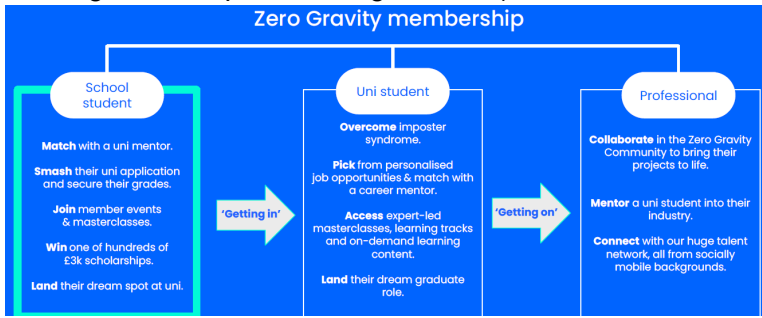


Session Title:	Transforming WP Engagement: Insights from the GenZ Student life cycle
Speaker(s):	Tom Haywood-Pope – Chief Operating Officer Alex O'Connor – School Strategy Lead Sophie Radford – Head of Employer Partnerships
Chair:	Amy Slater-McGill
Reporter:	Nicky Rogers

Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:	<p>Launched in 2020, Zero Gravity is a tech company and charity focused on increasing social mobility for students in the UK via partnerships with employers and HE About us Zero Gravity makes opportunity match talent. WP young people register with the site to access support including work experience and sponsorship funds.</p> <p>Speakers came from varied backgrounds including HE/careers related start-ups and Ed tech roles at Unifrog, education and the charity sector.</p>
Overview/Aim of session:	<p>To provide data-driven insights and practical strategies for enhancing WP student access and outcomes.</p> <p>Offer information on what students are doing at uni to plug the gaps in their knowledge and build networks to achieve graduate outcomes.</p> <p>Provide advice on what can be done to join the dots on a WP student's access, engagement and outcomes journey.</p>
Workshop Content	<p><u>1. The Widening participation challenge</u></p> <p>Tom began by mapping the journey needed to increase WP and address relevant EORRs: overcoming imposter syndrome, geographical barriers (ZG tech can help), negative media, the capacity/conversion /misconception issues reported by HE, the perceived reduced value of a degree (graduate salaries stagnant/competition for grad roles)</p>  <p>The diagram illustrates the Zero Gravity membership journey. It starts with a 'School student' box containing: 'Match with a uni mentor. Smash their uni application and secure their grades. Join member events & masterclasses. Win one of hundreds of £3k scholarships. Land their dream spot at uni.' An arrow labeled 'Getting in' points to a 'Uni student' box containing: 'Overcome imposter syndrome. Pick from personalised job opportunities & match with a career mentor. Access expert-led masterclasses, learning tracks and on-demand learning content. Land their dream graduate role.' A second arrow labeled 'Getting on' points to a 'Professional' box containing: 'Collaborate in the Zero Gravity Community to bring their projects to life. Mentor a uni student into their industry. Connect with our huge talent network, all from socially mobile backgrounds.'</p>

2. Supporting WP students to get in

Alex shared insights from the ZG student data (15000 members, 200,000 interactions with AI powered Information, Advice and Guidance) to show that WP students really struggle to choose their subject and uni. Students ranked further key challenges as: completing their UCAS Personal Statement, finding work experience, evidencing problem-solving and extracurricular activities.

Students prefer practical takeaways such as work projects that develop skills, mock interviews for eg Oxbridge, funding. ZG provide a scholarship to the lowest income 10% of their WP members, and have surveyed what this is spent on: 1. Tech, also transport at uni. Their impact (compared with a UCAS control group) shows a ZG member is 5 times more likely to go to Oxbridge than another WP student. Outcomes are also improved for progression to higher tariff unis and retention rates.

