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## **Supporting Planning Graduates into Work: the way forward in Scotland**

### **The Report of a Survey of the 2009 Graduates from Accredited Planning Schools in Scotland**

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**Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland**

**November 2010**

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## **Acknowledgements**

The RTPI in Scotland would like to thank all of those who participated in this study through contacting graduates, completing questionnaires, taking part in interviews and attending the seminar. The study would not have been possible without this cooperation and we are grateful for all the time and assistance given.

We would like to thank the Planning Exchange Foundation for the generous funding of this research, and in particular to thank Tony Burton for his guidance, support and advice.

## **Introduction**

During 2009 there was growing concern regarding the prospects for employment of graduates from accredited planning schools in Scotland. At the Scottish Government's Mini Summit on Planning Reform, held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2009, Professor David Adams of Glasgow University drew attention to the lack of jobs for those graduating from planning schools and the threat that this presented to achieving planning reform and sustainable growth if these skills were lost from the planning system.

In May 2010 the Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland, on behalf of the four planning schools at Aberdeen University, Dundee University, Glasgow University and Heriot-Watt University, wrote to John Swinney, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, to express concern regarding employment prospects for graduates from accredited planning courses. In May 2009 it was anticipated that approximately 120 students would graduate during 2009 and at that time only 6 students had secured jobs. Following further discussion at the Scottish Planning Education Forum, it was suggested that the situation should be investigated more fully and in November 2009 the RTPI in Scotland received a generous grant from the Planning Exchange Foundation to enable research to be undertaken.

In February 2010, Joanna Stewart was appointed to carry out the survey. Joanna holds an MSc in City Planning and Regeneration from the University of Glasgow, a BA (Hons) Degree in Geography from the University of Strathclyde and a Masters in Research from the University of Strathclyde. Prior to studying planning, Joanna worked as a Disability Assistant at the University of Strathclyde. The research was carried out between February and June 2010.

## **The Research Aims**

The study aimed to: provide good reliable information on the destination of the 2009 cohort of graduates from RTPI accredited planning schools in Scotland; to assist in understanding the current employment situation for graduates; to ascertain their preparedness and their early experience of employment and the job market; and to investigate requirements for on-going CPD support.

The study investigated the employment status of the 2009 cohort of graduates from accredited planning schools in Scotland. It examined their experience in seeking employment; the extent to which they were using their planning qualifications; their experience in the workplace; the relevance of their course work; the benefit of any previous work placements; and their need for further mentoring and support.

Whilst it was recognised that a six month survey would be limited in scope and depth of analysis, the research aimed to provide a basis for further discussion of how to prepare students for the workplace; how to support APC candidates; and how to keep planning skills within the profession. It was considered that the Scottish Planning Education Forum would provide the most appropriate forum for the discussion of the findings of this research within Scotland. The research took account of the RTPI/HCA Skills Action Plan for England which was published earlier in 2009 and recognised that some issues may need UK wide solutions and should be addressed within the framework of the RTPI's Education and Lifelong Learning Policy. It was agreed that the report would be submitted to the RTPI's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee.

The survey of graduates was accompanied by a survey of employers in the public and private sectors to investigate attitudes, practice and prospects in relation to the provision of placements and the employment of graduates. The research aimed to contribute to wider discussions about improving the employability of graduates particularly in difficult economic times.

This report provides details of the research methodology; briefly outlines conclusions from related UK and Scottish studies; and presents the results from the interviews and surveys of education providers, graduates, and public sector and private sector employers. The report provides an account of the seminar held on the 17<sup>th</sup> June, which was held to discuss findings, to identify emerging issues and to help in identifying recommendations for future investigation and action. Chapter 7 sets out the research findings and discusses future possible lines of enquiry. An Executive Summary of Findings and Recommendations is given on page 5.

## **Executive Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further investigation and Discussion.**

During 2009 there was growing concern regarding the prospects for employment of graduates from accredited planning schools in Scotland. In May 2009 it was anticipated that approximately 120 students would graduate during the year but at that time only 6 students had jobs arranged. It was suggested that the situation should be investigated more fully and in November 2009 the RTPI in Scotland received a generous grant from the Planning Exchange Foundation to enable research to be undertaken.

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The research took account of the RTPI/HCA Skills Action Plan, and aimed to provide a basis for further discussion of how to prepare students for the workplace; how to support APC candidates, and how to keep planning skills within the profession.

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### Research Findings

The research found that there were 105 graduates from accredited planning schools in Scotland in 2009. Approximately half of the graduates responded (48%<sup>1</sup>) to the questionnaire. 42%<sup>2</sup> of the respondents were engaged in planning employment, with an additional 14%<sup>3</sup> employed in other 'built environment' professions. 10%<sup>4</sup> were employed in other fields and 24%<sup>5</sup> were unemployed. The remainder had returned to study (4%<sup>6</sup>), were voluntarily not working (2%<sup>7</sup>) or employment details were not provided (4%<sup>8</sup>).

With regard to information on the graduates' experiences in seeking employment the research found that:

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<sup>1</sup> 50 out of 105.

<sup>2</sup> 21 of 50 respondents.

<sup>3</sup> 7 of 50 respondents.

<sup>4</sup> 5 of 50 respondents.

<sup>5</sup> 12 of 50 respondents.

<sup>6</sup> 2 of 50 respondents.

<sup>7</sup> 1 of 50 respondents

<sup>8</sup> 2 of 50 respondents.

- 89%<sup>9</sup> of respondents considered that it was either 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to find planning employment; and
- 66%<sup>10</sup> of those who are known to be unemployed are currently looking for planning employment, 60%<sup>11</sup> of those in non-planning/built environment employment are also seeking planning employment.

However, care should be taken in the interpretation of these results. A major problem in carrying out this research was the difficulty in establishing the numbers graduating from planning schools in any particular year; and the difficulty in contacting planning graduates once they had left University. Whilst a 48% response rate is acceptable for an on-line survey, the fact that the survey was unable to contact the remaining 52% of graduates was disappointing. In effect only 20%<sup>12</sup> of 2009's planning graduates are known to be in planning employment.

With regard to the graduates' work experience, the research found that:

- the majority of respondents in planning employment stated that their job either met (65%<sup>13</sup>) or exceeded (15%<sup>14</sup>) their career aspirations;
- 75%<sup>15</sup> felt that their current job fitted in with their career plan. The remaining 25%<sup>16</sup> stated that their job partly fitted in with their career plan but indicated that due to a lack of jobs they had had to be less selective and settle for types of planning employment that would help them to complete the APC process rather than keep looking for a job which specifically matched their career plan; and
- one in four<sup>17</sup> of those in planning employment had some concern about the security of their job.

The main difficulties facing those who had graduated in 2009 were: lack of jobs and increased competition for jobs. There was a general consensus that students who had gained practical experience whilst studying were more likely to be in employment than those without such experience. It was also noted that the number of students on postgraduate courses was increasing whilst numbers on undergraduate courses were in decline.

Survey responses indicated that input from planning practitioners and 'live projects' were seen as increasingly important in linking theory and practice, and in preparing students for working life. The benefits of work experience and of work placements (unpaid/paid and of varying length), were emphasised. Graduates perceived having had experience on a placement as a positive factor in achieving employment; 75%<sup>18</sup> of respondents who had undertaken a placement were in planning employment compared to 40%<sup>19</sup> of those who had not undertaken one. Placements were seen as beneficial in gaining experience of planning work and in making contact with planners and other built environment professionals. However, discussions with education

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<sup>9</sup> 35 of 39 who answered this question.

<sup>10</sup> 8 out of 12.

<sup>11</sup> 3 out of 5.

<sup>12</sup> 21 out of 105.

<sup>13</sup> 13 of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>14</sup> 3 of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>15</sup> 15 of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>16</sup> 5 of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>17</sup> 5 of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>18</sup> 9 out of 12.

<sup>19</sup> 11 of 27 who answered this question.

providers indicated that it was becoming increasingly difficult to arrange placements in both the public and private sectors.

Employers from both public and private sectors who provide placements stated that these were valuable both to themselves and to the student. However, the recession has had a severe impact on the availability of both short and long term placements.

Support for students and licentiates varied across public and private sectors. Whilst support for licentiates is widespread, awareness of the APC process amongst employers was limited and it would appear that almost one fifth of employers who employ planning graduates do not actively support licentiates in completing their Assessment of Professional Conduct (APC).

### Recommendations for Further Investigation and Discussion

This report recommends that the Scottish Planning Education Forum should establish a short life task force with the remit of considering the findings of the research and to identify and agree an action programme and allocating tasks amongst stakeholders. Such actions might include:

- a 'Buddy scheme' designed and piloted by RTPI in Scotland Chapters and the Scottish Young Planners Network Steering Group;
- research on design and delivery of placements;
- universities and public and private sectors to investigate new ways of providing practical experience for students and graduates;
- an update of the SSDP / Scottish Government 'Establishment Survey' to include information on placements; and
- improved information sources for graduates on useful networks, events; and information on how to gain practical experience and on the different opportunities available for working in planning and related fields.

Recommendations from discussion at the seminar included that consideration should be given by the RTPI to:

- requiring all final year students to become members of the RTPI;
- free membership of the Institute in the year following graduation;
- supplementing the already existing RTPI Facebook group (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=35070190851&ref=ts>) by establishing a Facebook group specifically for planning graduates which could be piloted in Scotland; and
- increasing awareness amongst employers of the APC system together with the provision of more targeted guidance for employers on the APC process.



## **Chapter 1 The Research Methodology**

### **Introduction**

1.0 The study aimed to: provide good reliable information on the destination of the 2009 cohort of graduates from RTPI accredited planning schools in Scotland; to assist in understanding the current employment situation for graduates; to ascertain their preparedness and their early experience of employment and the job market; and to investigate requirements for on-going CPD support.

1.1 The study investigated the employment status of the 2009 cohort of graduates from accredited planning schools in Scotland. It examined their experience in seeking employment; the extent to which they were using their planning qualifications; their experience in the workplace; the relevance of their course work; the benefit of any previous work placements; and their need for further mentoring and support.

1.2 A survey of public sector and private sector employers was also carried out to examine future prospects for employment and student placements, and to seek employers' attitudes to the provision of placements.

1.3 The research aimed to provide a basis for further discussion of how to prepare students for the workplace; how to support APC candidates, and how to keep planning skills within the profession.

### **Research actions**

1.4 The research programme comprised:

- a desk study of related work by the Improvement Service, Scottish Government, Heads of Planning Scotland, the House of Commons Audit Committee; and the Homes and Communities Agency;
- meetings with University representatives, and with other training providers including representatives of the Improvement Service, and RICS;
- the creation of a database of graduates;
- the design and distribution of questionnaires to graduates and to public sector and private sector employers;
- in depth discussions with selected graduate respondents;
- discussion of issues at meetings of the Scottish Planning Education Forum;
- submission of an interim report to the Planning Exchange Foundation, the Scottish Planning Education Forum (SPEF) and the RTPI's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee; and
- a seminar attended by graduates, academics, RTPI staff and Scottish Executive Committee members, and practitioners from the public and private sectors.

### **Research Outputs**

1.5 The outputs of the work were agreed as a full report of the survey submitted to the Planning Exchange Foundation; a published discussion paper; and a report to be submitted to SPEF and the RTPI Education and Lifelong Learning Committee.

## Research Method

1.6 Interviews were held with representatives of three<sup>20</sup> of Scotland's four planning schools, the Improvement Service, and RICS. These were conducted in the early stages of this study (February 2010) and enabled an understanding of education and training providers perspectives on graduate employment to be gained.

1.7 Interview schedules were prepared prior to each of the interviews. A combination of general questions and questions with specific relevance to the organisation the interviewee was representing were asked. Topics discussed included:

- impressions of the employment situation for planning graduates;
- difficulties facing planning graduates;
- how graduates find out about job opportunities;
- placement provision and the value of students gaining practical experience;
- the skills base of graduates;
- practical experience of students prior to starting planning education;
- trends in planning education; and
- the availability of contact details for students and the potential for university assistance in contacting graduates.

1.8 A database of the total number of planning graduates in 2009 was necessary in order to establish contact with graduates and to calculate the response rate for the questionnaire. Whilst university departments had offered to assist in developing such a database, this proved difficult in practice. All four Scottish planning schools were contacted in February 2010 and asked to:

- provide figures detailing the number of students who graduated from RTPPI accredited courses; and
- forward an email to those who graduated from accredited course in 2009 inviting them to contact the RTPPI in Scotland if they were interested in either completing the pilot or the actual questionnaire.

1.9 Both of these actions proved problematic. Planning schools do not appear to have at hand details of graduate numbers, and so there were delays in ascertaining this information.

1.10 Part of the reason ascertaining information on graduates is not as straightforward as it should seem appears to be due to the flexibility in which university courses can be studied, leading to students completing their planning studies at different points in the year. Under-graduate students typically complete their degrees and graduate in June/July, full time post-graduate students on one year Masters degrees typically complete in the autumn and graduate in December, and

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<sup>20</sup> University of Dundee, University of Glasgow, and Heriot Watt University

modular post-graduate students can complete their studies at various points in the academic year.

1.11 Planning schools were happy to forward information to their graduates but openly identified that this was likely to be problematic because, with the exception of Heriot Watt University, they do not hold up-to-date contact details of their students. The reason given to explain the difficulty of maintaining contact with graduates was that upon graduation student email accounts are closed and so contact details used by planning schools are lost. Planning schools are dependent on students wishing to stay in touch and voluntarily providing their contact details.

1.12 The difficulty in contacting graduates presented challenges for establishing links with graduates from 2009 and establishing a database of potential respondents. However, contacts via the planning schools did yield a small number of responses which enabled the graduate survey to be piloted. As noted above, maintaining contact with graduates is dependent on the graduate wishing to stay in touch; the establishment of alumni associations such as that at the University of Glasgow is one innovation that might improve contact in the future.

1.13 The graduate questionnaire was designed and distributed using Survey Monkey<sup>21</sup>. It was piloted in late February/ early March 2010 and completed by five graduates from Heriot Watt University and the University of Glasgow. Following this some small amendments were made to the questionnaire and it went live on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010 for four weeks. The questionnaire was advertised via:

- the database of graduates;
- Scottish planning schools;
- Scottish Planner Magazine;
- the RTPI's Planning Education and Research Network (PERN);
- the RTPI's Young Planners' Network;
- the Scottish Young Planners' Conference;
- the Improvement Service;
- word of mouth and networking;
- online networking via Facebook;
- contacting those who had free RTPI membership in 2009<sup>22</sup>; and
- asking respondents to forward information about the survey to those they had studied with or with whom they currently worked.

1.14 The four Scottish planning schools were contacted again and asked to forward another email to 2009 graduates alerting them that the survey was live and providing details on how it could be accessed. As an incentive to complete the survey respondents were given the chance to win one of two £25 book tokens.

1.15 Follow-up in-depth interviews were conducted with three questionnaire respondents who had attended different planning schools. Those interviewed represented the three most dominant categories of employment status (see section 4):

- employed in planning;
- employed in a related built environment field; and
- unemployed and looking for planning employment.

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<sup>21</sup> Survey Monkey is a website which facilitates the design and distribution of online questionnaires.

<sup>22</sup> Free RTPI membership is offered to students in the final year of their planning degree, these students were therefore due to graduate in 2009.

1.16 Interview schedules were prepared prior to the interviews together with combined questions that were asked of all interviewees and questions that were specific to an interviewee's employment status. The interviews lasted in the region of one hour and enabled questionnaire respondents to expand upon written questionnaire answers and to go into further details of their experiences of finding employment, the relevance of their academic study, the value of placements, and future career plans and aspirations.

1.17 The challenges of reaching recent graduates are discussed further in Chapter 4. The questionnaire sent to graduates is set out in Annex 1 and profile information for respondents is given in Annex 4. The analysis of results is given in Chapters 3 and 4 and set against results from previous studies as outlined in Chapter 2.

### **Surveys of Employers**

1.18 A survey of private and public sector employers was conducted as part of the research. This had the dual purpose of:

- obtaining information on trends in graduate recruitment; and
- gaining an understanding of the employment situation for planning graduates from the perspective of employers.

1.19 Two questionnaires were designed, one for public sector employers and one for private sector employers. Whilst both questionnaires covered the same topics and elicited the same information, they were designed slightly differently to reflect, and cater for, organisational differences between the two sectors. The topics covered in these questionnaires were:

- recruitment patterns;
- structures in place to support planning graduates; and
- placement provision.

The questionnaires forwarded to public and private sector employers are given in Annexes 2 and 3.

1.20 The private sector questionnaire was sent to all 89 of the firms listed in the RTPI's Scottish Directory of Planning Consultants with a Scottish address. The public sector questionnaire was distributed to all of Scotland's 34<sup>23</sup> planning authorities and a range of agencies known to employ planning staff. The private sector response rate was 22<sup>24</sup> per cent and, the public sector response rate was 34 per cent. Data from the questionnaire was supplemented with information gleaned from internet based research. This research involved visiting the website of each of the firms listed in The Planning Consultants Directory and searching for information on graduate recruitment and support, and placement provision.

1.21 The response rates to the survey of employers were disappointing and care needs to be taken in the interpretation of results. However, the report's findings have been supported by discussion at the seminar and by the results of previous studies, which are discussed in Chapter 2.

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<sup>23</sup> 14 out of 41

<sup>24</sup> 20 out of 89

## **Conclusions**

1.22 The main challenge in carrying out this survey was in making contact with the 2009 cohort of planning graduates. The lack of a full database with email contact details means that it is not possible to provide a complete analysis of the destinations of all 2009 graduates.

1.23 Early discussions with universities and others indicated that the lack of contact with graduates leads to a number of disadvantages. For instance universities are unable to forward details of possible job opportunities, and the Institute loses contact with those who may have been in receipt of free student membership. Benefits of keeping in contact with graduates include the sharing of information about training and job opportunities; and feedback on work destinations and the relevance of training.

1.24 The issue of how to keep in contact with graduates became a major focus of the research. In discussion at the seminar on 17<sup>th</sup> June it was agreed that further consideration should be given as to how and by whom contact with graduates might be maintained. It was agreed that there will be a role here for the universities, employers and the RTPPI in keeping in contact with graduates in ensuring professional development and in fostering the deployment of graduates in the planning profession. It was suggested that the Scottish Planning Education Forum provided an ideal framework for discussing solutions to this issues in Scotland.

