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# Graduate Career Pathways: Case Studies to Inspire Undergraduate Career Development Planning

## Call 2: Theme ‘Employability’

### Lead: Jo Conlon

### Project context and outline:

The importance of role models as helping to guide individual development through observation and learning is well documented in career theory (Gibson, D.E. 2004). The aim of this project is to investigate how graduate role models might be used to facilitate career planning within undergraduate Personal Development Planning (PDP). Role models, according to Shapiro et al. (1978), are individuals whose behaviours, styles and attributes are emulated by others. Singh et al (2006:67) state that: ‘role models are... key to the successful development of young aspiring managers’. Further the Catalyst Study (Catalyst, 2003) reported that the lack of female role models as a significant barrier to career success. In the early career stage Gibson (2003) reports that professionals found role models useful for the establishment of their self-concept and it is this aspect of the construction of an emerging professional identity that this proposed project has its focus. As stated by Brown and Hesketh (2004:145), ‘The concept of self-identity is [...] clearly important when it comes to how individuals construct and manage their employability. How an individual approaches the labour market is intimately linked with their ideas about what kind of person they think they are and the kind of person they want to become’.

The Fashion and Textiles Buying Management academic team are aware of significant career progression and success of graduates from the course. Graduates from 3 to 5 years ago are now entering senior positions and have the opportunity to offer significant insight and support to current undergraduates. This bid has enabled contacts to be developed into graduate biographies and career paths supported by video clip interviews. Additionally an important part of the value of the selected role models is that they demonstrate a diversity of opportunity and the possibility of attainment for those similar to them (Singh et al 2006:68) that can be reflected on within PDP.

Additional benefits of the project are the resources will make a significant contribution to the available marketing resources of the course for the purposes of recruitment as well as fostering recognition and credibility of the course with these major employers.

### Aims and Objectives:

- To create an initial digital repository of 6 graduate career case studies from Fashion & Textile Buying Management alumnae
- To use developed resources in TID1121 Working in Fashion & Textiles inviting the cohort to comment on the specific learning points from the role models presented and to contribute to the on-going development of the project and research
- To document the outcomes from these exploratory study sessions for dissemination and the enhancement of subsequent case studies
- To use the resource for marketing of the course through the website and open days and to record data on applications

### Methodology/Approach:

Case studies are a long-established tool within business and make for the succinct presentation of data in a familiar format. The writing of the case studies will be undertaken by Natalie Dawson, alumnus of the course, currently working at WWB (Womenswear Buyer, part of Ras Publications). This is seen as key to setting an appropriate and accessible tone to the case studies.

The compiled resources from this project will be accessed in TID1121 for students to undertake focused and personalised career planning (Billet & Henderson, 2011:16). Students would make use of the case studies as role models to construct their ideal, or “possible” selves based on their own developing needs and goals (Gibson, D.E. 2004). Students’ perceptions and perspectives would be captured in the taught sessions via an ‘opportunity map’ (Rae, 2003:545) and also extracted from the recorded reflections within their assignments.

### Outputs to date:

- Over 30 career profiles produced into a looped power point used at 2013 Degree Show and 2013-14 open days
- 6 case stories completed and loaded to course website
- 3 videos completed and loaded to course website

