

ASET Integrating Work and Learning newsletter

ISSUE NO. 24

ASET



ASET Essay Competition 2003

ASET currently offers 1000 Euros for their best essay from a post-placement student, summarising the learning from placement. The standard for the Competition was high and all entries contained worthwhile material: students had learned from their placement and could articulate that learning.

Entrants came from the Universities of Bath, Kent, Manchester Metropolitan, Surrey [Schools of Physics, and Engineering], and Sheffield Hallam. The competition was judged by Ray Robinson, Chair of ASET; John Wilson, Chair of UCSC, and Alan Smith, who has been involved with ASET conferences and the Essay Competition for many years. Reviewing the entries separately, they came to the same decision about the winner.

Although there aren't explicit criteria for the essay, the best essays did contain "quotable quotes" which promoted the value of sandwich placements.

The winning student wrote of starting from a position of ignorance regarding sandwich placements, going to a presentation motivated by little more than "curiosity and a 'nothing to lose' frame of mind"; two years later this turned into "the best choice of my life so far".

This student did an internship at Sun Microsystems in San Francisco with about 40 other students. University skills proved useful, but "applying them to the workplace was challenging... and I acquired expertise through researching and interacting with other people who had experience".

"The greatest learning was on the job..., where the first difference between academic and working worlds became clear: **knowledge is not offered to you on a plate; you have to go and hunt for it.** I now know where to look for information, and how to make the best use of people as sources of knowledge".

"Apart from learning new skills, my placement year helped me to develop a lot of personal qualities... confidence... earning respect... taking responsibility... taking initiative... motivating myself and colleagues/students".

"I have gained the abilities that enable any employer to differentiate between me and other applicants... and references from colleagues at Sun are valuable as well".

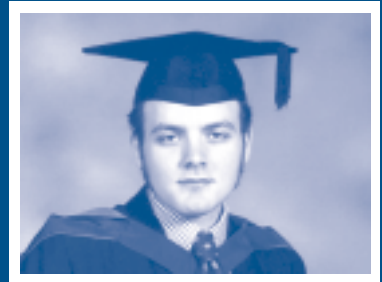
"Finally one of the greatest benefits... is the expansion of my network of people... it matters equally who you know and what you know".

"**My placement year has been the greatest experience of my life so far;** It opened my eyes and broadened my horizons, and the value is having a great impact on my academic results. University life seems much easier than before, because I am more effective in my research and work".

Well done, **Georgios Christos Fragiadakis who is studying Computer Science & Business Administration at the University of Kent at Canterbury** - you are a worthy winner of the ASET Essay Competition 2003.

Dr John Wilson

* All quotes in "... " are the student's own words from the essay. Emboldening has been added.



New Administrator

Keith Fildes, is currently doing a PhD in History at the University of Sheffield whilst working part-time for ASET.

Contact Keith on:

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aset@aset.demon.co.uk



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VirtualXchange - Providing Support to Female Students in 'SET' Industries

The VX project was funded by the European Union's Leonardo da Vinci II vocational training programme and has had many contributors from the UK, Ireland, Finland, Spain and Sweden during its development.

The VirtualXchange website aims to provide a supportive virtual environment for female students studying Business, Science, Engineering or Technology (SET) subjects. The site aims to combat feelings of isolation experienced by them on placement and to encourage women's mobility across Europe. The website arises from an analysis of needs from several different National and European sources.

Across the EU the numbers of females studying SET although improving, remain lower than the desirable level. Only 26% of students in mathematics and computer science and 20% in engineering and architecture are female.

ASET have agreed to manage the website www.VirtualXchange.org for several years.

Ray Robinson

ASET Code of Good Practice - Placements

A workshop Seminar was run on 3rd February at the Open University offices on Gray's Inn Road, primarily about the ASET Code but also covering the QAA Code in order to answer the obvious question - why are there two codes?

Sixteen people attended the workshop, which was run by John Wilson, ASET Executive and University of Central Lancashire, who had prepared the ASET Code. The ASET Code was launched in February 2001, badged jointly with NCWE who at that time were operating in conjunction with ASET, from the offices of the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE), coincidentally also at the Gray's Inn Road address. It was designed as a user-friendly guide for students, employers and HE institutions, covering the three phases before, during and after placement, in situations where the work experience is an integral part of a course or programme of study. When ASET relocated to Sheffield, and NCWE to CSU in Manchester, ownership of the Code reverted to ASET, which is why it is now generally called simply 'The ASET Code'.