1.25 With regard to skills development and the benefit of work placements, the survey results echoed many of the conclusions reached by previous studies in relation to the need to combine theory and practice in planning education, the need for a partnership approach to skills development, and the benefits of work placements. These issues are discussed further in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2 Skills and Employability: lessons from previous studies

2.0 This chapter examines the background information on trends in planning education in Scotland, the employment context and opportunities for 2009 graduates; contrasts the results of earlier surveys of graduates; and reports on the conclusions of recent studies in Scotland and the UK on skills, placements and employability in the planning profession.

### Trends in Planning Education in Scotland

2.1 There are four Universities in Scotland which provide RTPI accredited post graduate and undergraduate planning courses<sup>25</sup>. In recent years the number of students on under-graduate courses has fallen but the number of students on post-graduate courses has increased. This is inline with other areas of academia where the trend is to study more general subjects at under-graduate level, and to specialise at post-graduate level. It was also identified that more students who studied planning at under-graduate level were continuing to study planning at post-graduate level.

2.2 The number of graduates from the four Scottish planning schools is shown in table 2.1

	Dundee	Glasgow	Heriot Watt	Aberdeen	Total
Number planning students graduated 2009	27 (20 at under-graduate level, 7 at post-graduate level)	14 (All post-graduate level)	59 (13 at under-graduate level, 46 at post-graduate level)	5	105

Table 2.1 Number of graduates in 2009 from RTPI accredited planning schools in Scotland

### The Planning Profession in Scotland

2.3 There are currently 2205 members of the RTPI in Scotland. This includes 176 Licentiates; and 100 student members. (RTPI membership profile figures 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010).

2.4 It is difficult to establish an accurate picture of the employment of planners in Scotland or of the prospects for employment in the near future as no information is readily available by sector. In 2005 Ove Arup were commissioned by the then Scottish Executive to undertake research into the adequacy of the staff and financial resources available to local authority planning departments. The report presented evidence on the nature, scale and causes of resource problems and proposed solutions to identified problems. In particular, the report noted an overall shortage of qualified planning staff across Scotland and expressed concerns about the future supply of planning graduates.<sup>26</sup> However, this study was carried out pre-planning reform in advance of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006. The implications of planning reform are still to be worked through in practice and implications for staffing resources remain unclear. In addition, this study was carried out pre-recession and

<sup>25</sup> For further information see: <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/601/23/5/3>

<sup>26</sup> See: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/12/1591145/11453>

the employment of planners is heavily influenced by the cyclical nature of the economy, the fortunes of the house building and development sectors, and public sector spending patterns.

2.5 Anecdotal evidence suggests that the recession has had a major effect on employment in the private sector with redundancies in house building, the development industry, and planning consultancies. RTPPI members working in local government in Scotland have noted that local authorities have only been able to cope with the introduction of planning reforms because of the downturn in work due to the recession, and that prospects for employment in the public sector are poor with many experienced staff taking early retirement and posts remaining frozen. These difficulties need to be considered in relation to the future requirements of changes under the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, the additional duties placed on planning authorities, the effects of the proposed amendments to permitted development regulations; and continuing cuts in public sector funding and employment.

### SSDP Establishment Survey

2.6 The Establishment Survey carried out for the Scottish Society of Directors of Planning (now Heads of Planning Scotland) provided information on planners employed in local government, however, this survey was also carried out pre-recession in 2006.<sup>27</sup> This survey concluded that whilst staffing resources had improved since 2003, they were still generally perceived as inadequate to meet increases in workloads. Most authorities continued to feel under pressure; and recruitment of sufficiently skilled and experienced staff remained problematical with authorities using a variety of responses to address this issue. These responses included placing a greater emphasis on staff development and 'up-skilling' as a means of addressing skills deficiencies.<sup>28</sup>

### **The pre-recession situation**

2.7 Prior to the global economic downturn a number of reports were published across the UK which argued that labour shortages and skills gaps had become commonplace in built environment professions such as planning.

2.8 In England, the Academy for Sustainable Communities<sup>29</sup> commissioned Arup to examine the supply and demand of skills needed to deliver sustainable communities in England and to identify gaps. The report for this work, entitled '*Mind the Skills Gap*', was published in 2007. A key finding of this work was that all sectors of the built environment suffered from labour shortages. Planning in particular was identified as having a labour shortage as the supply of planning professionals did not then (2007) meet demand and that a significant number of planning posts remained vacant.

2.9 '*Mind the Skills Gap*' predicted that the gap between supply and demand would increase and planning would have the fourth largest labour shortage of built

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<sup>27</sup> G Peart 2006 'Scottish Planning Authorities Establishment Survey 2006' unpublished report to SSDP

<sup>28</sup> Since the completion of this study in July 2010, Scottish Government has circulated a new Public Sector Planning Workforce Survey to be completed by September 2010. The survey covers local government, central government (DBE and DPEA) and key agencies. It includes questions on RTPPI membership and graduate recruitment.

<sup>29</sup> The Academy for Sustainable Communities was absorbed into the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008.

environment sectors by 2012, forecasting that the labour shortage would rise from 10% in 2006 to 46% in 2012. A particular area of shortage was identified to be at middle management level. This is attributed to the recession in the early 1990s when there was a fall in the numbers of graduates entering the planning profession.

2.10 As well as a labour shortage 'Mind the Skills Gap' argues that there was a gap in both technical and generic skills and that these may be hindering recovery. The report argued that there '*needs to be continued efforts to increase the supply of planners, to enable continuous improvements and updates of technical knowledge, and to promote leadership and communication skills across the profession* (2007, p42).

2.11 Likewise the inquiry into '*Planning Matters – labour shortages and skills gaps*' by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee (CLG)<sup>30</sup> concluded that there was a need to raise the status of planning within local government. The Inquiry concluded that there was a significant risk that major Government targets for development and regeneration would be missed because the planning system is unable to manage either the volume or the variety of tasks it will be asked to perform.

2.12 The Inquiry made a number of recommendations relating to: the need for long-term annual assessments and analyses of the numbers of people employed in planning and other key sustainable communities professions and the labour shortages currently being suffered and likely to arise; the need to raise the general status of the planning profession and to promote careers in planning; and to provide conversion course for mid-life professionals who may wish to switch careers to planning.

2.13 The Inquiry concluded that '*perhaps the most surprising, and frustrating, point to arise repeatedly from this inquiry is the fact that labour and skills shortages in planning are so unsurprising. They have been evident for well over a decade but review after review, report after report, recommendation after recommendation have not resulted in their reduction. This must change. Without this capacity, our towns, our cities and our economy will be threatened either by paralysis or chaotic and under-regulated growth.*'

2.14 This study was published in 2008. 'Place making' remains a Government priority across UK Administrations but achieving its recommendations will be difficult within the current economic climate.

### **The effects of the recession in Scotland**

2.15 The economic context has changed rapidly and is likely to change even more. With forecasts of unprecedented public sector jobs losses throughout Scotland and the UK, opportunities of finding employment and placements may deteriorate further for graduates from Scottish Planning Schools. All this heightens rather than diminishes the significance of having accurate information on employment trends and opportunities and for information and guidance on relevant careers to be readily available for graduates.

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<sup>30</sup> House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee 'Planning Matters – labour shortages and skills gaps' Eleventh Report of Session 2007 – 08 HC517-1 The Stationery Office, London, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008



2.16 The conclusions of two Scottish studies emphasise the difficult economic climate and continuing difficulties for the public sector:

- i) The Scottish Independent Budget Review concluded :(Independent Budget Review Panel 2010)

*“Figures from the Scottish Government show that we are entering a long period, perhaps as many as 15 years, before the budget will return in real terms to 2009-10 levels.*

*“A reduction in public sector employment in the range of approximately 5.7 per cent to 10 per cent over the next four years translates into public sector job losses of between approximately 30,000 and 50,000. This would take devolved public sector employment back to levels that existed in 1999”* (Independent Budget Review Panel 2010b).

- ii) The Ernst and Young ITEM Club Scotland forecasts that 30,000 public jobs will disappear over four years: (Ernst and Young Scottish ITEM Club 2010 )

*“There are precedents for falling public sector employment levels in Scotland – notable in the late 1970s, again in the mid and late 1990s – however past periods of austerity have not necessarily been accompanied by falling public sector job numbers. This time round we expect things to be different, with public sector employment falling by over 30,000 over the next four years, and growing only marginally thereafter”.*

## **Earlier Surveys of Planning Graduates in Scotland**

### The 1981 Survey of Graduates from Scottish Planning Schools

2.17 In the late 1970s and early 1980s, annual surveys were carried out to ascertain the employment status of all graduates from Scottish planning schools. These are of relevance to this study as they cover a period of time characterised by recession and economic uncertainty and so provide a basis for comparison of graduate employment. An article in *Scottish Planner* by Peter Wiberg written in 1982<sup>31</sup> indicated that there were 136 graduates from Scottish planning schools in 1981 (compared to 128 in 1978, 120 in 1979 and 111 in 1980).

2.18 The survey of planning graduates in 1981 indicated a significant unemployment problem in planning with only one third of the 1981 graduates finding jobs in planning and ‘planning fringe’ occupations. Over the four years from 1978 the number of permanent planning posts obtained by Scottish graduates almost halved and the number of jobs available appears to have been stabilised at about 25 per year from 1980 to 1981.

2.19 The 1981 survey indicated that ‘*The number of graduates finding jobs outside planning has almost trebled in real terms over the last three years*’. In reporting these results, Peter Wiberg suggested that ‘*if the trend continues it might be useful to review both planning education and the Institute’s criteria for recognition of practical*

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<sup>31</sup> P Wiberg 1982 ‘1981 Survey of Graduates from Scottish Planning Schools’ *The Scottish Planner* No 8. October 1982 page 1, RTPi, Edinburgh.

*experience. Such reviews might help graduates to fit into a wider range of jobs, and they would help them to return to planning practice at a later stage in their careers if opportunities should arise.'*

2.20 This survey emphasised the relevance of a planning education to a wide range of professional circumstances and the need for such opportunities to be drawn to the attention of graduates.

## **Skills Development in Scotland**

### Survey by the Improvement Service Planning Development Programme

2.21 In 2007, Asset Skills and the Improvement Service agreed the objectives for a research project to examine the training and development support provided to graduate planners working across the planning system in Scotland<sup>32</sup>. The purpose of this research was to provide a snapshot of training and development of planners in the early years of their career from both the employer and graduate's perspectives. The survey focused on planners currently working towards corporate membership of the RTPI through the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) and organisations that had recently employed graduate planners. The following objectives were agreed for this research:

- to understand current practice and issues facing graduate planners and their employers regarding work based training and development;
- to identify demand for external learning support and opportunities for graduate planners and support required by employers relating to maximising the potential of graduate planners; and
- to gather opinions from graduates and employers on the preparation for planning employment provided by planning education.

2.22 The graduate planner survey was sent via the RTPI to student members, licentiates and planners who had achieved corporate membership within the last 3 years. This research concluded that there is generally good support for training and development of graduate planners in Scotland who are in employment. It identified some clear areas where graduate planners were seeking additional support and where employers would appreciate external training support to supplement the opportunities they could provide for graduates.

2.23 The employers were asked about what they considered to be the most effective ways of integrating learning and development into work. The most popular effective methods identified were in-house off the job training, using a structured graduate training programme and setting out learning objectives as well as business objectives for projects and work. Ineffective methods identified were e-learning and work based competency setting.

2.24 In terms of the external support that employers would like to help them to maximise the potential of graduate planners, the general preference was for face to face training delivered externally with groups from a range of other organisations. On-line learning opportunities were also a popular type of support for mentor training.

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<sup>32</sup> Improvement Service 2007 Graduate Training and Development Research Findings.

2.25 42% of the graduate respondents felt their academic qualifications prepared them for their work whilst 35% felt their studies had not prepared them well. Ways in which courses could be improved included:

- practical examples 70%;
- technical knowledge 55%;
- work experience 45%;
- political context 30%;
- generic skills 16%;
- urban design 14%; and
- environmental issues 9%.

2.26 Respondents were also asked how well their course had covered a range of technical issues. Over 50% felt that planning policy, planning and environmental legislation, urban design and community engagement had been covered well or very well. However over 50% felt that the following issues had not been covered well:

- development control issues and processes, appeals and enforcement;
- conservation and listed buildings;
- EIA and SEA;
- transport planning; and
- energy and climate change.

2.27 When asked how employers help graduates to develop core skills, the most frequently cited method (31%) was the provision of specific work related projects with identified learning outcomes. The next most common method was through mentoring. Very few respondents indicated that a structured graduate training programme would be or was used. The types of employer support provided for CPD were: funding from employer (52%), time off to participate in CPD (68%), personal development review (50%) and providing a mentor (34%). In terms of additional support that respondents would like from their employer, the most common preference was for job swap or secondment (52%), followed by training for APC submission.

#### Survey by Scottish Society Directors of Planning

2.28 In 2008 a survey of members of the then Scottish Society of Directors of Planning (now Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS)) requested views on the skills and knowledge of newly qualified planners. The results of this survey echo some of the conclusions identified above. 15 responses were received and indicated general satisfaction with development planning skills, plan preparation, planning policy; customer and community relations; time management and report writing skills. Respondents were critical of graduates' knowledge of development management, appeals procedures and enforcement procedures. It was recognised that these skills are difficult to absorb in a classroom environment and are best assimilated through on the job training.

## Placements

2.29 A study by the Improvement Service<sup>33</sup> explored how placement programmes for students were developed and implemented in three Scottish councils - Fife, Dundee and South Lanarkshire. The case studies examined the benefits for both students and councils and provided useful hints and lessons learned for other councils wishing to use this method of supporting the development of new planners in Scotland. It identified challenges as being: the time involved in recruitment which may involve significant time resources; and the need to plan for placements, to define an appropriate piece of work and to allocate staff time to design and guide the work. The study concluded that it was important to identify discrete pieces of work of an appropriate nature for the students to benefit from and that such work should genuinely contribute to the work of the team. In addition it was important that students should have a comprehensive experience of the department, wider than just the particular project.

2.30 The study by the Improvement Service examined a specific type of placement: paid summer placements. However, it is important to note that placements have a range of different characteristics. Firstly the length of placements varies and typically falls into one of the following categories:

- less than two weeks;
- summer placements (typically 10 to 12 weeks over the summer holidays);
- sandwich year placements. This is a 12 month placement undertaken by under-graduate students between their penultimate (in Scotland third) and final year of study.

2.31 Secondly, a distinction needs to be made between placements which are paid (usually summer and sandwich year placements) and those which are unpaid (usually short placements).

## Studies by related Professions

2.32 A recent study for RICS in Scotland<sup>34</sup> indicated that trends in surveying education are similar to those found in planning education. As with planning the number of university courses accredited by RICS has increased in recent years (from 29 in 1999/2000 to 61 in 2008/09). There has been a shift from studying surveying at under-graduate level to post-graduate and this is reflected by a decrease in the number of under-graduate programmes (and students) and an increase in post-graduate programmes (and students). Despite this transition to rising numbers of post-graduate students there has been a decrease in the number of funded post-graduate places. The data for this research were collect immediately prior to the start of the recession and therefore it is difficult to comment on the relevance of employment data. However, the survey of students' learning experience reinforced the perceived benefits of site visits, input from industry professionals, and industrial placements for both postgraduates and undergraduates.

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<sup>33</sup> Planning Development Programme 2008 Student Placements in Scottish Planning Authorities. Case Study featuring Dundee City Council, Fife Council and South Lanarkshire Council. Also see article by Emma Richardson 2008 'Student Placements in Scottish Planning Authorities' Scottish Planner August 2008 page 6.

<sup>34</sup> Roberts, Devaney, Findlay, Laing, and Buda (commissioned by RICS) The Future of Built Environment Higher Education in Scotland (2010)

## RTPI / HCA Delivering Better Skills for Better Places

2.33 Recent work in England on skills development, the 'Delivering Better Skills for Better Places' Action Plan was published in June 2009. Whilst the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) does not have a remit in Scotland, information from this Action Plan is relevant to considerations in Scotland. The HCA's vision is to present a coordinated learning environment to help improve the skills of existing practitioners and to encourage new entrants into the sector. The action plan took a partnership approach to achieve shared learning and improved skills and knowledge across built environment professions. This is a comprehensive action plan covering recruitment and promotion of the sector; progression routes; CPD recognition and retention of practitioners; leadership; community cohesion and empowerment; climate change; planning skills; urban design and green space skills; and skills for changing economic markets. The action plan on 'Planning Skills' includes exploring the potential for an apprenticeship in planning; and the provision of 176 bursaries for postgraduate planning courses in England.

## Graduate Survey, ARUP commissioned by Homes and Communities Agency

2.34 In 2009 the Homes and Communities Agency commissioned ARUP to assess current skills in the built environment in England and to review training and learning provision. This study is still in progress (August 2010).

## **Conclusions**

2.35 This short review of related surveys and research reports highlights difficulties and issues for further discussion. These include:

- a need to establish an accurate picture of employment in planning;
- a need to establish basic information on numbers of graduates from accredited planning schools in Scotland;
- a need for regular surveys to ascertain numbers of graduates and their employment destinations;
- the need for different approaches to 'on the job' training for recent graduates;
- the need for different ways of providing further training for graduates on development management, appeals and enforcements;
- the need for partnership approaches to the development of skills; and
- the need for information and guidance on different types of placements.

2.36 These issues and possible solutions were explored at the seminar on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010 and are discussed further in the following Chapters.

## Chapter 3 The Survey of Education and Training Providers

3.0 This chapter summarises the views expressed by representatives from education and training providers who were interviewed in the early stages of the study (February 2010). Interviews were held with representatives of three<sup>35</sup> of Scotland's four planning schools, the Improvement Service, and RICS. These discussions focussed on gaining an understanding of:

- impressions of the employment situation for planning graduates;
- difficulties facing planning graduates;
- how graduates find out about job opportunities;
- placement provision and the value of students gaining practical experience;
- the skills base of graduates;
- practical experience of students prior to starting planning education;
- trends in planning education; and
- the availability of contact details for students and the potential for university assistance in contacting graduates.

