

## **Transcript – The Importance of Extra-Curricular Activities**

**Host:** Alana MacLeod

**Speaker:** Lewis Melloy

### **Alana MacLeod: 0:01**

This podcast has been brought to you by the University of the Highlands and Islands Careers and Employability Centre. In this episode we'll be talking about course progression and extracurricular activities which develop skills and build a strong portfolio of experience. I'm Alana MacLeod and today I'm joined by Lewis Melloy, UHI alumnus and now Perth College's Campus Cycling Officer. Lewis, thank you very much for joining me today!

### **Lewis Melloy: 0:39**

Pleasure.

### **Alana MacLeod: 0:41**

Excellent. Okay, so we'll get started, tell us a wee bit about yourself – where are you from, what course did you study at Perth College UHI?

### **Lewis Melloy: 0:32**

So, as you said, my name is Lewis and I'm from Perth. And I started back when I was still at secondary school. In sixth year I started doing a hospitality module taken at Perth college as one of our additional modules that we could take, and then I started studying sport on the HNC coaching and developing sport, and then just progressed through HND to the BSc sport fitness degree and then finally graduated with a BSc honours in sport and fitness. And, I was lucky enough to be nominated in the same year for the Undergraduate Student Of The Year 2019. Which I was the winner of, and as part of that, I was able to meet the Princess Royal Anne on the graduation and also conclude the Student Vote of Thanks.

### **Alana MacLeod: 1:14**

Amazing, that sounds fantastic. What was that like?

### **Lewis Melloy: 1:17**

Oh it was amazing – a wee bit nervous at the start, obviously because of all the protocols that have to be in place for meeting her...and a great experience. Really relaxed to talk to, I think, not a lot of people get opportunities like that so for her to provide me with my award as well, was just amazing.

### **Alana MacLeod: 1:32**

Yeah, absolutely. So, I mean, you obviously you transitioned you your experience, your exposure to the college started at school...you transitioned...how did you find the transition and, who would you say helped you change the decision making process?

### **Lewis Melloy: 1:47**

To be honest the transition was fairly straightforward, I knew what I was going in for and what I was applying for, and it was definitely for me. And I'd done a lot of reading and that beforehand, so I knew the expectations of it. In terms of transition from HN to degree level, there is a transition which is noticeable. And that's obviously in terms of kind of assessments, criteria, expectations, referencing, your homework, your readings, your individual study you've carried out...but again that's just down to the individual student, how much they want to put in. I was the kind of person that would always do that kind of thing because I want to get the highest grade possible, but for other people that may not be the same – they might just want to scrape a pass.

So, I think the transition depends on how the student wants to progress. In terms of support, I think it's kinda like what you get for most people, your family and your friends were there to support me, my classmates going from our HNC to our HND, there was only three of us in the class. That was a massive drop they were so supportful, and then again moving into their degree...and then your lecturers and that at college were just first class, they are there to speak to you about anything that you need – advise you, support you, and guide you through the whole process.

**Alana MacLeod: 2:48**

Yeah, there's a lot of different people come into play when you're making these decisions, and it's great as well that you have these different people that you can bounce ideas off of and you'll get some feedback. It's really valuable. So, while you were studying, am I right in thinking you did quite a bit of extracurricular activity, over and above your course. Can you tell us a wee bit more about that and what you did, and the benefits of it?

**Lewis Melloy: 3:10**

Yeah, so as you said, at the college obviously there's lots of different opportunities to get involved in extra things, and I just took every opportunity I possibly could, because I knew it would help and support me and my future careers. So kind of going from HNC, I was part of the work experience module review, there was two of us that got chosen, just to kind of review their work experience module and how we felt it was going, and show some kind of work to external verifiers and that kind of what was expected in that which was a great thing to do.

