THE PLACEMENT TUTOR’S HANDBOOK

A GUIDE TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
ON ARRANGING PLACEMENTS AND A
COMPRENDIUM OF CURRENT BEST PRACTICE IN THE UK

WHAT IS THIS HANDBOOK ABOUT AND WHO IS IT FOR?

The handbook is divided into 2 sections. Section 1 is designed primarily for staff in higher education institutions new to placement. It looks at the importance of placement in the undergraduate curriculum, its strategic significance in higher education institutions and provides a checklist of things that tutors need to think about before starting out in arranging placements.

Section 2 contains current best practice in subject specific areas written by experts in the field with many years experience of placement. It shows the similarities and differences in placement issues and activities between subjects across the UK.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the second edition capturing best practice as a result of a collaborative partnership. Thanks go to David Pierce for co-ordinating section 2 and to Oliver Fry for editing section 2 and distilling the most common elements into a separate chapter.

Editorial Team for the first edition:

Contributors:

David Pierce, Oliver Fry, Karen Powell-Williams
Inter-disciplinary issues: Malcolm Brewer Previously with ASET
Business and Management: Leslie Chadwick University of Bradford
Humanities: Monica Jalloq University of Aberystwyth
Social Sciences: Maggie Paddon Smith Previously Middlesex University
Art and Design: Richard Morris Previously Brunel University
Science: Hazel Peck Sheffield Hallam University
Engineering & Technology:
Mathematics and IT: Ray Robinson University of Ulster
The Built Environment: Colin Yarwood Nottingham Trent University
Hospitality and Tourism: Isabel Hodgson

All rights reserved NCWE. With the exception of the Health and Safety Guidelines, no part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

CONTENTS

SECTION 1: HANDBOOK

Foreword – rationale for the handbook and implications of placement for HEIs
Introduction
Objectives and benefits of placements
Some inter disciplinary issues:

Background
Learning and Objectives
Preparation
Assessment and accreditation
Monitoring
Management
Health and Safety
Equal Opportunities and Disabled students
Payment, Tax and National Insurance
Overseas Placements
Insurance
Work Permits for incoming overseas students

Outline of placement activities:

Institutional decisions for placement
Role of placement and employability
Assessment and Accreditation
Informing potential applicants
Role of different departments

Checklist for staff new to placement
Preparing students
Finding employers
Preparing employers
Role of academic staff
Preparing academic staff
Students on placement
Returning to university

Code of Good Practice:
Definition of quality work experience
Criteria for good practice – HEI
Criteria for good practice – Employers

Health and Safety Guidelines from UCEA
Glossary of Terminology

SECTION 2: COMPENDIUM OF BEST PRACTICE

Business and Management
Humanities
Social Sciences
Art and Design
Science
Engineering and Technology
Mathematics and Information Technology
The Built Environment
Hospitality and Tourism

Further Reading
Contacts and Links

SECTION 1

HANDBOOK
FOREWORD

The rationale for the handbook and implications of placement for HEIs.

The rationale for this handbook can be understood in the context of the expansion of quality work experience in the undergraduate curriculum.

The Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education (Dearing Report) of July 1997 recommended that all students should experience the world of work as part of their studies. In 1998 NCWE was set up with Government funding partly to promote this, alongside a number of work experience projects in higher education. In recent years there has been a demand for increased opportunities for work experience by students and the Government has made it their policy that all students should have some form of work experience before they graduate. The drivers for this are the economic forces of global competitiveness for the UK, the downsizing of the traditional graduate recruiters and the need to raise quality in smaller businesses in supply chains. This suggests that the future of graduate employment will lie increasingly within SMEs.

The experiences of the Shell STEP programme, and of generations of sandwich placement students show that undergraduates can be of real financial benefit to small businesses. Alongside this, the abolition of student maintenance grants and the introduction of tuition fees means that students need to finance their studies. Earning whilst learning is a way of meeting that. Students know that quality work experience will help them get better jobs on graduation (this is supported by research from the Association of Graduate Recruiters) and employers expect students to have had some work experience by the time they graduate. Moreover, small businesses cannot afford the time to train graduates after employment; they need graduates who are employable, with key skills already developed. Work experience or placement can provide this development.

Placements which are embedded in the curriculum have many advantages. They are not an add-on burden to students, but are given time and recognition in some form. Students need to be carefully prepared before going on placement to develop their key skills (such as communication and team skills), course related skills, personal skills (such as time management) and business awareness. They also need to reflect on, and learn from, their experience. In addition, embedded placements foster the application of academic skills (such as analysis and critical evaluation) in the work place. They are also supervised, assessed and accredited (whether as part of a degree classification or as a stand-alone element) which increases their value to students. There is likely to be increasing pressure from students to accredit their work experience.

These processes require a large investment in staff development and in staff time if students are to make the most of the placement. Staff need to understand the skills that are embedded within the curriculum and how they are developed and applied, as well as those that are being developed on placement. Students need to be prepared to maximise their learning whilst on placement, and to reflect and learn from their experiences.

The implications for higher education institutions are considerable. Employability of graduates has become an important debate. HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council for England) is about to establish a National Co-ordinating Team that will work alongside the Generic Centre of the Learning and Teaching Support Network which will have the remit of
embedded employability more firmly in the curriculum. In addition, the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) has produced guidelines for HEIs on organising placements and the introduction of Progress Files in the autumn of 2002 will also impact on this agenda. There are, therefore, profound implications for the Careers Service and the integration of career management into the curriculum. These forces foster the student learning approach and the move towards entrepreneurialism within the economy.

Institutions need to acknowledge these drivers and levers. They must take ownership of the internal developments necessary to keep pace with the gathering momentum in the employability agenda for higher education.

Section 1 of this Handbook provides a wealth of information for staff new to placement. It describes what is involved and how to go about it. Alongside this, NCWE has developed some supporting materials; training materials for academic staff; the Focus on Work Experience magazine, published jointly with CSU; a Student Guide on Work Experience and a Company Guide for employers looking to take on undergraduates. We anticipate publishing additional guidelines and more detailed information on specific areas which are not covered in detail here, in the future.

Section 2 contains best practice by leading practitioners in 9 subject areas in the UK today. There is a wealth of knowledge contained here which provides a reference point for those who are starting out in the field, reassurance for those who are already experienced and a source of ideas for those who wish to revisit and refresh their own institutional and individual practices.

Revised by:
Liz Rhodes,
October 2002

INTRODUCTION

David Pierce

That students can benefit substantially from work experience now seems to be generally accepted. The case for such experience and for facilitating the learning that can be derived from it has been put persuasively in numerous reports during recent years and the National Council for Work Experience was established to expand and extend good practice across higher education. The Lee Harvey report, Work Experience, Expanding Opportunities for Undergraduates, provides a comprehensive overview of the many different forms of work experience available to students and for ten years and more the DfEE, now DfES, alongside a range of university partners has been funding work designed to expose and improve the learning potential of such experiences and the future employability of the students involved.

There is a current emphasis on developing the learning gained through term-time part-time work (TPT). In exploring the opportunities in this area, the links with good recording achievement processes, the importance of encouraging self-responsibility for learning and then the wider implications for CPD and lifelong learning become obvious. Yet the difficulties of translating the rhetoric of individualised learning into some sort of useful reality are only now being confronted. In spite of the growth of ICT and a widening recognition that
the whole of life’s experience, in work, at school, in leisure activities is a vast learning resource there are tensions between the various parties involved. How do we motivate people to learn and to take advantage of the help available to them? How much does an element of structure add to the effectiveness of learning? How do we encourage the development of more flexible qualifications? How do we reconcile the valid differences in the interests of employers, accrediting agencies, learning providers and others to create really genuine partnerships? These and many other questions need much further exploration and answers if significant progress is to be made towards some sort of Lifelong Learning culture. On the other hand they are the kinds of questions that have been debated for many years amongst those who have been involved in the development of good work placement practice within higher education. The contributions in this booklet demonstrate that problems still abound. They also make clear that there is a wealth of experience and good practice upon which to build. Newcomers to the problems of developing more learner centred approaches and recognising the learning to be gained through work experience will benefit from that experience which emanates from the growth of sandwich and vocational courses during the last twenty-five years.

It is important to emphasise that the contributions that follow are about work placements. They are not about work based learning or even work experience. They are not about recording achievement or independent learning. They are not even primarily about qualifications or a particular form of course structure. On the other hand all these subjects are entirely relevant to the contributions and it is difficult sensibly to discuss one without immediately confronting another. However, the term work placement itself defines the ground being covered and raises some of the difficult issues. The immediate and most powerful implication of the term is that others are assigning students to places. The feeling conjured up by the process is that others are responsible for the student, that they are at best trainees and that something is being done to them, rather than learners with the capacity to choose and determine their own preferences. It is reminiscent of a model of education that is highly structured and exists to put knowledge into the empty vessels for which the system has a responsibility. Of course the reality is quite different from that caricature and the emphasis is on learning partnerships with all concerned sharing responsibilities. Nevertheless it remains the case that the students concerned are engaged in a course of learning based in the academic institution and embark from it to receive additional, sometimes ill-defined benefits through their work placements. So that is our starting point, not the broader issue of work experience that includes experience gained from work without any involvement by an academic institution. That broader perspective has recently been described and discussed by Lee Harvey in his recent report. Nor is the starting point about how learning from and through work might be stimulated, captured and recognised. For a comprehensive review of all the recent developments associated with that, and a discussion of outstanding issues, the DfEE publication A Review of Work Based Learning provides a wealth of information.

The starting point for this booklet is perhaps to recognise first of all that approximately 100,000 students each year are engaged in a form of work placement. This is a significant proportion of the total student population and a growing one. Secondly, that the practice of arranging work placements for students is not new even though there has been recent high-profile emphasis on the benefits of such activity. Consequently there is a wealth of experience upon which to draw. On the other hand, as the following contributions demonstrate, the current practice is varied and there are many questions that demand answers if the practice is to be extended more widely.

The contributions that follow in Section 2 are personal ones. Each contributor has a long record of involvement in the organisation of work placements and they are representative of a
broad spectrum across all universities and disciplines. The subject groupings are not random and echo the categories included each year in the Association of Sandwich education and Training (ASET) Handbook. Some contributors focus on practice in a particular course as an example of practice in the discipline, others survey their subject more widely. In no case however is the intention to present a statistically valid piece of research about current practice across the whole of a discipline. That would require much more time and effort. Rather these contributions provide snapshots of current practice. There are descriptions of what is done well, indications of different views and approaches and many issues for discussion. The contributions cover the following discipline areas.

Business and Management
Humanities
Art and Design
Social Sciences
Science
Engineering
Maths and Information Technology
The Built Environment

Not surprisingly, there is much practice that is common across all the disciplines, some interesting differences of emphasis and a number of similar problems. For example, in Art & Design at Brunel, the responsibility for finding placements is laid firmly and formally upon the students. Their responsibility is not emphasised so much in other universities. There are different views about the freedom that students have in choosing suitable placements with some universities insisting that they accept the first offer and others more concerned with creating an effective match. Approaches to assessment differ, as does the attention paid to student preparation. And yet, in spite of the fact that placement objectives and benefits are set out in all the contributions, there is a feeling that one or two fundamental questions are repeatedly raised. Is the purpose of work placements as clear as it can be and is it possible to define a common purpose across all disciplines? Has the shift from the experience of a work placement to learning from that experience been sufficient bearing in mind the long history of practice described in these contributions? Does structure help learning and if so what kind of structure should be developed to facilitate learning from work placements? Are the problems associated with assessment raised by these contributors soluble? All these questions, and many more, are valid in the context of work placements. They become even more difficult and important in the broader context of ‘term-time part-time work’ and work based learning in general. And yet if lifelong learning is to be more than participation in traditional educational models or the pursuit of qualifications and more about motivating people to learn from their continuing experiences answers will be needed.

THE OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS OF PLACEMENT

The three main stakeholders in the higher education system – students, employers and higher education institutions – benefit in a number of ways through being part of a properly managed placement process. These are summarised below:

Students

Since the introduction of tuition fees and the phasing out of the maintenance grant, undergraduate students are now paying customers, who demand from the Higher Education system not only a solid academic education, but also a tangible reward on their investment in
terms of increased employability. Work placements are one of the most effective ways of achieving this, while broadening and enhancing the experience of higher education.

The aims of the placement period are to:

- Link theory and practice by providing practical experience of work to reinforce and complement the academic components of the course of study
- Obtain source material for a project or dissertation which forms part of the academic assessment of the placement period
- Learn new technical skills
- Reinforce and complement existing skills
- Develop and exercise thinking in a practical context
- Encourage self-development through critical reflection
- Enter into, and identify with, a professional role
- Acquire knowledge, key skills and competences relevant to the subject discipline, workplace and the later stages of the course of study

Additional beneficial outcomes include:

- Increased motivation towards studies
- Improved time management
- Gaining a ‘foot in the door’
- Job application skills
- Self presentation skills
- Concrete work experience on the CV
- Learning about the workplace in a ‘safe’ environment
- Enabling a more informed career choice to be made on graduation
- Gaining knowledge of the business environment
- Developing entrepreneurial skills that may enable graduates to start their own business
- Gaining knowledge of the industrial sector
- Easing the financial burden of studying full-time
- Developing personal maturity

Specific skills and attributes that can be developed are:

- Communication skills
- Numerical skills
- Report writing
- Critical evaluation/reflective skills
- Interpersonal skills
- IT skills
- Analytical skills
- Information gathering and analysis
- Problem solving

**Employers**

Few would disagree that one of the main purposes of HE is to prepare students for working life. Learning is now central to competitiveness and economic development. Employers
want new recruits who will add value immediately, people who are adaptive and adaptable and who have learned how to be analytical, critical, reflective team players. Most employers now look for evidence of some form of work experience when recruiting new graduates and want them to have some commercial understanding.

For the employer, work placements can add value in the following ways:

- Gaining an intelligent, motivated, cost-effective labour resource with valuable skills, knowledge and fresh ideas
- A good return on investment: for every £1 spent on student on a student placement by the employer, the average return is £6 (STEP summer placements 1999)
- Flexibility in staff development
- Flexibility of availability (students may be available at times of the year when need is greatest)
- Projects undertaken that would otherwise take valuable time from full time employees
- Existing staff gain the chance to find out what is currently being taught in higher education institutions
- Permanent staff gain opportunities to develop supervisory skills
- Industry can benefit from the latest research through closer links with HEIs
- Recruitment and training costs are cut through employing placement students when they graduate.
- Temporary staff shortages can be overcome at low cost
- Companies gain favourable publicity as a result of placements and sponsorship arrangements with the academic community

None of the above is incompatible with the student receiving excellent training and satisfying all academic requirements. However, the experience gained by the students will vary dramatically between large and small companies, between companies with various products and between companies in different countries as increasing numbers of students travel abroad for their placements.

**Higher Education Institutions**

It is now a stated objective of the Government that every student should be given the opportunity to undertake high quality work experience. Higher Education Institutions need to respond to this challenge if they are to satisfy the demands of both employers and students. But universities and colleges themselves stand to benefit in a multiplicity of ways through increasing the number of quality placements.

- The contracts generated with industry are useful in developing collaborative income from research projects, custom-built training courses and consultancy
- Close contact with industry helps staff to keep up to date with new technologies and working practices. This can be used to review and refresh the curriculum and bring it in line with the needs of the economy and student demand
- Staff themselves gain the opportunity to undertake placements in industry through the contacts generated
- It helps future student recruitment, as students now seek out work experience opportunities when applying to Higher Education Institutions
- Work placements can complement and enhance the academic programme carried out at the university.
• Students can mature and develop the key skills while on placements which make them better learners and contributors in the academic environment
• It is an official requirement that Key Skills are built into academic curricula. Work placements explicitly enhance key skills development.
• The performance indicators developed by HEFCE measure employability. Students with quality work experience are more employable (Bowes, L and Harvey L. 1999) and at better salary levels (AGR 1999)
• A range of requirements and funding initiatives being introduced by QAA (Progress Files) and HEFCE (Subject Centres, National Co-ordinating Team on Employability) are influencing the importance being attached to work experience in the curriculum.

SOME INTER-DISCIPLINARY ISSUES

Malcolm Brewer

Introduction

This chapter is based upon thirty years’ experience with sandwich courses. For seven years these courses were primarily in Mathematics, Computing and Statistics but in the remaining years they covered the full range of disciplines as a result of the writer’s deep involvement with The Association of Sandwich Education and Training (ASET). Members of ASET have shared their experiences and anecdotes, some of which are reproduced in the following. The comments are intended to be applicable to all disciplines unless otherwise stated

BACKGROUND

The term ‘work placements’ applied to undergraduate education can be interpreted in an increasing number of ways. There are generic issues which apply to all, or perhaps nearly all, models and there are specific issues applicable to just a few of them. The current range of work placements covers those that are a necessary and integrated part of the course to those that are short, vacation or term time part time jobs.

