# Chapter 14
# Mentoring for Quality Enhancement and Fostering Industry–Ready Graduates in Higher Education

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## ABSTRACT

*Mentoring programs play a valuable role in higher education. Formal mentoring processes and relationships increase the overall perceived quality of an educational program and the professional success of new hotel management graduates. To evaluate an established mentoring program in higher education, a single case study of the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School at Torrens University Australia (BMIHMS @TUA) was developed and that is presented and discussed in this chapter. The evaluation of the mentoring program found that mentoring relationships enable mentees to build knowledge and skills, develop networking opportunities, build confidence, and gain self-reflection abilities. The chapter offers insights and recommendations for higher education institutions to consider when setting up mentoring programs. The knowledge gained through this research will assist higher education institutions to better prepare students for a transition to work through mentoring whilst enhancing the quality of educational courses.*

## INTRODUCTION

The service industry has emerged as a significant economic driver that plays an important role in the development of national and regional wealth (United Nations 2017). In the past ten years, world output and employment have grown from around 65.8% to 68.2% and employment from 54.5 to 60.8% respectively and show no sign of slowing down (International Labor Office, 2015). Significant future employment will be in the service industry as more countries develop their hospitality and tourism capacity.

In particular, the hotel sector in Australia has seen major growth. 2013-14 saw the opening of seventeen properties in Darwin, Canberra, Brisbane and Melbourne which added around 1, 700 new rooms to the existent supply of 87, 795 rooms (Australia Tourism, 2015). Additionally, the national occupancy rate grew 1.5 percentage points to 66.9% at the end of 2014. In 2015, occupancy rate increased to 74.4%, the average daily rate growth 2.1%, and the revenue per available room was 3.7% more (STR Global, 2015). By the end of 2017, Australia's occupancy rate was 81.3%, the average daily rate is \$152.12, and the revenue per available room is \$123.73 (STR Global, 2017). These figures suggest the Australian accommodation sector is performing well, and it is projected that accommodation properties will continue to perform well financially (Deloitee Access Economics, 2017). Therefore, employment in the hotel sector will provide many opportunities for quality higher education graduates.

Employment in the hotel sector requires specific skills, knowledge and capabilities to service diverse needs and wants of customers. However, corporations (such as hotels, retail outlets, financial services and design houses) lack direct control over delivery quality by service employees (Scerri, Jenkins, & Lovell, 2017). Rather than using the traditional in house "apprenticeship" style training, service corporations largely depend on higher education institutions for formal qualifications and training of their employees (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2008). In turn, higher education institutions can develop relationships and processes with industry, including industry-employed alumni, to strengthen the quality and currency of education. Mentoring programs are one-tool institutions can utilise to develop and sustain high-quality education programs.

This chapter explores the role mentoring programs play in higher education programs. An evaluation of the Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School @ Torrens University Australia (BMIHMS @ TUA) mentoring program is developed to offer insights and recommendations for the establishment of mentoring in higher education institutions.

## NEED FOR WORK READY GRADUATES

The corporation, educational service provider and the student or graduate operate in a triadic service relationship. The global employment environment, combined with the growth of knowledge industries, demands services graduates who are technically skilled and ready for work. Employment of such work-ready graduates is high on the agendas of governments in many developed countries, which are strengthening the role of higher education institutions to contribute to the national economy by meeting the needs of employers and the industry (Shah, Nair & Wilson, 2011). Employers expect that, on graduation, students will have a well-developed understanding of the business world (Jackson, Ferns, Rowbottom & McLaren, 2015). A report from the Grattan Institute in 2018 stated, "Although new graduate employment has improved since its 2014 low point, the labour market is still tough for younger graduates".

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