosophy Society: What is Life? Prof M. Boden, Arts A155.

Film Society

Monday 22 May

7pm All the President’s Men.

Thursday 25 May

7pm The Return of Martin Guerre

All films screened in A2, £2.50/p members.

Music on Campus

Lunchtime Recitals

1.20pm Charles Macdonald (organ). Chapel. Tue 23 May. All welcome.

1.15pm Vicky Smallwood (voice), Norman Jacobs (Piano). Falmer House. Tue 23 May. All welcome.

2pm Keith Tippett in Concert. Meeting House. Thur 25 May. All welcome.

Music Festival Sat 27 - Mon 29 May

University of Sussex Students Union & Essential Entertainments present 3 day Indie, Jazz and Reggae festival in Stannier Park. Tickets £16 per day in advance from the Students’ Union.

CCE Saturday Schools — 10 JUne

The English Novel: the Waning of Empire

From Empire-building in India to disenchantment of colonial administration in Africa, a look at human predicaments in novels by E. M. Forster, Graham Greene and Scott.

The Pitdowm Hoax

An exploration of one of the greatest hoaxes in the history of science.

Reduced rates for students and staff. Enrol with CCE on 678527.

Self-Defence For Women

A free lunchtime self-defence course for female staff commencing Mon 5 June. The course builds confidence and increases assertiveness through discussion and teaching of basic self-defence techniques in a women-only environment. Places limited. Contact Richard Price, Staff Welfare Officer on ext. 3598. Closing date is Mon 29 May.

FOR SALE: Bright modern 4 bed house in Kingston, Double glazed. Gas c.h. Open fireplace. New bathroom. Quick sale wanted. £132,000. Contact ext. 8008 or 472940.


WANTED: Member of faculty seeks furnished 2 bed flat/house in B’ton to rent from July for one year. Contact Emma on ext. 3854.


WANTED: Couple (faculty) seek flat/flatlet in B’ton BR/London Rd BR areas. £80pw. Contact Pete on ext. 8737 or 472999 (eves).

WANTED: Couple (visiting faculty) seek accommodation to rent/house sit or for exchange with home in Calgary, Canada from 25 May to 26 June. Local references available. Please leave messages for Anne and Morris on 01793 770287.

WANTED: Visiting academic seeks 1 bed flat/or room(s) for month of July preferably in Hove area. Please email: uduel03@hay.cc. kcl.ac.uk.

WANTED: Faculty member seeks furnished flat during July/Aug. Non smoker. Contact Reiner on ext. 3019.

TRANSLATIONS: Technical & scientific English/French/English translations. Contact P. Bernard on ext. 2640 or 687013.

LOST: Purple package containing baby’s dress, marked Helena. Left in folder on door of Arts B331 several weeks ago. A reward offered. Contact Rachel Bowbly on ext. 8634 or 2235.

Bulletin

The Bulletin appears on Fridays with copy deadline the preceding Friday. Please send contributions to the Information Office, Sussex House on ext. 8209 or email: Bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.