Harvey, Geall and Moon (Work Experience – Expanding opportunities for undergraduates – Centre for Research into Quality, 1998) divide work experience into three broad areas. These are, undergraduate work experience as part of a programme of study, (which includes sandwich courses, professional practice etc), organised work experience external to the programme of study, (which includes structured vacation work (e.g. STEP, work shadowing etc) and ad-hoc work experience external to the programme of study. The latter includes term time part time work, voluntary work, traditional vacation work etc. Of the one million plus full-time students currently in higher education there are approximately 300,000 in the first category, 10,000 in the second and at least 600,000 in the third. These figures are an indicative rather than a definitive guide to the extent of work experience being obtained within the student population! All of these placements offer learning opportunities but the amount, the range and the depth of learning opportunity will vary considerably.

A number of issues to be dealt with are undoubtedly ‘academic’ in nature, e.g. specifying learning objectives, assessment, accreditation etc., and some are ‘administrative’, e.g. the job search, arranging interviews, the letter writing and filing etc. Crucial to the success of work placements is that skills from both these areas are necessary to manage the process
effectively. The balance between them will be determined by the position of the placement within the curriculum, the spread of learning objectives and the degree of involvement of the university in such activities as ‘Preparation for Placement’ and ‘Reflection on the Learning Obtained’.

The recent establishment and growth of ‘Job Shops’ in some universities is an interesting development and it remains to be seen whether they will continue to provide only an administrative service of brokering jobs for students or whether they will engage in some of the activities related to the learning from work experience.

Recently, the MaPPiT project, based in the School of Computing and Mathematics at Huddersfield University, has provided, through use of a ‘Business Process Reengineering’ technique, a very useful analysis of the various skills required in developing work experience opportunities for students. As well as giving a comprehensive breakdown and listing it can be used as a basis for identifying coherent groups of skills for the provision of training courses.

**LEARNING AND OBJECTIVES**

The learning that is potentially available from a work placement can be categorised into four headings, namely Course Related skills, Key Skills, Personal and Career Management skills. Different students in the same cohort of a course will have available to them very different mixes of opportunities from these four areas.

There are three distinct partners involved with placements, the students, the universities and the ‘host organisation’. The motivation and objectives of these three partners in work placements may be quite different and in fact the dynamic tensions created by some of the differences can be most interesting. It is important that each partner is aware of the objectives of the other partners. The clash which can occur between the need of an employer to complete a project by a deadline, the so called productivity imperative, and the need of a student to learn from the experience could be one illustration of the above.

In these circumstances a careful analysis of why universities are involved with work placements, and the resources they provide to meet their objectives, is important. For example, does the university accept that preparation of students for the world of work is part of its remit? Is their aim to develop course-related skills or related professional skills (and are these different?)? Is their purpose to develop skill sets which are complementary to those intellectual ones traditionally associated with undergraduate study? Is the intention to give students a framework for their personal and career development which they can manage themselves? The answers to these questions provide an indication as to how universities can support this activity and where the initial motivation for provision lies.

It seems clear that the main responsibility for supporting the provision of course related skills through work placements has to originate in the course area or teaching department of the university. The development of key skills has been the focus of much recent development work and a number of universities have constructed modules that address these issues. It is a moot point whether such modules should exist in a ‘stand alone’ way (in which case there is a danger of marginalisation and a return to the peripheral ‘General Studies’ of the 70’s), or whether they should be embedded in the course in as many aspects of the curriculum as possible. The latter, perhaps, should be the ambition.

Personal skills, or an appreciation of those that a student has or has not, arise from a developing ‘self-awareness’ which all students are encouraged to develop. Traditionally
Personal Tutors and Counsellors have fitted the role of providers of these skills but following the rapid growth of student numbers in the late 80’s and 90’s it is debatable whether these roles still exist and whether they are effective. There is no obvious formal mechanism pointing to a developmental or a delivery system of this range of skills.

Career management has, like Key Skills, been the subject of recent reports and a number of Careers Services within particular universities have been active in the development and delivery of relevant units and modules. Many of these appear to be voluntary and thus, by definition, additional to the curriculum rather than a part of it. These university attitudes may have to change if the learning opportunities from term time part time work, in which a vast majority of students partake, are to be maximised. Again, like Key Skills, the ultimate aim must be to embed the provision of career management skills in the course. The resources of most Careers Services seem totally inadequate to meet the needs of all students in their university.

PREPARATION FOR PLACEMENT

Nearly all of the research to date has pointed to the pivotal role of the preparation of students for placement. This topic is often confused with student preparation for finding a job. The latter includes letter writing, constructing CVs, interview preparation. In student preparation for placement the priority is to help students to think carefully, preferably with guidance, about what sort of learning objectives may be available from placement, how they might achieve them and how they can evidence that achievement.

For many students without previous work experience, other than the most casual, they may have no familiarity with the culture of the world of work and how different that is from their previous experiences in school or the early years of university. The concept of unequal members of a group making unequal contributions to a project controlled by time or financial pressure is not one common in academia! Identifying people who can help and the resources available can be rather more difficult in the work place than going to see the tutor.

Reacting to changing situations can be one of the most stimulating intellectual challenges of the work place as well as one of the most frightening. For many students at the more casual end of the work placements spectrum their motivation may be strongly influenced by financial considerations, or even necessity, but a shift of attitude towards the learning possibilities may be extremely beneficial, particularly in the longer tem.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION

The topics of assessment and accreditation have often been confused or discussions on one of them have been based on assumptions of the other, some of which have been invalid. A classic example of the latter is the sterile debate on assessment which has assumed that the output of measure of student performance on work placement would be a mark, a number, which would be put into the simple number crunching system so common in producing university degree classifications!

Over the last ten years much innovative and interesting work has been done on assessment methodology leading to some excellent models. The authors of these systems have then run into some difficulties in implementing them because the accreditation options have not been sufficiently thought through and accepted within the university. Different accreditation systems have very different implications for the assessment methodology. A lot of time and
effort can be saved by first considering and debating the options for accrediting the learning derived from placements.

Accreditation can be covered either internally by a university or externally. The internal options are firstly, somehow to ‘count’ it towards the classification of the degree and secondly, to give a separate certificate or diploma, against specific criteria, to recognise achievement, or the lack of it. Both of these options are reasonably well established for students on sandwich courses. The external options are to make use of an outside body which has an appropriate qualification or qualification structure. Currently the two largest and best known are City and Guilds, and their higher, professional qualifications of which the Licentiateship is the most appropriate for sandwich course placements, and EDXEL, which makes use of Vocational Qualifications some of which were developed following the introduction of the National Vocational Qualifications.

The Professional Bodies give credit for work placements. The organisation and supervision may need to satisfy specific criteria and conditions for the placements to count within their own Membership or Qualification structures. Some universities choose to work very closely with some Professional Bodies whilst others are more distant. The degree of involvement of the university in the required processes of the professional body will depend on the proximity of this relationship and that is often determined at departmental or course level.

If the students themselves are to become a more powerful body, perhaps in encouraging their universities to be more proactive in recognising work based learning, then one way would be to create another kind of qualification framework. Perhaps one which was truly employer-led would allow not only recognition of the many and varied outputs from undergraduate work based learning but would also be a framework for accrediting the achievements from their career, professional or life long learning activities. The employer recognition of any such framework would need to be rather more tangible than the lip service that is sometimes offered in this area!

Once the accreditation policy has been established then serious consideration can be given to the assessment methodology. Included in the alternatives for assessment are those which revolve around objectives, those around portfolio development and some interesting ones which depend largely on self-assessment. Although most developmental work was done in the sandwich course arena some recent work at Napier University, based on original work by Iain Marshall of that University, has extended the domain to more casual forms of work experience including term-time part time work.

All of the above, and other, options have their different emphases but all come down to the collection of evidence and how and who assesses that evidence. The three principal partners, namely the student, the employer and the university will provide most of the evidence and so the debate really centres on the form the evidence will take and how that evidence is judged.

**MONITORING**

For some, but not all, types of work experience the university will need to monitor the work placement. “Visiting Tutor” is an oft-used term for the person with that specific responsibility.

It is foolish to be prescriptive about the number of times a student should be visited. New placements, problematic placements, small companies, may well need more than a trusted and
well-used employer. If the university is receiving a fee for the students whilst they are on
placement, as it does for sandwich students, then that should influence the decision. The
university has an interest in the learning potential of the placement and the learning
achievement of the student as well as the more general but obviously important, health and
safety questions. So it is incumbent on the university, or the relevant part of it, to determine a
policy on the minimum number of visits ALL students should receive on those courses within
its purview.

MANAGEMENT

The management of any activity provides leadership, a focus and resources for that activity
and work placements for students are no different. This general principle applies whether the
university has a strong central management style or, the rather more fashionable, devolved
style. There appears to be some confusion in a number of universities as to whether
responsibility for the placement of students and related activities is an academic function, thus
falling into a well defined structure for discussing and debating academic issues, or whether it
falls into ‘External Relations’. In the latter case the structures are less well established and
often without clear leadership particularly when a specific issue is some distance from those
which normally fall into this area. Whichever way a university decides to handle the
placement function there needs to be a clear and well understood statement as to where the
policies are determined and where the responsibilities rest for the decisions which need to
made.

It is a widely held view amongst university staff involved in the placing of sandwich students
that this is not an activity valued highly by the university. This is demonstrated by a lack of
leadership at a senior level and the level of resourcing which is often inadequate and rarely
matches the resource input to the university generated by tuition fees and through the Funding
Council by the sandwich students whilst on placement.

If the university has an involvement in any aspect of arranging or accrediting work experience
for its students then the university will inherit responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities
may be tenuous duties of care, some may be firm legal duties. In fact it is important to write
out what responsibilities the students have with respect to obtaining and undertaking a work
placement and what responsibilities the university has. These can be incorporated into “Good
Practice” guides but there are distinctions between “necessary” and “recommended” and these
need to be made clear. One contentious area for sandwich students is how they respond to job
offers, particularly when the “market” for jobs is tight. Whether students should be obliged to
accept a placement if one is offered to them, or at least put under some pressure to do so, or
whether they are free agents to accept or reject offers is really the core of this debate.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

An aspect that has legal implications is the liability of a university for the health and safety of
its students on placement if those students are sandwich students. The publication, Health and
Safety Guidance for the Placement of HE Students – UCEA1999 is recommended reading for
further details. The major liability, in English legislation, under various Health and Safety at
Work Acts, falls quite clearly on the placement employer but because sandwich students pay a
fee, or have a fee paid on their behalf, to the university for their placement year the university
cannot avoid certain limited responsibilities. Basically the university has a responsibility not
to place students knowingly into an unsafe environment and this is achieved through a short
questionnaire. Answers must be confirmed by selective visits. Some knowledge of Health and
Safety issues is required but these are not onerous and can be obtained via a short training
session. Certain, but limited, responsibilities fall on the shoulders of the university representative who visits that student on placement as well as obliging such visits to be made. Those universities currently debating and deciding what support can be given to students on placement, particularly those away for a full year would be well advised to give some consideration to this aspect.

This is but one topic which is raised when “staff development and staff training” is discussed and although some universities and some organisations have made an attempt to address these topics much more could and should be done for university staff.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DISABLED STUDENTS**

Equal opportunities legislation applies to employment of all students as it does to any other employee or potential employee. Students need to be aware of the advice and help they can obtain if they feel they are being discriminated against and HEIs will not want to support organisations that behave in discriminatory or illegal ways.

**PAYMENT, TAX AND NATIONAL INSURANCE**

Students on project work which is a compulsory part of their course are sometimes unpaid. However, placements where students contribute to the organisation’s objectives or profitability should be paid at a proper rate for their level of contribution. Students on sandwich placements do not receive a maintenance grant and must be paid properly for their work. The ‘going rate’ for sandwich placements can be determined by enquiring locally.

The national minimum wage is £4.85 an hour for workers aged 22 or over, and £4.10 an hour for those aged 18-21, however sandwich placements are exempt from the national minimum wage legislation.

Students are generally subject to the same tax and national insurance as any other employee.

**OVERSEAS PLACEMENTS**

It is estimated that between five and ten percent of sandwich students have their work placements outside of the UK and there must be a significant number of students who choose to obtain work experience overseas before or following their higher education. It is difficult to generalise about some of their problems because issues that are relevant to certain parts of the world are completely irrelevant to others. For example students working in the European Union do not need work permits or visas but almost certainly do need this documentation for other countries.

Overseas placements can arise in a number of ways, through formal, funded programmes, such as LEONARDO in Europe, through inter-university exchanges, through personal contacts of staff and students or through the recruitment strategies of particular companies. In almost all countries there will probably be a pattern of work experience or placements for local university students and so the first imperative is to discover the extent of this activity, how it works, who drives it and if it has a similar culture to that in the UK.
For example, in France students carry significantly more responsibility than UK students do for arranging their ‘stage’ and thus staff in the various French Higher Education Institutions will carry significantly less responsibility than those in the UK. Another illustration would be the USA in which co-operative education students will often do a number of four month placements as opposed to the common UK arrangement of one twelve month placement. Superimpose this pattern onto the higher education system in the US, which on the whole is much broader and not as deep as that in the UK and this could lead to a UK student having a singularly undemanding experience in the US unless they were forewarned and forearmed. This generalisation is in no way universal and the two largest exception areas are in Hospitality Management and Business Studies in which there are many demanding and stimulating opportunities.

It is thus of high importance that if placements are being arranged by a third party, such as an exchange university, personal contact, that these are as well informed as possible about the students abilities, expectations, course requirements.

LEONARDO has, like all such programmes, got its advantages and disadvantages. Some authors, and particularly those with an involvement with Brussels, would have us believe it is all embracing but it has been estimated that only about twenty percent of non-UK European placements are connected to it. The EAIE (European Association for International Education) has a special interest group SWING (Stage, Work Internships Networking Group) and it estimates that over fifty thousand European students cross national borders each year for the purpose of a work placement. France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden all have established work placement systems and a number of other countries are developing theirs. All of these systems are similar in principle to the sandwich course system in the UK but all contain differences that can create real obstacles when placing UK students there. The pay rates in Germany can be low because there is an implicit assumption that the student is living at home; French companies often insist on a ‘Convention de Stage’ even though it is held to have no legal basis when one of the signatures is not French, and so on.

Subsequent to a growing awareness of health and safety issues for UK students in the UK there has been widespread demand for a publication addressing similar issues for students going abroad. This has been discussed at length but not provided because of the multiplicity of legal systems across the many different countries students want to go to in order to work. A number of universities have adapted the UK procedure, referred to earlier, if only to satisfy themselves that they are making a rudimentary risk assessment and fulfilling a duty of care.

**Insurance for placements abroad**

One aspect which is crucial to all students working abroad is that they should be adequately insured. This is an absolute requirement for students working in North America, and it is part of the process of obtaining the necessary work permit, but for students working in Europe it can easily be overlooked. E111 is often quoted as being sufficient but is often not so. E111 only provides in each EU country that provision which citizens of that country receive and only in matters concerned with health. Thus any students needing medical assistance in France will have to pay a small proportion of the cost, any student who is unfortunate enough to become seriously ill or have a bad accident and needs an air ambulance to come home will have a very big bill to pay. In the ultimate if a student dies whilst abroad then the relatives will have a particularly large bill in order to transport the remains back to the UK. E111 has its limitations. A comprehensive insurance policy covering medical costs, accident costs, personal possessions and luggage, tickets and passport and, seldom used but very important,
third party liability cover is a strongly recommended item for all students obtaining work experience overseas.

There are a number of agencies and organisations that can be very helpful and these include CIEE (Council for International Education), BUNAC (British Universities North America Club), EAIE, ASET as well as the Careers Services in most universities.

Work Permits for Incoming Overseas Students

Increasing numbers of overseas students are studying in UK HEIs for a period of time. Sometimes they may be offered the opportunity to do a work placement as part of their course of study. Overseas students from non-EEA countries no longer require a work permit to take part-time and vacation work. A number of restrictions apply: the student must not work more than 20 hours a week during term time, except where a work placement is to be undertaken as a necessary part of the course of study as agreed by the education institution. The student should not pursue a career by filling a permanent full time vacancy. Incoming overseas students on sandwich courses no longer need their university to apply to the Overseas Labour Service, they merely require a confirmatory letter that they are a sandwich student at a named HEI.

Further clarification can be obtained from the Home Office.

OUTLINE OF PLACEMENT ACTIVITIES

This section summarises much that is contained in Section 2 of this document. It is intended to be a checklist for those new to placement, as a focus for discussion and a starting point for planning. Many of the activities mentioned here have been the subject of detailed reports, several with DfES funding. Some are discussed in the preceding chapter. Some have not been documented in detail before.

