

Spreading the word...

Finance students are picking up prizes and getting the treasury lowdown from Association members. Catherine Gorham hopes the message gets across.

The Association has forged links with a number of universities in order to raise awareness among students of treasury as a career option. Warwick, Newcastle, Sheffield Hallam and Leeds Metropolitan have been selected for the reputation of their finance programmes and the exemptions granted to their students against accountancy examinations.

Prizes in finance

Each university has agreed a framework for an Association prize in finance to be awarded to the best-performing second-year student in an appropriate finance module. The first of these was awarded on 13 November 2000 to a student on the Strategic Financial Management unit at Sheffield Hallam University and was presented by David Cromwell at their graduation ceremony. Leeds Metropolitan has also set up a post-graduate Association prize. The prizes will be awarded annually, funded by the Education Trust Fund.

In addition to the prizes, an Association member will visit each of the participating universities to give a technical talk to finance students.

The first of these took place at Newcastle (given by Alan Dick of Scottish & Newcastle plc) and Sheffield Hallam (given by Mark Dormer and David Morrison of Northern Rock).

Alan Dick reports back: "I braved a wet and windy day and a mad cab drive to give a talk to finance students at Newcastle University. The purpose was to help forge links between the Association and the university in connection with the liaison work being undertaken.

I gave them background on the Association, what it is and what it does, and how it had helped my career. I also used Scottish & Newcastle as a case study to discuss the corporate activity that we had undertaken primarily in the last 12 months.

Overall, it seemed to go really well

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– nobody walked out or fell asleep. Some questions were asked at the end and quite a few brochures were distributed. I may have done the wrong thing, however, in that they want me to go back next year. I hope I don't get the same cab driver."

Attracting 'rocket scientists'

On a wider scale, Association members have visited a number of physics departments in order to tempt their students with the risk analysis challenges and attractive salaries that treasury can offer. Antonia Butler, Thames Water plc, visited Surrey University, where the department is in the process of marketing courses in physics with finance to meet the demand of the banks for 'rocket scientists'.

(Apparently one large investment bank is offering £50k+ starting salaries for physics graduates with no finance background.) It is intended to widen the targeted audiences of such talks beyond physics to include mathematics



David Cromwell presents the prizes at Sheffield University

and engineering as well as finance students.

Mike Barham of Hyder plc gives feedback from his talk:

"I gladly accepted the invitation from Neil Lakeland at the Association to visit Aberystwyth University in November and talk to the Physics Society about the role of a corporate treasurer.

The relevance of the disciplines gained through the study of physics to a career in treasury could be clearly demonstrated.

Success in physics requires a high level of numeracy and developed mathematical skills. A thorough understanding of Black-Scholes, the basis of option models, would be acquired.

I must confess my vision at the time was of a leisurely drive through the Welsh countryside, in mellow weather, stopping en-route for a pub lunch.

After delivering the talk I thought I would probably have time to socialise in the student union and then stay overnight before a quiet drive back the following morning.

Running so late that I had no lunch, battling through gale force winds and belting rain which turned into blizzards over the mountains and all in the knowledge that I had to go to London early the next morning was the reality.

The final feeling, however, was of great satisfaction as the discomforts of getting there were amply rewarded by an enjoyable session with the students.

They came from both the physics and finance departments, showed great interest throughout and asked numerous questions at the end.

I believe this is an initiative that should be built on and would encourage other treasurers to take the opportunity, if it arises, to talk to university students in their areas."

Catherine Gorham is Marketing Manager for the Association.