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Editorial

This special issue of the *Assessment, Learning and Teaching Journal* on employability is published at a highly pertinent time. As the Browne Review sets higher education towards a more competitive phase in which students, as consumers, will dictate the success of courses and even institutions, the perceived benefits of those courses, in terms of increased employability, will be of paramount importance. Employment outcomes are already seen as an important factor in young people's decisions on courses (Connor et al, 1999). This issue, however, focuses on employability in the longer term in line with Watts (2006) who proposed: "Employability can focus on immediate employment, on immediate employability, or on sustainable employability..." The interventions described in this issue all focus on longer term sustainable employability, though whether young people will be able to see these long-term benefits in their new and crucial role as rational decision-makers pre-entry remains to be seen.

Now is the appropriate time for all staff to focus on employability interventions and to celebrate good practice in this area. This issue provides an arena for such celebration as well as an opportunity to learn from successful initiatives in other areas. We welcome a range of contributions from authors outside Leeds Met and learn from their experiences, as well as providing space to look at activities and issues within our University.

We start this issue looking at some examples of good practice with an article from **Pauline Fitzgerald** which outlines the work she has done with final-year students: work which earned her the Excellence in Employability Award 2010. In this piece she describes how groupwork and peer assessment can be effective ways of developing transferable skills.

Wendy Mayfield and Andrew Du Feu also provide examples of good practice from their BA Design course while considering the need to embed PDP within courses. **Andrea Duncan** also looks at an embedded programme of PDP, this time for scientific students, considering the need for students to learn to reflect.

Reflection is also a theme examined by **Maja Jankowska** as she looks at the transferability of concept mapping to personal development learning and employability. **Joan Cartledge** also examines a specific technique for developing employability in her article looking at the possibilities offered by enquiry-based learning, while **Catherine Coates and Sue Smith** consider the need to identify and clarify employability

and enterprise content within courses. They promote the benefits of competency maps to enhance the student learning experience and employability.

Hannah Speight concludes this part of the Journal looking at an intervention that is not embedded in the curriculum as she considers the Durham Award, a university-specific employability award.

The second part of this issue focuses on employer engagement in all its forms, the role it plays in developing students who are ready to enter the workplace, and in developing those already in the workplace. **Graham Webb's** article considers the realism of employers' expectations of language graduates, while articles by **Mary Crossan, Anne-Marie McTavish and Vida Bayley** and by **Margaret Berrie, Lynn Naven and Irene Bell** examine the reality of engaging with employers for the purposes of work-based learning, with the latter looking at the successful AUL@W project, a collaboration between several Scottish HEIs. **Naven, Berrie and Bell** then elaborate on this by presenting a case study of the project in action. Penultimately we move to **Rob Ward and Janet Strivens**, who present the outputs of a collaborative project looking at how e-portfolio technologies can support work-based learners, and finally **Cate Thomas** describes a specific intervention in which employers and employees of small and medium-sized enterprises were attracted into higher education to develop their employability further.

I hope you enjoy reading this interesting range of articles which cover many varied aspects of developing employability in a changing educational climate.

Laura Dean

Head of Employability

l.a.dean@leedsmet.ac.uk

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