Career inspirations - A Student’s perspective from one academic advisor’s group. Authors: Joanne Canning¹, Hannah Phelan¹, Alison Howard¹, Fatema Lukmanji¹, Karen Butterworth², Sarah Ashworth² and Harmesh Aojula¹

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Background: Pharmacy being a multidisciplinary field of science can potentially offer a huge variety of career opportunities. However, patient facing sectors, including community, hospital and primary care pharmacy, remains the mainstream workforce. In the future, supply of graduates is expected to exceed the demand suggesting stiffening of competition in these and other sectors. In response we shifted the focus of year-2 personal academic advisor tutorials to employability skills and expected this change would lead the students to secure summer placements that are better targeted to their preferred sector. The ultimate aim being to arm the students with relevant experience thereby enhancing competitiveness. My year-3 advisees have decided to pursue different areas of Pharmacy as their career ambitions. We report key defining moments, which led them to their decisions in year-2.

Method: To develop employability skills year-2 MPharm students received; (a) five academic advisor tutorials, (b) a lecture plus a small group workshop explaining career options and the need to evidence/strengthen skills and (c) practice interviews targeted to summer placements. There were 30 second year academic advisors in the school, each with an average of 5.5 students. My year-3 advisees reflected on how year-2 reshaped their ambitions.

### Results

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year-1 Aspiration</th>
<th>Year-2 Defining Moment</th>
<th>Year-3 Future Aspiration</th>
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| **Advisee-1**
Community or Hospital Pharmacy | I took an internship in summer working on several projects, including designing a virtual patient community as teaching material. | Teaching & Academia |
| **Advisee-2**
Hospital Pharmacy or Medicine (MBVS) | I completed case studies, in the medicine module, to design drug formulations. These exercises first sparked my interest to pursue a career in industry. | Industrial Pharmacy |
| **Advisee-3**
Hospital Pharmacy | A visit to oncology ward in which chemotherapy clinic was run by prescribing pharmacist. This autonomy and use of clinical knowledge inspired me to work towards this career ambition. | Independent Prescribing Pharmacist |
| **Advisee-4**
Open minded | Hospital placements. | Doctor |

Conclusion: This is a small study, limited to student reflections within a single academic advisor group. Nevertheless it demonstrates that Year-2 is a critical time window to inspire students in developing employability skills which are better targeted to their future aspiration. It is interesting to note that even within a single group students were able to reach out into patient and non-patient facing sectors. With rising number of graduates, a year-2 focus on employability skills provides the impetus to start exploring options early. Students can then stay abreast of competition in securing summer placements, more relevant to their interest.