

December 2015

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ASET

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Happy Holidays

As 2015 draws to a close, I am pleased to bring you a bumper issue of your ASET members' e-bulletin with plenty to keep you busy in those quiet moments over the festive period, including details of two recent reports.

It has been an exciting year at ASET HQ, with the recruitment of two new staff team members, and an increase in the number of Trustees. We are now looking forward to meeting the challenges ahead with our strengthened team, but would first like to take this opportunity to thank ALL our members for your support and encouragement this year, as ASET moves into a new phase. We hope to be able to welcome many more of you at ASET events in the year ahead.

In the meantime, don't forget we are keen to share news of your events and experiences that will add to best practice for everyone, so do get in touch via the ASET office to have an item included in the next e-bulletin w/c 18th January aset@asetonline.org, and until then, enjoy your break.

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Overseas Placements – assessing the risks

by **Susannah Day, ASET Trustee**

Global Employability Consultant, University of Exeter

The timing of last month's 'Developing Overseas Placements' workshop in Glasgow, so soon after the attacks in Paris, raised yet more concerns over risk assessing overseas placements.

How can we risk assess against the unknown?

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As Placement Practitioners our role is to equip our students with the best knowledge and advice we can. We must be sure they have been directed to, and read, appropriate guidance (Foreign & Commonwealth Office [FCO](#)), spoken to previous placement students, understood cultural differences, and are prepared for both the ups and downs of working overseas.

Unless we have abundant funds, it is, more often than not, impractical to do pre-placement visits to check the working environment and structure of an overseas organisation. We can check to the best of our ability, and bearing in mind the location, political climate, known history of the placement provider, and our own understanding and awareness of the country's legal framework, but we cannot know the intricate details of the organisation as much as we can with a UK/local placement provider.

When a delegate at the most recent 'Developing Overseas Placements' Workshop, asked me:

"How do you sleep at night, knowing that you have well over 150 students on placements around the world?"

I realised this was a really pertinent question, and one that concerns most of us who work with students on international placement, and so I thought it might be useful to share with you how I reconcile my concerns.

The simple answer is that some of the questions I ask myself include:

- Have the students completed all their paperwork and risk assessments and has it all been signed off?
- Have they taken out insurance as appropriate and provided proof of that?
- Am I in contact with the student regularly?
- Do I have a written paper trail detailing all my correspondence with the student to answer any queries?
- Are the relevant schools and colleges informed of any issues?

I'd like to be sure that in most cases it's a "YES" across the board, although there are, inevitably a few tricky ones that need to be worked through.

As co facilitator for this ASET workshop, I see the worry and concern that placement staff have over these issues, and I know that we all feel a huge sense of responsibility when our students are overseas, and whilst I am not sure that there's a definitive answer to all the concerns as yet, rest assured, your ASET team will continue to work on it, and keep you apprised of the developments.

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BIS Research Paper No. 231

Understanding Employers' Graduate Recruitment and Selection Practices: Main report

By **Nicola Bullivant-Parrish**, Learning & Development Adviser, ASET

Since the last ASET members' e-bulletin, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, (BIS), has released a report entitled "Understanding Employers' Graduate Recruitment and Selection Practices: Main report" (November 2015). This important and timely research explores how graduate recruitment practices have evolved, following changes in the labour market as a result of the large increase in graduate numbers and the UK economic downturn. The researchers took a qualitative approach, speaking to a broad range of stakeholders including ASET.

The full 200+ page report, can be accessed online at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474251/BIS-15-464-employer-graduate-recruitment.pdf.

The 10 salient points emerging from the research are outlined below:

1. A diverse and competitive market for both employers and students

The pool of available graduates is larger and less homogenous than ever before. The main challenges graduate recruiters cited were; skills shortages in STEM subjects; too many applicants (and of a lower calibre); and a shortage of applicants for less well-known/visible organisations.

2. Generic and employability skills really do matter to employers

Graduate employers are seeking applicants who have a strong alignment with their organisations and although overall many are satisfied with their hires, some cited that skills such as interpersonal/communication skills were lacking.

3. Graduate recruitment is only one of several entry streams

There are a rising number of employers hiring apprentices. Strategies also include sourcing graduates with several years' work experience.

4. Attracting the "right" applicants is often the biggest challenge

The report identifies this issue as one to be tackled using several approaches including recruiting students earlier and working with HEIs selectively.

5. Employers can "target" universities in several useful ways

It is recognised by both HEIs and employers that close working relationships provide advantages; yet this needs to be resourced – and resources are not always available.

6. Selection practices need to balance validity, fairness and efficiency

Some employers have moved away from hypothetical situations in their selection methods towards the greater use of situational judgement tests, as a means for candidates to demonstrate their potential.

7. Work experience is a key component of recruitment strategy

It is encouraging and hugely pleasing to see that "work experience was of high and growing interest to employers of all sizes for a range of reasons, including skill and attitude development, the chance to make earlier relationships with potential recruits; and an extended opportunity to assess individuals"

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(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474251/BIS-15-464-employer-graduate-recruitment.pdf p15)

8. Social networks and informal processes can highlight opportunities

The report outlines that social media is supporting networking.

9. Varied responses to diversity and social inclusion agendas

Some employers are highly proactive in this area, whilst others are adopting a more “passive” approach. The socio-economic background of applicants is a difficult area for employers to monitor, compared to, for example, ethnicity.

