Spotlight on ... Rita Lewin

A profile of Rita Lewin, Head of Student Employability & Success / Deputy Director of Student Services

Rita Lewin is the Deputy Director of Student Services the Head of Student Employability and Success, which includes the Careers and Employability Services and Learner Development. Having started her career at MMU in 2006 as Head of Learning Support, Rita took up her current position following a restructure of Student Services in 2009/2010, which brought Employability into a named provision for student support. As Rita highlights:

“Employability is a very broad area of work, as it is not only concerned with supporting students to develop the skills and knowledge to thrive in the workplace, it is also about their awareness of the value of their graduate attributes in the context of their chosen discipline, so partnership work with academics is key. I really believe that employability does not detract from academic disciplines in anyway; rather it is about the practical application of graduate learning to the world of work, and enterprise activities.”

Enhancing the student experience is central to Rita’s role, as she explains:

“Being student centred is not just about a student’s university experience it is about preparing them for life after university, so that they can pursue the career of their choice with confidence and have the ability to compete with students from other universities. It is necessary to work with students to encourage their aspirations and develop their confidence as they prepare to enter the competitive graduate jobs market.”

Rita is acutely aware of the successes, vulnerabilities and challenges that MMU graduates can experience, as the Careers and Employability Service continues to work with students for up to three years following graduation. A lot of effort has gone into supporting graduates in the first six months, as not only is this a crucial time for new graduates, it is also an important time for the University, as the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) survey collects information about the types of employment or further studies graduates are doing at this time. The statistics from this survey inform KIS and league table data, available to prospective students who can then make comparisons between Universities. MMU has a challenge to increase the number of
students going into graduate level employment, so that we continue to be the university of choice for future students.

This academic year has been a busy time for Rita and the team as they have moved into the brand new Employability Hub in the New Business School and Student Hub. Reflecting on this move Rita says, “we now have a real opportunity to showcase the importance of employability within the university. A visible presence for employability is important, as it sends out a clear message to students that University has a role in preparing them for professional life.”

Rita graduated from Sheffield University and began a career in local government before working at Liverpool University and then as Head of Graduate Services and Assistant Registrar (Equality and Diversity) at Salford University. Following this Rita was appointed as Head of the Connexions Service on the Wirral, before returning to higher education when accepting her appointment at MMU. She is a member of the association of graduate career advisory services (AGCAS) and the Association of Manager of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE).