

GRADFOCUS



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Welcome

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of GradFocus, the GradWeb newsletter designed to introduce us to new customers and keep existing clients up to date with all our company news.

If you are a regular reader of GradFocus you may notice that we have had a make-over; we hope you like it!

Our feature article highlights the successes and challenges facing the Industrial Placement Programme of the School of Technology at Oxford Brookes University. Bob Champion, Principal Lecturer and Head of Employer Engagement in the School of Technology, discusses the benefits of industrial placements and the pro's and con's of voluntary versus compulsory placements.

We also have an interview with Brett Galloway, Graduate Recruitment Manager at Addleshaw Goddard who shares with us the firm's corporate social responsibility strategy and highlights the "Habitat for Humanity" charity. Last year and this year, Addleshaw Goddard is sending up to 40 of its graduates to Cluj in Romania to help homeowners and other volunteers build and renovate simple, decent homes.

We would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who has contributed and if you would like to be included in our next newsletter, then please let us know.

We hope you will enjoy reading this newsletter and we look forward to receiving your comments and feedback.



Julie Pratt, Katrina Rostrup & Jonathan Butler

The Industrial Placement Champion

Bob Champion has companies queuing at his door for placement students – and with more than 30 students working this year alone, the programme is a great success. The Principal Lecturer and Head of Employer Engagement in the School of Technology at Oxford Brookes University talks to GradFocus about the challenges and success behind the College's Industrial Placement programme.

He's a champion by name, and a champion by nature. Bob Champion, Principal Lecturer and Head of Employer Engagement in the School of Technology at Oxford Brookes University, is helping to drive a highly successful Industrial Placement programme, which has seen thousands of students over two decades benefit from a period of employment as part of their course at the University. This year alone, 32 students have been parachuted into a range of organisations in the private and public sectors – including PepsiCo, Ladbrokes, Johnson & Johnson and a host of blue-chip technology companies.

In some organisations, these ex-graduates have returned after graduation and subsequently moved into senior management positions. The FMCG giant PepsiCo, for example, has taken Oxford Brookes graduates onto their placement scheme for over 10 years and many have stayed with the company and progressed their career there. And at the other end of the scale, two thirds of the staff at the software developer Lede Ltd are the result of the Industrial Placement programme.

Bob's focus is the electronic engineers and computing students in the University's School of Technology and for these technology candidates, the advantages reach further than simply dipping a toe into the world of commerce. The relevant work place training provides them with valuable skills, giving them a competitive edge in today's job market; they have the opportunity to develop the transferable

skills valued by graduate employers – and the chance to establish a network of professional contacts. Above all though, they gain self-awareness: an increased maturity and understanding of the workplace, and a better understanding of their own career goals.

With this in mind, it's easy to imagine students queuing outside Bob's door for access to these placement opportunities. However, according to Bob, the demand for placement students from companies outweighs the universe of candidates available to fill them. "One of the main reasons for this is to do with student fees", he explains. "Students are concerned that if they allocate an extra year to their course for an industrial placement, they will be weighed down by another year of fees. Someone doing a BSc in Software Engineering wants to pay off their student loan as quickly as possible, and some are put off by the financial implications of extending their course."

Unlocking the pool of talent

Some universities make the Industrial Placement programme a compulsory part of the course. Could this be the answer to unlocking the pool of talent? "We've thought about making the placement a compulsory part of the courses, but have decided to maintain the optional approach. A compulsory scheme would place a significant amount of pressure on the University

to find the appropriate placement – and could dilute the quality of opportunity we currently offer. On balance, we think it's better to offer students a 'safety net' which they can use at their discretion."

So how does it work? Over the years, Oxford Brookes has developed close ties with many companies associated



Bob Champion and Richard Herman, GradWeb's first industrial placement student

with technology – helped by its close proximity to the 'Silicon Thames Valley'. Bob typically advertises the placements to students made available by these companies in the November-April timeframe. He doesn't pre-vet the candidates, instead leaving the recruitment process entirely in the hands of the employers. The process from there on tends to mirror the formal graduate recruitment programme: assessments, interviews, and shortlisted candidates.

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"The School of Technology is keen that its courses are well perceived by the employers; that they are relevant and offering the coursework aligned to their future career opportunities," says Bob. "We can only do this by maintaining the close relationship with the employers. Lecturing staff visit the employers twice a year to learn their latest technology techniques and strategies. In parallel, the work employers do can be valuable to research that a lecturer is conducting. It's a 'win-win' situation."

First hand experience of future employees

It's no surprise that employers are biting Bob's hand to get at potential placement candidates. Through the programme, employers get first hand experience with potential future employees, sometimes a year ahead of the Milkround. They have a valuable source to alleviate peak workloads and the opportunity to begin work on projects which might otherwise be delayed by resource constraints. They also have access to the University's staff and experience within The School of Technology.