### Impressions of the employment situation for Planning Graduates

3.1 Up until 2008 planning graduates were in demand and had an abundance of employment opportunities, however, those interviewed noted that now "*even the best students*" are struggling to find planning employment. Phrases such as "*dire*" and "*woeful*" were used by planning school representatives to describe the current employment situation for planning graduates and there was a general consensus among planning schools that very few 2009 planning graduates had secured employment in planning in either the private or public sectors.

3.2 It was considered that those in planning employment fell into three categories:

- part time post-graduate students working in the sector who studied planning as part of their career development and were supported on courses by employers;
- students who had acquired the most practical experience either before their course or whilst studying; and
- students who had undertaken placements (both paid and voluntary) and who had impressed their placement provider enough to be hired by them.

3.3 It was felt by those universities with under-graduate planning departments that prior to the recession employers favoured post-graduate students over under-graduate students; and under-graduate students who had done sandwich years or undertaken several summer placements over those without such experience. Since

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<sup>35</sup> University of Dundee, University of Glasgow, and Heriot Watt University

the recession, however, those interviewed perceived employers to now favour undergraduates with lots of experience over post-graduates.

3.4 There was agreement amongst the representatives of the planning schools that the main difficulties facing those who graduated in 2009 were:

- lack of jobs. It was noted that the private sector has not been recruiting during the recession and the public sector has been cutting back. People are not being promoted within organisations and therefore are holding onto graduate jobs. This has led to far fewer graduate positions becoming available.
- increased competition due to:
  - lack of jobs leading to more competition among graduates than in pre-recession times when there were fewer graduates than jobs;
  - redundancies so graduates are competing with people who graduated prior to 2009 and have more experience. More experienced planners are applying for graduate jobs; and
  - competition issues will escalate when people from 2010 graduate. Some concern was expressed that 2009 graduates are in a vacuum because when employers do start recruiting again they will be competing with people with experience, and people who graduated more recently and so have more up-to-date knowledge.
- difficulty in getting meaningful experience. There was a perception that it is much harder for recent graduates (and current students) to find meaningful work experience or secure placements, yet at the same time increased competition means that jobs are going to those with experience; and
- uncertainty. It is unclear when the employment situation will improve and so planning graduates are being faced with decisions of whether or not to keep looking for planning employment or find alternative careers.

#### How graduates find out about job opportunities

3.5 Planning school representatives felt that students were identifying jobs to apply for in the same manner as happened pre-recession. These sources were:

- Planning Magazine;
- Careers' Service;
- internet searches;
- newspapers; and
- contacts made on placements.

3.6 In addition, one university representative felt that academic departments were increasingly being used as the go-between between employers and students. Several examples were given of employers contacting the planning school and asking them to forward job information onto graduates. It was felt this was being done in order to keep costs down by not having to pay to advertise, and because some public sector planning employers recognise that graduates need to find planning employment otherwise valuable skills will be lost to the profession. This practice was perceived to have benefits for both employers and graduates enabling graduate job opportunities to be advertised across the cohort of Scottish graduates. However, its success depends on universities maintaining contact details for graduates and might be seen as extra work for planning schools.

**Importance of placements: the planning schools’ perspective**

3.7 There was a general consensus that students who had gained practical experience whilst studying were more likely to be in employment than those without such experience. The main way in which students gained such experience was through placements (such as summer placements, sandwich year placements, or course placements). The advantages of placement experience are explored in diagram 3.1.

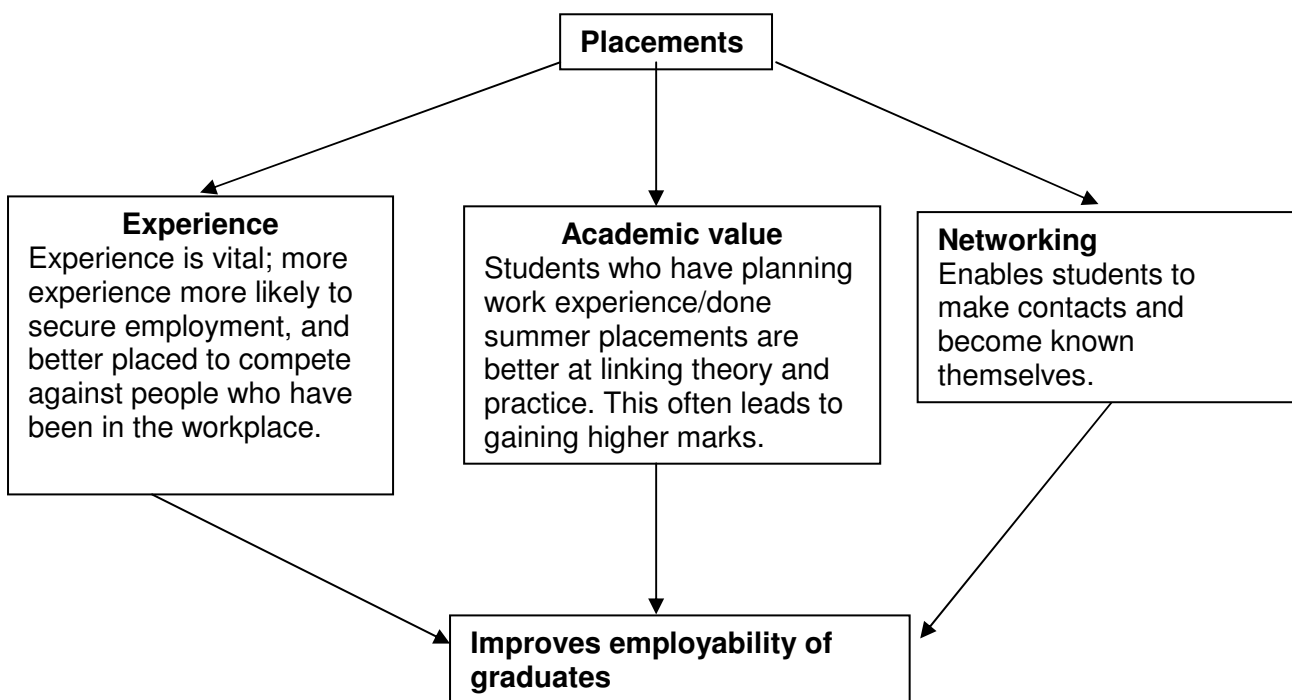


Diagram 3.1: Planning schools’ perceptions of the advantages of placement experiences

3.8 Despite advocating their numerous advantages the majority of courses do not arrange placements, although under-graduate students are actively encouraged to find summer placements. Placements were argued to be difficult to arrange for several reasons including:



- meeting interests and availability of students;
- finding employers willing to take on placement students due to the financial constraints which both public and private sectors are under. The public sector was still arranging placements but there was uncertainty/concern as to how much longer this would continue. Planning school representatives considered that the private sector had really cut back on arranging placements during the recession;
- it was considered difficult for students on 1 year Masters courses to fit in a placement on such an intense course; and it was considered that RTP1 accreditation regulations only allow for students on such courses to spend a very short period on placement. Such placements are hard to arrange as employers are unwilling to take people on for such a short time period as it is not of economic value; and
- most of the placements that are available are over the summer. This fits well with the undergraduate teaching timetable but not with the postgraduate timetable because this is when students are expected to work on their dissertations.

3.9 Planning schools that do not arrange placements did however facilitate students arranging their own placements through having connections to employers and being able to introduce students to placement providers.

### **Skills base of graduates and the role of planning schools**

3.10 All Planning School representatives considered that graduates had the right skills to work as planners but that those who had planning work experience had more skills than those who did not.

3.11 It was also argued that the high degree of input from planning practitioners into planning degrees and the inclusion of 'live projects' in the curriculum enabled more practical skills to be passed onto students. One planning school representative noted that whilst they felt they were equipping students with the necessary skills, this view was not always shared by employers (public sector employers in particular). The representative noted the ongoing debate regarding the role of the planning schools. They considered that university education should enable graduates to have bigger picture skills relating to the nature of planning; and the development of principles and practice. However, they noted that some employers emphasised the training of planners to provide them with specific skills such as completing development management forms. The representative felt that universities are not geared up to provide such training but instead planning schools provide graduates with a skills set which enables them to acquire these skills quickly once in employment.

3.12 The planning school representative felt that debate on the role of planning schools was going to increase in Scotland. Other representatives did not go into the same detail but there was a consensus that planning schools are educating planners who are going to work in a wide range of planning sectors and countries, and that their role is not just to produce planners to work in Scottish local authorities.

### **Practical experience of students prior to studying planning**

3.13 The range of experience with which students start planning courses varies, however, all the planning schools felt that this was not an issue and did not view experience as a pre-requisite to studying planning.

## Conclusions

3.14 There has been a move towards more postgraduate and less undergraduate training in planning in Scotland. Discussions with education and training providers suggested that:

- the main difficulties facing those who had graduated in 2009 were: lack of jobs and increased competition for jobs;
- there was general consensus that students who had gained practical experience whilst studying were more likely to be in employment than those without such experience;
- it was becoming increasingly difficult to arrange placements in both public and private sectors;
- most placements were available in the summer, this suited undergraduate teaching timetables but did not fit so well with post-graduate timetables; post-graduates might be encouraged to undertake practical experience before starting the course;
- input from planning practitioners and 'live projects' were important in linking theory and practice; and
- more direct contact between potential employers and graduates through university careers' departments and planning schools might be encouraged to ensure wide advertisement of opportunities and greater flexibility in short term employment opportunities and placements.

## **Chapter Four The Survey of Graduates: results and discussion.**

### **Introduction**

4.0 This chapter sets out the findings of the graduate questionnaire. It examines: the distribution of the questionnaire; response rates; profiles of respondents; current employment by sector; routes to employment; perceptions of the relevance of course work and the process of seeking employment; and the role of placements in accessing employment.

### **Distributing the questionnaire**

4.1 As discussed in Chapter 1 establishing contact with those who graduated from Scottish planning schools in 2009 proved difficult and it became apparent that:

- there is considerable difficulty in contacting graduates once they have left University; and
- it is difficult to provide an accurate figure for the number of graduates in any one year from Scottish accredited planning courses, in part due to the flexible nature in which planning can be studied leading to students completing their studies at various points throughout the year.

### **Response rates**

4.2 57 people took part in the survey. 7 of these were not from the cohort being studied (i.e. they either graduated prior to 2009, or did not attend Scottish planning schools) and so their data was excluded from the analysis. There were 105 graduates from Scottish planning schools in 2009 meaning that a response rate of 48% was achieved.

4.3 The response rate varied greatly between planning schools (see graph A.1 in Annex 4). The University of Glasgow had a particularly high response rate due to the researcher having studied there thus having personal connections with those being targeted. The biggest influence on the results was from students who studied at Heriot Watt (see graph A.2 in Annex 4). This is not surprising because Heriot Watt produces the highest number of planning graduates in Scotland and also maintains a database of graduates.

4.4 85%<sup>36</sup> of respondents studied planning at post-graduate level, 10%<sup>37</sup> at under-graduate level, and 5%<sup>38</sup> at both post-graduate and under-graduate level. That more post-graduates than under-graduates completed the questionnaire was unsurprising as the desk study of related work, and the discussions with university representatives, revealed that there has been a shift from students studying planning at under-graduate level to studying at post-graduate level. However, even taking this into account under-graduate students are under represented in the questionnaire. An impact of this under representation is that there is not enough data to make valid comparisons between under-graduate study and post-graduate study.

4.5 A breakdown of respondents' profiles is shown visually in Annex 4.

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<sup>36</sup> 33 out of 39 who answered this question.

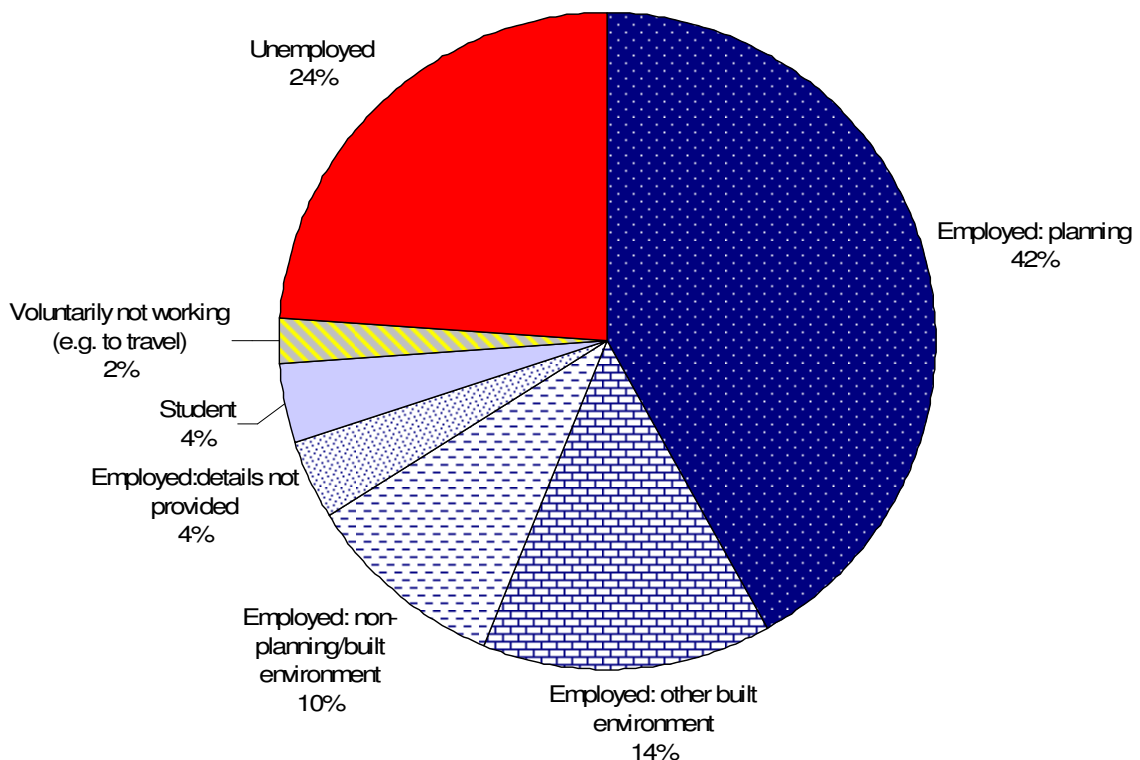
<sup>37</sup> 4 out of 39 who answered this question.

<sup>38</sup> 2 out of 39 who answered this question.

## Employment information

4.6 The employment status statistics of respondents are shown in graph 4.1 and indicate that 70%<sup>39</sup> of respondents were in employment, 42%<sup>40</sup> were engaged in planning employment and that 24%<sup>41</sup> were unemployed. However, only half of 2009's planning graduates responded to the questionnaire, taking this into account only 20%<sup>42</sup> of 2009's planning graduates are actually known to be in planning employment (see graph 4.2). The total figure is likely to be closer to this lower percentage, which may give a more accurate representation of the current employment situation for planning graduates for two reasons:

- graduates in planning employment were more likely to be targeted/hear about the questionnaire and to respond than those not because several of the mediums used to advertise the questionnaire were work based (such as the Young Planners Conference) and unlikely to be seen by those not in planning employment.
- A common theme in the in-depth interviews was that interviewees stressed how few of their classmates had found planning employment and that "most are either unemployed or working in something like a supermarket." (Interviewee 2).



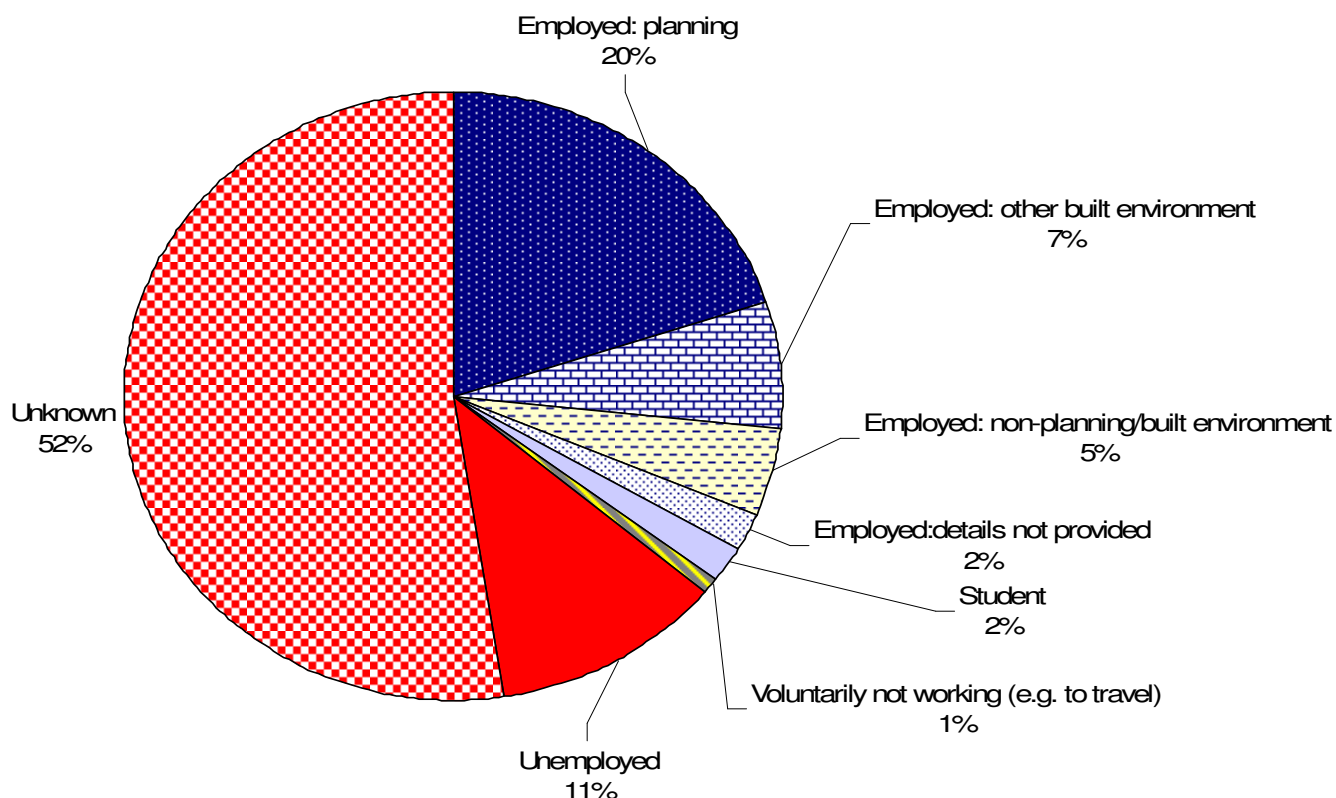
**Graph 4.1: Employment status of questionnaire respondents**

<sup>39</sup> 35 out of 50 respondents.

