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Editor's Introduction

This issue is the first of two on the topic of work-based learning in higher education.

The changing nature of universities in relation to an increasingly diverse range of students and differing fee structures means there is a renewed focus within higher education on the employability of students. Many universities are investigating work-related learning experiences to either provide higher education opportunities for students who may not have previously considered such an option, or to support the development of appropriate work-related skills for students already in education.

Within this context, Walsh & Kotzee provide a relevant discussion on the notion of 'graduateness', the factors which distinguish graduates from non-graduates and the tensions between generic graduate attributes, academic disciplines and work-based learning environments. As higher education and the workplace move closer together, the tensions between them, and specifically between academic knowledge and its application in practice, become more evident. Fenton O'Creevy & Hutchinson argue that these different forms of knowledge need to be integrated, and that distance learning approaches can be used to enable an effective dialogue for academic and workplace learning.

The term 'work-related experience' is used above to highlight the differing ways in which the world of work can be introduced into higher education curricula, and this is reflected in the papers and case studies presented in both issues of LATHE on this topic. Collis discusses the use of placements in the creative industries and notes that these experiences are not simply a way to train students to become employees, but are also useful in the development of employability skills. Other authors outline the development of specific modules which provide work experience opportunities (Dean), or which focus on work-related skills such as project management (Khan). The use of work-based practitioners to support the development of group dynamics within a work-based context is demonstrated in a case study by Nottingham & Pronger.

The relationship between higher education institutions and employers is a recurrent theme throughout this issue. Felce notes that 'The education sector has been criticised for its lack of understanding of

employers' needs and for not providing employable graduates or an education experience that meets the requirements of the 21st century marketplace', and that the development of pedagogy and curricula needs to be suitable for work-based learners. Corfield follows this up by examining the way in which a particular institution has developed processes which address the issue of employer engagement and the management of employers' expectations in the co-generation of higher education curricula. Sanders discusses the use of an action learning approach through a multi-organisational work-based learning degree which aims 'to ensure that higher education is more "relevant" to employment', particularly through the sharing of tacit knowledge. Fleming & Ferkins look at the integration of action learning in a sport and recreation degree course in New Zealand.

Two case studies look at ways in which students can demonstrate their work-based learning. Howe & Collins outline how e-portfolios can be used to support learning, whereas Perkins *et al.* discuss the recognition of learning and the identification of transferable skills and competencies arising from co-curricular activities. Such processes will be increasingly important for institutions in supporting students to demonstrate their employability skills to employers, and particularly for those institutions working towards implementation of enhanced transcripts such as the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

Phil Gravestock
University of Gloucestershire, UK