GradWeb is just one of the many companies currently benefiting from the Oxford Brookes School of Technology Industrial Placement programme. Last month, Richard Herman joined the company as a Junior Web Developer in the GradWeb technical team – the company's very first industrial placement student. He says, "Placements for my course are currently voluntary – and I personally think they're a great opportunity for both students and companies. Finding a placement was made a lot easier with the prerequisite module and support from the Oxford Brookes staff. They were very encouraging in the whole process, and were constantly updating the intranet with new job opportunities, which ranged from 'anything and everything', to more specific roles. I think the general experience of the placement is what I'm looking forward to most. I'm confident it will give me a better understanding of my course, along with developing my key skills."

For Richard and hundreds of others like him, the Oxford Brookes School of Technology Industrial Placement programme is the starting point for a long and prosperous career. And that's a great endorsement for more students to think about taking part.

Looking at law from another angle

At the leading UK law firm Addleshaw Goddard, the partners of tomorrow come from the graduates of today. GradFocus spoke to Brett Galloway, Graduate Recruitment Manager, to explore the company's innovative approach to recruitment – and how graduates are impacting its strong corporate social responsibility strategy.

Addleshaw Goddard believes in putting back into society – and that applies as much to its graduates as it does to every other aspect of the company's corporate social responsibility strategy. Based in London, Leeds and Manchester, Addleshaw Goddard employs over 1,300 people in total, 700 of which are lawyers, and is recognised as one of the UK's leading legal advisors. Every year, the company recruits approximately 50 trainee solicitors, and it is these candidates and other employees who are the vanguard of the company's corporate social responsibility programme.

Brett Galloway is the Graduate Recruitment Manager at Addleshaw Goddard, and he explains the philosophy behind CSR in the organisation. "As well as ensuring that our people thrive at work, the firm also takes its responsibilities to the wider community and the environment very seriously," he says. "To this end, we have set up a team, sponsored by the Governance Board, to ensure that we meet these commitments.

Apart from looking for new ways in which graduates can work while having

a minimal impact on the environment, they have the opportunity to undertake a wide range of 'pro bono' and charitable work that supports local communities. People are encouraged to come forward with ideas for initiatives that fit with the company's broad themes of education, social inclusion and access to justice."

Initiatives invariably require direct participation, such as graduates supporting other staff in offering free legal advice at the Springfield Legal Advice Centre in South London and St Georges Crypt Trust in Leeds. Graduates are also proud to help support charities such as The Prince's Trust, for which the Manchester Office has committed to raise £100,000 in three years, and the National Autistic Society. In addition, Addleshaw Goddard graduates also work with a number of not-for-profit organisations, such as Business in the Community and the Business Education Partnership, who organise reading and mentoring schemes in local schools.

Habitat for Humanity

The company's philanthropy also reaches beyond the UK. Graduates can get involved before they even start their training contract by spending a week overseas with Habitat for Humanity – an international charity dedicated to eliminating poverty housing worldwide by building homes for families in need. Last year and this year, for example, Addleshaw Goddard is sending up to 40 of its graduates to Cluj in Romania to help homeowners and other volunteers build and renovate simple, decent homes. The company pays for graduates' travel, accommodation and other costs. In return, it asks them to make a donation to the local community once they have

started their training contract. "Through this programme, our graduates are making a real and lasting difference to people's lives," says Brett. "At the same time, they experience a new culture, build relationships with fellow trainees and develop skills that will prove vital when they return home – such as working successfully as part of a team."

Addleshaw Goddard's innovative approach to graduate recruitment doesn't stop there. The company prides itself on having one of the most enjoyable working cultures around, and through the website, candidates can listen to podcasts and vodcasts where current trainees talk frankly about their time at the company – including the highs, the lows, and what they're enjoying most. This was recently taken to the next level with the launch of the Addleshaw Goddard 'Vox Box'. Using a mobile booth not dissimilar to the 'Diary Room' on TV's Big Brother, it toured the country visiting fairs, providing graduates with a unique space where they could have their say. "Legal students opened up like never before, offering us an exclusive window on their world," says Brett. "From undergraduate communications to their work/life balance and everything in between, they have come in their droves and spoken eloquently about what a law career means to them in the 21st century."

Addleshaw Goddard doesn't just pay lip service to a good work/life balance – it's a firm with a conscience, which takes its corporate social responsibilities seriously and works hard to promote diversity and equality of opportunity for all.



Focus on project management

The key challenge of any graduate recruitment campaign is to identify the target number of high calibre candidates within a limited timeframe. It's a tough call and impossible to achieve without careful and expert project management.

At GradWeb we recommend adopting a project management approach where we take responsibility for managing candidates through every aspect of the selection process for our clients. Through analysing and interpreting the activity we alert you to any action we feel you may need to take to ensure that your targets are met.

Our Project Managers work closely with our Recruitment Co-ordinators who have daily contact with candidates via email and our dedicated hotlines. Project Managers can ensure that only the most relevant information is fed back to the client. This approach ensures candidates are treated as individuals, whilst also providing the statistics and information vital for any recruitment process to run as smoothly as possible.

Working closely alongside a client throughout their recruitment process, Project Managers can act as an extension of a company providing a single point of contact for a client during their recruitment season. Project Managers also ensure that pre-agreed

service levels are adhered to and monitor the process against these standards to ensure that deadlines are met and the highest-calibre graduates are recruited.

