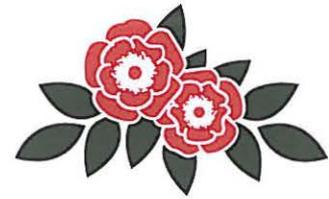


NEWS RELEASE

UNIVERSITY
— OF CENTRAL —
LANCASHIRE



University-backed comms agency celebrates client wins

PR agency UK Progress is celebrating a full portfolio of client wins six weeks ahead of its official launch.

The unique agency will be run by final year public relations students working from an office at the University of Central Lancashire, and has already attracted 20 clients, mainly based in the North West. The student consultants will practice under supervision and will be assessed on the quality of their work as part of their degree.

'Our public relations graduates already have an enviable academic reputation, but this project will really demonstrate that they are capable of applying their knowledge at the very sharp end of consultancy practice, in projects deliberately chosen for the challenges they bring,' says Paul Elmer, director of UK Progress and a senior lecturer in Applied Communication.

UK Progress will complete project-based consultancy across an initial client portfolio that spans major public sector accounts, manufacturers, legal and medical sectors. Student teams will specialise in soundly-researched strategic communication, and will develop tactical solutions that include publishing.

'By integrating a real agency into their final year we will effectively be preparing second-jobbers for the marketplace,' says Paul Elmer. 'The idea is simple enough: we are taking the principle of work experience, and adding to it the quality control and rigorous assessment that has won Preston its leading position PR education. The end result is a work experience that delivers more learning to the students, more skill to the clients, and is a first in the UK.'

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Clients pay a fixed fee of £2k that helps offset the costs of enhanced IT, office space and expenses such as travel. UK Progress will operate as a full-time agency during the academic year, with student teams using mobile technology including a fully wireless computer network and university-provided mobile phones in order to maintain a constant service without the need for a full suite of offices, a move designed to cope with varying volumes of work, with the potential for more than 100 student consultants working at peak periods.

The main drive this year has been in specially targeted sectors, ones where we know that students will get a challenge,' says Elmer. 'But I want to see that grow to include the charity and SME areas, where we can help build a better society and help organisations to innovate, and we are already partnering a similar student consultancy that has been operating in Utrecht for some years, so we hope to offer some students experience in international consultancy, too.'

Lectures and seminars are replaced with team meetings where student teams draw on the support and knowledge of a senior consultant, able to guide their developing practice, supplementing their formal learning on subjects such as applied research and strategy. Senior consultants, who are specially selected from the lecturing staff for their consultancy experience and practice, add the experience of applying that knowledge at the sharp end, and of dealing with clients, in addition to more traditional teaching roles such as directing students towards books and other learning resources.

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6 August 2003

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Note: For more information about UK Progress call the agency director Paul Elmer on 07714 105095.