Co-incidentally, at the same time as the ASET Code was being developed, QAA were working on their own code, number nine in the series, and this was published in July 2001. John Wilson was part of an advisory group working with QAA on that code, and Julian Ellis from QAA was kept informed of developments on the ASET Code, so they are complementary.

But they do have different purposes and different audiences; the ASET Code is for practitioners such as placement tutors and officers, students contemplating placement or already experiencing it, and placement employers, actual or potential. The QAA Code on the other hand is aimed at policymakers in HE institutions, involved in drawing up procedures and practices which would lead to a robust and stable system.

So which code you need depends on what you want it for; if you are a placement practitioner the ASET Code is probably the better one to use, but if you are looking at university-wide policy, and particularly if a QAA visit is expected, then clearly the QAA Code would be the one to consult. Ideally they go together.

As with many such workshops, much of the value was in sharing good practice between delegates from a widely-differing range of backgrounds covering both academic and administrative aspects of placements.

The ASET Code is available from ASET in Sheffield, price £3, while the QAA Code is to be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/public/cop/COPplacementFinal/letter.htm

Dr JJ Wilson

Changing Attitudes To Work Placements

"Encouraging students to take an optional Sandwich placement year often requires the missionary zeal of a new testament evangelist", maintains Stephen Gomez in a recent article featured in ILTHE Newsletter, outlining the case for integrating one-year placements into the academic structure.

In response to a declining interest amongst students on non-accredited science sandwich courses at the University of the West of England, an Applied Sciences 'Faculty Placement Service' has been set up to develop new strategies and to communicate a strong message to students, academics and employers about the significance of work based learning.

Various concerns including money, location and accommodation were listed by students opting out of the placement year. Yet, as Stephen advises, they are not fully attentive to the advantages and the positive effect it can have on levels of academic achievement. Statistical analysis has revealed that the placement experience alone had a significant bearing on degree classification irrespective of how well the student previously performed. Furthermore, the range of employable skills gained is looked upon favourably by employers.

Yet the matter of having to pay fees and only receiving notional accreditation for the year surpasses any of the benefits. Thus, securing actual academic credit to the work experience became the defining feature of the Faculty Placements Service's approach at UWE. Having received funding from the FDTL, a web based, generic system called 'Profile' was developed, which will be fully operational and available to all universities and colleges in a years time. Profile's principal feature is an electronic portfolio into which students on placement upload evidence of learning by completing templates based on the same criteria for awarding academic credit, but modified for use in the workplace. The system has formed the basis of a Professional Practice module which attracts level 3 credit. Numbers of students opting to take a sandwich placement has increased: students can clearly see the full benefits of placement experience within the academic structures of their degree.

Stephen Gomez



ASET Membership

ASET, founded in 1982, is the UK National Professional body for work based learning practitioners. The mission statement of ASET is:

“to promote and to support the concept of higher and further education programmes that integrate periods of academic study with periods of relevant work in an external organisation”.

The integration of work and learning and the development, promotion, and implementation of best practice in this area is the primary focus of ASET. Membership gives Universities, Further Education Colleges, and Employers the opportunity to benefit from and contribute to a wealth of expertise advice.

You could benefit from ASET's involvement in the following areas:

- **Promoting and disseminating best practice in all aspects of Work Based Learning.**
ASET has for many years been the catalyst for the development of best practice guidelines in many areas of Work Based Learning e.g. Health and Safety Guidelines for Students on Placements and the Code of Good Practice for Sandwich Placements launched in March 2001.
- **Providing expertise, information and advice relating to Work Based Learning.**
ASET's knowledge and expertise in all areas relating to Work Based Learning has assisted many companies, academic institutions and government bodies in the past. It maintains a website (www.asetonline.org), including an area restricted to members only.
- **Arranging seminars as a forum for discussion of issues relevant to Work Based Learning.**
Seminars are arranged on specific topics of interest e.g. 'Health and Safety for Students on Placement'.
- **Encouraging, supporting and initiating research into Work Based Learning.**
Funds may be made available to support relevant research in the area of Work Based Learning.
- **Representing the views of Work Based Learning practitioners to policy makers in government and higher education as well as to the media and the general public.**
The Dearing Commission, CVCP (now Universities UK), the National Centre for Work Experience (NCWE), World Association of Co-operative Education (WACE) etc.
- **Organising conferences and workshops where Work Based Learning practitioners can disseminate and exchange information by paper presentations, round table discussions or by general interaction.**
Recent examples include: Health & Safety: Universities Liability for Students on Work Placement
ASET/NCWE & QAA Codes of Practice for Sandwich Placement
Leonardo workshop: How to Make a Successful Leonardo Mobility Project
Legislation & DDA
ASET's Annual Conference is normally residential but in 2003, in order not to detract from the WACE Conference, a one-day mini-Conference was held in London. Entitled 'Stand Still or Take Off? The Future of Integrated Learning Following the Government Review'.
- **Acting as the hub of the Work Based Learning network at a national level and providing the link to world bodies such as the WACE.**
ASET will continue to work in close collaboration with any appropriate and relevant body, e.g. NCWE, to promote Work Based Learning throughout the UK.