Institutional decisions concerning placement:

• Role of placement and employability:

Allocation of responsibility within the institution for development of employability and placement; resources available including staff development and staff time in placement, recognition of the placement activity, centralisation or decentralisation of placement within the institution, course based or school/department based, where responsibility lies for finding the placement.

• Assessment and Accreditation:

Extent of contribution of placement assessment towards degree classification, e.g. compulsory activity but ungraded assessment or contributory part of degree class; if it is a separate award – how composed; free standing module; optional/compulsory activity for a particular degree; internal/external award; elements included in the assessment;
internal and/or external assessors; training of assessors and quality control of work place supervisors; variability in placements and equity of awards; transcripts and progress files.

- **Informing potential applicants:**

  To the HEI of work experience and placement opportunities; HEI prospectus, HEI website, UCAS website, admissions tutors, careers fairs, UCAS fairs, careers; magazines, schools’ liaison. Links with HEIs marketing department, and importance of Careers Service.

- **Role of different departments:**

  For ownership at subject and course level, staff development, educational and curriculum development, careers service, placement staff, academic staff.

**Checklist of activities for staff new to placement:**

- **Preparing Students:**
  
  **Early preparation:** continuation of Record of Achievement – Progress/Personal Development File, career management, what can be learned from placement, help and guidance available, role of different departments, timings, early thoughts, building on existing contacts, placements abroad

  **Preparation in preceding year:** where responsibility lies for finding placement, help and guidance available, timings, student responsibilities, benefits of placement, learning objectives, relationship to course, key skills assessment and development, job search skills, sources of information about jobs and vacancies, student’s strengths, what employers are looking for, curriculum vitae writing skills, filling in job application forms, writing covering letters, taking psychometric or other practical tests, interview preparation – self presentation and job/company knowledge, protocol on accepting first job offer, formalities of job offer and acceptance, contract of employment, health and safety training guidance, frequently asked questions, advice from former placement students, overcoming difficulties, support mechanisms, assessment details, registering details of placement, protocols and work culture, how to behave at work, employer expectations, ambassadorial role; insurance for non UK placements, travel, accommodation, customs, culture and health and safety matters abroad.

- **Finding Employers**

  Marketing literature, visits, nurturing existing contacts, employers forums, business forums, local CIPD branch forums, websites, electronic links, national and local newspapers (vacancies and local development contracts), existing partnerships, alumni associations, former placement students, careers services, job shop, networking, local industry, departmental contacts, Chambers of Commerce, Business Links, trade associations, trade directories, sector based employer organisations, intermediaries, regional development agencies and fairs, yellow pages, local libraries, careers fairs, placement fairs.

- **Informing and Preparing Employers:**
Literature and documentation for employers, benefits of having a student, what to expect from a student, student attitudes, what work students can do, supervision needed, equal opportunities, disabled students, job description, contract of employment, objectives of placement, development of key skills, administrative points – payment, tax and national insurance, health and safety, employer’s liability, work permits and overseas students, objectives of the job, feedback and appraisal, HEI liaison and involvement – visits, support, mentoring, assessment, project; supervisor’s assessment, length of time of placement, permanent job offers.

- **Role of Academics:**

  Allocation of roles between placement staff and academic staff; administration of placement, preparation of students, finding employers, visiting employers, allocation of staff to students, visiting students on placement, project supervision and assessment, placement assessment, measuring key skills development, quality assurance of assessment, accreditation and awards.

- **Preparing Academic Staff:**

  Understanding objectives of placement, understanding key skills, measuring key skills, training of staff in standards of care, support and visits, customer awareness and skills in external relations, health and safety, equal opportunities and disabled students, assessment criteria, minimising student drop out from returning to course.

- **Students on Placements:**

  Supporting literature and documentation for students, expectations of employers, ambassadors for the HEI, conditions for passing the placement, assessment criteria, contact details, making the most of the experience, measuring and tracking skills development, evidence of achievement, career management, visits, projects, presentations, interim return visit to the HEI, module choice for the next year, support networks for students, health and safety checks and guidelines, frequently asked questions, problems and troubles – what to do, where to get help; importance of completing the degree.

- **Returning to University:**

  Reflecting on the experience, maximising the value afterwards, revisiting curriculum vitae, career management, maintaining contact with employer, value to students, mentoring new placement students, informing the curriculum.

---

**CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE**

The following definitions have been developed in consultation with experienced practitioners.

A definition of quality work experience:
Quality work experience is temporary employment of a student, usually off campus, within a framework of learning and assessment where the individual student takes control of the learning.

The following items represent criteria for good practice in experiential learning, based on the experience of practitioners and the contributions of the writers in the Compendium of Best Practice:

- The student is taught by the HEI to identify and recognise potential learning outcomes, including key skills development and subject related skills
- Learning objectives are set (by the HEI, employer and student), within an agreed structure of framework, i.e. a Learning Agreement or Learning Contract
- Supervision is by an employer supervisor who understands the objectives, benefits and learning outcomes of work experience
- Academic supervision and visits take place at an agreed frequency
- Regular feedback is given
- An appraisal is given during and at the end of the work experience by the employer supervisor
- A project is undertaken, and report is written
- Learning, development and achievements are articulated by the student in written form
- A presentation is given of results, achievements and personal development
- Guidance is provided to integrate this learning into longer term career planning
- An assessment is made of skills development (by HEI, employer and student)
- The student integrates the learning into a career management plan
- Recognition, credit or a certificate is awarded

Employers need therefore to know what constitutes good practice on their side:

- Relevant legislation is adhered to, e.g. health and safety at work, employer’s liability insurance and equal opportunities legislation
- Students who contribute to the profitability or objectives of the organisation are paid a proper wage for their work; sandwich students who work for a year are paid a proper wage for their work
- A job description is given which matches the original description or advertisement for the job
- Where appropriate, a contract of employment is issued
- The job lasts for the agreed length of time except in exceptional circumstances
- Induction is given into the company and the job
- Learning objectives are set (in conjunction with the student) within an agreed framework, i.e. a Learning Contract is agreed
- Opportunities for key skills development are given whenever appropriate
- A project is identified in conjunction with the student and HEI
- Supervision is given by an employer supervisor who understands the objectives, benefits and learning outcomes of work experience
- Opportunities for training are given where appropriate
- Regular feedback is given
- An appraisal is given during and at the end of the placement by the employer supervisor
- An assessment is made of achievements and key skills development, with guidance, where necessary from the HEI
- Access to a visit in the workplace by the HEI is made possible
A return visit to the HEI during the placement is facilitated where possible

The Secretary of State for Education has stated that all students should have a minimum period of work experience. It is difficult to be prescriptive about the **minimum length of time** this should be since the quality of the work experience is not determined by time scales but by the learning achievements and skills development.

For some students, course embedded or assessed placements will not be appropriate or possible. In these circumstances work experience may, for example, take the form of vacation or part-time term-time work which is not part of the course and is not supervised or assessed by the HEI. Where this happens the quality of the experience and the learning derived from it is paramount. It is unlikely that this minimum period of time will be less than 2 months full-time for project focussed work, or 3 months full-time, or 1 year part-time of 8 hours a week, of a combination of these, where:

- Objectives are set
- Feedback is given
- An appraisal is undertaken
- Learning and achievements are articulated by the student in written form
- An assessment is made and recorded of skills development (by the student) preferably with employer endorsement
- The student integrates the learning into a career management plan

**HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR THE PLACEMENT OF HE STUDENTS**

The following tables have been reproduced from the Universities and Colleges Employers Association Health and Safety Guidance for the Placement of HE students. The full document contains management guidance on legal responsibilities, placement approval, university training and students needs. Included below are the checklists and examples of documentation and guidance.

**Placement Health and Safety Checklist**

Name of Employer: __________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________
Telephone: ________________________   Fax: _____________________

1. Do you have a written health and safety policy? Y/N
2. Do you have a policy regarding health and safety training for people working in your organisation, including use of vehicles, plant and equipment, and will you provide all necessary health and safety training for the placement student? Y/N
3. Is the organisation registered with:
   a) The Health and Safety Executive, or Y/N
   b) the Local Authority Environmental Health Department? Y/N
4. Insurance:
   a) Is Employer and Public Liability Insurance held? Y/N
   b) Will your insurances cover any liability incurred by a placement...
5. Risk assessment:
   a) Have you carried out risk assessment of your work practices to identify possible risks, whether to your own employees or to others within your organisation? Y/N
   b) Are risk assessments kept under regular review? Y/N
   c) Are the results of risk assessment implemented? Y/N

6. Accidents and incidents
   a) Is there a formal procedure for reporting and recording accidents and incidents in accordance with RIDDOR? Y/N
   b) Have you procedures to be followed in the event of serious and imminent danger to people at work in your organisation? Y/N
   c) Will you report to the university all recorded accidents involving placement students? Y/N
   d) Will you report to the university any sickness involving placement students which may be attributable to the work they are doing? Y/N

Contact Personnel

Who is your nominated contact for compliance with the requirements of health and safety legislation?
Name and position: ___________________________________________ Tel: ____________
The above statements are true to the best of my knowledge and belief:
Signed: ___________________________ Position: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please return it as soon as possible to the Placement Organiser at ____________ University.

2.0 EXAMPLE RECORD SHEET

   Final recipient: University

   TO BE ADDED

2.1. EXAMPLE LETTER TO EMPLOYER

   Our ref:
   Date
   Dear Sir/Madam

   Supervised placement 2002-3

   We are pleased that you have been able to offer a placement for (year). We regard the ‘year out’ as a three-way partnership between the employer, the student and the university. Although we are not a party to the contract of employment, students on
placements are enrolled as our students and we would expect to take any action necessary to ensure that a student is proving to be an effective, safe and reliable employee. Please do not hesitate to let us know if there are any problems with which you think we could help.

We have found that health and safety training for students has sometimes been neglected, perhaps because students are temporary employees and are sometimes forgotten when instruction is arranged. Although current legislation places primary responsibility for health and safety training and equipment on the employer, we recognise that the university has a duty of care. We have given information on health and safety as part of the course and further information is contained in the placement documents issues to students. However, this is of a general nature and does not include the specific information needed for any particular job.

The Health and Safety Executive has recommended that we ask formally for assurances on health and safety so, as part of the approved process, we should be grateful if you would complete and return the enclosed checklist. We are sorry to burden you with this but hope that you will not find the questions to onerous and will understand our reasons for asking them. We have told students that they must not start work before the placement is approved. If there is a change in location or working practice which would cause you to amend your answers as indicated in the enclosed ‘Health and Safety Checklist’, we would be grateful if you could notify the university accordingly.

Each student will be given written guidelines which clearly describe the various documents which he or she needs to produce to satisfy the course requirements. These include a ‘Student Induction Checklist’ which the student should complete within a week of starting work.

We expect every student, within their level of competence and training, to have their ability stretched, once you have confidence in it, and hope that your workload and available supervision will allow a varied programme of experience, as you would offer to any other employee.

We would welcome joint talks with you and the student to construct a programme of learning to be achieved while on placement with your organisation, compatible with the needs of your organisation and those of the student and the university. Through this we could all identify and be assured of health and safety issues which might be met, or for which training is needed.

If a student is doing a real job (i.e. one which needs doing) within your organisation they will receive useful experience. It is right that the experience comes naturally, after training, and as a result of doing the job safely, rather than the experience being somewhat falsely acquired in the role of an observer. Each student has full details of the course syllabus which should tell you what they already know and what they will be covering in their final year. Offering experience which makes use of the knowledge they have could be of most benefit to both you and the student.

As well as the course syllabus, the training scheme of the appropriate professional institution is a good guide to useful experience. We encourage students to record their experiences in terms of these schemes (although this is not part of the course and so is voluntary), particularly because the experience gained on placement is accepted
by the institutions as valid for professional training. If you are not familiar with the requirements, the student may have the details (if they have asked for them) but otherwise we should be happy to let you have them.

Most of this information will be of use to the student’s supervisor within your organisation so we should be grateful if you would give them a copy. We aim to visit students twice during the year. Some students will not be visited until they have worked for around six months or unless a risk assessment dictates otherwise. However, we hope you will contact us if you feel that an earlier visit would be desirable.

Thank you once again for offering a placement. The vast majority of previous placements have worked out very well and proved to be of great benefit to both student and employer. We trust that this year will be no exception.

Yours sincerely,

2.2 Example Letter to Student

| Name: | __________________________________________________________ |
| Course Title: | _______________________________________________________ |

Supervised placement 2002-3

**Authority to start placement**

This authority enables you to begin your placement immediately, or on the date agreed with your employer, whichever is the later.

It is valid for the whole of your employment with the employer named below, unless circumstances change sufficiently to warrant its withdrawal.

This authority is valid for employment with: **NAME OF EMPLOYER**

| Attended health and safety briefing: | Date |
| Received health and safety pack: | Date |
| Received placement pack: | Date |
| Authorised: | Date |
| (Placement organiser) | |
| Authorised: | Date |
| (University Safety Officer when appropriate) | |

Before starting work you should have read the information provided in the health and safety pack, particularly the section ‘Guidance Notes for Students on Placements (Health and Safety)’.

Final Recipient: Student
3.0 ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN AN EMERGENCY

Because of the wide variety of work that is carried out and the possible complex layout of the various buildings, it is not possible to produce a set of valid and detailed emergency instructions to cover every situation that may arise. For this reason, each employer has its own emergency instructions relating to particular buildings. There should be in every building a notice setting out the procedure to be adopted in case of fire.

There are certain points that apply to all emergency situations:
- You should commit to memory the standing orders for emergency action. You will have no time to read them in an emergency
- **Remember:** you are expected to act in the spirit of the instructions. There is no substitute for common sense
- The most important consideration at all times is human safety
- **Remember:** if you become a casualty someone must rescue you, possibly at personal risk to themselves
- You should act quietly and methodically. You should not rush or attempt to pass others when leaving the scene of emergency
- The senior person present should assume control of the situation, ensuring the safe evacuation from the premises of all persons present and be prepared to warn the Emergency Services, etc., of known specific hazards.

If you have to telephone for assistance in an emergency, the following information must always be given:
- Who you are
- Where you are, i.e. the location and telephone extension from which you are telephoning
- The nature of the emergency and what services are required
- The exact location where assistance is required

You should ensure that the message has been correctly received by asking for it to be repeated back to you.

It is essential that the location is clearly defined. Local terminology should be used because, for example, ‘the research site’ means very little to the Emergency Services.

It is important always to give the correct name for the building and the street where it is located. It the postcode is known that should also be provided.

3.1. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASWA)

The Act is based upon the concept of a general duty of care for most people associated with work activities. The specific aims are to:
- Secure the health, safety and welfare of persons at work
- Protect persons other than persons at work against risks to health or safety arising out of, or in connection with, the activities of persons at work
• Control the keeping and use of explosive or highly flammable or otherwise
dangerous substances, and generally prevent the unlawful acquisition, possession
and use of such substances
• Control the emission into the atmosphere of noxious or offensive substances

3.1.1. Main provisions of HASWA

There have been a number of Regulations, etc., since HASWA but fundamentally they
only amplify the basic concepts contained within the Act. Those provisions
applicable to people place various duties upon employers, employees and others. In
brief, these are:

General duties of employers
Employers are required, as far as reasonably practicable, to:
• Ensure the health and safety and welfare of employees
• Provide safe plant and systems of work
• Ensure safe use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances
• Provide information, instruction, training and supervision
• Maintain a safe place of work and safe means of access and egress

General duties of employers to employees
The effect is to make criminally enforceable the common law duty to take reasonable
care for the safety of employees. This includes the requirement, as far as reasonably
practicable, to ensure:
• Employees know the risks
• Employees know the precautions available

General duties of employers to persons other than employees
Employers have a general duty to protect anyone affected by the organisation, e.g. the
general public. Regulations:
• Require information to be given to persons affected, e.g. living near the plant
• Prescribe situations regarding emission of fumes, smoke, etc.
• Place duties on persons in control of premises in relation to harmful emissions into
the atmosphere

Duties towards the customer
Duties of those who design, manufacture, import or supply and install articles or
substances are to:
• Ensure they are safe and without risk to health
• Carry out tests, examination and research (or have it done on their behalf)
• Provide adequate information regarding proper use, maintenance, etc.
• Install or erect plant and equipment safely
These duties can be relieved by a written undertaking from the supplier that he/she
will take the steps to ensure that the article or substance will be safe in use or while
being cleaned. maintained, etc.

