

RIBA



Royal Institute
of British Architects

October 2009

Dear RIBA Member

It's been a strange year so far, and I have heard from few practices that have not needed to reduce staff, revisit their marketing plans, and tighten belts, and I know that the situation remains very challenging for many of you. Work enquiries are thankfully beginning to come back in to our practice, and having approved half of my team's holidays for August, I then found myself struggling to cope with an unexpected but welcome pile of new concept work. I hope that despite continuing difficulties you are also beginning to spot some light at the end of the tunnel.

I am very worried however about the huge number of students who have been unable to find employment. It doesn't seem too long ago that it was almost impossible to find good students to employ, when we welcomed their fresh-out-of-college energy and enthusiasm, their CAD skills which were streets ahead of most of the team, and their willingness to learn and assist.

Over the years I have found that 'home-grown' staff i.e. those whom we have employed and nurtured as students, have been easily tempted to return to the fold to bolster the work force. This has given us continuity of performance and a loyal and willing team. When times are good this has been the best employee pool to dip into for us, and saved us thousands of pounds in agency fees.

I can only begin to imagine the disappointment that this years crop of eager part 1 and part 2 students are feeling, having put their all into their course work, only to find that the profession is apparently turning their backs on them. I set up my practice and worked through the 1990s recession when many bright architecture students turned to other industries, and never came back. Think about it – how many 40-something architects do you know?

We simply must not let another generation disappear. Times are hard, but this cannot be an excuse to ignore the needs of our profession's students, if ways can be found to keep them going until work picks up.

I am also very concerned about reports I hear of students being asked to undertake fee-earning work for practices on an 'internship' or similar basis, without payment. All RIBA chartered practices are required to operate employment policies which follow the principles of the RIBA Employment Policy, which includes a commitment to employing students in accordance with the good practice guidance on the RIBA PEDR website. This guidance includes recommended minimum salary levels.

66 Portland Place
London W1B 1AD UK
Tel +44 (0)20 7580 5533
Fax +44 (0)20 7255 1541
info@inst.riba.org
www.architecture.com

Public Information line
0906 302 0400*

Registered Charity Number 210 566
VAT Registration Number 232 351 891

*call charged at 50p per minute



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

RIBA

If you haven't got sufficient workload to employ students at present then please do consider the RIBA's *Host Practice* scheme. I have heard from one of the partners of a London based practice that it's worked really well for them.

It's very simple – if you have desk space let a student use it FOC to carry out research, enter competitions etc, using your technical library and other resources. They are then in situ if you need a helping hand (for which you need to pay them of course) and if the relationship develops then you have students who will know your systems from shadowing you, and can slot straight in.

Please consider doing this – look at this link for details:

<http://www.architecture.com/EducationAndCareers/HostPractice/HostPractice.aspx>

If you have any other bright ideas, or other pressing issues that I can assist with please let me know.

With kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Duncan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J'.

Jane Duncan
RIBA Vice-President Practice