

promote internships, and universities and other agencies to broker them. Many internships are paid and adhere fully to national minimum wage legislation. In addition, some internships fall beyond the scope of existing legislation eg some internships with charities, very specific cases in which a volunteer is genuinely under no contractual obligation, those for students undertaking a maximum of one year's work experience as part of their course and work shadowing ².

There are many reports, however, that some employers continue to offer internships which appear to contravene the legislation. Indeed the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) recently recommended that graduates on internships be paid less than the minimum wage ³. On the other hand, many individuals and organisations, eg the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) ⁴, are campaigning for new legislation, enforcement of existing legislation and better practice from employers.

AGCAS members' views

AGCAS recently conducted a poll of its members which asked whether the government should 'clamp down on unpaid internships'. 85% of members voted 'Yes' and 15% 'No'.⁵ The continuing discussion stimulated by the poll demonstrates that there are deep concerns ⁶ within AGCAS and amongst its members. Not only are careers services and others being encouraged to break the law, but individual graduates are being exploited, and unpaid internships are contributing towards restricted social mobility. The recent report, Fair access to the professions ⁷

9 Make new contacts that will benefit them in their career;

9 Sample particular sectors, employers and types of work;

AGCAS calls for further action to ensure that internships do not:

9 Exploit individuals;

9 Restrict social mobility;

9 Replace entry level jobs for graduates and others

AGCAS's recommendations

Recommendations for students and graduates

- 9 Do consider carefully how internships in general and specific opportunities in particular can help you progress your career, and weigh any potential long-term benefits against immediate financial and other personal implications;
- 9 Do make the most of any placement in terms of making contacts, learning new and developing existing skills/knowledge, and gaining experience;
- 9 Do consider how best to negotiate with your line manager and others to ensure that you maximise the benefits of each internship;
- 9 Do think about how you will articulate the skills, knowledge and experience you have gained or developed in future applications and interviews;
- 9 Do make use of your HE careers service for information, advice and guidance on any of the above.

Actions for AGCAS

- 9 To distribute this position paper as widely as possible;
- 9 To actively lobby government and employers;
- 9 To produce appropriate CEIAG material for members to use with students and graduates.

References

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5. AGCAS poll and website discussion, AGCAS, May 2010 <http://www.agcas.org.uk/articles/317-AGCAS-poll-on-unpaid-internships>
6. University careers services claim the rise of unpaid internships is damaging the prospects for the Class of 2010; press release, AGCAS, 20 May 2010 <http://www.agcas.org.uk/articles/322-Unpaid-internships-the-AGCAS-view>
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AGCAS contact s

Sally West 0114 251 5770(initial telephone contact for the media)

Chris Jackson chris.jackson@agcas.org.uk AGCAS Communications and Marketing Manager

Website www.agcas.org.uk

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