Duties of employees
No levy on employees is permitted for the provision of statutory protective equipment.
Employees must:
• Take reasonable care for themselves and others
• Co-operate with the employer and use safety appliances
• Not recklessly and wilfully interfere with safety appliances

### 3.1.2 Written safety policies

Companies must prepare and revise, when necessary, a written statement of their general policy towards health and safety at work setting out:
- The organiser – i.e. who is responsible
- The arrangements – i.e. what is to be done

### 3.1.3 Safety representatives and committees

Trade Unions may, in accordance with Regulations, appoint safety representatives and ask for a safety committee. There is a duty on an employer to enter into consultation with representatives, whose functions and rights are prescribed by Regulations.

### 3.1.4 Disclosure of information

Inspectors may tell safety representatives what they ask the firm to do.

### 3.1.5 Powers of Inspectors

Inspectors have wide powers of:
- Entry
- Inspection
- Interview of persons
- Collection of information
- Photographing and recording
- Taking samples
- Seizing dangerous substances or plants
- Taking written statements

### 3.1.6 Enforcement

- Improvement Notice. This requires an organisation to take remedial action within a specified period. Failure to comply incurs up to a £20,000 fine (or unlimited fine on indictment).
- Prohibition Notice Activities giving rise to imminent danger must cease on the date stated which may be immediate. Failure to comply incurs a £20,000 fine or, on indictment, an unlimited fine and up to two years’ imprisonment.
- Codes of practice These are admissible as evidence in determining practicable, reasonably practicable and by practical means.
- Other offences These can incur a £20,000 fine on summary conviction or, on indictment, an unlimited fine and up to two years’ imprisonment.
- Appeal Employers may appeal to an Industrial Tribunal within 21 days against Improvement and Protection Notices. Improvement Notices are suspended until the appeal is heard, but not Prohibition Notices.
3.2. GENERAL SAFETY

3.2.1. Introduction
The prevention of accidents in laboratories, stores, workshops and all other places of work is a duty of every individual using or entering them. Ensuring the safety of others is as important as the avoidance of personal injury. Everyone should make it his or her first task to become familiar with any special instructions issued for dealing with emergencies peculiar to the place in which he or she is working.

3.2.2. General Safety Rules
Eating, drinking, smoking and the application of make-up in laboratories or when handling or working with chemicals is prohibited. Smoking may also be prohibited in many other areas as well.

You should familiarise yourself with:
• Layout of the building
• The location of the fire-fighting appliances and how they work
• Ways to get out of the building in an emergency, which may be different to the way you come in
• The siting of telephones, and
• First aid arrangements.

Remember: it may be too late to find out very much when an emergency actually happens
If you have any queries on safety matters: consult your supervisor or safety representative

3.3 SPECIFIC TOPICS

3.3.1. Fire
General Information
Most fires can be prevented by applying routine precautions, some of which are set out below. When a fire occurs, the principal hazard to people is the smoke that is generated and most deaths at fires are due to asphyxia by smoke. Double doors in corridors and doors leading from kitchens, for example, are designed to retain the smoke to allow the remaining corridors to be used for evacuating the building. The walls of corridors have a specified fire resistance so that the fire can be contained in a small section of the building.

Means of escape
Ensure that rooms, passages, corridors and stairways are not obstructed and that corridor fire doors are kept closed. If a room contains an emergency exit, make sure that it is unobstructed so that it is immediately available for use in an emergency.

Fire extinguishers
Do not attempt to use an extinguisher unless you have received appropriate instruction and training and if it is safe to do so.
Discretion is essential in deciding the lengths to which first-aid fire-fighting is pursued. Portable fire-fighting equipment is not designed to cope with extensive fires and it is important that first-aid fire-fighting should cease and the location should be
evacuated as soon as the effects of fire threaten the means of escape, the building structure, or otherwise indicated that it is out of control.

Although further action might reduce material losses no such saying can compare in importance with human safety.

**Before attempting to fight a fire:** always ensure the alarm has been raised and you are able to leave the area if the fire escalates out of control.

**Ensure you know:** the correct fire extinguisher to use and have received instruction in its use. For example, in a laboratory situation, use of the wrong choice of extinguisher can turn a minor incident into a major disaster.

**Use carbon dioxide extinguishers with care:** they can reduce the oxygen content of the atmosphere in a confined space to a dangerously low level.

**There are many kinds of fire-fighting equipment in the workplace:** it is the duty of everyone to know where they are located, and for what types of fire each one is intended. Whenever fire-fighting equipment has been used an immediate report should be made to the supervisor so that the equipment may be recharged or replaced.

**Use of fire extinguishers**

- **Carbon Dioxide (usually black in colour)** extinguishers are the type most generally used for electrical fires or in laboratories, and have several advantages in dealing with small fires. No mess is made and there is little danger of apparatus being knocked over or damaged. They can be used where live electrical circuits are involved. However, they have little cooling effect and until the extinguished material has cooled below ignition temperature care must be taken to ensure that the fire does not re-ignite.

- **Water (usually red)** extinguishers discharging water under pressure from a carbon dioxide cartridge are recommended for use on fires involving paper, wood, etc. They must not be used on fires where there are live electrical circuits. They may be used for solvents permissible with water. It should be noted that the strong jet of water can itself cause damage.

- **AFFF (Aqueous Film Forming Foam – usually cream)** multi-purpose extinguishers are suitable for most types of fires (materials, etc) and are ideal for dealing with the majority of fires involving flammable liquids. The aqueous film prevents re-ignition of the fire with limited cooling properties. Foam extinguishers may be used on immiscible liquids that are lighter than water, e.g. petrol and most oils. They must not be used where live electrical circuits are involved.

- **Hose Reels:** are usually sited in corridors or in large rooms, for use where extinguishers discharging water may be inadequate for the risk involved. They are intended to be used on fires involving wood structures, paper, fabrics, etc. The hoses are usually of 22mm diameter and from 25-40 metres in length. Where a control value is fitted, it is important to ensure that it is fully open before the hose is run out. Hoses fitted with automatic valves operate when between 1 to 3 metres of hose has been run off the wheel.

- **Fire/smoke-stop doors:** these may be installed throughout buildings so as to prevent smoke and hot toxic gases circulating along routes to safety. These doors
must not be wedged or propped open. They must be kept closed at all times after access and egress has been effected.

- **Fire Instructions:** These appear in the Emergency Procedures for the organisation and possibly in the internal telephone directory. They should be displayed on notices in all buildings.

- **Fire detection systems:** Fire detectors give an early warning of a fire, particularly if the fire starts in an unoccupied area. There are generally two types of detector used:
  - **Heat detectors** contain either a bimetallic or thermistor device and operate when a rapid increase in temperature occurs. They are fitted in some kitchens, laboratories and corridors. Other heat detectors operate when a fixed temperature, normally 60-70 degrees centigrade, is exceeded and they are used when a rapid rise in temperature can be anticipated in normal operation, e.g. over rooms and kitchens.
  - **Smoke detectors** contain an ion-chamber and detect the products of combustion. They are the most sensitive of the automatic detectors. Because of their high sensitivity, larger areas can be protected by a single detector and these systems are found in most buildings.

All fire detectors are necessarily sensitive devices and can be easily activated to give a false alarm. Smoke detectors, for instance, can be activated by dust, steam or exhaust from petrol or diesel engines. Misuse of fire fighting equipment, e.g. hose-reels, fire-extinguishers and fire-alarms, may render it inoperable when required in an emergency and could even result in loss of life. Moreover it is a criminal offence that may result in the imposition of severe penalties by the Courts and disciplinary action by the employer.

3.3.2 Precautions in offices, libraries, etc.

A recent nation-wide survey has revealed that offices are the source of a substantial number of serious accidents every year. Most of these are avoidable. There is an increasing use of machinery in offices, e.g. paper guillotines, photocopies, etc., which should be operated only according to the makers’ instructions. Only maintenance personnel should remove the enclosing panels of machines.

All portable electric appliances should carry a current Portable Appliance Test label. Leads should not be allowed to trail in a manner likely to cause persons to trip over them or to pull over the item. You should not leave appliances in precarious positions nor use waste-paper baskets as ashtrays.

Care must be taken to avoid spillage of water in rooms in which there are electric power points set in the floors. It is possible in some circumstances for a person standing on such a wet floor to receive a severe, possibly fatal, electric shock.

When carrying files, you should not carry so many that your vision is obscured. Filing cabinet drawers should always be closed as soon as you have found what you want. The corner of a metal drawer can inflict a very painful injury. Open only one drawer at a time because more than one drawer open may cause a filing cabinet to tip forward.

You must never stand on revolving stools or chairs and should avoid using any chair or stool where steps are provided. A fall on to the end of a desk or an open drawer can cause a very serious injury.
You should not leave stacks of boxes, kitbags or files on the floor near doorways for people to fall over. Polished floors, particularly if waxed or wet, offer a hazard. You should never run on the polished floors of corridors or common rooms.

### 3.3.3. Work outside normal hours

Many companies have their own rules with regard to work outside normal hours, e.g. 0800 to 1800hrs. Monday to Fridays. Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and other official holidays are usually regarded as outside normal hours. Extreme care should be exercised when working outside these times and then only with the explicit authority of the management of that organisation. It should be forbidden to perform operations deemed hazardous by the employer, or his/her nominee, unless some other person is within calling distance and only after prior permission has been given by the Head of the Section or his/her nominee for the particular work involved.

### 3.3.4. Electrical hazards

Two of the worst electrical hazards are careless or unskilled workmanship and faulty or worn out equipment. Neither of these hazards need arise. Electric and electronic supplies and equipment, including batteries and electrolytic capacitors can be responsible for personal injury and even death. They can also cause fires and explosions. Remember, some foreign colour coding of electrical leads differs from British practice. If in doubt, ask.

#### Electricity and Fire

All portable electrical appliances should have a current PAT Certificate. This involves a mechanical and visual check that all socket outlets, switches, flexible leads and electrical appliances are in good condition. In case of fire involving electrical equipment, the first action to take must be to switch off the power supply to that equipment. You should extinguish an electrical fire with carbon dioxide, **never with water or foam**.

#### Use of electric points and equipment

Lead length should be adequate for the particular job for which the equipment is currently being used. In no circumstances should you interfere with the wiring or connections of any electric point or appliance. All necessary adjustments or modifications to wiring will be carried out by a duly authorised, competent person.

### 3.3.5 Noise

Noise can cause damage to hearing, reduce efficiency or merely annoy. Damage to hearing can result from a sudden violent sound producing an effect as dramatic as the rupture of an ear drum. Continuous exposure to lower noise levels can, however, produce deafness. In the latter case the impairment to hearing may pass unrecognised for a long period of time due to the insidiousness of the effect. For advice on noise problems you should consult the organisation’s Safety Officer.

### 3.3.6 First Aid

It is a legal requirement to report all accidents in the workplace. Medical advice should always be sought, however serious the injury. Initially, simple first aid measures may be applied.

#### Minor Cuts

Cuts and grazes are best treated by cleansing under running water and then dried. A dry dressing or plaster should then be applied.
Severe Bleeding
Bleeding will be stopped by applying direct pressure on a dressing covering the wound and if possible elevating the affected part.

Burns and scalds
The affected parts should be immersed under running cold water for at least 10 minutes and then a dry dressing only applied.

Chemical spillage
All chemicals must be washed off the body with copious amounts of water. Some laboratories have emergency showers and these should always be used when available.

Needle stick injuries
Allow all puncture injuries to bleed freely and then wash under running water using soap or a hand cleanser. The injury should be reported immediately to the Medical Centre or First Aider.

Eye Injuries
All eye injuries must be irrigated thoroughly then treated at the Medical Centre or local hospital. You should never attempt to remove foreign objects from the eye. Always seek medical assistance.

It must also be remembered that any sudden illnesses, bouts of ill health and injuries, should be reported to the Medical Centre or First Aider, as soon as possible.

To ensure your own safety, as far as reasonably practicable, you should employ the age old maxim: if in doubt, ask.

STUDENT INDUCTION CHECKLIST

Name of student: _____________________________ start date: ________
Employer: ________________________________________________

The following items should be included in your induction into the organisation, preferably on your first day. Please check off the items below when they occur and inform your placement organiser of any items not covered within one week of the start of your placement. This list is not exhaustive and other topics may be covered, which you may note as you wish:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduced to key staff members and their roles explained</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of toilet facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of rest room, canteen (if relevant) etc.,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch, tea and coffee arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress Code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to answer the telephone, transfer calls and make calls both internally and externally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Parking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GUIDANCE FOR ASSESSMENT OF PLACEMENTS  
(Health and Safety)

Employers have the primary duty to ensure the health and safety of placement participants during their placements. Universities and placement agencies also have a responsibility to ensure the suitability of placements. They need to be sure that placements meet appropriate standards of health, safety and welfare and that employers know about their health and safety duties. Universities should, as part of their arrangements for placements, have a clearly stated policy on the health, safety and welfare implications for students. The policy should explain how placement organisers ought to assess the suitability of employers. The following elements form the basis for an assessment policy.

Preliminary enquiries
Any potential employer new to the placements procedures will need to discuss with the placement organiser the objectives of the placement, the implications of accepting students in the workplace and then be informed of, and issued with, the ‘Placement Health and Safety Checklist’.

These discussions should preferably take place at the workplace and provide an opportunity for the organiser to check the employer’s management systems for ensuring occupational health, safety and welfare. Where the new employer works from several premises (for example a chain of estate agents, or a multiple outlet store) it may not always be necessary to visit each work site. Much will depend on the organiser’s confidence in the health and safety management systems, as shown by responses to the points listed below.

Any employer of five or more people (including placement participants) who does not have, or is not willing to produce, a written statement of their policy on health and safety at work and of the arrangements for putting that policy into effect, should not be included in the placement scheme.
The employer’s policy and arrangements should be based on their assessment of the risks to the health and safety of employees arising from their work. Where there are five or more employees the employer should keep a record of the significant findings of the risk assessment and of any group(s) of employees identified by it as being especially at risk.

Further checks

The Health and Safety Commission publishes a simple step-by-step guide to help small businesses prepare a suitable policy. It includes other checks that should be made at the preliminary visit: has the employer appointed someone to have responsibility for students on placements?
- Has the employer confirmed that they have registered with the appropriate health and safety enforcing authority, where this is required?
- Has the employer agreed to give students appropriate supervision at all times and to provide them with training in health and safety issues?
- Has the employer confirmed that there are procedures to deal with any accidents and emergencies that may arise?
- In particular, is first aid equipment provided and are records of first aid treatments kept?
- If required, are trained first aiders available?
- Does the employer know that all accidents to students, however minor, must be reported to the placement organiser?
- Has the employer confirmed that they have current employer’s liability insurance? Insurance companies now carry out audits of the premises they insure and, if available, this information will give an indication of the insurer’s professional risk assessment of the employer.

In general this applies to factories (including garages, dry-cleaners and repair workshops) quarries, mines, offices, shops and some construction sites.
- Has the employer confirmed that they have registered with the appropriate health and safety enforcing authority, where this is required?
- Has the employer agreed to give students appropriate supervision at all times and to provide them with training in health and safety issues?
- Has the employer confirmed that there are procedures to deal with any accidents and emergencies that may arise?
- In particular, is first aid equipment provided and are records of first aid treatments kept?
- If required, are trained first aiders available?
- Does the employer know that all accidents to students, however minor, must be reported to the placement organiser?
- Has the employer confirmed that they have current employer’s liability insurance?

After discussing these and related issues the placement organiser should be able to assess the employer’s general approach to occupational health and safety, and make a judgement about the placement’s overall suitability. An essential part of the initial visit to the employer should be a brief walk around the workplace. This provides an opportunity to look at general conditions in the areas where students will be working. Useful indicators of appropriate attention to occupational health, safety and welfare in many workplaces are:

General standard of housekeeping
- Are there clear gangways?
- Is the workplace clean?
- Are stairways or doorways obstructed by stored goods?

General provision
- Is the workplace brightly lit or dingy?
- Where work is done sitting down, are suitable seats provided?

Fire precautions
- Are there any fire extinguishers?
• Does the employer have a system for checking them?
• Are fire exits clearly marked and not obviously obstructed?
• Are clear fire instructions displayed?

**Electrical safety**
• Are electrical wires to be seen? Loose, bare, dusty and disorganised wires or broken plugs or switches indicate an unsafe electrical system.

**Welfare facilities**
• Are toilets and washing facilities adequate and kept clean?
• Are soap and drying facilities provided?
• Are any health and safety information posters displayed?
• Every employer should, as a minimum, have displayed the poster ‘Health and Safety Law – What You Should Know’ or alternatively have arranged for distribution of the leaflet of the same name to all employees.

Placement organisers should look at the specific work to be done by participants where possible. They could usefully ask about personal protective equipment, ensure that such equipment in appropriate sizes is available if needed and seek assurances that participants will be trained in its use. Similarly, organisers can ask if there are health risks associated with the work and if such risks have been assessed by the employer.

