

# **UTS TOURISM MANAGEMENT MENTORING PROGRAM**

## **BACKGROUND**

In August 2003 the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism will be initiating a new program whereby graduates from the UTS Tourism Management courses will be recruited to act as mentors for existing students in the Bachelor of Management in Tourism. Such a program seeks to establish a strong ongoing link between students and the industry. The need for this has been evident since the demise of Tourism Council Australia (TCA) and the associated Council of Australian Tourism Students (CATS), the student membership program that TCA established and sponsored. The program is also a response to recent course evaluation feedback from Tourism Management students and graduates indicating that the linkages between students and the industry could be improved. Additionally, establishing this program is intended to produce some efficiencies in operating industry-based components of the degree, i.e. Professional Internship and Tourism Management Project, by providing a strong and steady base for placement and project opportunities. This could help alleviate the current problem of many Tourism Management students not completing the course in the minimum time because they have not satisfied their compulsory work experience requirements. Generally, the program should also significantly assist the process of transition from study to the workplace and provide avenues for possible graduate employment opportunities.

## **AIMS**

- To provide a means for UTS Tourism Management students to establish and maintain direct, purposeful contact with the tourism industry throughout their course, as a way of assisting their learning, orientation to the industry, and professional and personal development.
- To provide a means for the tourism industry to foster the development and subsequent retention of graduates within the industry.
- To provide a means for the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism to strengthen its links with the tourism industry, and to enable some ongoing monitoring of graduate outcomes.
- To provide a basis for strengthening the network of UTS Tourism Management graduates and a means for current students to connect with that network.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

In relation to the first of the above aims, the program also seeks to meet the following learning objectives for the student participants:

- To develop a greater awareness of professional practices, behaviour and attitudes through direct, ongoing exposure to the industry.
- To enable students to more readily relate theory to practice by providing them with constant points of contact and a range of experiences within the tourism industry.
- To motivate learning in the students' academic subjects by providing them with a greater appreciation of the professional and industrial environments in which they will be ultimately operating.
- To facilitate a diverse range of industry-based learning opportunities, and thereby make the achievement of specific learning objectives in areas of the course such as Professional Internship and Tourism Management Project somewhat easier.

## **MENTORS**

### **Qualifications**

Mentors will:

- Be graduates from the BA in Tourism Management, BA in Tourism Management/International Studies, Graduate Diploma in Tourism Management or Masters of Management in Tourism Management;
- Be currently working in or associated with the tourism industry or a closely related field;
- Have at least two years work experience within the tourism industry or a closely related field;
- Be located within Sydney or in close proximity;
- Have their participation in the program approved by their employers/managers, especially in relation to providing work experience placements; and
- Be willing and able to devote their time and make a commitment to the program for at least a year.

### **Role/Expectations**

Mentors will generally represent points of contact and sources of advice for students from within the tourism industry. When the program is fully operational they will act in this capacity for any one student from the end of the student's first year of study through to graduation. Specific aspects of their role will include:

- An initial meeting with the student to establish an agreement that defines the relationship and the mutual responsibilities. As a result of this meeting the mentor may opt not to take on a particular student;
- Offering the student at least one work placement<sup>1</sup> of at least two weeks duration (or ten days over a non-consecutive period) with the mentor's organization within the first year of the relationship. UTS's insurance coverage indemnifies the employer during a student's work placement period, and where they are on the employer's premises for any other course related matter, such as completing industry-based project work;
- Providing general advice to students in relation to their course and career development, with particular emphasis on broadening their exposure to the industry and associated professional environment;
- Where feasible and appropriate, inviting the student to attend at least one industry function during the course of the mentoring relationship, and thereby providing the student with an opportunity to broaden their network of industry contacts;
- Facilitating professional internship and Tourism Management Project opportunities, by either providing these directly or advising the student on contacts or sources within

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<sup>1</sup> As a compulsory part of their course students must complete at least 50 days of approved work experience, involving placements in at least two different sectors of the tourism industry. Each placement must be for at least two weeks, or 10 days spread over a longer period of time. These represent minimum requirements and students can complete longer periods of experience with any employer. There are limitations on the type of experience that will be approved, with the general requirement being that the student will be exposed to management issues and tasks. Some limited recognition may be given where the student is involved in basic operational tasks.

- the industry, or elsewhere in the mentor's organization, which might provide such opportunities; and
- Creating awareness of the mentoring program within their organization and with other industry contacts.

The mentor may opt out of the relationship with a particular student at any time, if they consider that the student is not behaving appropriately or in accordance with the original agreement; or if changes to the mentor's work situation make it difficult or inappropriate to continue with the relationship.

The relationship between the mentor and mentee (student) is a personal one and as such should continue if the mentor leaves their current employer but is still working within the tourism industry. This would be contingent, however, on the new employer agreeing to the arrangement.

An individual mentor will be responsible for no more than three students at any one time and can opt to take fewer students. This will be entirely up to the mentor. If a mentor chooses to assume responsibility for more than student, this may be done in a staggered fashion; e.g. the mentor could take on one new student per year, but because each relationship would last two years they would have two students with overlapping periods.