And then I also made a Perth College case study video on the value of work placement, with the employability and careers centre. In the HND it was kind of similar – a lot of volunteering outside to build up these hours that you had to do start your course, whether that was work placement or sessions, because I took the coaching route in sport and fitness, and we had a lot of coaching session we had to do. I think as I moved into third year, obviously there's less time that you've spent on campus because it's more self-directed study. So during that time I was participating in undergraduate questionnaires and studies, I started volunteering as a sport and fitness Ambassador within the sport and fitness department, which allowed me to contribute to the sport department's analysis of student focus group feedback data that we took from all our courses that we run at Perth. I contributed to the year of the young person student engagement event that we had down in Perth, and then I was fortunate enough to be part of the student staff panel for the new principal appointments, as well, which was another great experience.

And then, in my final year as an honours degree student, I'd done a couple of student support case studies for marketing, and also a 'day in the life of a student' blog...and then again, I continued as a sport fitness ambassador. And, I'm not going to bore you, but just to run through a couple of things that I'd done as a sport and fitness Ambassador: organised various student sporting events throughout the year, kinda running from fancy dress volleyball tournament to five a side tournament to a Show Racism the Red Card volleyball tournament, introducing keynote speakers at various events across the academic year, including attended talks and workshops. I attended college open days providing tours and speak of different prospective students; I opened and assisted the 2018 student induction for the whole of the sport and fitness department for 250 students, which was very daunting at first...but I settled in there which was good. We applied, and received, £1500 of funding for a 'Perth Decides' funded project which we ran an event called Happy Perth Healthy You, which was a health and fitness related event, targeted at primary school pupils, and then secondary school pupils with additional support needs. And then the last few years as well, I've been doing the end of course feedback review sessions with other sports classes, just to look at how we can improve our courses from the students as well. So, yeah, that's just a small amount of what I've kind of done out with my course!

**Alana MacLeod: 6:00**

It's brilliant, though. I mean, I suppose that type of activity, it builds a lot of skills and confidence that you can then apply in the work you're doing now and in future roles as well. You've got all that experience – a sort of portfolio – that you can reflect on. I mean, what do you think were some of the key skills that these various activities taught you?

**Lewis Melloy: 6:19**

Well I think first and foremost, the obvious one is your CV enhancement. There's so much that I can talk about now going for job interviews and in putting on my CV, just with all the experience I've been lucky enough to have. And skills, personal skills, for me is...communication, I've improved that so much. Even like leadership skills, I mean a lot of my Ambassador role was taking the lead on an event, planning, organisation, the evaluation, working with volunteers, coordinating volunteers...and again, teamworking, because there was four of us as an ambassador role, and then a lot of kinda problem solving and stuff with events. I think the main one that sticks out to me is the CV enhancement, the amount of stuff I've been able to add on my CV now that I've done is, is...just phenomenal.

**Alana MacLeod: 7:02**

You almost have a response to any scenario, you know, any question that's asked of you – you have something that you can reflect on.

**Lewis Melloy: 7:09**

Yeah, and I think a lot of that is just through what I have been able to do, and the support I've been given whilst I was studying at the college.

**Alana MacLeod: 7:15**

Yeah. And I mean, you touched on it a bit earlier on taking part in the review of the work placement module. Tell us a bit about where you went and what you did, as part of the work placement module and, and the value of this, you know, looking back?

**Lewis Melloy: 7:32**

So as part of our HNC course, you have to carry out work experience module, and that is for 40 hours of volunteering, and you've got the option of doing that throughout the year, or you could take it at the volunteering week end of semester one, start of semester two. When I was going through school, I always wanted to be a PE teacher at a secondary school, so I went back to my old secondary school, and was able to do my weeks work experience with the PE department, just shadowing the PE teachers on classes, how they structure their classes, working with students, doing warm ups, doing drills with them. I can remember the time of year it was January, so it was always cross-country time. So we spent a lot of that week out doing the cross country and things like that.

**Alana MacLeod: 8:09**

In the cold?!

**Lewis Melloy: 08:10**

It was very cold, very wet, and of course the first day, I didn't think and I forgot to bring a change of clothes! So of course, you're stuck in all your soggy stuff all day. But yeah, it was just, it was kinda for myself to get more of an insight of what I was hoping to do as a future career, and it actually made me think that it's not PE teaching at a secondary school I want to do, it's more of a lecturer at a higher education or further education establishment that would suit me better. So I mean that value

was phenomenal, because I was then able to pursue correct route that I would need to take to become a lecturer rather than a PE teacher.