10. Competing drivers influence employer practices

These include the business need for efficiency in hiring the best graduates; to be agile to respond to the pervasive conditions in the current labour market; and to have a diverse workforce.

Importantly, the report also identifies potential remedies and action points which include:

1. Understanding entry routes, transition into work and beyond

There is a role for both of the key partners – employers and HEIs - to support and guide students here.

2. Generic and employability skills

Again, it is recommended that a collaborative approach is taken to ensuring that the skills agenda is appropriate to produce the results required.

3. Work experience

Recommendations here are, encouraging – that employers provide a *range* of work experience types and, generally, *more* work experience. For universities and students alike, the need for a pro-active approach is stressed.

4. Attracting the right applicants and engaging with selected universities

This recommendation seeks active, multi-layered relationships, and a less scatter gun approach by all parties. It is also heartening to see that policy makers are asked to financially support University services to facilitate such approaches to engagement.

5. Fair and objective screening and shortlisting

Again, all parties have work to do here to move this agenda forward.

6. Social mobility

Universities, employers and policy-makers are asked to be aware of how they can make fair their practices to provide a truly level playing field for students engaged in recruitment activities.

Jisc “Technology for Employability” report

Colleagues may be aware of this recent project from Jisc for which the [full report is now available](#), along with a [quick read version](#) and sets of [HE case studies](#) and [FE case studies](#). The report includes the findings from the research into the challenges faced by universities and colleges and the benefits that technology can offer together

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with an overview of the key skills employers are looking for and the opportunities offered by universities and colleges to provide those skills.

To help colleagues the Jisc report offers:

- A 5-dimensional model that helps to make sense of the many ways that technology can be used to enhance the development of student employability
- Recommendations and guidance to programme teams, institutions and sector bodies on enhancing student employability with technology
- Effective practice examples from 20 universities, FE colleges and skills providers which include highly creative uses of technology, for example in enabling student engagement with peers, staff and employers e.g. in solving real-world problems

Jisc are planning a webinar on the 26 January 2016 to focus on the report – details will be announced on their project blog - <http://employabilityproject.jiscinvolve.org>

ASET Staff Development Programme

Watch this space – dates to be announced in January.

ASET Bursaries 2016

2016 ASET Research Bursary

2016 ASET Research Bursary

For small-scale research into Work Based and Placement Learning

ASET
INTEGRATING WORK AND LEARNING

ASET is pleased to announce our **2016 Student Research Bursary**, inviting proposals from colleagues to fund an undergraduate or recent graduate to carry out a clearly defined piece of **small-scale research** designed to grow the body of research into work based and placement learning.



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2016 will be the fifth year of the ASET Research Bursary, and in celebration, we will be undertaking a little research ourselves, looking back at the research undertaken and the impact of the work funded.

In the meantime, we are keen to award this year's bursary– and hope that, in the remaining 6 weeks until the 2016 deadline (1st February – 9am!) you will be getting that project proposal finalised.

For 2016 the Bursary has been increased, to offer **£600** to the **hosting institution** to cover expenses including attendance at the 2016 ASET Annual Conference, and **£2400 to the student** appointed to undertake the research project typically over a period of 8 weeks/300 hours.

Details of the award can be seen [here](#), and full terms and conditions are available on the [ASET website](#).

2016 ASET Exploration & Enhancement Student Bursary

2016 ASET Exploration & Enhancement Student Bursary

For small-scale projects on Work Based and Placement Learning



ASET is pleased to announce our **2016 Exploration & Enhancement Student Bursary**, inviting proposals from colleagues to fund an undergraduate or recent graduate to carry out a project investigating an aspect of your **institutional practice**, with the goal of sharing the learning with the ASET community. You might want to:



The Exploration and Enhancement Student Bursary 2016 is also now open for submissions and, like the ASET Research Bursary, the award has been increased, to offer £600 to the hosting institution to cover expenses including attendance at the 2016 ASET Annual Conference, and £2400 to the student appointed to undertake the research project typically over a period of 8 weeks/300 hours.

This award, is designed to facilitate the **sharing of innovative practice** in placement and work-based learning.

- Which aspect of your work would you like to know more about?
- What information would help you develop what you offer?
- What could you do that would be of benefit to students?

Whatever your role in placement, work-based learning or employability development, if there's an aspect you'd like to find out more about, ASET might be able to help.

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Details of the award can be seen [here](#), and full terms and conditions are available on the [ASET website](#).

The closing date for applications to both bursaries is **1st February 2016**.

ASET Student Competition 2015

Final Reminder

Entries are steadily flowing in for the 2015 Student Competition – don't forget, there are two categories for entry this year, with a £500 prize is available for each. You may also like to note that the criteria for entry have been adjusted to reflect the many different types of placement and work experience undertaken by your students, so please do take another look at the entry requirements.



2015 ASET Student Competition

You can download the [2015 ASET Student Competition flyer here](#), and from the ASET website to forward to all your returning placement students – they could **Win £500**

ASET Student Competition 2015 categories for entry:

- Work experience gained in the UK or Ireland
- Work experience gained overseas

ASET Annual Conference Proceedings 2015

I am pleased to announce that [Proceedings from the 2015 Annual Conference](#) are now available to view on the ASET website.

ASET Office news

Please note that the ASET office will close on Friday 17th December and re-open on Monday 4th January 2016.

From all of us at ASET, hope you enjoy your break, and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year.