Placement organisers should also enquire about any health-based limitations on the type of person who may be appropriate for the placement. Employers have a duty to assess the capabilities of their employees (which includes placement participants) in health and safety terms.

There may for example, be operations involving possible exposure to sensitising agents that would not be appropriate to students with asthma.

Another example might be a warehouse where there is a significant amount of works transport (lift trucks, etc). In such a workplace a partially sighted student, or one with significant hearing loss, may need particularly careful supervision. It is best practice to discuss students’ ability to carry out particular tasks with their tutors.

Where special arrangements are needed for students with disabilities, placement organisers should ensure that employers are given full information, and any necessary advice, well in advance of the placement.

Finally, placement organisers should ensure that participants’ tasks will not involve any prohibited by law. A list of the current national prohibitions on the employment of young persons on placement is available from the:

HSE Education National Interest Group
39 Baddow Road,
Chelmsford CM2 0HL

There may be additional prohibitions in local by-laws so universities should ensure that their placement organisers know about any local conditions.
GLOSSARY OF WORK EXPERIENCE TERMINOLOGY

The terminology used by work experience practitioners may not be familiar to students, employers or staff new to placement. Furthermore words may be ambiguous or used conflictingly by different people. The following definitions have been researched amongst practitioners.

Accreditation: The practice of awarding an officially recognised mark, grade or certificate to a student on the basis of a certain level performance against agreed criteria and standards. They can be awarded by the university or an outside body. In the former case it may be awarded as a part of, or separate from, the degree classification.

Assessment: The critical monitoring or evaluation by an academic and/or employer of a work experience student’s performance against agreed criteria and standards. Assessment does not necessarily lead to accreditation.

Course embedded work experience: An academically assessed or accredited period of work experience with an employer, forming a structured part of a degree programme and which draws on and develops course content skills.

Course related/content skills: Specialist skills relating to the subject matter and techniques of the course of study/degree subject.

Employability Skills:
A UUK and Coopers and Lybrand Report of January 1999 described the emerging consensus that the skills concerned with employability should include the following:

- Traditional intellectual skills: critical evaluation of evidence, the ability to argue logically, to apply theory to practice, model problems qualitatively and quantitatively, to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions
- The new core or key skills: the 6 key skills of the QCA (see below)
- Personal attributes: self-reliance, adaptability, flexibility, “nous”, creativity
- Knowledge about how organisations work

Generic skills: General skills, which are basic to and necessary for employment, such as analysis, synthesis and practical evaluation.

Internship: A work placement or period of work, frequently unpaid, in a commercial organisation working alongside paid employees

Job Shop: A campus-based employment service at which employers advertise part-time paid, voluntary term-time or holiday jobs for undergraduates for which a fee is charged. The jobs do not have to be course related or gain academic recognition or credit. Other employment-related services and advice may be available.

Key skills: certain attributes and aptitudes sought by potential graduate employers, and often best developed on the job. They may well include specialist technical skills, in addition to others that are universally sought.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority has identified 6 key skills: communication, application of number, information technology, working with others, improving own learning and performance, problem solving. These are graded into assessable units throughout the curriculum.

Learning: The process of acquiring skills and knowledge which brings about a change in behaviour, attitudes and understanding.
Mentor: A person, usually an employee of the host company, to whom the student can turn for advice and help. This may be a different person from the placement supervisor and could be another student, or a member of the supervisory or management staff.

On the job training: Training that is conducted at the work station whilst doing the job.

Off the job training: Training that is carried out separately from the work at a different time or place.

Personal skills: The more social skills, which relate to the individual’s ability for self-management, self-learning and self-presentation.

Placement: see work placement below.

Placement manager: A member of HEI staff who is responsible for the setting up of work placements with host companies in liaison with the relevant academic departments.

Placement supervisor: the person in the place of employment responsible for overseeing work placements and ensuring that agreed procedures are adhered to. Generally an employee of the host company.

Placement tutor: A member of HEI academic staff responsible for the assessment or accreditation of a work placement student.

Professional practice: work experience that is mandatory to the fulfilment of professional body requirements.

Quality work experience: the same as the definition of undergraduate work experience below but adhering to the Code of Practice (see page ).

Sandwich Placement: an assessed paid work placement which is necessary and integral to the student’s course. It is often of one year’s duration – i.e. constituting one year of a four-year programme of study. ‘Thick Sandwich’ – a continuous one-year block of work experience: ‘Thin’ Sandwich – work experience is undertaken in a shorter block (usually around six months) and may be repeated over the period of the degree course.

SME: small or medium-sized enterprise. A small business employs less than 50 people, and a medium-sized one up to 250. A micro business, also included in this category, employs up to ten people.

Term-time part-time work: paid or unpaid work undertaken during term-time (day, evening or weekends).

Transferable skills: skills that are gained in one working environment, but can be applied quickly and productively to another. See Key skills above.

Undergraduate work experience: a temporary period of employment, from which an undergraduate student learns. It could be paid or unpaid.

Voluntary work: any type of work undertaken for no remuneration, usually outside of an academically incorporated structure. Often, but not always, the term denotes charitable or community-based work, often of a part-time nature.

Work-based learning: learning which takes place whilst being employed (temporarily or permanently) from and through the experience of work; where the status of the learner is an employee in the workforce rather than a student from higher education; and the nature of the learning is concerned predominantly with an ability to do the work rather than with personal development.

Work-based project: a specific piece of assess work, undertaken at an employer’s premises, that enables a student to develop key and subject specific skills.

Work placement (paid/unpaid): a period of work experience, usually pat of a course of study. Can be arranged by the higher education institution in liaison with the employer, or by the student. The student usually works full-time with the host.
company for an agreed length of time. Work placements are generally assessed or accredited as part of the degree course.

**Work Shadowing:** a student observes a member of staff working in an organisation, and thus gains an increased understanding of what a particular job entails. Usually organised by an academic department in partnership with an employer.

---

SECTION 2

COMPENDIUM OF BEST PRACTICE

BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

A VIEW FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD

Leslie Chadwick

*This chapter is based upon the writer’s twenty years experiences of business and management placements at the University of Bradford Management Centre and various other UK colleges and universities. He is currently Head of Work Experience Placements and Senior Lecturer in Accounting and Finance, School of Management.*

BACKGROUND AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Business and management courses have experienced considerable growth in the number of students going out on work experience placement and there has been a dramatic increase in the scope and variety of placements. Students now take up placements in accounting and finance, marketing, human resource management, production operations management, retail management, logistics, IT related, public and private sector appointments and charitable work.

Recently placement officers have had to spend more and more time managing the scarce resources available to them. This has brought about a constant need to monitor, review and revise placement systems. There has also been a noticeable and significant increase in the competition for places. This has increased the administrative loads and placed greater pressure and responsibility on placement officers and students. In the case of large companies, students nowadays may encounter the full force of their selection process. This is in itself a valuable learning experience for those who are short-listed. Quite a number of colleges and universities, in addition to targeting large companies/organisations are actively targeting SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), a sector which could really benefit from being able to employ work experience trainees. Growth has also been experienced in the numbers taking up placements overseas and this causes problems in terms of visits and monitoring progress.
Another trend has been the increase in ‘head hunting’. A number of employers are using the placement period as an integral part of their recruitment system. At the end of the placement the student may be offered a permanent job and may even receive some financial assistance for the remainder of their course.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PROVIDERS OF PLACEMENTS AND PROFESSIONAL BODIES.

It is important to establish good working relationships, backed up by efficient and effective communication systems with the providers of placements, professional bodies and others involved in the process. It is essential that the providers are adequately briefed on their role and expected input. This may, for example, involve in-company visits at the outset, employer visits to the college or university, various telephone conversations, and correspondence. In addition there needs to be appropriate and well designed documentation, e.g. a booklet which explains how the system operates.

Establishing new placements could involve having open days and/or conferences and/or workshops for prospective employers. It may also involve targeting possible providers, via a direct mailing and then following up enquiries in an efficient and friendly manner. Further contact may, for example, be established via contact at recruitment fairs, P.R. activities and links with local chambers of commerce.

The college/university placement system should be designed to make the recruitment of the industrial trainees less time consuming for the employer. For example, the employer may be sent batches of student CV’s and/or application forms. The college/university may also provide facilities to the employer for interviewing and/or assessment tests and for presentations by them.

The roles of the partners involved

All the parties concerned must understand their role and what is required of them. They need to work closely with each other, hence the need for effective and efficient communications, co-operation and co-ordination. Colleges and universities do have different structures when it comes to managing their placements. However, the following definitions of the various roles which are involved, should serve as a useful guide:

The placement secretary. The key communication/link between the student and the company, and the company and the college/university. The administrative duties may include:

- The co-ordination of job applications e.g. distribution to students, sending applications in batches to employers, arrangement for interview rooms etc.
- Communications with students/employers/tutors e.g. briefing notes, course booklets, evaluation forms, etc.
- Receiving assignments, projects and dissertations from students and booking them out to markers.
- Maintaining individual files for each student that are used to chart their progress and for assessment purposes.
**The placement tutor**  Responsible for preparing the student for the placement period, and the monitoring and assessment of the student’s progress. The key link between the college/university and the provider via visits and frequent contact. The duties include:

- visits to existing and prospective providers
- the monitoring and assessment of student progress and performance in the workplace
- finding new placement opportunities
- Ensuring that Health and Safety regulations are being complied with.
- Managing the academic component e.g. assignments, dissertations, etc.

Depending on the resources available, it may be necessary to use a number of visiting tutors to carry out the in-company visits.

**The employer**  To provide a business-related placement which will enable the student to develop their key skills in a safe and secure business environment.

**The workplace supervisors/mentors**  To be the link between the company and the college/university for each individual student. To contribute and be actively involved in the assessment of the student’s progress and performance e.g. during company visits and by competence and comparative based questionnaires.

**FINDING PLACEMENTS**

Many of the existing placements tend to come as a direct consequence of work well done by placement students in the past. It may, however, be possible to attract new placements via the following:

- Having a strong link with the college’s/university’s own careers service who can often provide several useful contacts.
- using direct mail shots
- encouraging students to be pro-active via their placements or their own contacts
- Using placement opportunities at other colleges or universities e.g. appropriate project/research work.
- Making use of a database to register students as being available for a placement, or via a web site.

**PREPARING FOR THE PLACEMENT**

The preparation for the placement period may be organised along the following lines:

**Year 1**

A series of Pre-placement Workshops in the second semester.

The workshops may include:
• A personal analysis of strengths and weaknesses
• The preparation of CVs and portfolios
• Completing application forms
• Interviewing techniques/advice
• Visiting speakers
• Explaining the department’s placement application system

**Year 2: Pre-placement Workshops** (First semester, plus one final session towards the end of the Second Semester) The workshops may include:

• A Health and Safety at Work briefing
• Interviews revisited
• Meetings with students who have returned from placement
• Assessment requirements/procedures and placement objectives
• Visiting speakers

The Pre-placement Workshops are designed to help equip students with the skills needed to secure a placement and adapt reasonably quickly to the environment of the workplace.

**A compulsory Practice of Management Course (in Semester 1 of year 2).**

Such a course would aim to stimulate the development of key communication (interpersonal) and self management (intrapersonal) skills, and may include:

• communication skills e.g. listening and presenting
• presentation skills
• personal development planning
• demonstrating increased confidence via being able to apply such skills
• time management
• stress management

**MAINTAINING PARTNERSHIPS**

The number one way of keeping a placement is to ensure that the students perform well in the workplace. This can be aided by the development of appropriate skills before the placement starts and the establishment of sound, pre-placement preparation programmes.

Wherever possible company representatives should be invited to participate in the processes e.g. at a post placement presentation by students. This should further strengthen mutual commitment.

**HELPING REFLECTION AND LEARNING**

Students’ reflective skills should have been encouraged and developed during preparation for the placement, and should continue to be developed during it. The following methods are applied.

- **Opportunities and encouragement for discussion of the learning that is or should be taking place.** This could be between the student and their personal tutor and/or their
visiting tutor and their workplace supervisor/mentor. Some of the questions which may be asked are:

- In which areas do you feel that you have made substantial progress?
- Have you identified any weaknesses on which you need to work?
- Is the support and training from the employer adequate?
- What further training do you need?
- Is the support from the college/university adequate?

The reflective nature of assignments/projects and dissertation. These should require students to use their critical evaluation skills, initiative and creativity. For example:

- A critical evaluation of the company/organisation’s induction training programme.
- Reviewing a task that was done well and a task which with hindsight could be done better if encountered again in the future.
- An assessment of the acquisition of key skills and the achievement of learning objectives.

Feedback Feedback plays an important part in developing reflective skills. The student should therefore receive appropriate feedback at regular intervals from their personal tutor, visiting tutor and their in-company supervisor/mentor, for example, to identify gaps in the learning which is taking place and to discuss action plans relating to the bridging of these gaps.

Well thought out learning contracts. Such contracts should be designed and formulated in consultation with the student and the employer.

Learning logs, records of achievement and reflective journals. Provide a means of self-assessment whereby the student can measure their own progress in achieving their learning objectives. Such logs/records may also provide a vehicle/starting point for discussion between the student and their tutors/mentors etc.

De-briefing Many courses require the students to return to the college/university for a de-briefing session(s). This may be a half day or a whole day and include all/some of the following activities:

- reflective discussion in small groups
- short presentations covering successes, problems, benefits, learning outcomes, skills development
- opportunities to discuss progress to date with personal tutors
- Returning students advising students who are applying or have already applied for a placement with their host company/organisation.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES

Projects and assignments are the most common tools used in the assessment and accreditation of work placements but others are also used in addition to reports from the employer. They can include one or more of the following:
A dissertation or in-company project to be handed in towards the end of the placement or after the placement.

A number of assignments to be completed by specified dates e.g. three assignments one of which is an in-company project.

Log books e.g. descriptions of tasks undertaken and critical evaluations of them.

Portfolios containing examples of work carried out, reports submitted, learning logs which consider the acquisition of key skills:

Presentations made to employers and/or to staff and students back at the college or university.

Personal development files maintained by the students.

**MONITORING PROGRESS IN THE WORKPLACE**

This tends to be done by visiting tutors who discuss the performance and progress with the student and their in-company supervisor/mentor. The frequency of such visits/assessments depends upon the length of the placement and the resources that are made available by the college or university for this purpose.

At an appropriate time the opportunity can also be taken via questionnaires, to enable:

- the student and college or university to evaluate how well the company manages the placement
- for the company to evaluate how the college or university manages the placement.

Other ways of monitoring progress include telephone contact by a personal tutor during the first few weeks and the hosting of regional meetings.

In-company supervisors do, in practice tend to change from year to year which makes the in-company visit so much more important. Their help and assistance is vital when it comes to monitoring and assessing the student’s progress/performance.

**Quality issues**

Quality assurance measures designed to ensure that student progress and performance in the workplace is evaluated and assessed on a consistent basis depends upon good liaison between the visiting tutor and the workplace supervisor/mentor, plus a moderation process which irons out the inequalities which exist. For example, certain organisations are exceptionally professional and hard taskmasters when they carry out their evaluations.

Having had the student projects/assignments/dissertations marked it is then necessary to have a second marking/moderation function.

A quality assurance audit should also review and evaluate the following:

- How well the employer has managed the placement, e.g. using a questionnaire completed by the visiting tutor in consultation with the student. This could assess areas such as monitoring progress, recognition of training needs, welfare, support.
How well the college/university has managed the placement e.g. one report completed by the workplace supervisor/mentor, and another report completed by the student.

It is particularly important that feedback is provided within a reasonable time.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the pre-placement preparation period, together with the placement period, should ensure that the business and management student develops a wide range of interpersonal and transferable skills, of the type that are highly valued by employers.

**HUMANITIES**

**An Overview of Practice in Universities**
Monica Jalloq

This chapter records good practice drawn from universities offering both sandwich and optional placements in Humanities degrees.

**BACKGROUND AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

The earliest examples of work placements incorporated into Humanities degree courses are to be found in the field of Modern Foreign Languages, where for years students have spent their third year working as Language Assistants in schools and colleges abroad. Nowadays, Humanities students have a choice of numerous courses in a wide range of subjects incorporating compulsory work placements. The duration of these work placements varies from 6 weeks to a full academic year.

The Dearing report\(^1\) published in 1997 recommended that every student should receive work experience during their undergraduate courses to enhance business awareness and graduate employability. A number of Government initiatives have followed, including the funding of several valuable research projects and the Higher Education Funding Councils are encouraging universities to expand the provision of courses incorporating compulsory work experience. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales is exceptional in requiring every Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Wales to have a Work Experience & Employability Plan as part of their Learning & Teaching Strategy. Each 3-year Plan (WEEP as it is fondly known!) includes developmental targets for the number of new modules or courses containing compulsory work experience and is reviewed annually.

