

newsletter

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SUBMISSION TO THE **DEARING INQUIRY** INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

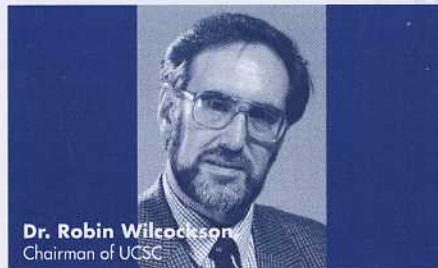
Following ASET's invitation to contribute to the National Inquiry into Higher Education a submission was made in early November by the UCSC sub-committee.

In setting out its response, ASET stressed that Work Based Learning and Work Related Learning are particular, strategic approaches to learning and numerous reports comment on their effectiveness in helping learners develop transferable and enterprise skills, in developing increased understanding of analytical concepts and so encouraging better academic performance, in helping students into employment and in 'bridge building' between universities and the world of work.

The submission included recommendations on:

- ◆ **The Definition and Purpose of Higher Education**
- ◆ **Teaching and Research within Higher Education**
- ◆ **The Size, Shape and Structure of Higher Education**
- ◆ **The Wider Contribution of Higher Education to National Life**
- ◆ **Funding issues**

In setting out its evidence in Section 1 of the submission, ASET strongly endorsed the concept that higher education should have



Dr. Robin Wilcockson
Chairman of UCSC

within its *diversity* (i) of purpose (ii) of style or mode of learning, of which one is sandwich (iii) of institution (iv) of student population (v) of routes to qualifications.

Acknowledging that the partnership between universities and employers is capable of significant development, ASET noted that employers already contribute an estimated £600m per annum in salaries and supervision to students on work placement. ASET is not suggesting that work-related learning is appropriate for all students or all courses but that it is of crucial importance for a sizeable proportion in the context of subsequent employability and as a foundation for their life-long learning by integrating the university and employer dimensions.

In the Teaching section the submission focused on the development of transferable skills within sandwich courses; emphasising the enhanced

maturity of students and the corresponding improved motivation and performance in subsequent situations, both academic and employment, as has been recognised in recent HEFCE Teaching Quality Assessments. The employer dimension inherent in sandwich courses means that effective teaching and learning involves students, lecturers and employers in a rich synergistic relationship which has beneficial effects far beyond the immediate education of the student and which is a powerful example of partnership with industry. Also incorporated in this section were comments on quality assessment, stressing that the sandwich course system as a whole is already endorsed and to some extent self regulated by employers taking an increasing number of students.

Important issues were raised in the section on the contribution of a higher education to national life and in particular the fact that continued emphasis on the delivery of sandwich courses would increase the contribution HEIs are able to make to the economy at all levels. Work placement schemes offer the opportunity to SMEs to experience the contribution which graduates can make and current experience suggests that this is a rapidly growing area of placement provision.

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HEALTH & SAFETY of Students on Placement

Findings of the working party

Placement tutors have been concerned for some time now about their legal liabilities for the health and safety of a student on placement. Those who were not concerned became so when they saw the legal advice commissioned by ASET from Nabarro Nathanson. Reaction to this advice ranged from full acceptance to outright rejection, both of which could be described as 'knee-jerk'.

There are two issues which need to be addressed:

- ◆ **Are universities doing enough to be reasonably sure about the health and safety of students on placement?**
- ◆ **Are universities doing enough to be reasonably sure that they are meeting their legal obligations in connection with the health and safety of students on placement?**

These two issues do not necessarily require the same action. The more important one is the first but the second cannot be ignored.

Earlier this year ASET and the Universities' Safety Officers' Association (USA) set up a joint working party whose brief was to provide some recommendations. The recommendations (at this stage covering UK placements only) are now in draft form and the final version, which will have been examined by the Health and Safety Executive and lawyers, should be available in Spring 1997. It is expected that it will be endorsed by CVCP.

ASET/USA will organise a one day conference at which the detailed recommendations will be

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