

## **ASET Bursary 2017 – Summer Project Bursary**

### **Aston University, Careers+Placements (C+P) Proposal – C+P Associates Pilot Analysis for Phase 3**

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#### **Broad objectives**

The aim of the Careers+Placements Associates pilot during academic year 2016-17 is to provide a student voice throughout the work of the Careers+Placements Department and, as a result, to increase the number of students who engage with our services. Their focus is to support the design, development and delivery of our key student facing services, ensuring that what the department offers, meet the needs of Aston students.

This proposal is to fund a current second year undergraduate student to carry out an analysis of Aston's C+P Associates Pilot delivered during 2016-17. It is to look at all aspects of the pilot from the recruitment and training of associates, to the delivery of how they supported the services, outcomes achieved, areas for improvement and recommendations for the future, aiming at establishing this initiative in the department for the long term.

#### **Pilot's Details**

Phase 1: an initial ten week of the pilot was delivered between October and December 2016 achieving the following outcomes:

- i) A task group - with representatives from all C+P teams was created to be responsible for day to day activities including deciding who will do what, recruitment and training and agreeing outputs
- ii) Recruitment of Student Associates - 13 students associates were recruited from across four schools of study including six second years, four final years and three postgraduate students. An Associates webpage was created to develop awareness of who they are and their background: <http://www.aston.ac.uk/current-students/careers-centre/careers-student-associates/>
- iii) Creating and delivering relevant training sessions for the student associates - an assessment day (26<sup>th</sup> October 2016) was delivered that incorporated a 'show & tell' element; allowing the applicants to put in to practice elements of the role i.e. peer to peer feedback on CVs. Formal training was delivered on the following areas:
  - a. Induction
  - b. CV checking techniques
  - c. Peer-to-peer guidance on 'how to explore your options'
  - d. Briefing for Aston Futures (online job portal) to market engagement with the feedback survey
  - e. Three hours of shadowing for the triage team, with representatives from Jobshop, Careers Consultants & Placements Support Teams.
  - f. One hour of Aston Futures (online job portal) training on how to input activities to support with monitoring value and impact
  - g. One hour on providing CV guidance delivered by a Careers Consultant.

- iv) Associates attended various meetings on behalf of Careers+Placements
- v) Associates started to make use of the mentoring opportunities available with members of the team

During the phase 1 of the pilot, the Associates were involved in three key projects;

- Focus group on placement search support with second year students
- Aston Futures (online job portal) marketing campaign for the feedback survey
- Triage service: initial enquiry management from 'centre walk in' service users. Associates provided advice and signposting to further support during student drop-in appointments

Remuneration of the Associates in phase 1 was made in the form of vouchers,

Feedback on phase 1 of the pilot has been gathered from departmental colleagues, the working group, and Associates.

**Phase 2:** will take place from February to June 2017 with the aim to roll out further trials on key C+P activities including:

- i) Supporting with student focused events including jobs fair, postgraduate student meet and greet, mature students event, placements motivation event, careers fairs, lecture shout outs
- ii) Supporting with pre-entry activities including delivery of applicant visit day presentations
- iii) Establishing the associate's peer to peer e-advice via social media and VLE
- iv) Training for Associates to be able to attend student focused forums within the Schools
- v) Support the various 'calling' activities to target specific student groups i.e. second years who have been disengaged in the placement search

Remuneration of the Associates in phase 2 is via paid roles.

### **Student's Role**

A second year student who is unable to do a year-long placement will be recruited to carry out analysis of the C+P Associates pilot in the form of a Summer Placement. This proposal is to fund this last part of the pilot, allowing us to look at all aspects, from the recruitment and training of the Associates, to the delivery of how they supported the services, outcomes achieved, areas for improvement and recommendations for the future. The aim is to establish this initiative in the department for the long term. A focus group with all the Associates will take place to understand their own views on how the pilot went and what they would have liked to be different as both service providers and service users.

We envisage this role to take the form of a Short Summer Placement. The student will take the Short Placement Module and the work will be assessed, gaining 20 credits after completion of project and assessment. The learning objectives will be linked to the aims of the short placement module below:

- i) Provide a framework that will enable students to maximise their learning from a short placement experience
- ii) Provide an opportunity for the development of skills and understanding of key strengths and development needs, and how these will impact on students' future career goals

- iii) Provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to communicate these skills, key strengths and development needs effectively in formats commonly utilised by employers as part of their selection processes.

On successful completion the student will be able to:

- i) Appraise placement opportunities in relation to the potential they offer for personal growth and development
- ii) Appraise placement opportunities in relation to the potential they offer for showcasing, and gaining feedback on, existing personal skills and attributes
- iii) Use reflective practice techniques to develop, and to articulate to others, an accurate awareness of their technical and 'soft' skills, and their related personal and professional development needs
- iv) Identify and plan the next steps required to move closer to their career goals.

### **Supervisor's Role**

The supervisor will be the Student Support Manager in the C+P Department, who also leads the C+P Associates Pilot. The supervision will include an induction, training, objective setting, weekly meetings, mid project review and end of project meeting. The completion of the Short Placement module assessment will also be supported and monitored by the Supervisor.

Full support for this bursary application and the Short Placement have been approved by the Head of Placements.

### **Why the project, future impact**

Increasingly we are finding that as student numbers grow, and the student demographic changes, it becomes more difficult to engage students in the services we offer in the C+P Department. We recognise that, now more than ever, peer to peer support and the student voice have become critical when designing employability services. They are essential components if we want students to engage with us. Particularly students from differential groups, who have longer distance to travel in their employability journey, for whom C+P interactions and interventions have a bigger effect.

The potential impact of this pilot is around increasing engagement across the board, but with a focus to reach those who need it most, those from differential groups. Higher engagement in a focused, structured and monitored way (with a specific menu of options and activities throughout years 1, 2 and final year) has the potential to increase summer internships, placement and mentoring uptake, ultimately resulting on improving the employability of our students and their work-readiness.

### **Potential challenges**

Time constraints to complete the full analysis and propose recommendations, may be a challenge. To prevent this, a detailed project planner and schedule will need to be prepared.

Access to the full group of Associates during the summer may also be a challenge, it will be important to talk to the Associates about this project beforehand during the academic term to ensure they cooperate and support the project.

The structure of the data and access to the data will need to be prepared beforehand to maximise the analysis time during the summer placement.

### **Project Timescales**

- advertising and promoting ASET short placement role for project from 1st June
- student recruitment and CVs matching against role throughout June
- project/short placement officially starts on 26th June, agreed objectives and milestones in that week
- first review 24th July
- second review, end of project, recommendations and ASET presentation with findings on 24th August

### **Project Short Placement**

- research the value and outcomes of the C+P Associates Pilot during phase one and two academic year 2016-17
- design, send and analyse survey results from second year students about their experience of interacting with and the support received from Associates as part of their placement preparation year
- contacting all the associates to organise focus group/s to understand about their experience of being an Associate, what worked, what didn't work and what was missing
- creating videos with Associates that promote the role to future students, to be used next academic year
- coordinate testimonials of Associates that promote the role to future students, to be used next academic year
- Through analysis and reflection from the material gathered above, create a set of recommendations for C+P management