The use of Internships as a Work Placement option on Quantity Surveying Courses in light of the current economic downturn in the Irish Construction Industry

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology in part fulfilment of the requirements for award on Masters (M.A.) in Higher Education

By

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Declaration

I hereby certify that the material which is submitted in this thesis towards the award of the Masters (M.A.) in Higher Education is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfilment of the above named award.

Signature of candidate: ____________________________

Date:__________________________________________
Abstract

This research examines the concept of internships as a Work Placement option on undergraduate Quantity Surveying courses in light of the economic climate that prevails in Ireland at present. The Irish Construction Industry has experienced unprecedented decline over the last six years, with reduced employment prospects as a result. Graduates on construction related courses are having difficulties sourcing employment, and many feel that they are disadvantaged if they have not experienced work placement as part of their undergraduate course. The benefits of work placement as a mode of learning have been well documented, however this study explores work placement on a specific Quantity Surveying course, within the context of a depressed economy. The views of Employers, Students, Lecturers, and Graduates are compiled and analysed to provide findings on how best to facilitate this mode of learning.

This phenomenological study uses a research design which is interpretivist and qualitative in nature. The data was gathered through a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with the key stakeholders listed above. The primary concern was to compile rich and deep data from different perspectives on the work placement process. The design recognises the limitations of the research, and acknowledges that the findings are not exhaustive.

This study suggests that Employers in the Construction Industry are still very positive towards employing work placement students despite the economic downturn. They advise that placement durations should be shorter than the traditional one year placement, with four to six months being more suitable. The findings suggest that Employers are not in favour of non-paid internship style placements. They advise that some form of remuneration is prudent, or students would not value the experience. Lecturers were also supportive of work placement, and again feel that payment must be included to avoid possible exploitation of students. Many Employers also acknowledge that work placement serves as a vetting arena for recruiting potential full time employees in the future. This study suggests that students and graduates are very supportive of work placement modules, whether paid or unpaid, and look towards employability after graduation as their overriding concern.

The main conclusion is that there is a strong argument in favour of including work placement modules on undergraduate Quantity Surveying courses, despite the logistical challenges posed by a declining Construction Industry.
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APC</td>
<td>Assessment of Professional Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIM</td>
<td>Building Information Modelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIF</td>
<td>Construction Industry Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIT</td>
<td>Dublin Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEA</td>
<td>Higher Education Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAVI</td>
<td>Irish Auctioneers &amp; Valuers Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAMA</td>
<td>National Asset Management Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>NQAI</td>
<td>National Qualifications Authority of Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>QS</td>
<td>Quantity Surveyor</td>
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<tr>
<td>RICS</td>
<td>Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>Society of Chartered Surveyors</td>
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<td>SCSI</td>
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<td>TPC</td>
<td>Test of Professional Competence</td>
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