Corporate or Institutional Membership

Corporate or Institutional Membership of ASET gives whole organisations access to the expertise and knowledge built up by ASET members over the past 20 years. This is in addition to access to the ASET database of Universities and employers involved in Work Based Learning. The subscription rates for 2004 are as follows:

Corporate: £130 Individual: £40 School: £25

For corporate members particularly, this represents exceptional value as everyone in the organisation is covered. There is the additional benefit of **reduced fees** for conferences, seminars or staff development programmes for **all staff** in the member institution / company and this alone has recouped the cost of joining for many of the member institutions or companies. **Can you afford not to have access to such a wealth of expertise, advice and assistance?**

If your staff attend ASET Seminars, Staff Development Programmes or Conferences, you can definitely afford to be a member as **the saving should outweigh the cost of your membership!**

NEW MEMBERS

This year there have been 19 new members, of which 17 are FE colleges, reflecting ASET's expansion into this area in response to the growth of foundation degrees.

New members to date: Glasgow Caledonian University, Aylesbury College, Blackburn College, Henley College Coventry, City College Brighton, Park Lane College, Mid-Cheshire College, Chichester College, Joseph Priestley College, Salford College, Brooksby Melton College, City of Bath College, Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, Newark and Sherwood College, Salisbury College, Newcastle College, Writtle College, University of Wolverhampton, and St Brendan's Sixth Form College.

notice board

Dates For Your Diary

● ASET WORKSHOP / SEMINAR PROGRAMME 2004

Delegate fee: £130 ASET Members, £150 Non members

● HEALTH & SAFETY FOR PLACEMENT STUDENTS Wednesday 23rd June, at Woburn House Conference Centre Bloomsbury, London

This seminar will explain the philosophy behind the CVCP-published report and address key issues giving advice on the preparation of students, the preparation of staff and on having an adequate defence against legal action. It is aimed at university staff who have taken on these responsibilities since 1997 and those who would like a refresher.

● LEGISLATION & DDA JULY 2004

How the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4 (Education) impacts upon provision and providers. Find out where and how to find sources of assistance; review the new responsibilities and legislation of the DDA; and look at easy adjustments to make placements inclusive and accessible. The workshop will be delivered in conjunction with SKILL, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities.

● INTRODUCTION TO WORK PLACE MANAGEMENT NOVEMBER 2004

Aimed at work placement organisers, academics and careers advisers, and particularly for members of staff new to placement management, this workshop is designed to introduce all the fundamental aspects to the field. Share ideas and good practice on placement preparation, implementation and debriefing; review current legislative aspects with regard to placements; have your questions answered by experienced placement organisers and share a fresh focus on what work experience can and should achieve.

● ASET CONFERENCE & AGM 2004 7-9th September 2004, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge

Themes: Employability and Work Experience; Assessment and Accreditation Frameworks; Supporting Student Learning on Work Placements; International Partnerships & Placements; Managing Work Placements University-Business Links.

Keynote speakers: Rt. Hon. Alan Johnson MP, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, John Brennan, CHERI (Centre for Higher Education Research and Innovation, Open University and Bernd Waechter, ACA (Academic Co-operation Association).

Conference Prices: if booked before 9th July 2004 £395, ASET Member £365. If booked after 9th July 2004 £465, ASET Member £435. These rates include 2 nights accommodation and breakfast, refreshments, lunches and evening dinners.

Web Developments

A new members section is currently being constructed, which will be a how to do guide to placements based on the expert contributions of our Executive committee and covering areas such as:

- How to set up a placement
- Placement management
- The benefits of doing a placement
- The Code of Practice
- Disabilities
- Canuke
- European placements
- Health & Safety on placements

2003 MEMBERS

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Aston University
Bolton Institute
Bournemouth University
Brunel University
Carnaud Metalbox Plc
City University
College of North East London
De Montfort University
Doncaster College
Fife College of FE
Imperial College of Science, Tech & Medicine
Institution of Civil Engineers
Kings College London
Kingston University
Leeds Metropolitan University
Liverpool John Moores University
London Metropolitan University
London South Bank University
Loughborough University
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Contributions to the newsletter
are most welcome.