



© like working abroad," he says. Another option is to offer them unpaid internships. Michael Sullivan, chair of the RICS' OS and construction faculty, says: "Our policy is to encourage young people to spend time in the building industry, even if at first they are not paid."

The idea is to keep them feeling enthusiastic about the sector, as well as giving them training that will benefit both them and the industry later. He adds that internships can be part-time where employers don't have sufficient workload, which would also allow them to do part-time work elsewhere.

Latham says he understands that many firms are simply not able to take on graduates in any shape or form. So could anything else be done? There are not a huge number of ideas floating around, but

17%

Graduates who owe more than £20,000

a couple of initiatives offer some hope.

Westminster university has launched a scheme that offers training to unemployed built environment graduates.

It won funding for the Build Up scheme from Westminster council and the Higher Education Funding Council for England's Economic Challenge Investment Fund. Trainees with Build Up, which was launched this summer, will receive free training in a wide range of subjects, from Passivhaus construction to accounting and negotiation skills. The programme appears to be the only one of its kind so far, however, and it has places for just 1,500 graduates, so more schemes are needed in order to have a significant impact.

There is also the government's Graduate Talent Pool initiative, launched on

Michael Kleios

Age 21

Debt about £25,000

Degree 2:1 in quantity surveying and construction management from Reading
Ideal first job "I'd like to work in London for a big contractor. I did work experience last year with ISG and absolutely loved it. They said I would be welcome to go back full time this year, as long as the recession didn't get any worse. Two days before my first exam this summer, they retracted the offer."

Message to the industry "Graduates who don't get jobs in construction now are going to change their career paths and the industry will lose us forever."

Plan B Already in action - Kleios has left construction and launched his own business, Cheeky Monkeys, which helps children learn through playing sport. He is already making a profit.

10 August, which aims to encourage UK employers to create internships (if unpaid, the intern would still be eligible for job seeker's allowance) and advertise them for free at the raduatalentpool.direct.gov.uk website. It already has 3,741 internships advertised (including 1,806 paid ones). But towards the end of last month, the site had only five built environment-related vacancies. The employers offering them were London consultant John Rowan & Partners, Cambridge consulting engineer Prior Associates, the Ministry of Justice, the Royal Engineers and Kidderminster-based renewable energy specialist Eco2Solar.

With only these piecemeal measures in place, Watts says what is needed is a "structured programme to help graduates find work in the construction industry". Such a programme could arrange internships and voluntary work, for example, carrying out building projects for charities, and it could put graduates in touch with the areas of the industry that are still busy - or will be soon - such as education, civils and nuclear.

Such a scheme would no doubt help graduates like Olley, who are spending huge amounts of time firing off CVs to companies, becoming more and more disillusioned all the while. Until any such programme materialises, Olley looks set to continue to send those emails. She says: "My friends and family keep reminding me I have a first, and I am ahead of the game. Unfortunately, due to the recession, it just doesn't feel like that."

For more from Building's graduate survey, go to www.building.co.uk/graduates2009

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