<sup>40</sup> 21 out of 50 respondents.

<sup>41</sup> 12 out of 50 respondents.

<sup>42</sup> 21 out of 105 who graduated.



**Graph 4.2: Employment status of all who graduated from Scottish Planning Schools in 2009**

### Graduates in planning employment

4.7 From the analysis of those who responded to the questionnaire, the majority of graduates in planning employment are full-time, although 34%<sup>43</sup> are on temporary contracts ranging from six months to two years. Over 60%<sup>44</sup> of those with planning employment are working for local authorities (see graph 4.3). The most frequently occurring type of work respondents employed in planning were engaged with was development planning and development management, followed by planning policy and then community engagement. The majority of respondents in planning employment stated that their job either met (65%<sup>45</sup>) or exceeded (15%<sup>46</sup>) their career aspirations. 75%<sup>47</sup> felt that their current job fitted in with their career plan. The remaining 25%<sup>48</sup> stated that their job partly fitted in with their career plan but indicated that due to a lack of jobs they had been less selective and had settled for types of planning employment that would help them to complete the APC process rather than keep looking for a job specifically matching their career plan. One in four<sup>49</sup> of those in planning employment had some concern about the security of their job (see graph 4.4).

<sup>43</sup> 5 of 21.

<sup>44</sup> 14 of 21.

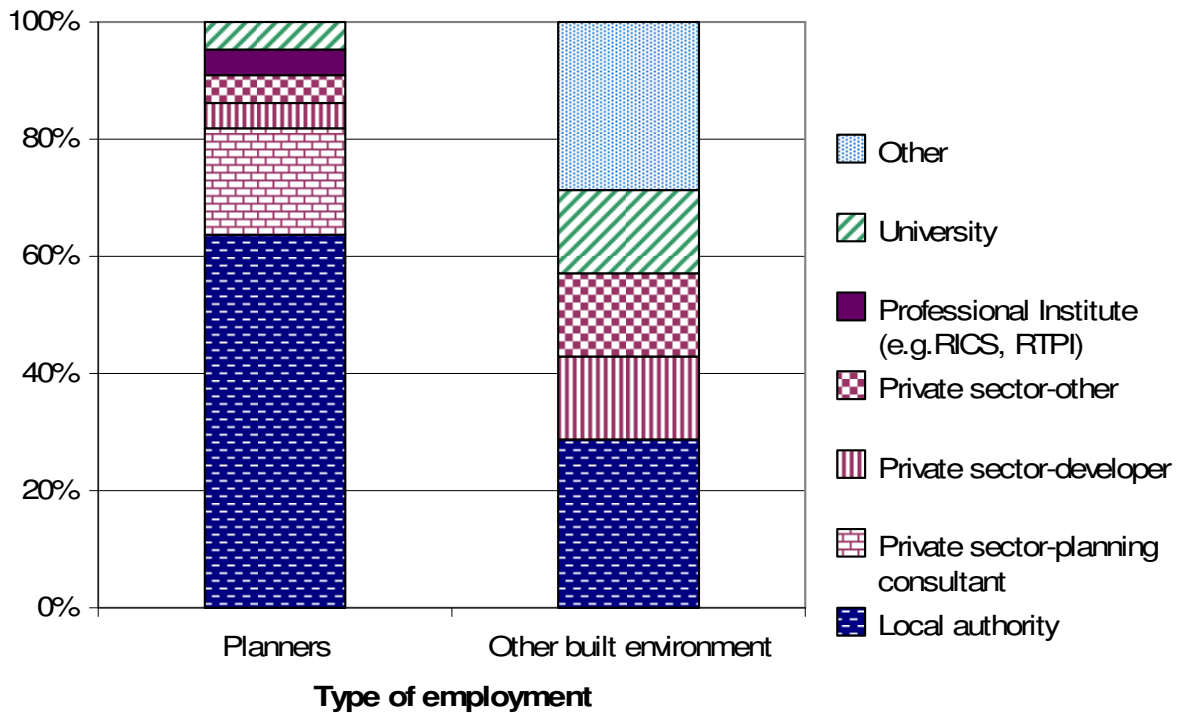
<sup>45</sup> 13 out of 20 who answered this question

<sup>46</sup> 3 out of 20 who responded to this question.

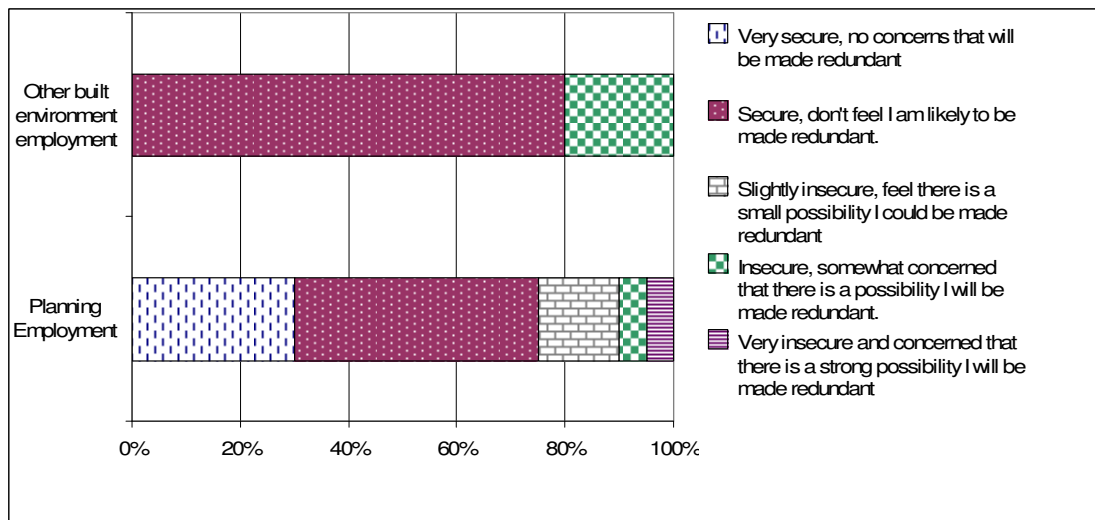
<sup>47</sup> 15 out of 20 who responded to this question.

<sup>48</sup> 5 out of 20 who responded to this question.

<sup>49</sup> 5 out of 20 who responded to this question.



**Graph 4.3: Type of organisation graduates working in planning and built environment are employed by.**



**Graph 4.4 Respondents' perceptions of their job security**

### Graduates working in other sectors of the built environment

4.8 Half of respondents<sup>50</sup> who were working in other sectors of the built environment had looked for planning employment prior to starting their current job. Having been unsuccessful in finding planning employment they were forced to broaden their horizons and secure other built environment employment.

<sup>50</sup> 3 out of 6 who answered this question.

4.9 It is possible that planning graduates who have gone into other built environment employment may be lost to the planning profession. Half of these respondents<sup>51</sup> had looked for planning employment upon graduation, however, none is currently doing so, and only a third<sup>52</sup> stated that they had firm intention of looking for planning employment in the future. As was shown in chapter two this reaction occurred in previous recessions. That planning graduates may be being lost to the planning profession in this recession because they cannot find planning employment was reinforced by interviewees. One interviewee (working in the built environment) explained that they would not have applied for their current job had there been planning jobs to apply for, however, now they are doing the job they were finding it interesting, being given responsibility, starting to work their way up the organisation and, although not a planning job, use some of what they learnt on their degree. Consequently they stated that they have no motivation to look for planning employment and do not intend to do so in the future because they “*would be bottom of the heap*” (Interviewee). Other interviewees argued that recent graduates will be lost to the planning profession as graduates will find other types of employment.

### **Graduates working in non-planning/built environment employment**

4.10 60%<sup>53</sup> of those in employment not associated with planning or the built environment are currently looking for planning employment; the remaining 40%<sup>54</sup> are undecided as to whether or not they will look for planning employment in the future. The same 60% started their current employment prior to commencing their degree studies which would indicate that they are maintaining a ‘holding position’ in the meantime but as yet have been unable to benefit from the additional training received in their planning education.

### **Unemployed Graduates**

4.11 66%<sup>55</sup> of unemployed graduates stated that they were looking for planning employment. 8%<sup>56</sup> were looking for non-planning/built environment employment, and the remaining 25%<sup>57</sup> did not comment. The majority of those looking for planning employment indicated that they were also looking for employment in other built environment sectors, and other sectors not related to planning. It is likely that should they secure non-planning employment their skills will be lost to the planning profession for the same reasons given above in the discussion of graduates working in other built environment professions. As one interviewee who is still looking for planning employment explained they are now also looking for other types of employment, and that if they secure this they are likely to remain in that field because they want to work their way up the professional ladder and gain professional qualifications.

### **Finding Employment**

4.12 Graph 4.5 below indicates that half<sup>58</sup> of those in planning employment had found their current employment after completing their planning degree. However,

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<sup>51</sup> 3 out of 6 who answered this question

<sup>52</sup> 2 out of 6 who answered this question

<sup>53</sup> 3 out of 5.

<sup>54</sup> 2 out of 5.

<sup>55</sup> 8 out of 12.

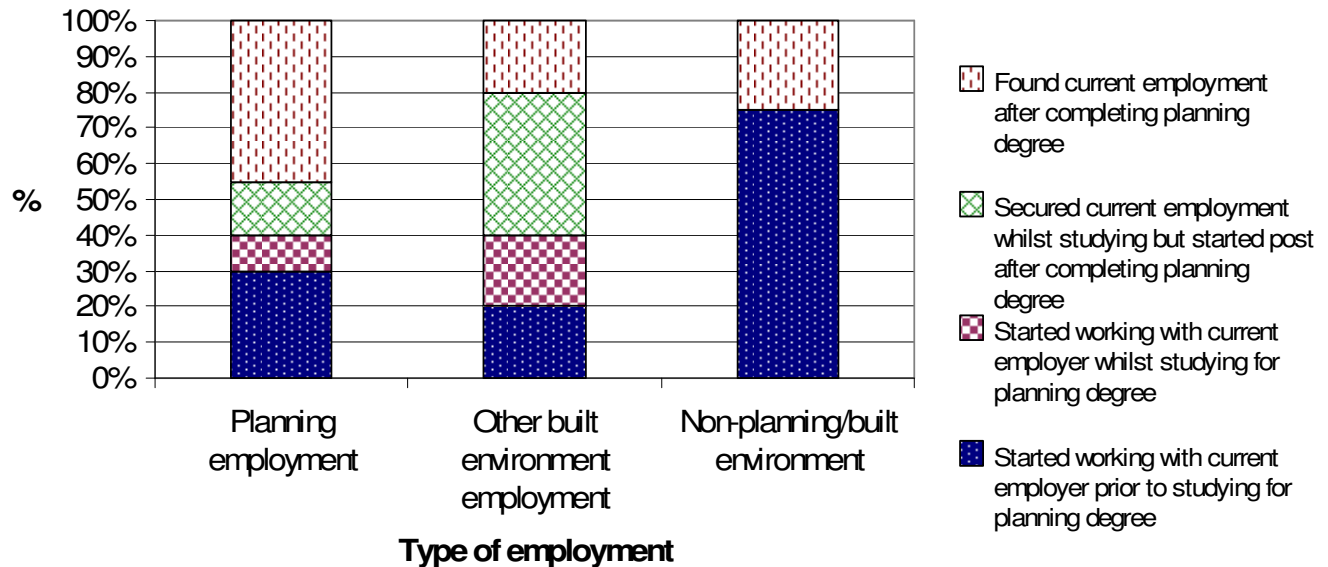
<sup>56</sup> 1 out of 12.

<sup>57</sup> 3 out of 12.

<sup>58</sup> 9 out of 20 who answered this question.

approximately one third<sup>59</sup> had returned to the employer for whom they had worked prior to studying for their degree.

4.13 In responding to questions about the most popular sources for looking for employment, Planning Magazine and the internet were the most frequently cited with over 50%<sup>60</sup> of respondents also looking in newspapers; 40%<sup>61</sup> citing word of mouth and over 30%<sup>62</sup> looking to their university department for information.



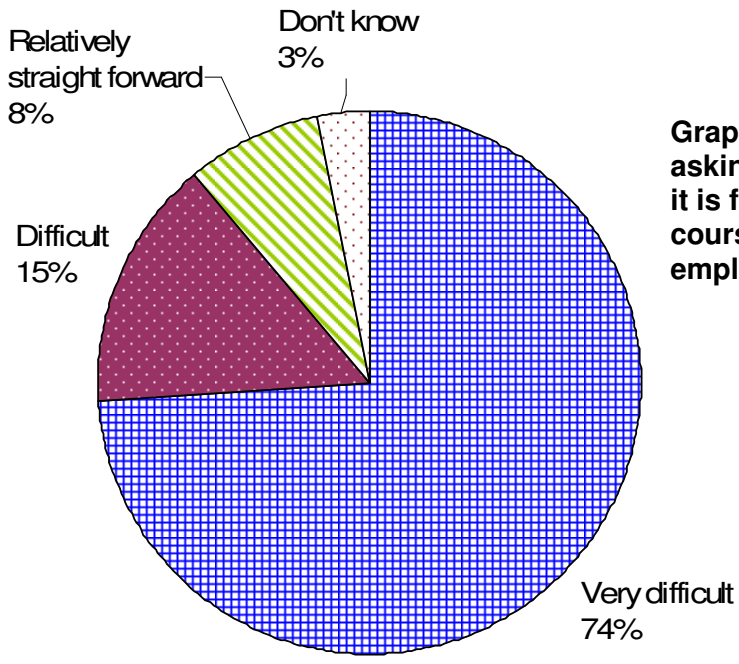
**Graph 4.5: When respondents found their current employment**

**Perceptions of finding planning employment.**

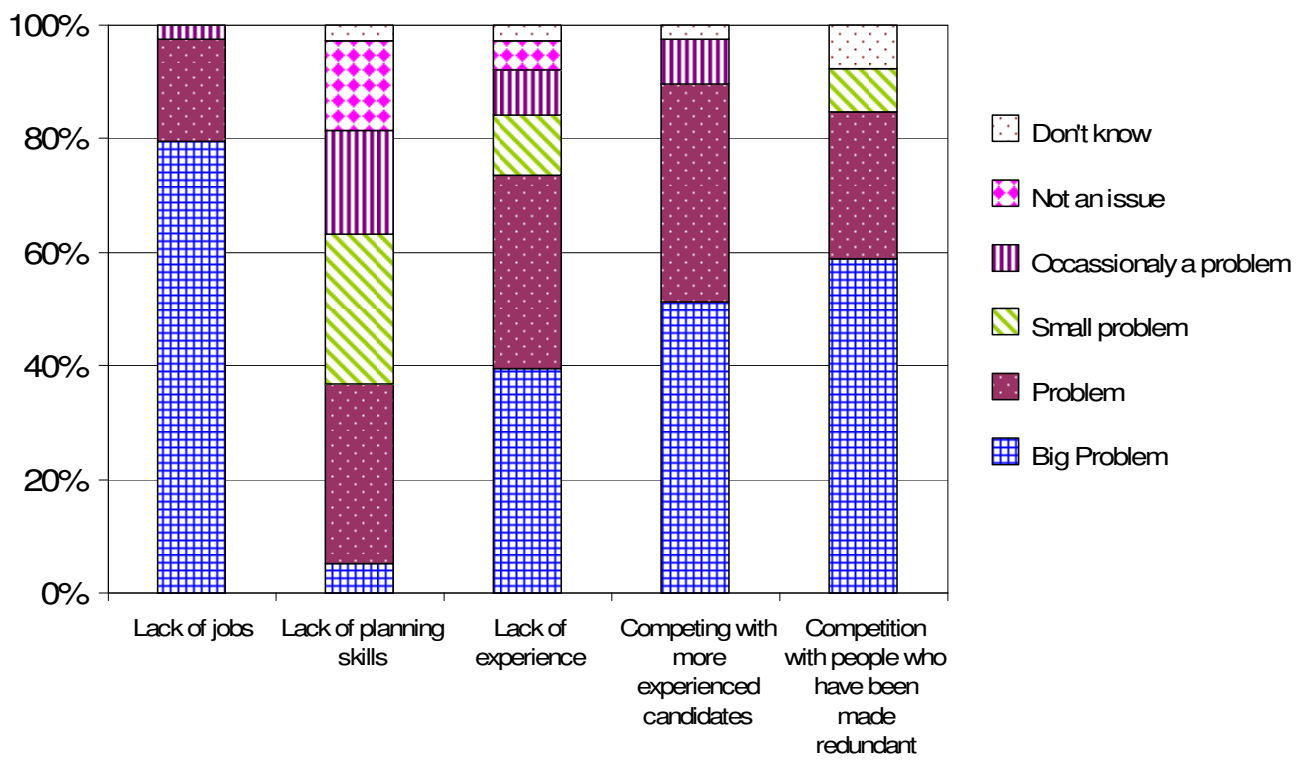
4.14 Respondents perceived securing planning employment to be a difficult task at the present time (see graph 4.6). Graph 4.7 shows that the biggest perceived difficulties in finding planning employment were lack of jobs, and competing with those who have been made redundant, and applicants who have more practical experience. Lack of practical planning experience was also perceived to be an important issue. Lack of jobs, competition, and the need for practical experience were also the common themes that emerged from analysing the comments made by respondents at various points in the survey. Comments that are representative of those made can be seen in box 4.1. These were also the most common reasons graduates had been given for not being successful in applications for planning jobs.

<sup>59</sup> 6 out of 20 who answered this question.  
<sup>60</sup> 20 out of 39 who answered this question.  
<sup>61</sup> 16 out of 39 who answered this question.  
<sup>62</sup> 13 out of 39 who answered this question.





