

## Aims

The purpose of the study was to examine the issues encountered when employing staff on fixed term contracts, with specific focus on motivation and staff engagement.

Gaining a better understanding of the thoughts, attitudes and motivators for these staff was the main objective of this study.

The use of fixed term contracts often forms an integral part of departmental resourcing plans. Common reasons for employing staff on temporary contracts are:

- specific project work
- students on placements/internships
- cover for maternity leave/secondment.

The key focus of this case study were staff employed on internships.

The anticipated outcome was the development of best practice guidelines for line managers and employees.

## Methods

Focused on examining the **positives** with the aim of understanding what works rather than fixing what doesn't work!

Feedback was gathered from 3 different groups:

**Group 1** - staff previously employed on an internship but have since left BU. All are currently in alternative employment

**Group 2** – staff still employed but knew that their fixed term contract would finish on a defined date

**Group 3** - Line managers/supervisors managing staff on internships/placements

## Staff Feedback

- Commitment, ownership and taking responsibility for personal development were common themes that emerged across all groups
- Acknowledgement that a wide range of development opportunities existed but there was often a lack of recognition of their value in terms of personal development benefits
- Recognition that being proactive was essential. A common phrase was *'make the year what you want it to be'*
- Some regret was expressed that opportunities to develop transferable skills were not seized. Staff who did take advantage of opportunities felt they had a head start over other graduates
- 'What's in it for me' should be clearly articulated for new employees. Staff will look to line management to highlight the range of opportunities available.
- Use it as a networking opportunity, being proactive is essential
- Awareness that focus often diminishes towards the end of the contract term and staff do not always engage at an organisation level. Motivation at local level was more consistent
- Staff often feel devalued if not treated equally alongside permanent staff. Feedback suggested that if you do not invest in your temporary workers they will repay you with a lack of investment in the role



## Best Practice

The original aim was to produce practical guidelines for line managers based on the results of the study. Key improvements which are currently being piloted are:

- Clear communication to staff to highlight their responsibilities in getting the most out of the role
- Encourage staff to create development opportunities and support them in that development
- Take time to develop the not just the core skills required but also the transferable skills
- Show commitment to job enrichment. The role needs to be a meaningful experience that enhances future employability and skills
- Encourage staff to complete a skills analysis and undertake a reflective review of their year
- Show your temporary workers that you value them equally alongside permanent staff. They are an asset to the organisation so their content and motivated will ensure that they perform as effectively as possible.

**“Treat employees like they make a difference and they will “**

Jim Goodnight, CEO, SAS