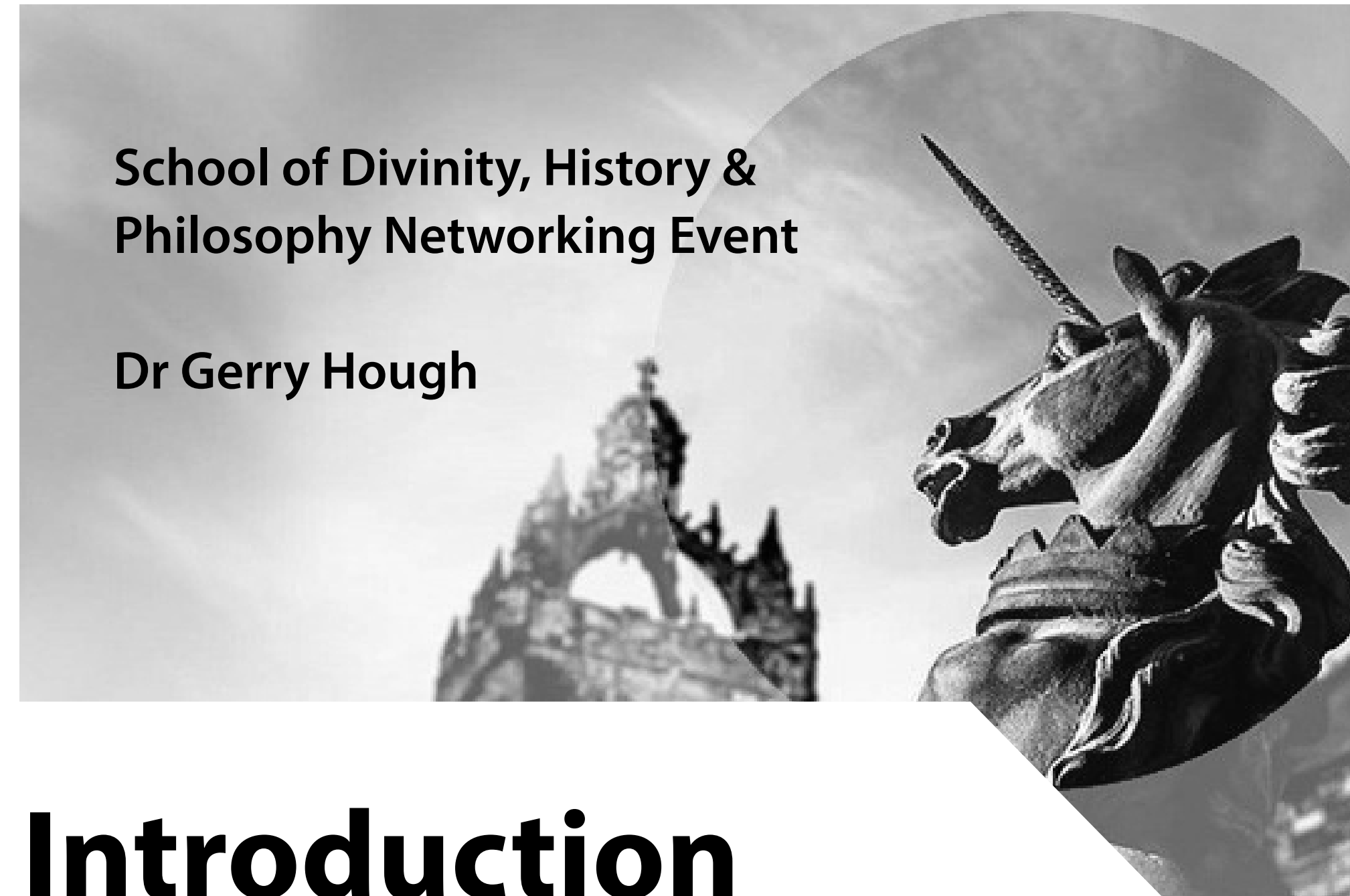


Evidence for Enhancement: Do Student/Employer Networking Events Work?

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Introduction

In November 2018, the School of Divinity, History & Philosophy organised its inaugural undergraduate/employer networking event in The Sir Duncan Rice Library. The event, which was hosted in partnership with employers from the MA Programme Advisory Board (PAB) was devised to:

- Broaden students' career thinking about the range of opportunities available to non-vocational degree students.
- Improve students' networking skills.
- Enable students to develop a professional network.

Methodology

A survey based on Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model (Kirkpatrick, 2006) was used to collect students' qualitative and quantitative feedback at the end of the session. The survey helped measure the effectiveness of the initiative based on:

1. **Reaction:** Students' satisfaction with the networking event.
2. **Learning:** Based on the session aims.
3. **Behaviour:** Changes in students' knowledge and skill levels.
4. **Results:** Increased student engagement levels in employability. The survey was anonymous and any data collected was treated confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 2018.

Key Findings

25 undergraduates from a wide range of degree programmes in the School attended the event. Insights from the survey are presented against the Kirkpatrick four-level evaluation model.

1. **Reaction:**
Did the students enjoy the networking?
93% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed that the networking format engaged them.
2. **Learning:**
Did the students meet the session intended learning outcomes?
87% of students either strongly agreed or agreed that their confidence in networking had improved.