Another positive development is the requirement for all HEIs to have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) or Progress File available to all students by 2005. This was also one of the prime recommendations of the Dearing Committee. The purpose of the PDP is to enable a student to record and reflect on all the learning that takes place during his/her university years. This incorporates both academic and experiential learning, encouraging students to recognise their own skills and personal development. It provides the perfect home for the reflective learning

log (and similar activities) that many students already complete during their work experience/sandwich placements.

These developments are significant. WEEPs in Wales are about to enter their third year but PDPs are very much in their infancy. A great deal of developmental work has begun and some useful customisable packages have been produced by a number of universities in England suitable for incorporation into Virtual Learning Environments. However, the real test for PDPs will come when students themselves begin to use them. How will they, and indeed, how will academics react to this new dimension? Pilot trials are already underway and these will inform developments.

**Compulsory Work Placements**

Fully integrated and accredited work placements are the ideal, but in those Humanities subjects which may be relatively new to work placements, eg English and History, a network of employer contacts may need to be built up. Lateral thinking is important here! For example, an English student placed at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in their PR Department gained valuable experience in research, in writing for a variety of audiences and in the use of multi media which were of value in her final year studies and prepared her well for careers in publishing, PR or journalism – or indeed for a majority of graduate careers. HEI Careers Services are uniquely placed to advise placement tutors on appropriate areas of work and on suitable contacts.

**Optional Work Placements**

There are many university departments which allow keen individuals to take an intercalated year, but there is only one documented structured optional scheme supported by placement staff and open to all students, including Arts, Humanities and Science, in a university. By its very nature, the optional placement year cannot be integrated into the degree course. However, a learning log is currently being piloted with a view to assessment towards a university award which will give credits in addition to those required for the degree. There are parallel examples in sandwich education, ie where placements are an integral and compulsory part of the course and where a university certificate in Industrial or Professional Studies is accredited, with the credits adding to those required for the degree.

**PURPOSES AND BENEFITS**

Where placements, optional or compulsory, are of direct relevance to the degree discipline, students gain additional knowledge and skills and see the theory they have learned at university applied in practice. They also build confidence and add considerably to their skills base and business awareness and enhance their employability. Where students wish to test the water of a potential future career that is not directly related to their degree discipline, optional placements provide all the above benefits apart from the application of theory in practice.

The non-vocational nature of the vast majority of Humanities degree schemes has resulted in a relative paucity of integrated sandwich courses. However, the situation is now changing. The basic tenet of the value of work experience in developing confidence and skills in individuals has long been recognised. For students of Modern Foreign Languages, for example, it has long been accepted that there is a need to:

- practise using the language in countries where it is used as the prime language;
- live in that country to appreciate fully its social background, history, politics and culture and, indeed, the past development of the language itself in context.

Work placements abroad in schools, commerce and industry, have introduced an additional perspective whereby students get to understand the world of work and develop employability
skills which further prepare them for later life at home or in their target country. The introduction of accredited learning logs and reflective learning sessions on return to academia has enhanced the integration of the work experience period into Modern Foreign Language courses.

In a vocational subject such as Law, those students wishing to enter the legal profession can benefit hugely from both relevant and non-relevant work placements. Six months’ paralegal work in a firm of solicitors or a year in the Government Legal Service, for example, provides an insight into the legal profession and develops skills to enhance future prospects. Equally valuable for those wishing to specialise as commercial / company lawyers or to become Company Secretaries (where a Law degree is a useful background) is a placement in corporate strategy, finance, contracts administration, etc.

Arguably, Humanities students stand to gain more than any other group from substantial placement schemes because the career paths following Humanities degrees are so enormously varied and often unclear to the undergraduate. In the UK a majority of graduate jobs (public and business administration, management functions, finance, IT, social work, and others) lie in areas open to graduates reading any discipline:

DEVELOPING LINKS

Sound working relationships with employers (large and small) are essential for successful placements and placement tutors must continually extend their employer networks and develop existing links. Market forces continually affect placement opportunities and increased competition from an ever-increasing population of students seeking work placements ensure that the market place for placements is never static. Also one poor placement student can severely damage a relationship with an employer, sometimes to the point of excluding students from a particular university department for the foreseeable future. The placement tutor must nurture old and new links accordingly.

Modern Foreign Languages

The systems in place for appointing English Language Teaching Assistants in most of Western Europe are well established and appear to work well, although there are not always sufficient placements available. In Eastern Europe and elsewhere the system is developing fast.

For setting up placements in commerce, industry or public sector the development of effective partnerships abroad is expensive and time-consuming. Personal visits are essential. Links are considered most effective when made with senior management and potential supervisors/managers. A good working relationship with personnel officers is also important. These close ties need to be nurtured on an ongoing basis and the network extended to provide more opportunities for increasing numbers of students. Surrey University has found it useful to include foreign embassy staff and representatives from industry, the public sector and professional bodies on the department’s Advisory Board. Once a placement has been agreed, it is important to prepare the employer well on the employer’s role, on course requirements and on the attributes and interests of the individual student.

Journalism

It is becoming easier to find or set up placements in this area and both the placement tutors’ personal contacts and the initiative of the students are involved in the process. At City
University, where there is a high proportion of international students, many of the placements are in the students’ home countries and the network of contacts is expanding.

**Optional placements for Humanities students**

The Careers Advisory Service at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth has operated the Year in Employment Scheme (YES) for students reading any degree discipline, for over two decades. The number of placements open to all students is increasing, both in terms of those advertised in the YES office by employers and those resulting from research by, or on behalf of, individual students. The links with local, national and international employers in the UK and the rest of the world for graduate recruitment are, of course, extensive in a Careers Service and this network is easily tapped for the recruitment of intercalary year students also. The importance of maintaining good relationships with employers is paramount but may be less continuous than for sandwich courses because of the very nature of an optional scheme, whereby one cannot always predict the supply of a candidate in a particular discipline. Again, there is no requirement for a placement to be directly related to the degree discipline.

**ORGANISING PLACEMENTS**

**Defining the roles of partners involved**

Clarity of objectives is vital to the success of both compulsory and optional placements. Most universities produce booklets for employers which cover the aims of the placement and requirements of the course, course content to date, details of assessment, Health and Safety requirements, number of visits to expect from placement tutors or other staff, whom to contact for further advice.

All universities contacted held preparatory briefing sessions for students, supported by booklets containing essential information. In one example, the information packs are tailored to each individual student. Thus, a description of the company and the type of work (based on the previous year’s experience for a repeat placement), who to contact in the host organisation, the name of the supervisor, how to arrange accommodation, details of the employer’s contract, taxation, Health & Safety and insurance. Log books and evaluation forms were also included.

Academics are briefed regarding methods of assessment, how to conduct supervisory visits, Health & Safety checks and details of the employers and students for whom they are responsible.

**Finding placements and maintaining partnerships**

The vast increase in student numbers and in the modules/courses incorporating work experience pose difficulties for placement tutors. The increased competition results in some students not being able to secure a placement. Universities have reacted to this by making placements optional or by running parallel (but not identical) courses so that the unsuccessful student remains on a full-time course, relinquishing the sandwich course. Where new modules incorporating a compulsory placement have been introduced, the placement is often planned for the summer before the second or third-year module. Where a placement is not secured, the student chooses an alternative module on return to university.

Despite these difficulties, the number of placements available has increased in recent years. For example, opportunities in newspaper journalism in this country and the rest of the world are increasing. This is encouraging in an employment sector notoriously difficult to enter as a graduate, and any graduate with a substantial period of work experience with a newspaper
will stand out from the crowd of other applicants. Vacancies for Teaching Assistants in Europe are increasing but there is still a shortfall in some countries. This has a knock-on effect for those students seeking work placements outside schools, because the closing date for applications for the Assistantships is often too early for other placements to be researched and secured. For placement tutors, therefore, it is particularly important that any good links with employers are carefully fostered year upon year.

For Humanities students seeking optional placement, as in the Year in Employment Scheme, the number and range of placements is increasing in the UK and the rest of the world. This is true for the full spectrum from small and medium-sized enterprises to multi-national organisations. Many suitable placements are initiated by speculative applications and it is an important part of the learning process for students to research their own placements. Academics or careers staff then have to examine the quality of the placement and work with the employer, especially if they have never recruited a student before, to ensure that placement is sufficiently demands, developmental and well-managed.

Types of placement

For linguists or other students seeking optional placements in Europe, it is important to note that outside the UK there is no appreciation of the ‘any discipline’ approach to graduate or student recruitment. Thus it would be very unlikely for a student of French or History to find a job in, say, personnel management unless they had prior experience/training in the field. Having said that, some students have achieved placements in Europe under similar circumstances by networking.

In degree disciplines such as Fine Art, Art History, Museum Studies it may be extremely difficult to find placements, particularly paid ones. Placements in Libraries and Museums have proved challenging and students have been given considerable responsibility, for example, going to auctions to buy paintings or photographs for a collection. However, where compulsory unpaid placements are the norm and are scheduled to take up 6 weeks or so in the summer vacation, students can be resentful. There is a loss of earning power not only for the 6 weeks but it is often difficult to gain employment for the remainder of the summer. Tutors need to manage this situation with care!

In this country, the list of possible placements for optional intercalated years is almost limitless. To those who are unused to this concept, it may seem surprising that Drama, English and History students have very successfully taught in Environmental Education Centres, without prior knowledge beyond the GCSE syllabus in Biology or Geography, if that! It is, perhaps, easier to see the link with History if the student is working in the House of Commons Library carrying out research in the records for MPs, or with the Ancient Monuments Commission or with one of the European Institutions in Brussels. All areas of commerce, industry and the private sector have offered very successful placements to Humanities students.

Student preparation

It is now established good practice to run pre-placement seminars for sandwich and optional placement students. Many departments include videos of the host organisation, type of work or target country, together with discussions with students who have returned from previous placements. These seminars should be underpinned with documentation that students keep for reference throughout the placement period. It is important to state clearly the expectations
and responsibilities of all three partners in the placement process: the student, the academic
department and the employer. It is also important to include details of the de-briefing and
assessment procedures that will occur on the student’s return to university. This
documentation should comply with the QAA ‘Code of Practice on Placement Learning’ to
safeguard the interests of all concerned.

Quality issues

It is important that all the procedures employed by HEIs in placing students on work
experience comply with rigorous quality standards. Guidance is given in the QAA Code of
Practice mentioned above and also in the Codes of Practice published by the Association for
Sandwich Education & Training (ASET) and by NCWE. Where placements are made by HEI
Careers Services, policies and procedures have to comply with additional standards, such as
the Guidance Council’s ‘Matrix’ Quality Standard.

The quality of management and training in a placement is of paramount importance to the
student, the academic department and the employer. It is not always an easy area to regulate.
Sound preparation and regular monitoring are the keys to success. The procedures described
above for clarifying objectives, identifying requirements and responsibilities on all sides, and
careful Health and Safety checks are minimal requirements.

Even with excellent preparation things can still go wrong. The best fence against disaster is
frequent contact between all parties and, of course, the supervisory visit. Tutors need to be
trained in what tell tale signs to look out for on supervisory visits and how to deal tactfully
with students and supervisors, especially where country borders have been crossed. In the
best examples of good practice, visits are made every three months for 6-month placements.
Unless a problem arises, it is unlikely that a student will receive more than two visits in a 12-
month placement. Students on the optional YES placement scheme receive, wherever
possible, one visit per year – unless there are problems, in which case an immediate additional
visit is arranged. Special arrangements have to be made for overseas personnel to visit
students in far-flung corners of the world, unless by chance a member of staff is visiting for
other reasons.

AIDING REFLECTION AND LEARNING

Particularly where the placement year is to be accredited as part of the degree scheme, the use
of a diary or log book (on paper/CD/web) is common. Learning logs or profiles allow a
record of activity and achievement to be kept by the student and the best examples record also
the skills gained from each activity and from the whole experience. Thus the record should
not only relate to the place of work but to the wider experience of the placements also.
Learning logs will contribute to the Professional Development Plans or Progress Files that all
HEIs will have to have in place and available to all students by 2005.

In the case of one Journalism course, a portfolio including cuttings of the student’s published
work, the supervisor’s report and a student evaluation of their own work contribute to their
marks in second and final year placements. For the final year placement a diary is also kept.
In addition to this, there is the option of a one-year placement but this is not formally
assessed.

For MFL students, university normally encourage students to keep a diary but this is not
always assessed. In many universities dissertations form the basis of any accreditation for
the year abroad. More than one piece of work may be required, one on an academic subject
researched on placement and another on what has been learned from the placements in terms of cultural, political, social issues and personal skills development. At one university, students have to keep a learning log on placement and make a presentation on return to university. They also have to research their final year project while abroad, which counts as a 20-credit module, and the supervisory placement visit and discussion of the draft before Christmas of final year ensure that progress and learning are take place.

All the universities contacted, arranged de-briefing sessions involving discussion, and sometimes student presentations, and felt these to be instrumental in ensuring that students reflect on their learning and share that learning with their peers.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES

Accreditation is an important tool for encouraging all students to input maximum effort and thought into the placement process, while at the same time encouraging maximum learning. Thus all examples of compulsory placement in Humanities courses encompass an element of accreditation. The basis of assessment varied between courses in the same university and between universities. The best examples involved both academic placement tutor and the employer supervisor in the assessment, together with a record of the student’s own assessment, often in the form of a learning log and/or report. More common were examples of accreditation based on one or two dissertations researched abroad and submitted on return. Accreditation varied from 10% of a module to 120 credits for a full time one-year placement.

A number of universities are developing methods of formally assessing various kinds of extra-curricular work experience for their own award schemes, eg the York Award, or working with CRAC on the Insight Plus programme. The University of Wales Aberystwyth is piloting a scheme to accredit optional intercalated year placements, which will provide additional credits to a student’s transcript.

These activities contribute to the ongoing and lively debate as to how optional placements, particularly those of no relevance to degree discipline, can be integrated and accredited within a degree course. However, most universities are now examining ways of accrediting generic skills development which is implicit within academic teaching. Indeed, there are now many examples of fully integrated skills units or entire modules which are already being accredited. In theory, the accreditation of skills gained from non-relevant work experience placements would merely be an extension of these new developments. In practice, however, many difficult questions are being grappled with – not only how to accredit such placements but also who will accredit them. These issues may be particularly important in the Humanities where work placements in some subjects are a relatively new occurrence and so relevant placements may be hard to find.
SOCIAL SCIENCE

An overview of practice

Maggie Paddon-Smith

This chapter reviews practice in the Social Sciences with a particular emphasis on developments at Middlesex University.

BACKGROUND AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Approximately 20% of universities offer accredited work experience in Social Science. This varies in length from four months to twelve, the majority being the traditional one-year sandwich placement. The observations and practices described here refer mainly to those at Middlesex University, with occasional reference to other institutions. Middlesex was a pioneer in this field, being one of the first to offer a mandatory, integrated placement year to about 200 students per year. Although the placement is no longer compulsory, about 130 students still chose to take this option each year and more are going for the shorter alternatives. Because of this the placement procedure at Middlesex is very structured and efficient. It is university policy to give all students the option of a work experience module and across the whole institution (including the professional programmes) approximately 3500 students take advantage of this.

The advent of self funding for students means that the days of the four year sandwich placement where the student is unpaid may well be limited. This has prompted institutions to review what alternative options they can offer the student, and to introduce a greater choice of experiential learning within a regular three-year programme.

At Middlesex University it is current practice to offer the following: a one-semester full time placement in place of three taught modules within a three-year programme. The student attends the placement full time for five days per week for a period of up to 14 weeks. The assessment is as rigorous as for the sandwich placement and the student is accredited with 60 credits towards the final degree. Other students may choose to attend the placement for only three or four days per week (rated at 40 credits) and come to the university for one taught module (20 credits). And some students will take two taught modules and do what is termed ‘an internship’ module worth 20 credits. Attendance at the workplace is for two days.

A typical portfolio might read thus:
Level 1: 6 taught modules = 120 credits
Level 2: 6 taught modules = 120 credits
Level 3: 3,4 or 5 taught modules plus the accredited work experience = 120 credits

AIMS AND BENEFITS

Bearing in mind the relative financial hardship which many endure, the experience must live up to expectations as most of these placements will not be paid. However the glow emanating from the returning finalists dispels any doubts about the choice!
Many of these students will have an intrinsic interest in social theory and policy and may have idealistic views on how society should be changed. The opportunity to put the abstract into reality can be compelling. It can be daunting then to discover that voluntary and charitable organisations have to spend a great deal of their time raising funds just to survive.

