

Short country survey on employability among BFUG members

Response by Scotland

The employability working group agreed to conduct a short country survey and that each member of the group would cover their own and two allocated countries. The members of the working group agreed to contact the members of the BFUG for the allocated countries with the following questions:

- 1) What are the main challenges for your country in terms of employability? (eg Is graduate unemployment a problem? Are there restrictions on access to certain jobs? Is there a careers and guidance service?)

The Scottish Government has published a comprehensive Skills Strategy which sets the forward agenda for addressing employability in HE. This has been supported by a major initiative on employability in Universities from the Scottish Funding Council.

In general, there is a good match between graduate skills and employer needs. The key development issues are:

- Transferable, generic or 'soft' skills aimed at improving the personal effectiveness of graduates, including communication, IT, interpersonal skills and problem solving. All universities are developing approaches to embedding these skills within curricula.
- Skills utilisation within the workplace – while this may in part reflect the skills of graduates, it also relates to the culture of the workplace, HR practice and attitudes to risk and innovation.
- Lifelong learning – providing affordable and accessible opportunities for graduates to update their skills throughout their career.
- Internationalisation of the learning experience – relatively few Scottish students take part in Erasmus exchanges and we wish to promote a wider range of opportunities for international contacts and to provide all our graduates with an international perspective.

- 2) What would help you most as an output from this working group? Is there a dialogue in your country between higher education institutions and employers? If so, at what level does this take place – national, regional, institutional etc? What sort of issues does it cover?

We have good structures for engaging employers in national and sectoral discussion through Sector Skills Councils, enterprise bodies and national development agencies. Liaison is less effective in building real educational partnerships at local and programme level, for example through guaranteeing work experience placements or contributing to assessment strategies.

- 3) Can you provide two examples of good practice in your country in relation to any of the themes to be covered by the report?¹

¹ Suggested themes to be covered in the report are:

- awareness-raising amongst employers of the value of a bachelors qualification and associated learning outcomes;
- involving employers in devising curricula;

We have many years of experience with the bachelors' qualification as a standard exit point and it is widely recognised by Scottish employers who recruit many entrants at this level.

The careers and guidance services in Scottish HE institutions are well embedded and effective, not only in providing services to individual students but in contributing more generally to educational strategy through links with employers and through development of transferable skills.

Under "Internationalisation of the learning experience", I suggest adding "...relatively few Scottish students take part in Erasmus exchanges and we wish to promote a wider range of opportunities for international contacts ".

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- the provision of careers and guidance services;
 - employment and career structures within the public service that are fully compatible with the new degree system;
 - self-employability;
 - curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes;
 - the recognition of degrees in the labour market across Europe;
 - the role of higher education in lifelong learning and continuing professional development.