



The Newsletter of the Association for Sandwich Education & Training

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ASET Newsletter

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Comment

The Government is seeking to make higher education available to more young people – a long term goal of doubling the proportion of students to 30% within 25 years was established. With this ASET is heartily in agreement. Indeed the growth of sandwich courses over the last few years, 20% over the last three years, is particularly pleasing in that it increases the supply of educated and experienced graduates into the labour force. Unfortunately, the time it takes to 'produce' a new sandwich graduate can be inconsistent with movements in the economy. Sandwich course organisers and placement tutors are still felling 'shell-shocked' from the pressures of placing students this year with the economy in deep recession. There were a number of reports in the media in the early summer of a crisis in sandwich courses with huge numbers of unplaced students predicted. The final result, thanks to the efforts of all those concerned in the system, was nowhere near as bad as was first thought (particular subject areas that suffered were some business studies and computing courses, construction and hotel catering, and management courses). Whilst individual employers were not able to provide as many placements as in previous years all statements made by employing organisations; the CBI, graduate recruiting associations etc. were positive towards the sandwich course system – supporting the principle of courses with a placement element and the extra maturity of sandwich course graduates. Indeed the general principle is gaining rapid favour – many other courses are incorporating placement components with the introduction of the EHE initiative.

We all hope that the economic recovery begins soon so that the provision of good quality work placements can meet the increased student demand. At the same time institutions offering sandwich courses will have to be increasingly aware of maintaining the quality of the programmes, in particular the assessment and evaluation of learning achieved on placement, as funding per student (the unit of resource) decreases. These and related issues are high on the agenda of ASET through the 'expansion' of the nineties.

ASET Launches Fund to Support Researching Work Based Learning

Over the last few years there has been considerable research interest in Work Based Learning in Higher Education. Both CNA and TEED have funded a number of major projects and a host of students have addressed problems as part of their final year dissertations.

All of the projects funded by TEED by its latest tranche of research monies are described in 'Skills Links' and the first 17 projects funded by the Development Services Unit of CNA have been summarised and placed into perspective by Dr. Leslie Davies of Salford University in his *A Synthesis Study – Experienced-based Learning within the Curriculum*.

The Association for Sandwich Education and Training exists to develop, promote and implement the concept of sandwich course education and training and provides a forum to stimulate, discuss and disseminate information amongst interested parties. It seems very appropriate therefore that ASET, through its Research Development and Evaluation Committee is now able to assist practitioners interested in undertaking research into work based learning by:

- Bringing together interested parties and practitioners
- exploring future projects
- encouraging publications
- forming networks
- providing *modest funds* to support the direct costs of approved projects

Research areas of particular interest to ASET include:

- Delivery cost (institutional/industrial perspectives)
- Quality assurance
- Institutional development
- Transnational placements and exchanges
- Professional formation and career development
- Standardised assessment/profiling (including application of Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) techniques)
- Student management (preparation/counselling)
- Curriculum development
- Perceptions: students (including pre-entry and transitional), industrial etc
- The placement 'experience'

In the context of a rapidly changing scene in vocational education where wider access, efficiency (quality linked to funding), modularisation and flexible modes of delivery are now part of the common currency, ASET is keen to help inform the debate by stimulating high quality low cost practitioner research.

For further information contact: Peter Harding, Secretary: ASET Research Development and Evaluation Committee, Silsoe College, Cranfield Institute of Technology, Silsoe, Bedford MK45 4DT. Tel: 0525 60428 Fax: 0525 61527.

The Integration of Work Based Learning with Academic Assessment

A project funded by TEED (The Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate) commenced at Coventry Polytechnic in April 1990 titled the Integration of Work Based Learning with Academic Assessment. This project had several sections, the main ones being:

- to consider two specific courses where work based learning was of particular importance;
- To survey courses across the institution offering work based learning;
- to run a staff development programme relating to this area;
- to produce a set of Guidance Materials to be used as a code of good practice throughout the Polytechnic and for our partners in industry.

One of the major outcomes of the project was the publication of guidance materials – *A User's Guide, The Integration of work based learning with academic assessment, Guidelines for good practice*.

The guide draws on relevant research and experience to provide information about work-based learning and its assess-

ment, and to promote good practice. It is intended to assist staff, students and employers involved in work placements.

Topics covered include: assessing work based learning; roles in work based learning; and the parts played by course teams and course committees, industrial placement tutors and liaison officers, employers and managers, and mentors in addition, there is a section aimed specifically at academic staff to help them prepare and present information for students who will undertake a placement.

The structure of the document is such that it may be used as a source of information but also the checklists provide all users with a method of monitoring their practice. These checklists have been placed in the text to facilitate access and to enable all users to photocopy the lists and use them on a regular basis.

Heather Coates, Coventry Polytechnic. (For a copy of the Guidelines please write to Heather Coates, School of Physiotherapy, Coventry Polytechnic, Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5FB.)