**Alana MacLeod: 08:42**

Yeah, it helps you to make an informed decision. Yes. So, at the moment you're currently working at Perth College UHI Campus Cycling Officer which sounds like a brilliant role. How did that job come about? Are you enjoying it? What's next?

**Lewis Melloy: 08:58**

As I said I was in my final year, fourth year student at Perth college, and the job was advertised. It was going to be based within the sport and fitness department. I knew who was advertising it and who was going to manage it, and they'd come and kinda spoke to me and said, I think this is maybe something you should look at. Because I was planning on, this year, taking a gap year before I go and start my Master's in October in sports management at Stirling, so I was just looking for something for kind of a year, just to keep me ticking over. They've never had something like that within the UHI before. And then of course, there was two that got appointed to Inverness, and there was myself and Perth, which was great. I mean it's something that I've never kind of looked into before. I've never really worked within the sector of sustainable travel or...it was very interesting and obviously with me being the first person to do this job at Perth, I had the flexibility in starting it how I liked. Yeah, which again was a great opportunity.

I was also successful in receiving circa £15,000 of funding for the college, for cycling and sustainability and infrastructure that can be put in place. But obviously, with a pandemic happening, that all had to be put on hold. So, unfortunately not been able to see these projects through at the moment. I learnt so much kind of networking and making new contacts, especially working with the guys in Inverness, their cycling officers, that was great to have the three of us together and just being able to kind of promote active travel sustainability on campus, even in the short time I was there. I managed to get an extra four or five staff members on to our cycle to work scheme, which was great, as well as getting the funding to bring on more infrastructure to a few of the facilities that we've already got, so...it's a great experience that was able to get.

**Alana MacLeod: 10:33**

Yeah, and I mean your master's sounds really, really, interesting as well. So is that the first step in sort of maybe moving into a lecturing kinda position maybe at some point in the future?

**Lewis Melloy: 10:42**

Yeah, so my contract for the Cycling Officer job is up kinda end of April/May kinda of time, so we were looking to hopefully extend that but obviously with the pandemic happening that wasn't the case. I've still been doing wee bits and bobs for them there, as ik new I was looking longer term to go into lecturing, so I'd always had my mind set on doing a masters. Thankfully I applied for Stirling and start in October, so...I'm hoping to get back up to Perth and do some shadowing and working with the sports team and that as well, just to gain some experience.

**Alana MacLeod:**

Yeah, no that sounds brilliant, and shadowing is a fantastic way to learn about something as well, isn't it? It's really, really good. Brilliant! That's really exciting. So I mean, last question for you, I suppose...

If a student is thinking about taking up a placement opportunity, or looking to build up a bit of a portfolio of experiences that they can put on their CV (much like you have) what would you say to them?

**Lewis Melloy: 11:33**

Just grab and take every opportunity that comes your way. Because sometimes, other people might not get these opportunities that you've been given. I know from experience of studying and working at Perth that some students don't grab these opportunities, and then later on that year, or maybe the following year, they've regretted that. So just having even little things I've spoken would make you stand out from other potential candidates. I mean, it's helped me massively, with jobs and opportunities and that. I've been able to have these things on my CV.

There's a lot of people as well that say that I'm lucky to have done all the things that I have, but all I say to them is that I've just had the exact same opportunities everyone else has. I've just grabbed the opportunities that have come my way, with the hope of them benefitting me and my future career. And then the final thing that I always say to every student that I speak to, is the level of passion that you want to achieve in your career, is down to the amount of effort that you want to put in. You need to put in the effort, and it will come, and it will reward you like it has done for me. I've been lucky enough in some of the stuff that I've talked about today.

**Alana MacLeod: 12:30**

Yeah, you get out what you put in, and you're a perfect example of that. It's brilliant. Lewis, thanks so much for joining me today, it was great to hear about your success, experiences, journey through from school actually, through college, to your degree, and now a Masters at Sterling! It's super exciting and you have to keep in touch and tell us how you're getting on.

**Lewis Melloy: 12:49**

Definitely will do!

**Alana MacLeod: 12:52**

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