



ASET 2017 Student Research Bursary Application for funding from Careers Service, University of Edinburgh

Proposed project question: Investigate the maximum number of hours an undergraduate student can work during semester without adversely impacting their academic commitments.

Objectives and methodology

Gaining some work-based experience during university is essential. If a course does not have a placement element, we encourage students to find work experience during semester and/or during vacations. We aim to establish how much time a student can commit to work-based learning without adversely impacting their studies. This will provide an evidence base for us to advise students and employers about the maximum number of hours we recommend they work.

In addition, the outcomes of the study will help inform our advice to international students who may be confused about the difference in our current policy about maximum number of hours (15) and restrictions relating to visa regulations for international students, which is generally 20 hours per week.

The research will mainly consist of qualitative research conducted through an online survey with students and followed up with focus groups to ask more in depth questions to discuss the impact of working part time while studying and establish where the boundaries lie between a good and unhealthy balance. The groups will be split to understand the specific needs of UK, EU and international students. Reference will be made to the student's fee status to establish whether this impacts a student's attitude to part time work.

We will also conduct a benchmarking exercise of other institutions in the UK and overseas to establish what guidance they provide to students and the rationale for this.

We will survey local employers in key sectors which offer part-time work to establish their needs from student employees in terms of number and pattern of hours worked and investigate the impact of a proposed restrictions on hours.

Plan of activity and timescales

Anticipated start date 5th June 2017

Induction and training: 1-2 days

Collecting data from approximately 15 institutions in the UK and overseas: 3-4 days

Formulating survey questions and creating surveys: 6-8 days

Sending out surveys and promoting to students and employers: 2-3 days (surveys open for longer)

Analysis of survey results and formulating questions for student focus groups: 4-5 days

Arranging and carrying out focus groups: 4-5 days

Analysis of data and write up: 15 days



Contingency: 4 days

The student's role, including details of how their own learning objectives will be set and included

The student will:

- Formulate questions for the survey, discuss with staff.
- Promote the survey to students through approved university communication channels.
- Analyse the survey questions and make recommendations for the format of the focus group.
- Make contact with the University careers community to carry out the benchmarking exercise.
- Analyse the data and write up recommendations.

The students learning objectives will be set in line with the University of Edinburgh graduate attributes (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/employability/graduate-attributes>). We will use existing resources "Making the most of your PhD internship" and "Moving on from your PhD Internship" to give the student ownership of their goals and provide a tool to reflect upon these goals at the end of the internship.

The supervisor's role in the project, and their research expertise, evidenced by their role held within their organisation, experience, qualifications and/or publications

The supervisor will provide:

- Background sector information
- Introductions to relevant contacts in the sector
- Set clear objectives and milestones for the project, ensure that these are met
- Assist in formulating questions for the survey

The supervisor will be Eilidh Steele, Internships Manager, Careers Service, University of Edinburgh. Eilidh has nine years of experience working in careers and employability roles. The roles have been focused on supporting students to find work while studying either through part time employment, placements, internships or volunteering. She has a BA Open Studies degree from The Open University which she obtained while working part-time.

How it will benefit the sector

The University of Edinburgh Careers Service has recently undertaken some desk-based research to identify any published work in this area and did not uncover anything of value. This research could prove useful for universities in the UK and beyond to reference when offering advice to their students about balancing work and study commitments or when designing schemes which involve students working part time during the academic year.

It will provide an evidence base to advise students, academic and support staff about the ideal number of hours they are able to work during semester without adversely impacting their academic commitments..



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Careers Service

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