**Graph 4.6 Responses to the question asking how difficult respondents feel it is for graduates of RTPI accredited courses to secure planning employment at the present time.**



**Graph 4.7 Problems in securing planning employment**

*I feel lucky to have found this position as competition for graduate places is high with fewer places being available this year.*

*The few jobs being advertised are looking for extensive experience. Very hard to find work experience.*

*At a recent interview for a temporary planning job in a rural location I was told that the council had received 90 applications for the post. I did not get offered the job as the candidate who did had 3 years planning work experience in a similar role.*

*A large majority of planning jobs require a level of experience that I do not have being a recent graduate.*

*The futility of searching for increasingly scarce planning employment makes me wish I'd stayed working where I was before I wasted my time (and money) on an RTPPI accredited MSc.*

*Applied for over 30 posts throughout the country, of particular note was a job at...which I was interviewed for (Assistant Planner 20k) and 510 people went for it and 5 were called for interview. Very, very difficult to secure planning jobs at the minute, only short term contracts are offered in Councils and planning private sector is struggling.*

*Graduate planning jobs rejected my application on the basis of lack of experience. So I have travelled to Australia, not only to travel but have secured an unpaid planning placement with... Government*

**Box 4.1 Comments made by respondents reflecting that the main difficulties in securing planning employment are lack of jobs, competition for jobs and the need for practical experience in order to secure employment.**

4.15 The survey indicated that respondents considered that securing planning employment is difficult because more people are applying for fewer jobs, and graduates who lack practical experience are competing with those who have experience. The next section of this report will explore the value of placements as being one mechanism that can assist students and graduates in acquiring necessary experience.

**Value of placements**

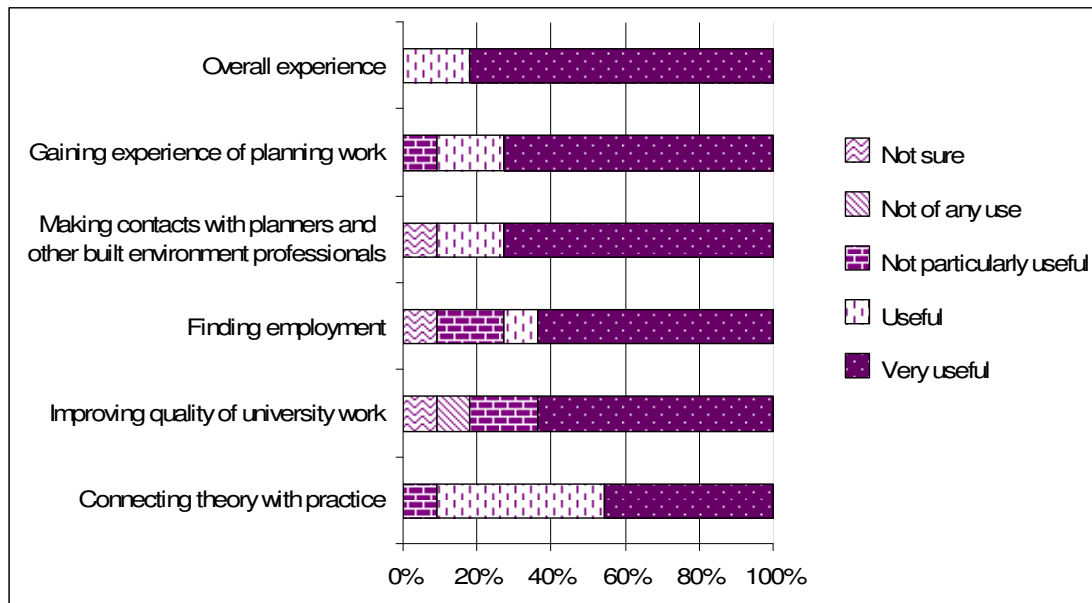
4.16 Chapter three argued that planning schools view students gaining practical experience through placements to be highly advantageous in terms of improving students' academic work, and increasing their chances of gaining employment. Graduates also place value on placement experience, with 92%<sup>63</sup> of respondents who undertook a placement(s) stating that they would recommend doing a placement. The two most useful aspects of placements were gaining experience of planning work and making contacts with planners and other built environment professionals (see graph 4.8). Placement experiences were also perceived to assist in finding graduate employment, with 82%<sup>64</sup> of those who did a placement stating that it "might help/has helped me in finding employment" and the remaining 18%<sup>65</sup> stating that it "definitely will help/has helped me in finding employment." The value of placement experiences was also stressed in the in-depth interviews with those who

<sup>63</sup> 11 out of 12 who had undertaken a placement.

<sup>64</sup> 9 out of 11 who answered this question.

<sup>65</sup> 2 out of 11 who answered this question.

had done placements. Placements were also perceived to be beneficial by those who had not done a placement as part of their course as 85%<sup>66</sup> of such respondents would have liked a placement to have been an option.



**Graph 4.8 How placements were useful to respondents who had done a placement**

4.17 Graduates' perception that having placement experience(s) assists them in finding planning employment appears to be well founded. Graph 4.9 shows that 75%<sup>67</sup> of respondents who did a placement were in planning employment compared to 40%<sup>68</sup> of those who had not. Indeed one respondent employed in planning stated that they felt very lucky to have their current position and that it was through doing "a sandwich year as part of my course which I think gave me the edge over other applicants" (questionnaire respondent). Another respondent stated that they 'would not be employed without the experience' the placement gave them. Lack of experience was also one of the most common reasons respondents were given for not being successful in a job application.

4.18 Despite both graduates and planning schools advocating the value of placements graph 4.10 shows that less than half of respondents had done a placement or other form of planning work experience, and only 18%<sup>69</sup> of respondents had done a placement as part of their degree (5%<sup>70</sup> of respondents did a placement as a compulsory part of their degree and 13%<sup>71</sup> did a placement as an optional part of their degree). 5%<sup>72</sup> of respondents had the choice to do a placement as part of their degree but elected not to do so.

<sup>66</sup> 22 out of 26 who answered this question.

<sup>67</sup> 9 out of 12.

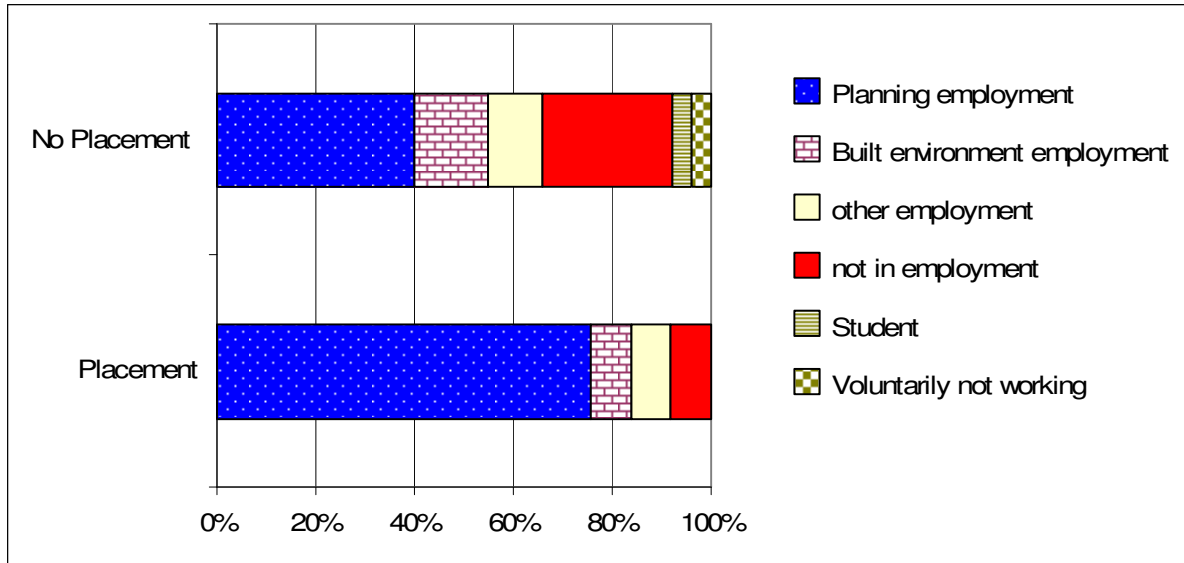
<sup>68</sup> 11 out of 27 who answered this question.

<sup>69</sup> 11 out of 39 who answered this question.

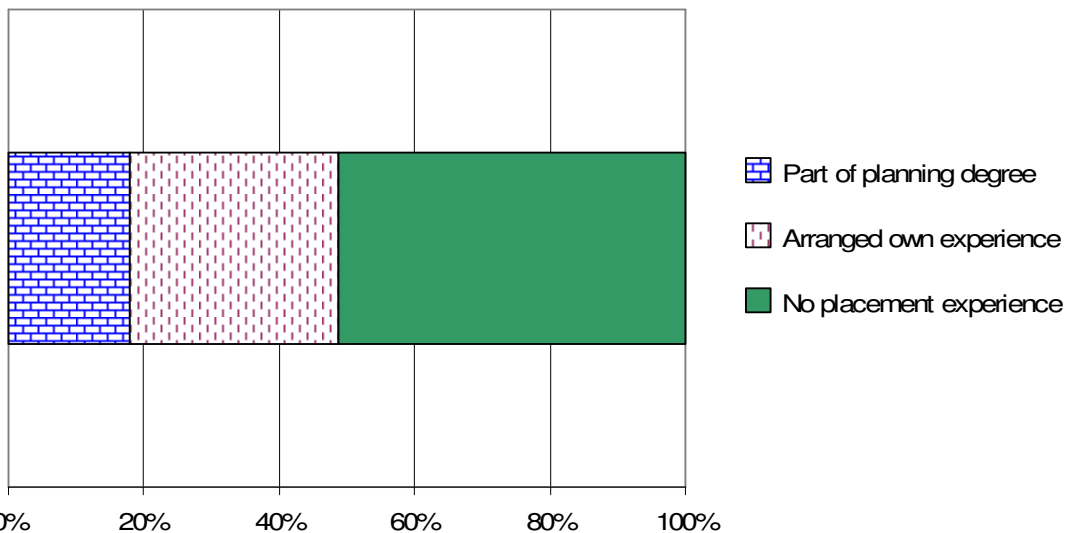
<sup>70</sup> 2 out of 39 who answered this question.

<sup>71</sup> 5 out of 39 who answered this question.

<sup>72</sup> 2 out of 39 who answered this question.



**Graph 4.9 Difference in employment status between those who did and did not do a placement**



**Graph 4.10 Arranging placement experience**

4.19 Those that opted not to do a placement as part of their degree did so because they were already working in a planning environment thus gaining experience, and in some cases would not have been allowed by their employer to do a placement due to the potential for conflicts of interest to arise. This was expanded upon in an interview with a respondent who was working in planning and being funded to do a planning degree by their employer: *“if a placement had been a compulsory part of the course my employer would not have let me do the course due to commercial conflicts of interest and potential conflicts of interest with local authorities.”* So, whilst placements appear to be very beneficial for those who did them, and 85%<sup>73</sup> of those not offered a placement as part of their course would have liked to have done one, any

<sup>73</sup> 22 out of 26 who answered this question.

recommendations for placement provision need to take account of the need of students who may be committed to an existing employer.

4.20 The length of placement undertaken by respondents varied from one week to over a year. There does not appear to be an ideal length of placement, however of those that did a placement of less than 2 weeks the majority<sup>74</sup> felt this was not long enough. From one of the follow up interviews it became apparent that length was only part of the story, the other part being the quality of placement with regards to what the placement involved, how it was supervised, and the type of work being done.

4.21 Despite placements being seen as very useful some negative aspects were identified:

- those who undertook summer placements were generally paid, however, they were not well paid summer jobs and some respondents identified that they could have earned more with other summer jobs;
- competition for placements was very intense; and
- if badly supervised placements could be very dull and not worthwhile learning experiences.

### **Relevance of Academic Study**

4.22 This section discusses respondents' views on how well their academic studies in planning had prepared them for employment.

4.23 The majority of respondents felt that their academic studies had prepared them relatively well for employment in planning<sup>75</sup> (see graph 4.11). The aspects of their studies which respondents felt had been most helpful in terms of preparing them for planning employment were:

- practical assignments, group work, presentations, and report writing;
- dissertation research;
- placements (see above section); and
- input from professionals in practice.

4.24 The value placed by respondents on the input from professionals in practice in their studies was particularly significant, and all who responded felt that they had benefitted from this. The most dominant reasons given were that such input:

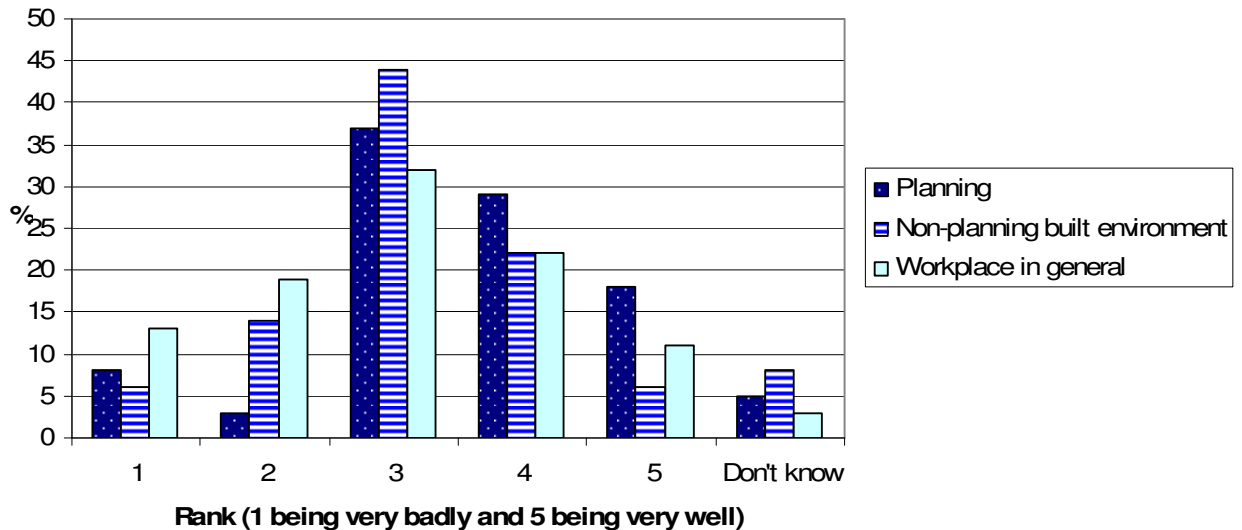
- gave students an insight into professional practice;
- provided a link between theory and practice;
- enabled students to have contact with planning professionals; and
- enabled exercises and assignments to relate to the real world.

4.25 The significance of the value placed by students and graduates on having input into their academic studies from professionals in practice was also highlighted by RICS in their study on built environment education in Scotland (see Chapter 2).

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<sup>74</sup> 4 out of 5.

<sup>75</sup> 31 of 37 who answered this question.



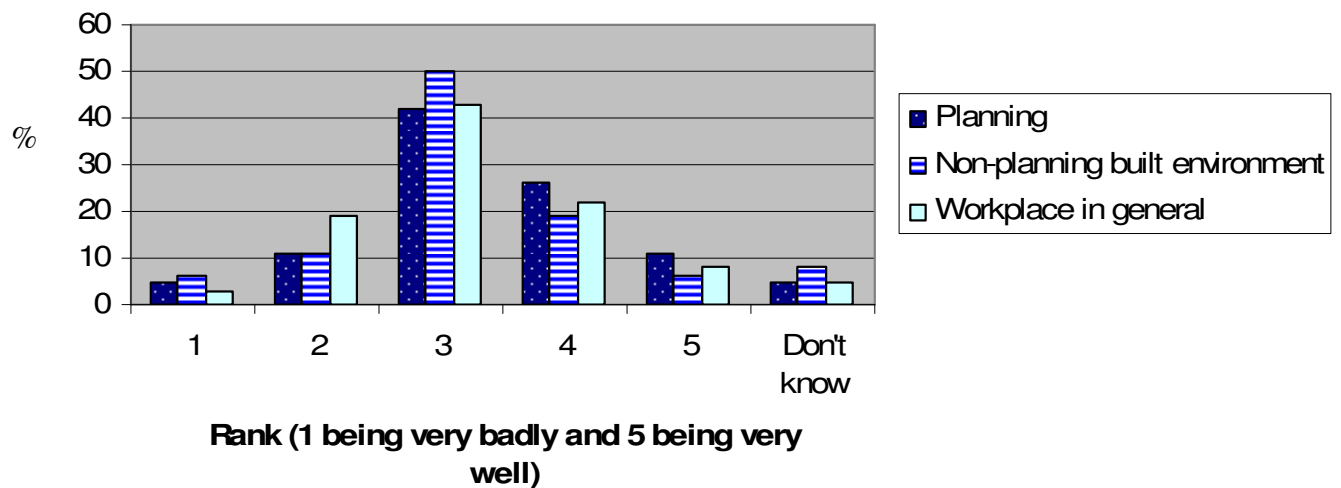
**Graph 4.11 How well prepared respondents felt their academic studies in planning have prepared them for employment**

4.26 It should however be noted that some respondents were critical of the way in which professional practice examples were provided and assimilated into course work. Criticisms related to the need for better communication between professionals and academics with professionals being more aware of other course work.