A prerequisite for most Middlesex SS students going on placement is that they have passed the Research Methods modules. This will have provided the student with a working knowledge of how to evaluate research and encourages them to recognise research as a process involving choices rather than a set course. During the placement they use statistics and learn to read numbers. In many of the placements the student will have to conduct a survey so may be given the chance to devise their first ‘real’ questionnaire. This will be followed by arranging and interviewing a group of people; collecting data and analysing it and finally presenting a report. A considerable body of employability skills is developed through this experience!

Some Sociology and Social Policy students decide to go into Social Work when they graduate. Competition to be accepted on to these programmes is great but it seems that the completion of a successful placement can be an advantage.

The popularity of the television programme Cracker has attracted many students to study Criminology with a view to pursuing a career in Forensic Science. Having a related placement experience on their application seems to make a difference.

Students of Third World Studies see for themselves the effect of policy and debt on local communities when they join a development related organisation or a voluntary agency which study the issues, problems and challenges facing many Third World societies. The skills developed here include research, practical, personal and transferable, thus broadening the prospects for employment.

STUDENT PREPARATION

The placement component of any award requires an investment of planning and preparation. The student will want to see a demonstration of commitment from the tutor that this type of learning has credibility and is not considered a soft option. Even though many research projects have suggested that the learning which takes place in the workplace can be as valid as that in the classroom, it is a different kind of learning. The student may want to have certain fears allayed, or details of the type of work to be done or assessment methods clarified. Control of organising the placement should now pass to the student with guidance and support from the tutor and placement staff.

In some institutions there are professional placement officers who will, in collaboration with the Careers Service, advise the student on CV preparation and interview techniques. Working in collaboration, the staff in the placement office and the tutor will identify possible opportunities for the student.

SS students might consider including modules such as in-depth interviewing during the second year. Discussion with the student should include how it is reflection on the learning from the experience that is relevant and not just the living through the experience. They should be guided in how to draw up a Learning Agreement once the placement is confirmed. This is a powerful statement focusing on the achievable learning objectives offered by the placement. It should be signed by student, tutor, and supervisor. It helps to plan a course of
action and addresses WHERE I am going; HOW will I get there; WHAT will I learn; WHY did I do it that way; DID IT WORK; room for IMPROVEMENT.

PROCUREMENT OF PLACEMENTS

Various approaches successfully produce placements. Most are time consuming and require skills in marketing and negotiating. In some institutions students find their own placements and give the details to the tutor. At North London the bulk of the work is carried out by tutors who liaise with the students and the workplace. Where there is a strong tradition of work experience programmes the institution opts for a dedicated placement office staffed by administrators who have specialist skills.

Approaches include:

- Colleagues or networking
- Ongoing from one year to the next.
- Approaches from external organisations who want a research project carried out.
- Consulting journals, directories and newspapers.
- Target a specific agency with one student’s details
- Following up students’ own contacts

The impulse to do a grand mailshot should be resisted as the percentage return on cost is negligible.

An essential requirement for making approaches is a quickly read, easily assimilated information sheet. This, accompanied by a letter written to a named person is one of the most effective ways of opening opportunities. This should be followed by a phone call to discuss further details and the suitability of the environment. This in turn may occasion a visit.

The best recommendation for solid partnerships is providing ‘good’ students! Those who are well prepared, committed, reliable and enthusiastic, and who want to learn create the best possible impression. It is quite usual when asked if they will take another student, for an organisation to respond ‘yes, if we can have another one like this’! Sadly the reverse situation also holds.

TYPES OF SUITABLE ENVIRONMENT

Social Science students in the main go to public sector or voluntary organisations. These will include:

Advice bureaux
Aids counselling service
Community Health Councils
Drug Rehabilitation Centres
Environmental agencies
Housing needs support
Civil Service: Depts of Social Security
   Employment
   Immigration
   Media research
   Non-Government Offices
   Refugee centres
   Victim support
   Police Research unit
   Special needs services
   Human Resource Management
   University Research depts
DEVELOPING LINKS

It is essential to nurture links. It is unprofessional to ‘dump’ a student in an organisation and hope for the best. In each agency there should be a named supervisor dedicated to the student. There has to be continuous communication between the HEI and the student and supervisor. Irrespective of the length of the placement, at least one visit is recommended. Shortly after the commencement of the placement there should be contact of some kind, perhaps from the placement administrator.

Work place supervisors enjoy being invited to visit the HEI. They feel much more involved in the whole process if they feel they are contributing. A way to do this is to host an annual workshop or conference. At Middlesex, placement students come along as well and give a short presentation to tutors and peers on their experience and research. Supervisors have the chance to talk to tutors on course content and relevance of modules.

This may seem like a huge drain on resources but the return outweighs the investment in terms of cementing the placement liaison. It is also a golden occasion to interest them in participating in postgraduate study or research issues.

Another consideration is to acknowledge the skills employed in supervising and to give recognition to these in a form of accreditation which again might be part of accumulated credit towards a university award. In providing Social Work placements for their students Middlesex University has an agreement with two of the Local Authorities, whereby the workplace supervisor is guaranteed a subsidised place on the Practice Teachers course in return for taking the students. They gain university credit for this. Using this as a model, the School of Social Science proposes to offer this opportunity to selected supervisors. They will be assessed through a Work Based Learning module.

ROLES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

The principal players in any placement are 1) the student, 2) the workplace supervisor and 3) the university tutor. As mentioned earlier some HEIs are fortunate to have the support service of professional placement staff who may act as a pivot for all.

The student: Before embarking on the placement and following a successful interview, the student, in collaboration with the supervisor and support from the tutor, will draw up a Learning Agreement. This should balance the needs and expectations of all. The role of placement students can be an ambiguous one. They have the dual role of ‘employee’ and learner and may be seen by incumbent staff as a threat. Especially in the initial stages, the student will need greater support to establish themselves, to gain confidence and credibility, and eventually to take initiative, question, contribute and learn. They will depend on the tutor’s visit to revive the link with the academic course and reassure that they are going in the right direction.

At Middlesex Social Science students enter placement armed with a Learning Agreement and a logbook. In the latter they will record the evidence of their learning. Before leaving the university SS students are given guidance on how to observe and reflect on what they are learning. This is done at seminars where tutors and placement administrators encourage them to notice how their contribution will fit in to the delivery of the function or service; stimulate them to reflect on the processes and outcomes. The theories and academic knowledge the student has brought with them should enable them to interpret what it is they are learning and relate this to the discipline.
The workplace supervisor: This is also a dual role, that of mentor and educator. The course tutor should not underestimate the importance of this role. For the duration of the placement the supervisor is essentially in control of the student’s learning. They should have been involved in drawing up the Learning Agreement and use this as a framework for achieving both the learning objectives and the job to be done.

It should not be assumed that the WPS has got the necessary skills to supervise and that they are aware of HEI’s expectations. The tutor should be quite explicit about these. The WPS should be informed about the assessment procedures and what they are expected to contribute. It should be emphasised that quality time must be set aside for student and supervisor to get together so that they can monitor the progress of the placement against the Learning Agreement. The supervisor may rely on the tutor for guidance on how to interpret the student’s actions, give constructive feedback and resolve difficulties for the good of the organisation. The tutor should be aware that there are different ‘styles’ of supervision, that the supervisor may bring some personal attitudes to the role, and that the nature of the organisation could have a bearing on this. Workplace supervisors may be pleased to attend a training session if that were offered by the HEI.

The visiting tutor: This is a crucial role and one which may have more credence outside the university than inside! It is a multi-faceted role which requires quite specialist skills. As with the WPS, training workshops which direct the tutor can be an enormous help. In this ambassadorial capacity of bridging the workplace with the academy, the tutor should establish that the student is in a genuine learning situation, that the Learning Agreement is being adhered to, and that the WPS is comfortable with how the placement is progressing. The student may need to have all the potential learning opportunities brought to their attention. These will include mundane chores which are part of every day work culture but also a part of the learning process. As well as representing the academic perspective of the work experience, the tutor is also the student’s agent. As such, a courteous approach to the workplace supervisor should be extended. Notice of intent to visit at a convenient time should be given and if circumstances prevent this taking place, an apologetic phone call is essential. Dress code should also be sympathetic to the environment. Occasionally the visitor may have to deal with conflict which has arisen in the workplace. Then the role changes to that of mediator.

To sum up there are at least five different roles to fulfil:

1) Tutor to student
2) Support to company supervisor
3) Assessor to student
4) Institution public relations representative
5) Learner, assimilating company culture. (Marshall 1993)

ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY ISSUES

Assessment is aimed at addressing what the student has been able to achieve with the combination of SS theories and developing interpersonal skills against the planned expectations outlined in the Learning Agreement. Who will do the assessment? There is agreement that continuous observation and review throughout the placement period is best carried out by the WPS who should be aware of the internal learning outcomes.
Historically the assessment of placement has been based on the submission of a report or thesis drawing on the data collected while in the work environment. But this piece of work will not necessarily demonstrate those interpersonal skills the student sets out to acquire. The students themselves will complete the reflective logbook and it is the combination of all of these factors that determines the final assessment.

Middlesex is moving from simply assessing the theses, to giving credit for each component. Beginning in academic year 2000 each student who chooses a work experience module irrespective of the duration, will have the following assessment:

a) Learning Agreement 15%
b) Reflective Log 15%
c) Work Place Supervisor’s assessment 20%
d) Oral presentation 10%
e) Organisation Profile 10%
f) Research Project 30%

The word content here will be determined by the level of credit. This will be graded against university criteria and accredited towards the degree.

Since an aim is to promote employability, it is worth considering giving some ‘stand-alone’ recognition of the student’s placement achievements that will have credibility with employers. Social Science students are given an additional ‘in-house’ award called a Diploma in Occupational Studies, which verifies that the student has completed a successful work experience year.

ART AND DESIGN

A CASE STUDY FROM BRUNEL UNIVERSITY

Richard Morris

*These observations are the result of about eighteen years experience with work placement schemes for students on a Design & Technology with Education course, and with Product Design, Industrial Design and Industrial Design Engineering courses at Brunel University. These involve nearly two hundred students each year taking work placements at the end of their first and third years, as well as students who prefer to take a full year out on a placement.*

BACKGROUND

ESTABLISHING OBJECTIVES

Any scheme devised for placements must reflect what is required and feasible, by the department, courses and external partners involved. It should not be controlled either by practices in other departments or university senates simply because ‘it has always been done like this’.
The prime objective of any work experience is to enlarge a student’s experience beyond their academic studies. Some will argue that the placement must coincide exactly with the academic work areas. Experience shows, however, that students can benefit from many unlikely areas even if not apparently directly related to their course. Many, upon graduation, may set up their own businesses and to have first hand experience of dealing with people, organisation, management and finance within a company can be very beneficial. Improving language abilities through a placement is also helpful as many jobs now demand at least one language beyond the mother tongue. Our students make use of exchange schemes where they spend some time in a non-British academic institution studying subjects they do not do on their own course. They also experience the culture of the country first hand and learn to speak the language.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

If a college is to offer sandwich courses, it is essential that staff can deal full time helping to find placements, providing guidance about the placement and undertaking a general responsibility for the whole situation. They must be people who have a certain freedom to interpret the rules and should be either academics or academic-related. They must have a first hand experience of at least some of the disciplines to be encountered by students on placements and, if possible, belong to a relevant professional organisation for their subject, especially if such an organisation accredits their courses.

Employers, whilst willing to become involved with work experience, have their problems and rules. It is not always practical to stipulate that all placements have a rigid timescale – some of the best placements cannot offer this. However certain courses are tied to certain institutions or professional bodies, who demand certain minima.

Successful partnerships exist through trust on both sides. It is essential that both sides of the partnership show a professional attitude towards placements. It is tempting for a company to off load all their low grade tasks onto a student but, if they look at this closely, they are not in fact giving themselves any credit. Likewise a poor student can tarnish the image of work placements. Some degree of trust must exist to overcome such situations. If the company has not taken a student previously it is worth inviting them to either visit the college or for the placements organiser to visit the company. Once met it is so much easier to discuss problems over the telephone should they occur.

Professional bodies usually have someone responsible for student matters and they may need to be consulted if a scheme is being set up for the first time. They may also have member companies willing to take students.

The Role of Tutors and Supervisors

Those involved with work placements must have a well-defined role and responsibilities. In the Department of Design the title of the person responsible is the Industrial Liaison Officer. The remit is wider than one of just finding suitable places for the students. It is also combined with being the Industrial Tutor whose responsibilities lie more with approving the suggested placements, outlining a plan of action for each student and pastoral care. In a large department this could be a separate person appointed from the academic staff. Students also need a visiting tutor, who may or may not be the academic tutor or even their own personal tutor. This tutor will be responsible for visiting students on placements, discussing the placement
with the company supervisor, and reporting on the student’s performance. In our case the Industrial Liaison Officer also undertakes a role as one of the visiting tutors.

To run effective placements requires commitment on both sides. Within the college the person responsible for organising and arranging placements must be someone who relates easily to students. The responsibilities must be clearly set out. Not only do the students have responsibilities but so also do the college and work placements tutor. The latter must be scrupulously fair in dealings with students. They must set objectives, time scales etc and stick to them. Students must be aware that failure to conform may lose a placement opportunity. Experience has shown that students do appreciate this. Each student must be given a printed set of guidelines, which will also be useful to staff.

The visiting tutor is responsible for monitoring the student at the company. They will arrange a visit to see the student in action and to talk to the supervisor and involved with the student. If a problem arises they will sort it out.

Employers have several responsibilities, not least to themselves to ensure that they provide the student with a worthwhile experience and treat the student in an adult manner. Whilst most students are young and comparatively inexperienced, they will certainly have ideas of their own. They need to be allowed to ask questions.

The company supervisor may be someone in the personnel department, or a line or departmental manager. They will usually be the people who put forward the proposals for a student work placement and will be responsible for seeing that the student completes their allotted tasks professionally. The supervisor will ultimately complete a questionnaire on the student’s performance.

FINDING PLACEMENTS

Finding placements is the first objective. If starting from scratch there are directories, journals, professional bodies and institutions that can provide mailing lists. This was the situation when the Design & Technology with Education course was first set up at Brunel University in 1981. There was no experience of this specialised market within the university itself so a totally new mailing list had to be created, as well as a different approach towards placements from the rest of the University. The current design courses have been able to build on this experience.

At Brunel University it is firmly laid down in Senate Ordinances that the responsibility for finding a placement lies with the student. However that does not absolve the placements organiser from also assisting in finding placements. He also has the responsibility for approving anything found by the student. Students finding their own placements have the advantage that they are presenting themselves directly to a company. A letter from the college placements organiser is much less personal. Students can discuss their hopes and expectations face to face and answer any queries that the company may raise. Students themselves can search amongst a variety of areas: local and national directories, local employment agencies, relevant journals and papers. There may be a professional body that can assist students. Local chambers of trade, commerce and industry may publish directories or local job agencies in an area where a placement is desired.

There will be those companies or organisations who regularly assist with placements, though not necessarily every year. But there will always be those who have a one off need for a student for a particular task. Companies on a mailing list must be contacted well in advance of the placement period for there is sometimes the problem that the placement opportunity may
fall towards the end of a financial year. If not advised in time, there may be no budget for students.

Views differ as to what a student must do on a placement. Students from the Design Department at Brunel go into a company to do an actual job related to some part of their course or their future employment. Each student is allocated an Industrial Tutor who not only visits the student but also assists with any problems if necessary. On the visit the tutor may discuss the opportunity of some research work to be carried out by the department or for a final year project for the student and the chance of employment. Industrial contacts are invited to become active as regards advice and guidance for the courses by becoming members of an advisory group. That way they keep a foot in academia and we keep a necessary link with industry. All placements contacts are invited to the opening of the annual degree show. The University itself has a Business Development Bureau to maintain links beyond individual department and organises seminars and a publication for members.

**Non UK placements**

Students may wish to undertake a placement outside the UK. If this placement is within the European Union then there should be no problems beyond that of language. However it is not usual in some countries for students to be paid, or they are paid so little that they would be unable to subsist except at a loss. No work permits are necessary in an EU country. However if a student wishes to go outside the EU then they enter the world of work permits. Sometimes the potential host organisation will deal with such matters but the student must check first with the relevant office of that country in the UK.

There are also exchange programmes, such as Socrates, which allow students to go to another college outside the UK for a given period. They will usually study a subject not undertaken at their own college and may also have to take exams. For some of these schemes there may be grants available. When planning an exchange the student must make sure they work out a realistic budget!

**Non EU students**

Students from non-EU countries no longer need a work permit to undertake a work placement. However, they should not work longer than 20 hours a week except where the placement is a necessary part of their studies. Other rules apply to work not a part of their academic studies and there is a Home Office leaflet on the subject.