Students also indicated their increased knowledge base:

"There are a lot more opportunities than I thought."
MA (Hons) Anthropology & Philosophy Student

3. **Behaviour**
Were students aware of their changes in their knowledge and skill levels?
93% of students felt more knowledgeable about the opportunities offered by the visiting employers.

Students also identified a range of skills and qualities required for successful networking, including: active listening, interpersonal skills, communication and professionalism.

4. **Results**
How did the event help increase students' future engagement with employability?
The shaping of students' future career thinking is illustrated via the following comments:

"I will look into Aberdeen City Council internships and Explore Learning opportunities."
MA (Hons) History-History of Art Student

"I plan to create a LinkedIn account."
MA (Hons) History & International Relations

Conclusions

Yes, student/employer networking events do work as evidenced through the survey data.

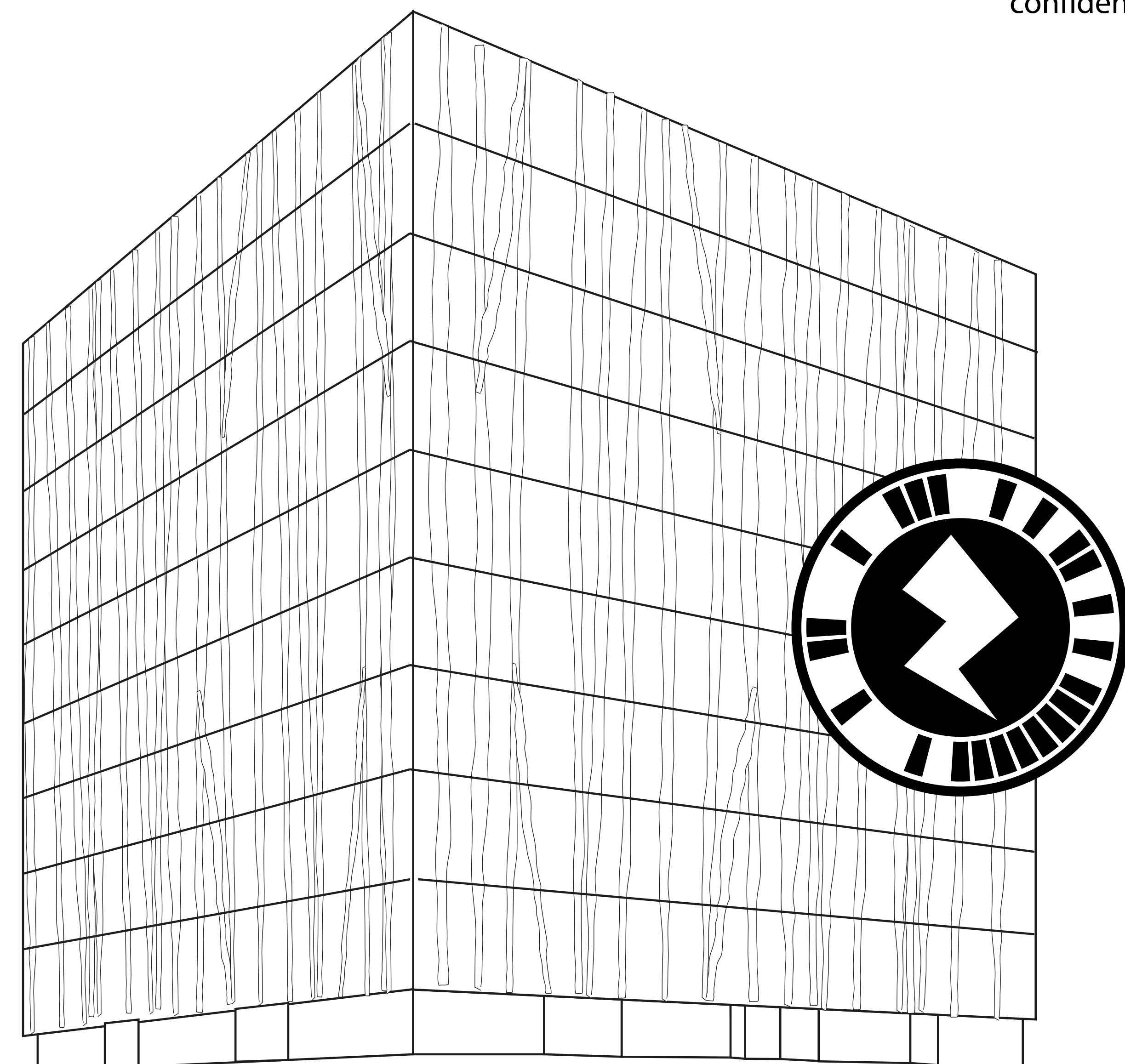
Students require dedicated time, space and support to develop their professional networking skills. Setting up a LinkedIn profile is also key to start building networks.

"Realising my degree is versatile. I feel much more confident. Like my degree is useful."

2nd Year Theology Student

"A good opportunity for interacting with the students whilst prompting them to think about their future opportunities."

Alison Paterson - Talent Acquisition, Aberdeen City Council



"Developing students' employability in the School is crucial to the students' learning experience"

Dr Gerry Hough - School Director of Teaching