The mentor, and their organization, will get recognition of their contribution by such means as:

- A certificate of appreciation from UTS; and
- Periodic publicity relating to the program, e.g. School newsletter, School website, publicity in trade and general press.

## **MENTEES**

The mentees in the program will be students enrolled in the Bachelors of Management in Tourism (or BA in Tourism Management), including those completing the double degree in International Studies, and Tourism and Hospitality. Students will generally enter the mentoring program at the end of their first year of study, although students may choose to enter the program at a later stage of their course. Where a student has entered the course with substantial advanced standing they may enter the program after one semester of study. Participation in the scheme is entirely voluntary.

Normally students will have the same mentor throughout their course, although they may be given an opportunity to change mentors if they wish to increase their exposure to another sector of the industry. It will be up to the student to make a case for such a change and approving it will depend on the availability of a suitable mentor who is willing to take that student on.

Where a mentor has opted out of the relationship with a student for reasons that do not relate to the student, every effort will be made to connect that student to a new mentor. Where the student has contributed to this decision by the mentor, e.g. through inappropriate behaviour, the student will have to show cause why they should be allowed to continue in the program. A panel of academic staff within the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism will be convened to

review such situations and determine whether the student should be allowed to continue in the program.

## **INITIATING THE PROGRAM**

The introduction of the program is being overseen and managed by Tony Griffin, Senior Lecturer in Tourism Management at UTS. In addition a small working party of graduates has been established to guide the development of the program and assist with its initial implementation. Two meetings of this working party have taken place, with participants including:

Deanna Varga, SCVB (graduate 1994)  
Anna Rattray, ATEC (graduate 1996)  
Derek Sadubin, Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (graduate 1996)  
Jessica Keen, ATC (graduate 1997)  
Natasha Whyte, Australian National Maritime Museum (graduate 1998)  
Mark Jackson, Mawland Hotel Management (graduate 1999)  
Nadine Wood, Visit Britain (graduate 1999)  
Ben Robertson, Starwood Hotels (graduate 2000)

All of the graduates in the working party have discussed the proposal within their respective organizations, who strongly supported it. The program has been designed taking into account feedback from both the graduates and their employers.

Current students have also been consulted on this proposal and indicated strong support and a likely high demand for participation in the mentoring program. In addition, the proposal was also presented to the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism's Teaching and Learning Quality Group. Further modifications to the proposal were made as a result of these discussions.

The initial step in implementing the program will be the introduction of a pilot program in the second semester (August), 2003. Between 20 and 30 students and mentors will be recruited for this. All the mentors will be qualified graduates from the BA in Tourism Management or the Tourism Management/International Studies double degree. Students will be recruited from the current second year of the course. The purpose of the pilot program will be to test and fine-tune the design of the full program, which will then be introduced in 2004. An evaluation of the pilot program will be carried out in February 2004.

To support the introduction of this program a UTS Faculty of Business Curriculum Development Grant of \$9,000 was awarded in July 2003. This grant has enabled the employment of a research assistant (Megan Vacaflones, graduate 1994) who will assist with the process of establishing the program, especially the recruitment of mentors, monitoring the progress of the pilot program and evaluating its results. A subsidiary benefit of establishing this program, is that it will provide data on graduate destinations and career paths. The aim will be to contact as many graduates as possible, so a fairly complete picture of where our graduates have gone should emerge. This will be a very valuable tool for assessing the long term success of the course from the graduates' perspective. The mentoring program will moreover provide a basis for the ongoing monitoring of graduate career outcomes and building the network amongst UTS Tourism Management graduates.

## **SOME KEY OPERATIONAL FEATURES**

- Prior to being assigned to a mentor, students will complete a personal profile form, which provides some personal background details and indicates their goals, interests and expectations in relation to both the mentoring relationship and their subsequent careers. Each student will then be matched up with a mentor who is considered to be compatible with that profile.
- Mentors will also complete a profile form, which provides some personal and professional background details, their expectations and preferences relating to mentees, and an outline of the nature of the opportunities they can provide.
- Individual relationships between mentors and mentees will be defined in terms of an agreement established at the start of the relationship. A standard form of agreement has been prepared. This defines certain compulsory conditions and arrangements, while others may be negotiated to suit the circumstances of the mentor. Mentor's employers must also sign off on this agreement.
- Before signing the above agreement, mentors and mentees must meet up to confirm their compatibility. Any special terms of agreement should be discussed and agreed to at this meeting.
- Students participating in the program will receive a certificate to that effect.
- UTS will conduct at least one function involving mentors and mentees each year. An initial function will be held later this year, during the pilot program period, with another to launch the full program in 2004. Industry sponsorship may be sought to support these functions. Participating students may also be asked to contribute to the cost of holding these functions.
- News relating to the scheme will be placed on the School web site.
- UTS will recruit new mentors each year as more graduates become eligible.
- UTS will maintain a data base relating to the scheme.
- The program will be administered by an academic staff member from the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism, initially Tony Griffin.

## **LONGER TERM PROSPECT**

If the program proves successful it may be extended to tourism industry mentors other than UTS Tourism Management graduates. It may be necessary to move more quickly to this phase if it proves difficult to recruit a sufficient number of mentors from amongst UTS Tourism Management graduates.

**For more information about the Mentoring Program, contact:**

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