

digital careers planning FOR PHYSICISTS



DR ANDREW HIRST, director of the White Rose Industrial Physics Academy (WRIPA) at the University of York, outlines a digital approach to improving the outcomes of physics graduates.

The White Rose Industrial Physics Academy (WRIPA) is a collaboration between business and the university physics departments of Hull, Leeds, Nottingham, Sheffield and York. WRIPA's mission is to provide physics students with the opportunity to gain skills, knowledge and work experience that will better prepare them for graduate-level work. WRIPA was recently awarded funding from the Office for Students' Improving Outcomes for Local Graduates Challenge Competition. The funding has enabled WRIPA to focus on increasing the number of physics students that are in graduate-level employment in the Yorkshire, Humberside and East Midlands region.

NEW DIGITAL FUTURE

Physics students have the right skills to be valuable in the new digital future. Current graduate labour market data indicates that opportunities for physicists in areas such as programming, data science and software development will remain or grow. However, in the post-pandemic world, many physics students lack the 'translation' skills to digitally market themselves, develop online professional networks or find work opportunities.

In response to the pandemic, WRIPA has re-imagined how it will support physics students to navigate their new virtual professional world, make better-informed career decisions, and connect with employers. The WRIPA website, to be relaunched in autumn 2021, will be an innovative and accessible physics career development platform, offering information on career pathways, business connections and relatable role models. Using a desktop or mobile device, physics students will be able to access embedded career readiness resources, including a Physics Discovery Careers tool to learn about the types of roles that physicists go on to, and connect with compatible employers or WRIPA physics alumni.

ASPIRATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The tool will help to break down misconceived stereotypes of physics-related job roles by introducing students to a range of diverse role models.

Longer term, we hope to develop a Physics Pathfinder digital tool to support students to better understand regional graduate labour markets by matching their career aspirations to potential job opportunities. This will help students build a more accurate picture of regional work opportunities that fits their academic interests and desired location of work.

CAREER CONVERSATIONS

Other digital toolkits will focus on a diverse range of themes, including 'recruitability' (such as interview skills) and creating a LinkedIn profile. WRIPA is also collaborating with the Institute of Physics to create a digital Wellbeing and Personal Resilience guide, which will outline strategies to help students build and maintain resilience in the face of change. WRIPA has started to develop inclusive online content and resources that will resonate with different student cohorts and can be embedded within the physics curriculum. We also plan to develop a podcast series based on career conversations with alumni, covering topics such as changing career paths and how to deal with failure. This content will highlight to students the non-linear career paths of physicists and how to view career progression as a developmental activity.

TALENT POOL

Increasingly, employers are delivering their student engagement events and content digitally in order to connect with a larger number of students across multiple universities. WRIPA's website will link up a regional talent pool of physicists with technical employers. This will offer SMEs and lesser-known employers improved connectivity with an undergraduate physics audience. We also plan to curate sector or role-specific content in collaboration with employers or professional bodies, to sketch out career pathways and develop inclusive digital content.

WRIPA has been able to draw on a cross-university interdisciplinary team with expertise in marketing, web development, student careers support, business engagement and teaching and learning. Through the digital tools and resources that have been produced to date - and those that are planned for the future - we hope to empower and inspire physics students as they transition out of university and into the workplace, and continue to support their future career development.

With thanks to all staff who contribute to the central delivery of WRIPA.



andrew.hirst@york.ac.uk



[Connect with Andrew on LinkedIn](#)



[@WRIPAinfo](#)