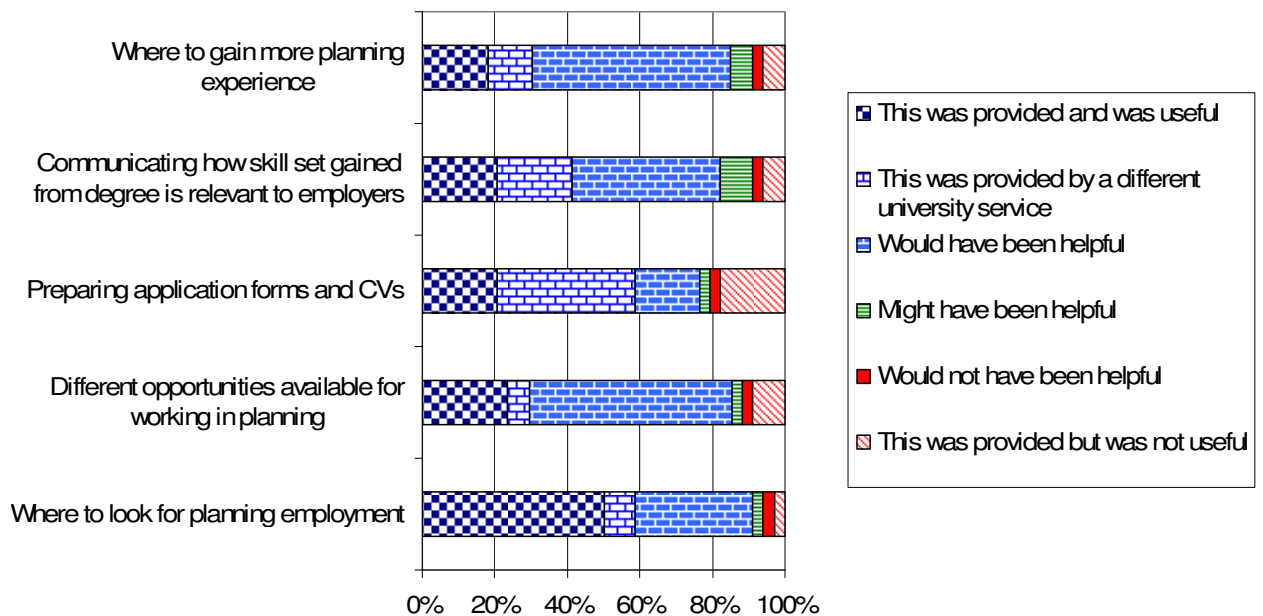
4.27 Aspects of students' courses which respondents had not felt to be relevant to planning in the workplace were:

- too much emphasis placed on theory and not enough on planning in practice;
- lectures slotted into the timetable to meet professional accreditation requirements but which were poorly integrated into the rest of the degree (management and finance courses were common examples); and
- courses not focussing on what happens in the workplace.

4.28 With regards to the practicalities of actually finding planning employment most respondents felt relatively well prepared (see graphs 4.12 and 4.13). The two most frequently cited areas where respondents would have liked more assistance from were how to gain more practical experience and in gaining a better understanding of the different opportunities available for working in planning.



**Graph 4.12: How well prepared respondents felt for the practicalities of finding employment in different sectors upon graduation**



**Graph 4.13 Type of assistance graduates would like to have had with regards to finding planning employment.**

## Conclusions

4.29 The main findings emerging from the survey of graduates indicate:

- the difficulty in contacting planning graduates once they have left university;
- it is estimated that there were 105 graduates in 2009;
- 48%<sup>76</sup> graduates from planning schools in 2009 responded to the questionnaire, of these 42%<sup>77</sup> were engaged in planning employment, 14%<sup>78</sup> were employed in a related built environment field; 24%<sup>79</sup> were unemployed;

<sup>76</sup> 50 out of 105.

<sup>77</sup> 21 out of 50.

<sup>78</sup> 7 out of 50.

<sup>79</sup> 12 out of 50.

- Approximately half of the 2009 graduates did not respond to the survey and therefore only 20%<sup>80</sup> of 2009's planning graduates are known to be definitely in planning employment; and
- 66%<sup>81</sup> of those who are known to be unemployed are currently looking for planning employment, 60%<sup>82</sup> of those in non-planning/built environment employment are also seeking planning employment.

4.30 With regard to perceptions of experience in finding work:

- 89%<sup>83</sup> of respondents considered that it was either difficult or 'very difficult' to find planning employment;
- the main reasons for not being in employment were seen as the lack of jobs, competition with people who have been made redundant and competition with more experienced candidates; and
- graduates perceived having had experience on a placement as a positive factor in achieving employment; 75%<sup>84</sup> of respondents who had undertaken a placement were in planning employment compared to 40%<sup>85</sup> of those who had not undertaken one.

4.31 With regard to perceptions about the usefulness of placements and the need for further support:

- placements were seen as beneficial in gaining experience of planning work and in making contacts with planners and other built environment professionals;
- respondents placed considerable value on the input from professionals in practice in their studies; and
- respondents would have liked more assistance from their universities on how to gain more practical experience and in gaining a better understanding of the different opportunities available for working in planning and related fields.

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<sup>80</sup> 21 out of 105.

<sup>81</sup> 8 out of 12.

<sup>82</sup> 3 out of 5.

<sup>83</sup> 35 of 39 who answered this question.

<sup>84</sup> 9 out of 12.

<sup>85</sup> 11 out of 27 who answered this question.



## Chapter Five The Survey of Employers: results and discussion.

### Introduction

5.0 The surveys of private and public sector employers aimed to:

- obtain information on trends in graduate recruitment;
- gain an understanding of the employment situation for planning graduates from the perspective of employers; and
- obtain information on extent to which support for the APC process is provided.

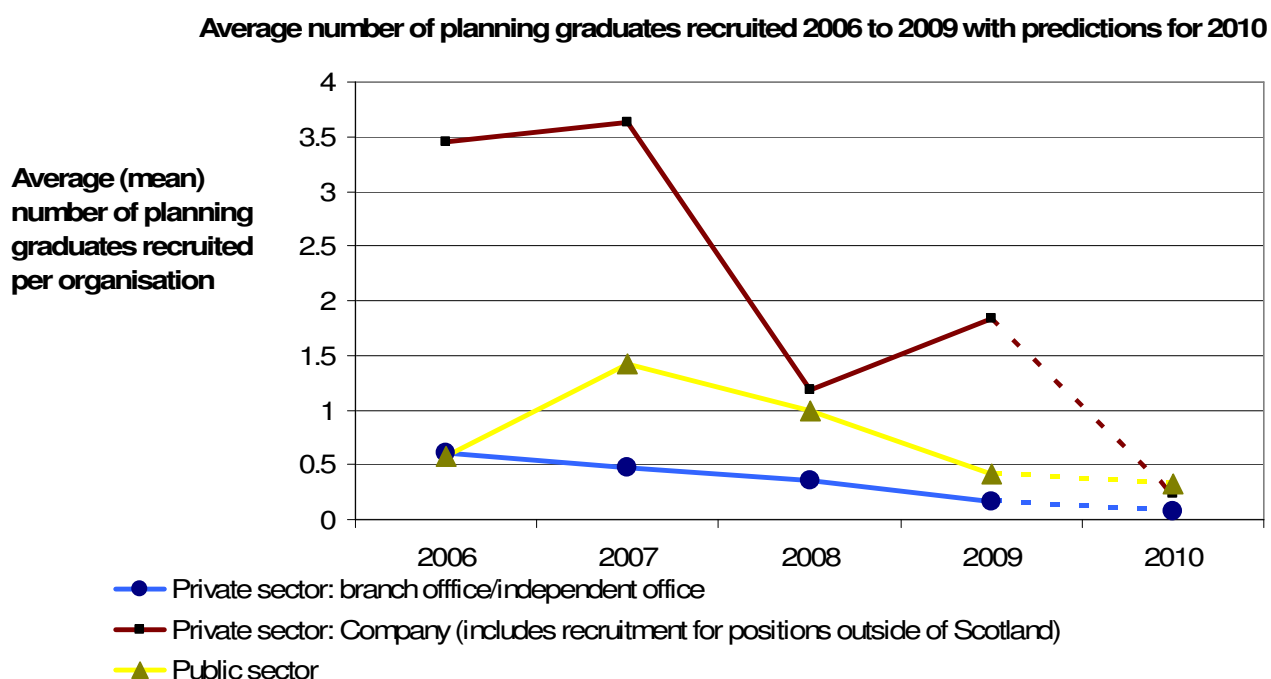
5.1 As described in Chapter 1 two questionnaires were designed and circulated to employers in the public and private sectors. These covered:

- recruitment patterns;
- structures in place to support planning graduates; and
- placement provision.

The detailed survey results are set out below.

### Graduate recruitment patterns

5.2 There has been a marked decrease in the number of planning graduates employed in Scotland each year since 2007 (see graph 5.1). The most significant decrease was in 2008 which, unsurprisingly, coincided with the “credit crunch”. There has also been a convergence in the number of graduates being employed by different types of organisation.



**Graph 5.1 Average (mean) number of planning graduates recruited 2006 to 2009 with predictions for 2010.**

5.3 Questionnaire responses indicate that the number of graduates being employed will continue to fall in 2010, with the public sector looking likely to be the largest recruiter of planning graduates in 2010. Only 16%<sup>86</sup> of public sector respondents had firm intentions of recruiting graduate planners in 2010 (half of these would be for temporary short-term recruitment to cover maternity leave), this was even lower in Scottish planning consultancies where the figure was 5%<sup>87</sup>. A degree of uncertainty regarding the recruitment of graduates in 2010 is evident as 8%<sup>88</sup> of public sector respondents stated that they are “unlikely” to recruit, and 5%<sup>89</sup> of private sector respondents stated that they “might recruit one”. Those graduates who are recruited will work in a wide range of different areas of planning, with the most cited area being development planning followed by environmental planning, community engagement, development management, energy and renewables, housing, planning policy, and regeneration.

### Supporting graduates

5.4 Of those respondents who employ planning graduates 77%<sup>90</sup> actively provide support to these graduates in completing the RTPI’s Assessment of Professional Conduct (APC). The figures were 82%<sup>91</sup> in the public sector and 72%<sup>92</sup> in the private sector. Little can be drawn from these figures given the poor response rate and the difficulty of defining the total field of private sector employers. However, there was some indication of a lack of awareness of the APC process amongst some employers and it would appear that almost a fifth of employers of planning graduates may not be actively supporting their licentiates through the APC process.

5.5 The survey showed that different forms of support are offered by different organisations, and the quality of support is likely to vary. Examples of the type of support offered by different organisations can be found in table 5.1.

Private sector	Public sector
Support given throughout. Time during work hours to complete log book, PDPs and critical evaluation. Support given to attend APC training days	Appropriate experience, support and mentoring
Established mentoring scheme and CPD	Mentoring/training
Financial support	Advice is given and a mentor arranged
No programme as such, just helped them with their forms etc	Mentoring support provided by appropriately experienced staff

**Table 5.1 Examples of APC support offered by employer survey respondents to planning graduates**

### Placement provision

5.6 58%<sup>93</sup> of questionnaire respondents provide placements to those interested in pursuing a career in planning. Interestingly the figure was the same for both public

<sup>86</sup> 2 of 14.

<sup>87</sup> 1 of 20.

<sup>88</sup> 1 of 14.

<sup>89</sup> 1 of 20.

<sup>90</sup> 17 of 22.

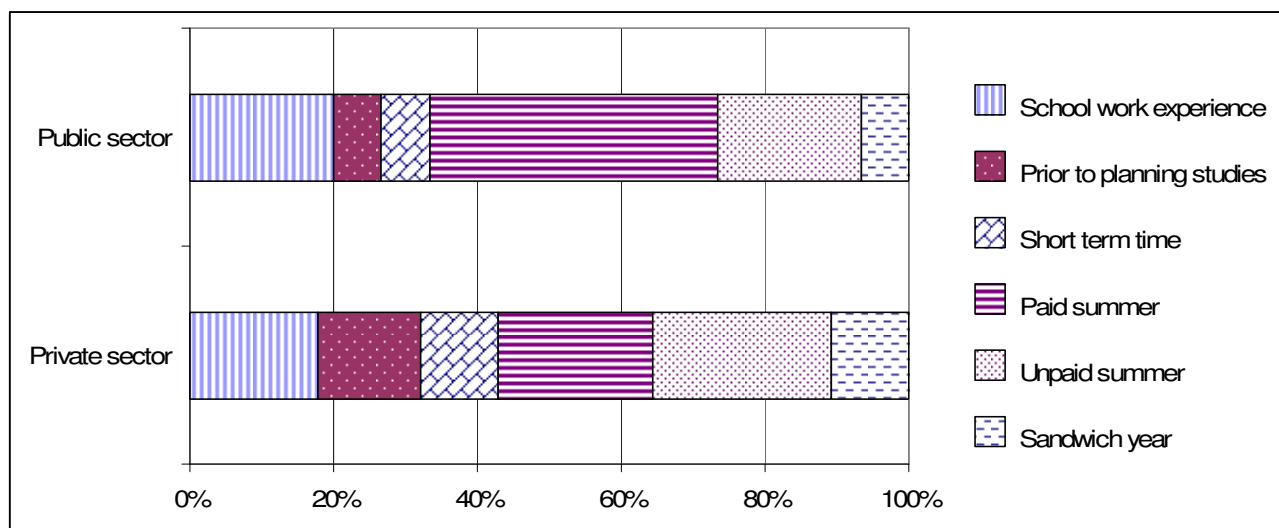
<sup>91</sup> 9 of 11.

<sup>92</sup> 8 of 11.

<sup>93</sup> 19 of 34.

and private sectors. Only 22%<sup>94</sup> of private sector placements are arranged through a placement scheme, compared to 43%<sup>95</sup> of public sector placements. The remainder are arranged on an *ad hoc* basis.

5.7 Graph 5.2 shows the range of different types of placements offered. The most significant differences between the types of placement provided is that paid summer placements are much more dominant in the public sector than in the private sector (see graph 5.2).



**Graph 5.2 Types of placements offered by employers**

5.8 Employers from both sectors who provide placements stated that these were valuable both to themselves and to the student. Example of comments made by employers regarding the value of placements can be seen in table 5.2.

*'We have found our summer placements make a valuable contribution in terms of assisting workload pressure for what is a small team of planning staff.'* (Public sector respondent).

*'Placements are very valuable. Started with one myself'* (Public sector respondent).

*'Placements are very important'* (Private sector respondent).

*'Value of placements: had positive experiences in the past'* (Private sector respondent).

*'Sandwich year and summer placements have been offered in the past and have proved worthwhile for both students and the organisation'* (Public sector respondent)

*'We have rolled our summer student posts together to fund a sandwich year placement which has proved to be very beneficial for us and the student'* (Public sector respondent).

**Table 5.2 Examples of comments made by respondents reflecting the value of placements.**

<sup>94</sup> 2 out of 9 who answered this question.

<sup>95</sup> 3 out of 7 who answered this question.

5.9 The reasons given by private sector respondents for not providing placements related to the small size of their company which contributed to one or more of the following factors stopping them from taking on placement students:

- lacked office space;
- lacked resources;
- lacked sufficient work to support placements;
- services offered are very specialised and require experience; and / or
- it is not economic to take on placements as they require too much training and staff time and so it is not economic or commercially viable to have them.

5.10 Reasons for the public sector not providing placements were all based on one or more of the following:

- lack of financial resources;
- difficulty supervising and managing workloads; and/or
- difficulty supporting students and maintaining a proper work programme.

5.11 The recession has had a much bigger impact on the private sectors ability to provide placements. 74%<sup>96</sup> of private sector respondents stated that the recession had negatively impacted upon their provision of placements, compared to 30% in the public sector.

## **Conclusions**

5.12 Employers from both sectors who provide placements stated that these were valuable both to themselves and to the student. However, the recession has had a severe impact on the availability of placements. Lack of office space, lack of resources and the specialised nature of work in the private sector often made placements more difficult to offer. Support for students and licentiates varied across public and private sectors. Little is known about the quality of placements and APC support and it would appear that more awareness of APC guidance amongst employers would be helpful.

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<sup>96</sup> 14 out of 19 who answered this question.

## Chapter Six Report of seminar held 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010

### Introduction

6.0 A seminar was held in Edinburgh on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010 to discuss the results of the survey, to discuss emerging issues and their implications, to identify possible actions and to begin to formulate actions for different groups of stakeholders.

6.1 The seminar aimed to offer participants an opportunity to provide feedback and expand upon the research's findings; to discuss related initiatives; to explore the provision of different types of work placements, graduate training opportunities and support for graduates; and to help to define solutions to short term and long term issues relating to the support of graduates.

6.2 Invitations were sent to more than 60 people representing:

- planning schools;
- private sector employers who returned the employers questionnaire and indicated they would be interested in attending follow up events;
- planning authorities;
- other public sector employers of planning graduates;
- Planning Aid Scotland;
- the Improvement Service;
- Members of the RTPI in Scotland's Scottish Executive Committee;
- Asset Skills;
- professional bodies such as RICS;
- graduates who completed the survey; and
- representatives from the Scottish Government's Directorate for the Built Environment

6.3 30 people signed up for the seminar, and the names of the 27<sup>97</sup> attendees on the day are shown in Annex 5. All of the above stakeholders were represented.

6.4 The programme for the seminar, which is shown in Annex 5, involved a mixture of discussions, working groups and presentations from RTPI representatives, a 2009 graduate, and public and private sector employers. For the afternoon working groups participants were split into two groups and were asked to provide a solution to three questions focussing on contact with graduates; work experience and placements; and the need for a wider action plan for Scotland. These questions focused on the key issues raised by this report, and built on the presentations and discussions in the morning sessions. The purpose of working groups was to elicit discussion which would provide possible solutions to these issues and to formulate recommendations for future action. The questions were the same for both groups and are detailed in Annex 5.

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<sup>97</sup> Due to other work commitments about a third of participants had to leave at lunchtime and so missed the afternoon sessions. Several of these participants later submitted (verbal or written) comments regarding what their contribution would have been to the afternoon discussions had they been able to stay.

6.5 The seminar expanded on:

- the benefits of staying in contact with graduates and the difficulties associated with the practicalities of doing so;
- the need for a regular survey linked to other surveys of the planning establishment in Scotland;
- the nature of placements and the benefits of different types of placement;
- the benefits of placements to graduates and employers alike;
- the need to increase awareness amongst employers of APC support needs and guidance;
- the need for a partnership approach to finding solutions; and
- the need for an action plan for Scotland.

6.6 Discussion at the seminar supported and re-enforced the findings of the survey. This chapter reports on additional points and recommendations made at the seminar in relation to maintaining contact with graduates; the need for ongoing support for graduates; placements; and an action plan for Scotland.

### **Contact with graduates**

6.7 A major challenge in carrying out this research was the difficulty in identifying and contacting the 2009 graduates. Discussion regarding this focussed on the questions below:

- should we maintain links with graduates from accredited planning schools?
- how might such links be used to benefit graduates, education providers, employers, and the RTPI?
- how might this be achieved?
- who should lead in maintaining links? and
- what kind of support do graduates need?

### Benefits of maintaining links with graduates

6.8 There was general agreement on the need for ongoing contact with planning graduates. Maintaining links with graduates was seen as beneficial for graduates because it would enable information to be shared with them. Such information included:

- available job/experience opportunities;
- training events; and
- developments in the planning profession.