3. Supporting WP students to get on

Sophie talked about the challenges of WP students to progress at uni as they are less likely to have work experience (time/money), have a network or family contacts (or the awareness of the importance of this + internships etc) eg an employer who recruits only from previous first-year interns. ZG data shows that members are aspirational but there is a disconnect, as employers struggle to recruit WP grads. She then ran through the ZG programme to tackle self de-selection, skills gaps and motivation, including mentoring, a masterclass and work experience opportunities (tip: using a GenZ speaker has much more impact). Stats showed a large impact on numbers of their WP students applying for work-related opportunities.

4. Takeaways and best practice

The Challenge	Getting-In	Getting-on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WP students self disqualify from top universities WP students face increased employability challenges post-uni WP students lack the network advantage Rising attention on the Apprenticeship route 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing access to Personal Statement support, work experience and problem solving development increases WP students chances of breaking into Uni Providing masterclasses with practical learning opportunities will increase student engagement Providing a University mentor 1.9x increases WP students chances of breaking into top unis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building students professional network early will increase confidence & employability Provide work experience opportunities whilst studying Providing an avenue to develop "power skills" alongside studying will increase employability of students

<p>Case Studies/Examples:</p>	<p>Practical activities eg Snapchat virtual work experience of building a VR lens developing critical thinking and problem solving skills.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="670 310 1414 936"> <thead> <tr> <th>Masterclass session</th> <th>Proportion of all attendees in last 6 months</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Snap AR Lens Lab</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Get ready for your Oxbridge interview</td> <td>10.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>What is critical thinking and how do Oxbridge measure it?</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Writing a winning personal statement with UCAS</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Imperial College London - Crafting a compelling personal statement</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>How to ace your Admissions Test</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>How to demonstrate critical thinking in an Oxbridge application</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>All you need to know about HSBC's degree apprenticeships</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Getting on example of impact:</p> <div data-bbox="670 989 1442 1482" style="background-color: #004a7c; color: white; padding: 10px;"> <p>HSBC more than doubled their conversion of socially mobile talent, using Zero Gravity</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="670 1150 1422 1482"> <thead> <tr> <th>Outcomes</th> <th>Pre-campaign</th> <th>Post-campaign</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Conversion of socially mobile students</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">2.3x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Confidence in securing a grad job</td> <td style="text-align: center;">27%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">98%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Understanding of brand values and mission</td> <td style="text-align: center;">25%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">97%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Masterclass session	Proportion of all attendees in last 6 months	Snap AR Lens Lab	15%	Get ready for your Oxbridge interview	10.5%	What is critical thinking and how do Oxbridge measure it?	6%	Writing a winning personal statement with UCAS	6%	Imperial College London - Crafting a compelling personal statement	6%	How to ace your Admissions Test	5%	How to demonstrate critical thinking in an Oxbridge application	5%	All you need to know about HSBC's degree apprenticeships	4%	Outcomes	Pre-campaign	Post-campaign	Conversion of socially mobile students	2.3x		Confidence in securing a grad job	27%	98%	Understanding of brand values and mission	25%	97%
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<p>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</p>	<p>Discussion on the limited number of Degree Apprenticeship vacancies and who's getting them (i.e. not WP). Shared types of WP activities used such as mentoring, summer schools, contextual offers, funding for transport. Discussion of barriers to WP in getting career-ready.</p>																														
<p>Questions and Answers:</p>	<p>Is engagement ongoing? Most use the platform for help getting in, then again when looking for grad opportunities; plan is to keep them engaged as employers want earlier engagement. What about pre-16? Currently support aligned to UCAS calendar but are pushing for earlier and more continuous engagement. What about engaging with senior mgt in schools/</p>																														

	academies? Happy to collaborate with a uni rep on a thought leadership piece for trust execs etc.
SummaryKey takeaways:	Useful data insights and tips for supporting WP students - Getting in: offer practical support/takeaways Staying in: build networks Getting on: prioritise 'power' skills (leadership, critical thinking & communication) Providing eyemasks for tired delegates was a nice touch!