### References:

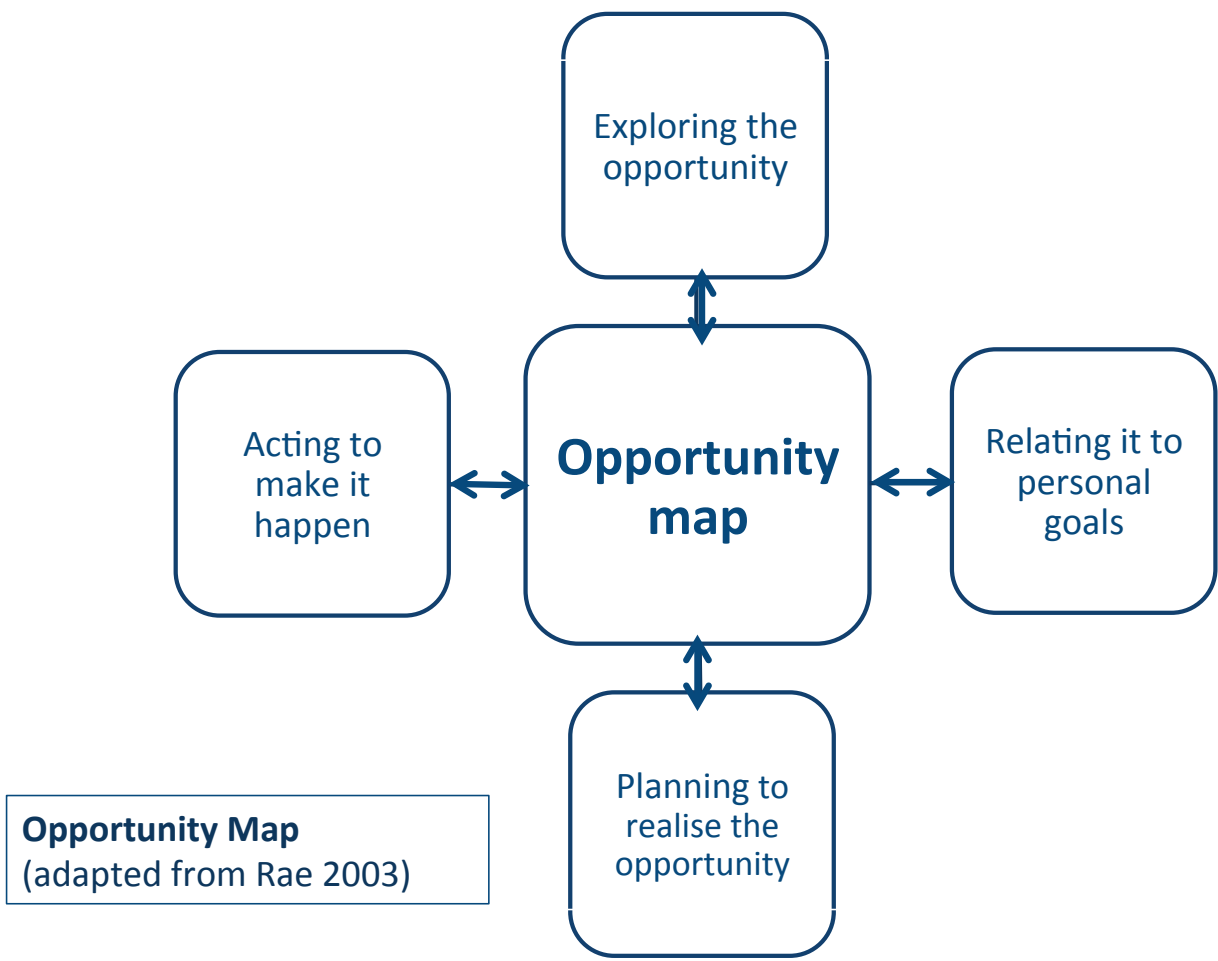
Billett, S., Henderson, A., (2011) “Developing learning professionals integrating experiences in university and practice settings”, Dordrecht: Springer

Brown, P. and Hesketh, A. (2004), The Mismanagement of Talent, Employability and Jobs in the Knowledge Economy. Oxford, UK : Oxford University Press.

Gibson, D.E. (2004) “Role models in career development: New directions for theory and research”, Journal of Vocational Behavior, vol. 65, no. 1, pp. 134-156

Rae, D. (2003) “Opportunity centred learning: an innovation in enterprise education?”, Education + Training, vol. 45, no. 8/9, pp. 542-549.

Singh, V., Vinnicombe, S., James, K., 2006, “Constructing a professional identity: how young female managers use role models”, Women in Management Review, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 67-81.



### Graduate Success Stories



**Melanie Coote**  
Sourcing Assistant – Burberry Brit  
Graduated 2007



### Graduate Success Stories



**Alison Steel**  
Buyers Admin at ASOS.com  
Graduated 2012



### MY CV

ALISON STEEL  
BUYER'S ADMINISTRATOR, ASOS OUTLET  
FASHION & TEXTILE BUYING, CLASS OF 2012

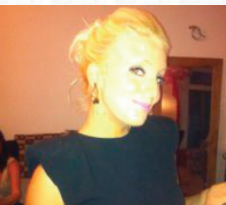


WHAT DOES THE ROLE INVOLVE?  
As a buying admin the key aspects of my role include raising purchase orders and helping suppliers deliver their stock into the business. Getting products through production ready to be sold online and maintaining my online shop which tracks a product from it being raised on the system to delivery are also vital tasks that need to be updated weekly.

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL WEEK INVOLVE?  
Monday's are sales days, we get in early to analyze the week's sales, go to 'best' and 'worst' product meetings, catch up with our merchandisers and decide what to do with the stock that has performed well and that which hasn't. Tuesday's involve catching up with my buyer, scheduling gifting product that has come in to the business and calling it from warehouse to go through production. After that I'll liaise with suppliers for details on purchase orders and update my portfolio. Wednesday's and Thursday's involve raising orders on to the system and helping the buyers with any analysis they might need for appointments, whilst Friday's a morning spent checking supplies on things we'll need for the next week, checking through samples and sending stock back to the warehouse.

Excerpt from Case Story

### Graduate Success Stories



**Kate Jackson**  
Buyer – Next  
Graduated 2007



### Graduate Success Stories



**Sarah Liversidge**  
Buyers Admin. Assistant  
Mini Boden  
Graduated 2012

