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Enhancing employment outcomes of Mathematics graduates

Day 1 – Parallel II (15.05-15.35)

Employment outcomes of graduating students have been one of the key issues under consideration among many universities and stakeholders in recent times. Higher education institutions are taking this up in many ways, embarking on different strategies, to enhance the employment outcomes of their graduates. It is important to help students develop their employment skills during their programme of study to ensure a positive learning experience resulting in a successful employment outcome. This may take the form of specific employability initiatives at department level, appropriate for the programme portfolio, to complement traditional careers advice services provided centrally by the university. This paper describes how employability skills of Mathematics students can be enhanced through greater engagement with employers and professional bodies throughout their degree programmes and discusses how this is implemented at our institution.

Employability skills of Mathematics graduates have been an area of concern for the mathematics community and employers nationwide. Although this topic has received a good deal of attention lately, it is useful to explore different ways to enhance students' employability skills as they can impact positively on employment outcomes of students. In this paper, we discuss and explore employment related learning activities, and the associated extra curricular activities, of the academic programmes in Mathematical Sciences to facilitate the development of general graduate skills that we believe will result in good employment outcomes. Complementing the methods used within teaching and learning for this purpose in our institution, we embark on greater engagement with professional societies and employers to help students develop necessary set of graduate skills. In this process, we organise regular careers events, workshops, a Mathematics business game and learning related extracurricular activities to ensure students make a smooth transition from education to employment when they graduate. The main objectives of these events have focused on preparing students well for employment using two different approaches. The first one emphasized the role of the societies in professional development in the field to increase students' awareness of the membership and its benefits in their career development. The second one engaged with employers to provide up-to-date information about careers, employment opportunities and the necessary graduate skills development.

Student feedback from the above activities suggests that these events have improved students' awareness of employability as a whole, helped them develop their graduate skills, and enabled them to make an informed choice about their career plans and progression. Although this work is on going, there has already been some evidence of enhanced employability outcomes for our graduates.