The key to efficient, effective project management is continual 'pipeline planning' – reviewing the numbers of candidates coming through the recruitment process and the percentages passing each stage. This can be invaluable when GradWeb begins work with a new client or a change is made to a particular stage in the process. Samantha Hornblow, Project Manager at GradWeb, explains, "Through close monitoring of the candidates completing each stage, benchmarks can be suggested to the client which can then be used to predict how many candidates should reach final stage assessment centres or be offered positions. Through pipeline planning one of our clients was able to raise the benchmarks used in their process and achieved a 70% pass rate at the assessment centre stage." This helps to ensure that the process is as seamless as possible and that

candidates are progressed quickly, as well as giving clients an indication of the timescales involved in filling their vacancies.

Pipeline planning is important even with well established recruitment processes. Sophie Best, Graduate Recruitment Advisor at Watson Wyatt explains further: "GradWeb analysed the activity of candidates in our pipeline which enabled us to anticipate potential issues. One of our practices was oversubscribed, for example, and being able to see this in advance meant that we were able to bring forward our application deadline and divert the remaining applications to teams that weren't attracting as many candidates." By contrast, pipeline planning can also be used to anticipate possible shortfalls of candidates reaching assessment centre, allowing clients to extend



deadlines and reschedule assessment events accordingly. Samantha concludes, "The graduate recruitment processes can be complex, and clear communication with both clients and candidates is essential. The Project Manager is responsible for ensuring that both parties have a positive experience and are kept fully informed at every step of the way."



Yesterday's graduates become today's assessors

Assessment centres are just as challenging for assessors as candidates. This was the conclusion drawn by three National Management Trainees who assessed at this season's assessment centres for ngdp (National Graduate Development Programme for local government).

Racheal Walker, John Bennett and John McLean (left) were all recruited onto ngdp through the rigorous selection process which includes attendance at an intense one day assessment centre. They have all successfully graduated from the two year programme this year. "The assessment centre was challenging

and intellectually demanding but I really enjoyed it", said Racheal who had never attended an assessment centre before. John Bennett agrees, "It provided a good insight into what life in local government may be like and an understanding of the sorts of issues faced."

Having all experienced the assessment centre as a candidate, all three volunteered to train as assessors in order to assess future candidates for the programme. "As well as being a good development opportunity, as a recent graduate I thought I would be able to put candidates at their ease in what can be a stressful situation" commented John McLean. "It was also good to give back to the programme by helping to identify more high calibre candidates to join the sector."

So how did they find the experience from the other side? "There is much more to assessing than I realised," commented John Bennett. "You have to record everything that your candidate says and does which requires real concentration." Racheal was concerned that she might be too soft in scoring the candidates by empathising with their situation but found that because the assessment dimensions are clearly defined it was easy to remain objective. John McLean agreed, "It was amazing to see it from the other side and writing down everything reassured me of the robustness of the process and that it wasn't just down to luck on the day." Having had this experience all agreed that they are definitely up for it again next year.

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Let's raise a glass and toast the 40th anniversary of the AGR



GradWeb will be out in force at the annual AGR (Association of Graduate Recruiters) conference from 6th – 8th July at the Celtic Manor Resort, Newport, Gwent. We are proud to be a member of the AGR and a long standing supporter of the conference.

This event offers a great opportunity for industry professionals to get together, network and share best practice. This year's theme is 'Delivering world class skills for graduates and recruiters' and includes two eminent speakers. Sir Paul Judge will be asking, 'What skills should our graduates have in the era of globalisation?' and Baroness Susan Greenfield CBE, will be discussing, 'Tomorrow's people: How 21st century technology is changing the way we think and feel.'

We would like to say congratulations and raise a glass to the AGR on this it's 40th anniversary, so we thought it appropriate to have a party themed prize this year. To find out how you could win a £300 Hotel du Vin voucher, come along and see us on stand number 9.



GradWeb - About Us

GradWeb offers an extensive and flexible range of services to help you manage your graduate recruitment campaign. Whether your requirement is large or small, we can provide you with a combination of services to create a tailored solution that meets your requirements exactly.

The services we offer comprise:

- Online application and candidate management systems
- Response handling and fulfilment
- Candidate management and related administration
- Project management
- Application form screening
- Interviewing
- Assessment centre design and delivery
- Recruitment process design
- Interviewer and assessor training

We already work with some of the best known graduate employers in the UK including: Logica, ngdp, Arup, Audit Commission, WestLB, BP, Cisco, Watson Wyatt, RWE npower, Corus, Severn Trent Water, Atos Origin, British Energy and Network Rail. Our client retention rate is second to none and comes as a result of delivering a quality service through industry best-practices and fully integrating ourselves within our clients' graduate recruitment process.

If you would like to find out more information about GradWeb and the services we offer, or would just like an informal chat about your graduate recruitment requirements, please contact Tom Lambert on +44 (0) 1635 584130, mobile +44 (0) 7826 916107 or by email: tom.lambert@gradweb.co.uk



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If you have any comments, questions or feel you have something to contribute to our newsletter, we will be delighted to hear from you.

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