6.9 Contact with graduates would also benefit education providers, employers, government and the RTPI by allowing employment destinations to be monitored. Ongoing contact was considered important because:

- it enables feedback on the types of work graduates are doing;
- it enables feedback on the relevance of graduates' training;
- it contributes to workforce planning; and
- it could help to inform the design and delivery of university courses.

### How can contact with graduates be maintained and who should maintain this contact?

6.10 A number of different ways of maintaining contact with students were discussed. Each had different benefits, however, ultimately the success of any scheme would depend on the student wishing to maintain contact and seeing the benefits of doing so.

6.11 The RTPI is in touch with planning graduates who join the RTPI; however this is not comprehensive because graduates are very unlikely to pay to join the RTPI if they are unemployed, or not in employment related to planning as it would be perceived to be '*a financial drain without benefit*'. Other ways need to be identified of staying in contact with such graduates.

6.12 Whilst some planning schools do try to stay in touch through asking for forwarding details, alumni associations, and *ad hoc* reference requests, planning schools did agree that there is no comprehensive way of doing this. They also noted that not all students wish to stay in contact and that many do just disappear (international students in particular) and that the pressures of academia are not conducive to proactively keeping up-to-date records of graduates contact and employment details. A comprehensive systems is therefore not in place for staying in touch with graduates and monitoring where they are employed although some universities do undertake general surveys of their alumni.

6.13 One planning school representative suggested that better communication between planning schools and employers could assist planning schools in keeping track of graduate destinations, particularly if employers informed planning schools when they recruited one of their graduates.

6.14 Planning schools drew attention to the fact that every year they complete a return to the RTPI giving names of students who have completed their studies. However, due to Data Protection Legislation it is not possible for contact details to be shared.

6.15 It was also suggested that graduates have a role to play and need to proactively stay in touch with organisations such as planning schools and the RTPI. Clearly, the role of the graduate is important in seeking new opportunities in line with their skills and interests. Reference was made to a scheme at Ohio University where students are required to develop a personal vision of what they expected from their career choice. However, it was highlighted that not all graduates wish to stay in touch with the profession and or their planning school. This is particularly so for international students who return to their home country, or those who do not want to enter the planning profession following graduation.

### Suggestions for how this contact could be maintained

6.16 The above discussion led to agreement amongst participants that all stakeholders have a role to play in maintaining contact with planning graduates. A number of solutions were proposed for further discussion by SPEF:

1. There was a consensus of the benefits of the establishment of a network to enable information to be disseminated, and to encourage graduates to remain in touch with planning schools, the RTPI, and each other regardless of whether or not they are in planning employment. Issues were raised regarding data protection, how this would be managed, and who might

manage such a network. It was agreed that this should be discussed further by SPEF.

An RTPI network and an alumni association for graduates of Scottish planning schools was suggested but the majority of attendees felt that the simplest way of doing this, and the way most likely to be successful, was the establishment of a Facebook group by the RTPI specifically for graduates of accredited planning courses in Scotland or UK wide to supplement the already existing RTPI Facebook group (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=35070190851&ref=ts>) which is open to anyone interested in the RTPI and covers more generalised themes and discussions. This approach is dependent on graduates voluntarily committing to, and recognising the benefits to themselves of, becoming a member of the network. It was suggested that this could be promoted by the members of the Scottish Young Planners Network Steering Group who visit planning schools to give presentations on membership of the RTPI and working as a planner.

2. Another suggestion was that the RTPI could require all students in the final year of an RTPI accredited degree to become student members. Such an approach would catch people before they graduated, however, its success would depend on membership being maintained and contact details being kept up-to-date.

3. It was suggested that the above proposal could be strengthened by offering free RTPI membership for 1 year following graduation (although licentiate administration fees would remain payable for those qualifying for licentiate membership). By removing the cost factor graduates without employment, or planning employment, would be more likely to renew their RTPI membership (or if not already members join the RTPI) and so retain contact with the RTPI.

4. It was suggested that a 'Buddy Scheme' could be established which would bring together students and planning professionals. This would encourage students to become part of the life of the Institute at an earlier stage and would enable them to see the benefits of RTPI membership. It was suggested that the RTPI in Scotland Chapters could run the 'Buddy Scheme' together with the universities.

With over 2000 members of the RTPI in Scotland and on average 100 graduates a year only one in twenty planning professionals would need to be involved to make the 'Buddy Scheme' work. The scheme could involve the student and 'buddy' being in touch three or four times a year. The 'buddy' might provide general guidance on practice, and networking e.g. assisting in arranging placements/work experience (either themselves or by putting the student in contact with others).

### **Summary of points made regarding contact with graduates**

6.17 Maintaining links between planning graduates and the planning profession is important and is beneficial to all involved as it:

- supports the planners and the planning system of the future;
- provides a mechanism for disseminating information on training, networking and job opportunities to graduates;



- assists planning schools to ascertain what their graduates are doing and provides a feed-back loop on relevance of training, teaching and research;
- enables planning employment to be monitored, and may help education and training needs to be adjusted accordingly; and
- such a network could enable the re-run of the survey of graduates; it was suggested that this could be undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Planning Education Forum or if adopted across the UK, by the RTPI with the involvement of the Young Planners Network.

6.18 It was generally agreed that graduates, planning schools, employers and the RTPI all have a role to play in maintaining these links. Specifically it was recommended that the Scottish Planning Education Forum might consider:

- a Facebook group for graduates of Scottish planning schools to be established as a supplement to the existing RTPI Facebook group;
- students might be encouraged to log their contact details with the universities before they graduate;
- students should be made aware of useful websites, professional networks and events including local RTPI Chapters which offer opportunity to keep abreast of planning, placement and employment opportunities; and
- the establishment of a 'Buddy Scheme' for planning students which could be organised via RTPI Chapters in conjunction with planning schools.

6.19 It was suggested that the RTPI's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee might be invited to consider:

- requiring final year students to be student members of the RTPI; and
- offering free membership of the RTPI for one year following graduation.

### **The nature of placements**

6.20 Discussion at the seminar highlighted the number of different types of placement which can be offered by employers. The presentation by Jim Birrell had described the close attention to the pre-planning of placements in Fife Council ensuring that placements were useful to the planning department as well as providing well supported and relevant experience. David Leslie's presentation provided details of the City of Edinburgh Council's scheme for graduate training and stressed the need for training to ensure service needs which encouraged the recruitment of 'talented' students who could be trained into the City's corporate approach. These excellent presentations highlighted a number of different approaches to the provision of short term placements and to graduate training programmes. The different types of placements identified included:

- three month summer placements where students are integrated into a planning team and work on 'real projects'. This enables the student to get experience of a type of planning (for example development plans, development management, and conservation work);
- 30 day placements for students who have done a summer placement to continue this one day a week in their final year of study (with agreement of planning school). This work is usually associated with students' dissertations or research projects;

- sandwich year placements where students follow a structured programme spending six months in development management and six months in development planning; and
- other *ad hoc* short-term placements, voluntary and/or paid.

### **Benefits of placements**

6.21 The benefits of placements to students and organisations varied depending on the nature of the placement.

6.22 Short term placements tended to be viewed negatively by some employers because they were not of economic value. Some felt they were of less value to students because of their short duration. Whilst the majority of seminar attendees agreed that short term placements were frequently resource inefficient there were varying opinions of their value to students. Several points were made regarding the value of short term placements to students:

- they provide taster experiences of different type of planning work and help students decide which type of planning work they are interested in pursuing;
- to comply with RTPPI degree accreditation rules they are the only type of placement experience that can be arranged through planning schools for students on a one year Master's course; and
- they enable students to meet planning professionals, network, and make contacts.

6.23 Longer term paid placements were viewed as being of value to both students and employers. The discussion at the seminar indicated that the benefits of placements to graduates are that they:

- put planning into a real world context;
- provide an understanding of the basics of how the planning system is structured and works;
- through actually 'doing' planning students are able to clarify their understanding of features of the planning system which they might have struggled to grasp when presented theoretically in their studies;
- provide experience they can use to demonstrate planning experience in further job applications;
- assists with their university studies; and
- enable students to identify areas of planning in which they are more interested in working.

6.24 A number of disadvantages and potential impracticalities of placements for students were identified and these included:

- high competition for placements means that not everybody can obtain a placement;
- the rate of pay for placements is low and students can earn more by doing other summer work;
- the majority of students need to work during term time to support themselves and are graduating with large amounts of debt. Consequently many are not in a position to undertake unpaid placements or work experience; and

- placements tend to be advertised when students were preparing for exams and so decisions have to be taken regarding whether to focus on university work or applying for placements.

6.25 The value of longer term paid placements to employers was identified as:

- bringing new ideas and perspectives to the department;
- enabling useful work to be undertaken which otherwise could not be achieved; and
- representing good value for money.

6.26 Concern was expressed that the budget for placements would be cut in local authorities as part of budgetary cutbacks, as has happened in the private sector.

### **Good practice in arranging placements**

6.27 It was felt that the success of placements was based on a number of factors:

- a rigorous process of recruitment and selection. As well as ensuring that employers recruit a 'good' student it was felt that this demonstrated commitment on behalf of the employer;
- preparation by the placement provider prior to a student starting a placement. The success of placements to both the employer and the students is often dependent on time and effort being put into planning the placement prior to the student's arrival. By doing this preparation the work the student will do, and who they will do it with, has been identified prior to the start of the placement. This means that the work done is work that actually needs to be done rather than the student just doing *ad hoc* work, or work that is created just to keep them occupied;
- team participation. Placement students are integrated into teams and so are therefore working with permanent planning staff within the department; and
- work on real live projects. This is of benefit to both the employer as it assists them in managing their workload, and to the student as they can see what they have contributed to and use it as concrete examples of their experience when applying for future work.

### **Other examples of placement/work experience provision**

6.28 The Scottish Government's Directorate for the Built Environment provides an example of short term placements that have been of value to those who have undertaken them. Initially they provided one week placements for students and two day placements for those already working in planning. These involved attending a variety of meetings and presentations and undertaking small tasks; the aim being to enable people to get a taste of the work done by government planners, and to gain a deeper understanding of the planning work done by the Scottish Government. However, the government staff found one week placements to be very time consuming and so all placements have now been condensed into two days as a compromise between enabling experience and being resource efficient<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>98</sup> For further information see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/modernising/cc/SkillsTraining>

6.29 The Scottish Government recently ran a four day training programme (Planning in Practice Graduate Programme) for recent graduates to help them with the transition between education and practice<sup>99</sup>.

6.30 Schemes to encourage work experience are common across higher education and are also being used in other professional groups. One example is that of Glasgow Caledonian University which is investigating the setting up of their own company to enable IT students to get experience. This approach could be investigated between planning schools, local authorities, and planning consultancies and could involve students being commissioned to do pieces of work/research. This would enable work and research to be done which organisations want done but do not have the staff time for, and would enable students to gain experience and knowledge.

6.31 Similar approaches are found in the Law School at Strathclyde University which runs a law clinic where students can offer advice and practical assistance to people under the guidance and supervision of qualified solicitors.

6.32 Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) offers a number of volunteering opportunities to students and graduates which enables them to gain experience. These include participation in the PAS Roadshow programme; participation as observers in their community training programme; involvement in workshop sessions, supporting the experienced volunteers; and research internships.

### **Summary of points made regarding benefit of Placements**

6.33 A number of possible actions which could be taken forward by SPEF were suggested as a result of this discussion:

1. Employers in the public and private sectors in Scotland should be encouraged to provide a range of short and long term placements for students of planning.
2. Further research is needed on what constitutes a good placement. Sharing of good practice could lead to useful guidance on placements. This work could be co-ordinated through the Scottish Planning Education Forum.
3. The practical learning methods currently utilised by planning schools could be further expanded by planning schools working with planning authorities to identify research and live projects for students to work on. This would enable students to gain more practical skills as well as to be involved more directly in their local area.
4. Students and graduates should be encouraged to become involved with Planning Aid Scotland.

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<sup>99</sup> For further information see: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/modernising/cc/SkillsTraining>

5. The Scottish Government's Directorate for the Built Environment should be encouraged to re-run their initiative "Planning in Practice Graduate Programme" and to continue their staff development scheme.

6. Efforts should be made to increase awareness among employers of the APC system. This could be linked to the APC events organised by the Scottish Young Planners Network Steering Group and staff from RTPI Professional Services Directorate.

7. Scottish Government and Heads of Planning Scotland should be asked to consider the inclusion of questions on placement provision and support for APC in the Establishment Survey of Scottish Local Authorities<sup>100</sup>.

8. A 'placement service' to advertise placements might be investigated. Quality of Service or accreditation would be desirable.

### **Action Plan for Scotland**

6.34 Participants at the seminar discussed the need for a partnership approach to issues of training and support for recent graduates. There was little knowledge of the Homes and Communities report 'Delivering Better Skills for Better Places' which aims to deliver a unified approach to place-making skills in England, however, the following questions were raised at the seminar

- do we need an Action Plan for Scotland?
- what should be included?
- which partners should be involved? and
- how might this be achieved?

6.35 It was noted that in Scotland the Scottish Planning Education Forum (SPEF) was ideally positioned to lead a partnership approach required to co-ordinate actions by the RTPI, public and private sector employers, Scottish Government and academics. All of these sectors are represented on SPEF.

6.36 It was suggested that SPEF should work closely with the Sector Skills Council, Asset Skills, and that a representative from Asset Skills should be invited to join SPEF.

6.37 It was proposed that SPEF should establish a short life task group to consider the findings, issues and potential solutions set out in this report.

6.38 It was recognised that many of the issues discussed were common across the UK, that graduates from English and Welsh planning schools might face similar difficulties and that some recommendations may require UK wide solution. Further discussion should take place within the context of the RTPI's Education and Lifelong Learning Policy framework. It had been agreed that the findings of the research would be submitted to the RTPI's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee for consideration.

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<sup>100</sup> Since the completion of this study in August 2010, Scottish Government has circulated a new Public Sector Planning Workforce Survey to be completed by September 2010. The survey covers local government, central government (DBE and DPEA) and key agencies. It includes questions on RTPI membership and graduate recruitment.



## Chapter 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.0 This research set out to provide good reliable information on the destination of the 2009 cohort of graduates from RTPI accredited planning schools in Scotland; to assist in understanding the current employment situation for graduates; to ascertain their preparedness and early experience of employment and the job market; and to investigate requirements for on-going CPD support. This Chapter sets out the results of this research and identifies the key findings of the surveys and emerging issues needing to be addressed, as well as detailing recommendations arising from this study which were supported by the discussion at the seminar.

7.1 The research found that there were 105 graduates from accredited planning schools in Scotland in 2009. Approximately half of the graduates responded (48%<sup>101</sup>) to the questionnaire. 42%<sup>102</sup> of the respondents were engaged in planning employment, with an additional 14%<sup>103</sup> employed in other 'built environment' professions. 10%<sup>104</sup> were employed in other fields and 24%<sup>105</sup> were unemployed. The remainder had returned to study (4%<sup>106</sup>), were voluntarily not working (2%<sup>107</sup>) or employment details were not provided (4%<sup>108</sup>).

7.2 A major problem in carrying out this research was the difficulty in establishing the numbers graduating from planning schools in any particular year; and the difficulty in contacting planning graduates once they had left University. Whilst a 48% response rate is acceptable for an on-line survey, the fact that the survey was unable to contact the remaining 52%<sup>109</sup> of graduates was disappointing. In effect only 20%<sup>110</sup> of 2009's planning graduates are known to be in planning employment.

7.3 With regard to information on the graduates' experiences in seeking employment the research found that:

- 89%<sup>111</sup> of respondents considered that it was either 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to find planning employment; and
- 66%<sup>112</sup> of those who are known to be unemployed are currently looking for planning employment, 60%<sup>113</sup> of those in other employment are also seeking planning employment.

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<sup>101</sup> 50 graduates out of a total of 105 graduates.

<sup>102</sup> 21 out of 50.

<sup>103</sup> 7 out of 50.

<sup>104</sup> 5 out of 50.

<sup>105</sup> 12 out of 50.

<sup>106</sup> 2 out of 50.

<sup>107</sup> 1 out of 50.

<sup>108</sup> 2 out of 50.

<sup>109</sup> 55 graduates from a total of 105.

<sup>110</sup> 21 out of 105.

<sup>111</sup> 35 out of 39 who answered this question.

<sup>112</sup> 8 out of 12.

<sup>113</sup> 3 out of 5.

7.4 With regard to the graduates' experience in the workplace, the research found that:

- the majority of respondents in planning employment stated that their job either met (65%<sup>114</sup>) or exceeded (15%<sup>115</sup>) their career aspirations;
- 75%<sup>116</sup> felt that their current job fitted in with their career plan. The remaining 25%<sup>117</sup> stated that their job partly fitted in with their career plan but indicated that due to a lack of jobs they had had to be less selective and settle for types of planning employment that would help them to complete the APC process rather than keep looking for a job which specifically matched their career plan; and
- one in four<sup>118</sup> of those in planning employment had some concern about the security of their job.

7.5 The main difficulties facing those who had graduated in 2009 were: lack of jobs and increased competition for jobs. There was a general consensus that students who had gained practical experience whilst studying were more likely to be in employment than those without such experience. It was also noted that the number of students on postgraduate courses was increasing whilst numbers on undergraduate courses were in decline.

7.6 With regard to the benefits of placements, the research found that:

- there was a general consensus by education providers that students who had gained practical experience whilst studying were more likely to be in employment than those without such experience;
- graduates perceived having had experience on a placement as a positive factor in achieving employment; 75%<sup>119</sup> of respondents who had undertaken a placement were in planning employment compared to 40%<sup>120</sup> of those who had not undertaken one;
- placements were seen as beneficial in gaining experience of planning work and in making contact with planners and other built environment professionals. However, discussions with education providers indicated that it was becoming increasingly difficult to arrange placements in both public and private sectors;
- employers from both sectors who provide placements stated that these were valuable both to themselves and to the student. However, the recession has had a severe impact on the availability of placements; and
- input from planning practitioners and 'live projects' are seen as increasingly important in linking theory and practice; and preparing students for working life.

7.7 Research findings also indicated that support for students and licentiates varied across public and private sectors. Whilst support for licentiates is widespread it would appear that some employers lack awareness of the APC system and do not support graduates through the APC process.

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<sup>114</sup> 13 out of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>115</sup> 3 out of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>116</sup> 15 out of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>117</sup> 5 out of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>118</sup> 5 out of 20 who answered this question.

<sup>119</sup> 9 out of 12 who answered this question.

<sup>120</sup> 11 out of 27 who answered this question.



## Issues to be addressed

7.8 Issues to be addressed as identified by this research are:

- how to maintain contact with graduates from accredited planning schools and to ensure their early involvement in the life of the Institute in Scotland;
- the feasibility and desirability of undertaking regular surveys of graduate destinations and experience;
- the need to design and provide good quality work placements of different types and duration across the public and private sectors; and
- the need to draw the attention of employers to the APC process and related guidance and to consider the need for further guidance for employers on the APC system.

## Recommendations for Further Investigation and Discussion

7.9 Participants at the seminar were in agreement that the Scottish Planning Education Forum would provide an excellent forum for further discussion of the issues raised. It was recommended that SPEF should establish a short life task force with the remit of considering the findings of the research and to identify and agree an action programme and allocating tasks amongst stakeholders. Such actions might include:

- a 'Buddy Scheme' to be designed and piloted by RTPI in Scotland Chapters, the Scottish Young Planners Network Steering Group and university representatives;
- research on design and delivery of placements;
- an investigation by universities and public and private sector employers to investigate new ways of providing practical experience for students and graduates;
- further consideration of links between universities and local planning departments on 'live projects' and topics for dissertation work;
- an update of the SSDP / Scottish Government 'Establishment Survey' to include information on placements<sup>121</sup>;
- a re-run of the Scottish Government's 'Planning in practice Graduate Programme;'
- increased awareness among graduates of websites, professional networks and events including RTPI in Scotland Chapter events to increase networking opportunities;
- more direct contact between universities and employers and graduates to ensure vacancies are widely advertised through university careers' departments and planning schools using email accounts; and
- consideration by universities on how to improve information sources for students on gaining practical experience and on the different opportunities available for working in planning and related fields.

7.10 Participants at the seminar also recommended that consideration might be given by the RTPI's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee to:

- requiring all final year students to become members of the RTPI;

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<sup>121</sup> Public sector survey announced August 2010.

- providing free membership of the Institute in the year *following* graduation;
- developing a register of placements, internships and voluntary opportunities<sup>122</sup>;
- supplementing the already existing RTPI Facebook group (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=35070190851&ref=ts>) by establishing a Facebook group specifically for planning graduates which could be piloted in Scotland; and
- increasing awareness amongst employers of the available guidance and events on the APC system together with the provision of more targeted guidance for employers on the APC process.

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<sup>122</sup> An informal data base of internships, voluntary experience and shadowing opportunities was set up by the RTPI Young Planners Network in August 2010.

## Annex Two: The Private Sector Employer Questionnaire

### RTPI in Scotland Questionnaire for Employers

1. How many graduate planning positions did you recruit for in the following years?  
If you are unsure please estimate (and indicate that this is an estimate).

	2009	2008	2007	2006
Your office				
Your company				

2. Have you recruited for, or do you intend to recruit for, any graduate planning positions in 2010?

**Yes**

**No** (please go to question 5)

3. Please provide the following details. If you are unsure please estimate (and indicate that this is an estimate).

	Number of graduate planning positions recruited/recruiting for in 2010	When will/did they start
Your office		
Your company		

4. Which of the following areas of planning will the planning graduates you recruit in 2010 be working in?

Community engagement	
Development management	
Development planning	
Education	
Environmental planning	
Heritage/conservation planning	
Housing	
Marine and coastal planning	
Planning policy	
Regeneration	
Research	
Retail	
Rural planning	
Transport planning	
Urban design	
Waste	
Other – please specify	

5. Does your company operate a graduate development programme/training scheme for graduate planners?

**YES**

Does this programme actively support graduate planners through the APC?

YES

NO

**NO**

Does your company actively offer assistance to planning graduates in completing the APC?

YES (Please expand)

NO

6. Does your company provide placements for planning students?

**Yes**

6a. How are these placements arranged?

Placement scheme    *Ad hoc* basis    Other (please detail)

6b. Please indicate which of the following types of placement you offer planning students

School work experience	
Placements prior to students commencing their planning studies	
Short placements during term time	
Paid summer placements	
Unpaid summer placements	
Sandwich year placements	
Other (please specify)	

**NO – is there a reason for this?**

7. Has the recession influenced your decisions regarding placement provision?

**YES**

**NO**

If so please explain how

8. How many people does your organisation employ?

	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-49	50-99	100-249	250-499	500-999	1000+
Office									
Company									

9. How many planners does your organisation employ?

	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-49	50-99	100-249	250-499	500-999	1000+
Office									
Company									

10. As part of this study we are conducting a focus group? Would you be interested in participating in this?

**YES**

**NO**

Please provide the following details

Name	
Position	
Company (and branch if applicable)	
Email	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you would like to make any final comments, or raise anything you feel we have not covered here, please do so below. We are particularly interested in any thoughts you may have on:

- the current employment situation for planning graduates
- the future employment situation for planning graduates
- which areas of planning are most likely to offer employment opportunities for planning graduates
- the value of placements

## Annex Three: The Public Sector Employer Questionnaire

### RTPI in Scotland Questionnaire for Employers

1. How many graduate planning positions did your organisation recruit for in the following years? If you are unsure please estimate (and indicate that this is an estimate).

2009	2008	2007	2006

2. Have you recruited for, or do you intend to recruit for, any graduate planning positions in 2010?

**Yes**

**No** (please go to question 5)

3. Please provide the following details. If you are unsure please estimate (and indicate that this is an estimate).

Number of graduate planning positions recruited/recruiting for in 2010	When will/did they start

4. Which of the following areas of planning will the planning graduates you recruit in 2010 be working in?

Community engagement	
Development management	
Development planning	
Education	
Environmental planning	
Heritage/conservation planning	
Housing	
Marine and coastal planning	
Planning policy	
Regeneration	
Research	
Retail	
Rural planning	
Transport planning	
Urban design	
Waste	
Other – please specify	

5. Does your organisation operate a graduate development programme/training scheme for graduate planners?

**YES**

Does this programme actively support graduate planners through the APC?

YES

NO

**NO**

Does your organisation actively offer assistance to planning graduates in completing the APC?

YES (Please expand)

NO

6. Does your organisation provide placements for planning students?

**Yes**

6a. How are these placements arranged?

Placement *Ad hoc* basis Other (please detail)  
scheme

6b. Please indicate which of the following types of placement you offer planning students

School work experience	
Placements prior to students commencing their planning studies	
Short placements during term time	
Paid summer placements	
Unpaid summer placements	
Sandwich year placements	
Other (please specify)	

**NO – is there a reason for this?**



7. Has the recession influenced your decisions regarding placement provision?

**YES**

**NO**

If so please explain how

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8. How many people does your organisation employ?

1-9	10-19	20-29	30-49	50-99	100-249	250-499	500-999	1000+

9. How many planners does your organisation employ?

1-9	10-19	20-29	30-49	50-99	100-249	250-499	500-999	1000+

10. As part of this study we are conducting a focus group? Would you be interested in participating in this?

**YES**

**NO**

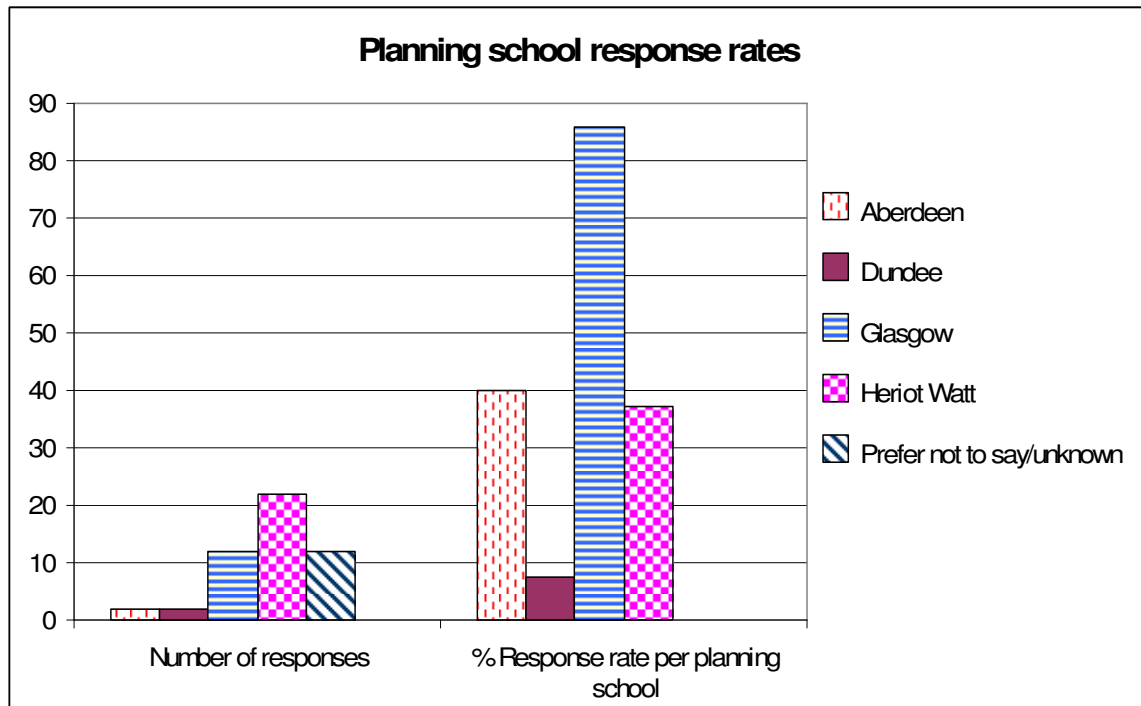
Please provide the following details

Name	
Position	
Organisation	
Email	

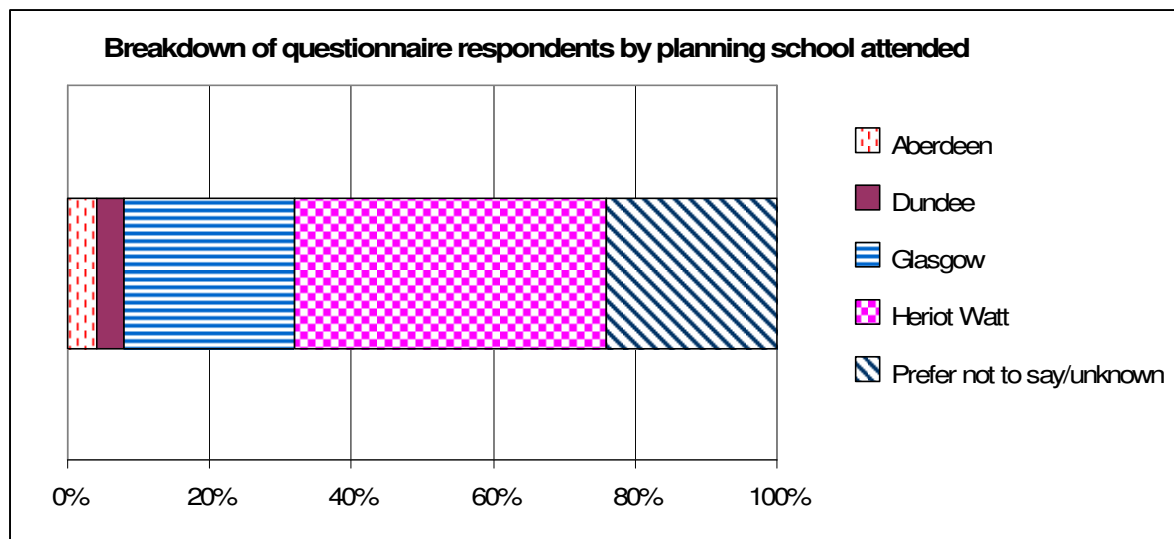
Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you would like to make any final comments, or raise anything you feel we have not covered here, please do so below. We are particularly interested in any thoughts you may have on:

- the current employment situation for planning graduates
- the future employment situation for planning graduates
- which areas of planning are most likely to offer employment opportunities for planning graduates
- the value of placements

## Annex 4: Profile Information for graduate respondents

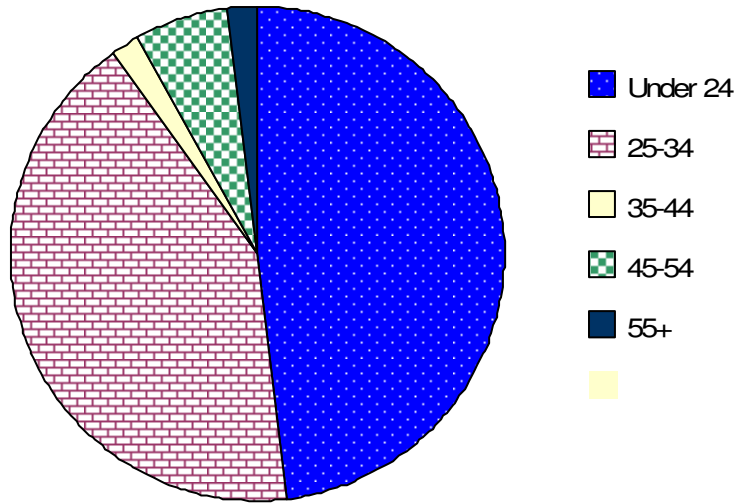


**Graph A.1 Planning school response rates**

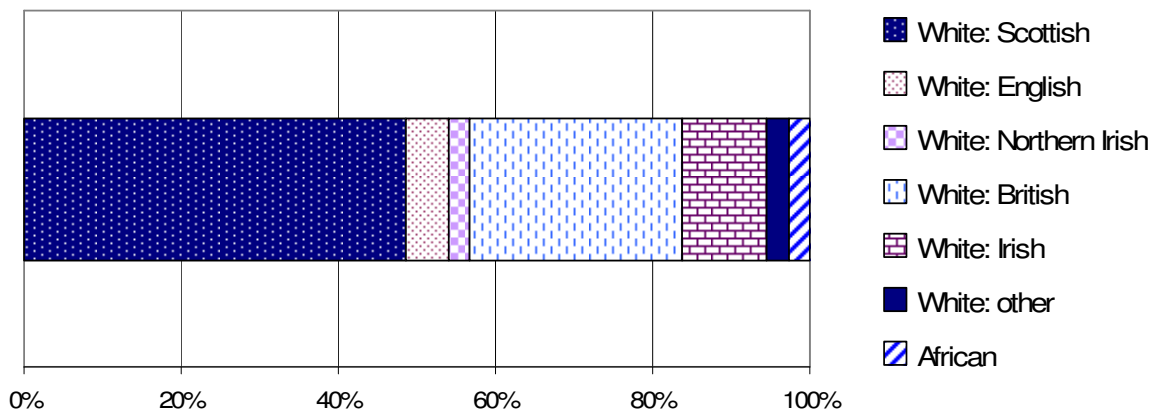


**Graph A.2 Questionnaire respondents by planning school**

Of those who responded and stated their gender 49% were male and 51% were female.



Graph A.3 Age of graduate respondents



Graph A.4 Ethnic background of graduate respondents

## Annex five: Seminar

### Seminar Programme

10.00	<i>Registration with tea/coffee</i>	
10.30	Welcome and Introduction	Veronica Burbridge National Director, RTPI in Scotland (in place of Roger Kelly, Convener Scottish Planning Education Forum)
10.40	The report's results and recommendations	Veronica Burbridge and Joanna Stewart RTPI in Scotland
11.00	2009 Graduate experiences	Sarah Johnston 2009 Graduate
11.10	Discussion	
11.40	<i>Break</i>	
11.55	Employer reflections: experiences from the public sector	Jim Birrell Development Manager, Fife Council
		David Leslie Development Management Manager, City of Edinburgh Council
12.25	Employer reflections: experiences from the private sector	Bob Reid Planning Director, Halliday Fraser Munro
12.40	Discussion	
13.00	<i>Lunch</i>	
13.45	Lifelong Learning: RTPI update	Catherine Shepherd RTPI
13.50	Encouraging Employability	Tony Burton Planning Exchange Foundation
14.00	Discussion Groups	
15.00	Plenary	
15.20	Summary and conclusion	

### Discussion group questions

#### 1. Contact with graduates

A major challenge in carrying out this research was the difficulty in identifying and contacting the 2009 graduates.

- Should we maintain links with graduates from accredited planning schools?
- How might such links be used to benefit graduates, education providers, employers, and the RTPI?
- How might this be achieved?
- Who should lead in maintaining links?

## 2. Placements

Responses to the graduate and employer questionnaires and discussions with education providers all stressed the important role of placements but noted difficulties in provision.

- What kind of placements should be provided?
- What are the difficulties in providing placements?
- How might these be overcome?
- Are there any alternative ways to strengthen practical experience in planning education?
- What further work is needed?

## 3. Action Plan for Scotland

Delivering Better Skills for Better Places' published by the Homes and Communities Agency aims to deliver a unified approach to place-making skills.

- Do we need an Action Plan for Scotland?
- What should be included?
- Which partners should be involved?
- How might this be achieved?

## Attendees

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Kevin McCrudden	Asset Skills
Charles Tibbles	Charles Tibbles Planning
David Leslie	City of Edinburgh Council
John Walls	Convenor RTPI West of Scotland Chapter
Gregor Hamilton	Dundee City Council
Jim Birrell	Fife Council
Libby Porter	University of Glasgow
Karol Swanson	Graduate
Morag McRaith	Graduate
Sarah Johnston	Graduate
Bob Reid	Halliday Fraser Munro
Sarah McIntosh	Heriot Watt University
Lesley Broadley	Improvement Service
Ross Pattenden	Improvement Service/graduate
Les Huckfield	Leslie Huckfield Research
Robert Pickles	Planning Aid Scotland
Tony Burton	Planning Exchange Foundation
Catherine Shepherd	RTPI
Charles Strang	RTPI in Scotland
Joanna Stewart	RTPI in Scotland
Veronica Burbridge	RTPI in Scotland
Rebecca Frost	Scottish Government
Suzanne Stephen	Scottish Government
Zoe McClelland	Scottish Young Planners Network
John Esslemont	South Ayrshire Council
Sue Hudson	Sue Hudson Planning
Bill Lynch	University of Dundee