**STUDENT PREPARATION**

Printed guidelines on placements are produced for students setting out both the university’s as well as the department’s requirements for placements. There is guidance on the student’s responsibilities, how to prepare a CV and the design portfolio, making own contacts, responding to offers, organising interviews, what is expected on a placement, tutorial visits, writing a report at the end and the assessment process. These are all gone through in a series of meetings with small groups at the beginning of the course. Writing CVs and creating a design portfolio, an essential necessity for any design or arts student, are part of the normal academic design studies, but students may also get personal advice from the Industrial Liaison Officer. This includes commenting on CVs produced by the students to check for clarity and content. The University careers department organises seminars on interview techniques and preparation.

Information on individual company requirements is usually provided by the company itself. Some have a very specific requirement, others may leave a final decision until they actually
meet students at interviews. Most, however, will specify skills required, such as the ability to use certain engineering or graphic computer programs, or model making or management skills. Some are just seeking a well-motivated, hardworking student, who will take on anything and everything and who fit into the existing team.

Time consuming though it may seem, it is important to be available to students, as and when they need, to discuss their placements. For the final count down towards the placement, they are all issued with details of their company, the dates they will be there and their company contact. Their actual working hours and payment will be in their contracts. There are also basic guidelines about illness, holidays and behaviour whilst on the placement: they are company employees and therefore obey all company regulations. They are allocated their industrial tutor. Details of the format of their reports on the company are contained within the placement guidelines.

A problematic is whether a student can turn down an offer already accepted, or leave a company, for a ‘better’ placement. The rules must be firm. Once a student has accepted a placement, then a verbal, if not yet a written, contract, has been agreed. The company will begin to set aside the necessary space for the student and set in motion the lead up to the student’s arrival. If a particular project has already been allocated it will do neither the student nor the college any good if the student then reneges on the agreement. Similarly a student on a placement, even where there will usually be an agreed period for notice, ought not to leave the company in the midst of an ongoing project. Often the reasons for wanting to leave early are the result of poor communication between the student and the company supervisor. The student must immediately contact the visiting tutor and usually such situations are resolved amicably.

**Student pay**

Most companies pay students on placements but it needs to be checked with new contacts. It is obviously fair that in exchange for the work they do students should receive a proper remuneration. Rates of pay vary from less than one hundred pounds a week up to seventeen thousand for a twelve months placement.

**Links with the Careers Department.**

Most HEIs have a Careers department whose function is helping graduates to find a job. There may be occasions where companies are seeking both graduates and placement students so a good link needs to be maintained between the placement organiser and the careers department. However since the placement is directly related to the academic part of the course, and there is a very necessary communication with relevant course tutors, the responsibility of the placements organiser must be to the department. There may be, within the college, regular meetings between other placement organisers, careers and college administrators to swap information but the direct link and responsibility must be to the department.

**AFTER THE PLACEMENT**

Following a placement there must be an assessment. Information will come from three sources. The visiting tutor writes an assessment of the placement both as to the student’s performance and the suitability of the company. The student writes a report following the placement that must be seen by the company in case it contains any confidential details. A questionnaire is sent to the company from the student’s department.
Visiting Tutor’s Report

Students are normally visited once during a placement lasting up to six months and might be visited again for a longer placement. Overseas placements are also visited where possible. Or it is sometimes possible to get someone in the locality to carry out a visit on behalf of the department.

Generally a tutor will stick to the same companies each year. Most members of the department undertake visits as they are both enjoyable and an opportunity to talk to people at the sharp end of the subject being taught or to discuss the possibility of closer relations between the company and the department. They write a report on their visit which is handed to the Industrial Liaison Officer. This will include a résumé of the work that the student is undertaking and any comments from the student’s company supervisor.

Student’s Report

At the conclusion of a placement the student writes a report. The Report serves several purposes. First it shows that the student has an understanding of the nature of the placement and the company involved, of the actual work carried out and what they, the students, consider they have gained both personally and from an academic point of view. It is also valuable to the company as a record of the student’s activities and achievements whilst on placement. A well-written and produced report can also form part of the student’s portfolio for either a subsequent placement or as part of a job application following graduation. To assist in the writing of a report students keep a logbook to record daily events and thoughts about the placement as it proceeds. Sometimes, as a condition of their placement, students will have to write a report for their company. Provided this is not confidential this could form the major part of the report for the college.

The Report is divided into three parts. Firstly an introduction to the company. This could include a brief history of the company, what they do and where they see themselves in a national or international market plus a family tree showing the different areas of the organisation and where the student has fitted in. The middle part is the student’s own comments and opinions on the work carried out, the way the company approaches a project, their attitudes to management and communication and anything else of relevance. Here the logbook will come in handy to jog the memory. The final part is for the student to reflect upon the experience and to state what he or she has gained from it both in terms of their personal skills and of the course objectives.

Company Questionnaire

After the placement the company receives a brief questionnaire to grade the student’s performance in certain areas. The questionnaire is kept to a minimum as many of our companies are quite small and do not have the time to complete elaborate forms. Questions relate both to the general conduct of the student, their work performance and the benefits to the company. There is also space to write more personal comments. If there are too many low grades then the matter would be discussed with the student’s company supervisor and also internally with both the tutors.
ASSESSMENT

Student placement reports are handed in within four weeks of returning to course. They are then read and assessed by the Visiting Tutor and the Personal Tutor. Evidence of an understanding of the placement is required as well as a good standard of presentation. Reports have to be either typed or word processed. The report will be accompanied by the Visiting Tutor’s and company’s report, and a pass or fail awarded based on the three sources of information referred to. In the event of a possible failure the matter is discussed with the Visiting Tutor, the company supervisor, the student and their Personal Tutor. A report is then presented to the relevant Board of Examiners for their final decision. Should a student fail the mandatory placement period, then their degree is withheld until a further placement is satisfactorily undertaken, usually after the final year of the course.

Reports are not given marks as each experience is very different and it would, in fairness to the students, demand an external moderator. There has been no demand from the students for this to happen.
This contribution relates to common practice in undergraduate courses in the biomedical and allied science subject areas within the School of Science and Mathematics at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU). Approximate typical student numbers doing a particular type of work placement each year are: 120 undertaking 48 week sandwich placements as part of their honours degree; 20 completing the shorter HND Work Experience unit and 30 on BSc final year project placements. All placements contribute academic credit towards the qualification. Although a course may be accredited by a Professional Body this does not influence the nature of the placement year.

For the majority of BSc science courses in the School students initially enrol on the sandwich programme ie the placement component is compulsory. In other cases the decision to undertake the sandwich route is formally taken by the student at the beginning of the second year.

Courses in other subjects eg mathematics, are also offered within the School. Many of these include a placement element with a similar organisation and range of assessed components to those discussed here.

BENEFITS TO SCIENCE STUDENTS

Work placements in Science are important in that they form a link between theory and practice. Students often find the amount of information that they are required to assimilate in the early stages of a science course daunting and they question its relevance. However when they are able to apply it in a working environment, their understanding and appreciation of the need for knowledge generally increases substantially. Difficult concepts become clearer and their confidence in their abilities improves.

Specific benefits relate to the fact that scientific knowledge, and its associated technology, are rapidly changing and access to a range of specialised state-of-the-art instrumentation and apparatus is restricted in many HEIs. Practical laboratory work is an essential element of most courses but is very time-consuming and expensive to deliver.

A proportion of undergraduates are interested in science but are unsure of the exact branch they eventually wish to pursue. They may be unsure whether they want a career associated with laboratory work. The placement may help to resolve some of these issues.

Research projects are an essential element of many undergraduate and postgraduate science courses and the opportunity to complete these in an external laboratory offers several benefits to the student, the HEI and the laboratory involved. The student may get the opportunity to work with an established research team using specialised apparatus; their contribution to the research output of the department is welcomed; laboratory costs at the HEI are reduced and the wider choice of project topics enhances the quality of the course.

FINDING PLACEMENTS

The majority of placements in science involve working in a laboratory. It is helpful to prospective placement employers to receive course curriculum details with any initial placement enquiry. In most HEIs it is the responsibility of the placement tutor to ensure that the subject area of any placement on offer is appropriate for the course and to clarify the nature of the work because, within a particular
department, the type of work can vary substantially. At SHU the placement tutors request job
descriptions for each position on offer and discuss new placements with an appropriate company
employee. They may undertake to visit the department in question to discuss such aspects as
supervision, SHU requirements, training procedures, and Health and Safety, which is of particular
importance in scientific laboratories. In addition, for research project placements, a member of
academic staff, usually the project tutor, confirms that all aspects of the submitted project proposal,
which includes details of the facilities, resources and supervisory staff, are all of an acceptable
standard.

Despite the variety of laboratories, the employment sector for science placements is quite narrow.
This makes targeting companies easier but restricts the number of opportunities. An important
consideration for short placements which take place during the academic year, may be local access as
students normally undertake these from their university accommodation base. Academic colleagues
tend to develop links with local industries, including the public sector, and these form the basis of
initial enquiries. There may be a similar location constraint on short undergraduate or postgraduate
research project placements but some students do elect to leave the university area, at their own
expense, in order to benefit from the facilities in a particular laboratory. Such project opportunities
are often the result of a previously successful longer placement or are arranged through colleagues’
research contacts.

Sources of potential sandwich placement providers are available from scientific publications,
company directories, and graduate employers. These can be consulted when establishing an initial
enquiry list. Subsequently, previous placement employers are contacted and these form the core of
science placements at SHU. Visiting tutors (VTs) also follow up new contacts in different
departments within a particular organisation when they visit.

Science is constantly evolving, and particularly in the expanding field of biotechnology new
companies are constantly emerging. It is therefore necessary to keep abreast of these changes and any
potential placements. Academic colleagues can help by passing relevant information to the
appropriate placement tutor. A simple form for this purpose encourages them to do so.

The lead-in time to arranging placements seems to lengthen each year. Many of the larger companies
are now asking for applications almost a year in advance. These deadlines must be adhered to and
this puts an enormous strain on students and placement organisers. Companies expect quick
responses to their communications, so competent administrative staff are vital.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

The continuing success of work placements demands that all parties involved benefit. However for
this to be the case the roles and responsibilities of all participants must be agreed and defined.

The extent of the formal assessment varies considerably between courses and HEIs. This can be
confusing for prospective placement employers unless they are specified initially. The approach
adopted at Sheffield Hallam University is that the placement tutor discusses the course requirements
and obligations of the placement employer with new potential placement employers and then follows
this up in writing if requested. All potential placement employers are required to complete a Health
and Safety questionnaire before approval is given to the student to start work. Such forms should be
drawn up in conjunction with Health and Safety personnel in the HEI and be based on their Health
and Safety policy. Appendix I gives an indication of the information that might be required.

Comprehensive written information on the course requirements associated with the placement is
available to the company when the placement commences. These aspects, together with assessment
details and responsibilities, are discussed with the student and the workplace supervisor (WPS) by the
Written information for employers
Additional written general information is useful to employing departments at the start of the placement period:
- Contact names and addresses, phone, fax, email of key HEI staff e.g. VT, placement tutor, placement administrator, course leader;
- Level of contact /nature of monitoring by HEI during the period;
- Confidentiality issues.
An effective way of establishing initial contact between the student and their WPS is to ask the student personally to hand over this information on their starting day. It also gets round the administrative problem of the WPS not being known at the time the placement was agreed.

Maintaining contact during the placement
At SHU the VT ensures effective contact between the HEI and the student and their WPS supervisor during the placement. A telephone call from the VT within the first few weeks of commencement serves to introduce all parties and to establish the frequency and nature of future contact. Although placement monitoring is the responsibility of the VT, the student and the WPS are encouraged to initiate contact at any time. The wider availability of email may help this process.

VTs are briefed by the placement tutor on their various responsibilities which include giving both pastoral and academic support to the student, ensuring appropriate and safe working conditions, and monitoring the performance of the student. They are issued with Guidance Notes which outline their role and include a simple checklist for use on telephone contacts and during visits. This gives structure to the conversations and ensures that all aspects are covered. The information can then be quickly transferred to a monitoring form and a Health and Safety checklist. Appendix II gives an example of the health and Safety information which might be required. These forms are handed to the placement tutor prior to filing who can then identify any problems and take appropriate action.

Depending on the length and nature of the placement, topics for consideration during the initial telephone call could include:
- student accommodation;
- work being done;
- performance expectations;
- difficulties;
- procedural and administrative matters.

It is good policy to visit students on placement and at SHU for short placements such as 6 week HND placements. One visit is acceptable but for 1 year sandwich placements, especially those linked to academic credit, two visits is normally a minimum for students in the UK. Our guidelines suggest that at each of the 2- 4 hour visits, the VT should have private conversations with both the student and the WPS in addition to a joint meeting.

Initially it is important to discuss:
- the proposed nature, structure and length of the visit;
- aims and objectives of the placement;
- related academic credit and assessment;
- health and safety issues.

During the private meeting with the student it is useful to discuss:
• their well being;
• work being done/proposed;
• academic issues/assessments;

During the private meeting with the WPS it is useful to discuss:
• their role in training, supervision, assessment etc;
• laboratory facilities/safety etc;
• performance of the student;
• HE requirements of the placement;
• other involved staff e.g. as mentors/supervisors for particular components.

Developing the monitoring team

The placement tutor can gain valuable information from the completed monitoring forms and can also act to resolve any issues that have been identified. Any Health and Safety issues should be referred to the relevant personal in the HEI for advice or follow up. Regular meetings with the VT team give an opportunity to disseminate information, share experiences and discuss any proposed changes to the placement arrangements. Such meetings are particularly useful for new members of the team but they should not be regarded as a substitute for initial training with the placement tutor.

STUDENT PREPARATION

Providing a suitable environment for students to prepare themselves adequately for placements is the responsibility of the HEI and in the School of Science and Mathematics at SHU is implemented by the placement tutors. Colleagues from Careers and Counselling and the Learning Teaching Institute are also involved in sandwich placement preparation. The former give specialist advice on applications, interviews etc and the latter on access to library information while away from the University on placement as students will be completing assignments for academic credit. Students’ attendance at specific timetabled sessions covering such topics as Health and Safety on placement is compulsory.

Placements in the biomedical and allied sciences are very competitive and demand a very positive input from students and organisers. Students do not initially appreciate this and often need much encouragement to actively participate. Although the sandwich year is the third year of the course, student preparation begins in the first year with written information, timetabled sessions and personal interviews with placement tutors. Booklets containing the following information form the basis of the student sessions and are also of use all through their placement year.

• Importance and objectives of a placement;
• Payment;
• locations;
• Process of obtaining a placement;
• CV writing;
• Questionnaire about placement preferences/restrictions;
• Placement opportunities (examples);
• Agreement setting out the students’ and SHU’s responsibilities;
• Covering letters;
• Application forms;
• Interviews;
• Assessment/academic credit details;
• Supervision and monitoring;
• Health and Safety on placement.
All information regarding placements eg booklets, details of potential placements and associated application instructions, general notices etc, is disseminated to students via Blackboard. This is an interactive web-based program which students can access at any time. This approach has proved to be very efficient to administer and has been well received by the students.

Preparation for the HND Work Experience unit, which takes place in the second year, is in the months preceding it. It follows a similar, but less intense format.

An important element of student preparation for sandwich and HND placements is to introduce the concept of learning at work and how they can maximise on the opportunities available. This can be set out in general terms but will probably be more effective if associated with some assessed components. The units of study which are linked to the sandwich and HND placements in science at SHU are designed to do this and also to encourage students to understand and question rather than just to ‘do’. The units are presented to the students in written form and explained fully in the placement preparation sessions. Whatever vehicle is being used to assist and assess learning it will not be effective unless the students understand what is involved and what is being achieved.

**LEARNING, ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION**

The value of placements in terms of learning, and their contribution to academic credit, is now generally acknowledged, largely as a consequence of the widening awareness of the concept of Work Based Learning (WBL). This is reflected in the adoption of a more formalised assessment process by many HEIs which encourages students to maximise on the learning opportunities available to them. The nature of assessment depends on the type and purpose of the placement but this places considerable responsibility on the HEI to ensure that academic standards are maintained and that work-based credit is of the same value as that obtained on taught courses within the HEI. Thus internal and external moderation procedures will apply.

**Summative assessment** is associated with academic credit and is directly related to the Learning Outcomes for the unit (module). This could be a research project, a Work Experience unit which forms part of an HND BTEC in Science or a unit of credit linked to a sandwich placement. In the case of the latter, the student is eligible to receive a sandwich award if they have successfully completed their sandwich year, and the unit of credit associated with it contributes to their overall degree classification in the usual way. Other arrangements for sandwich courses involve students completing some assignments, which may or may not actually contribute academic credit e.g. a report, logbook etc., in order to qualify for a sandwich award. A third approach is to award a separate qualification for the sandwich year.

**Formative assessment** that allows students to evaluate and develop their own performance is valuable during work placements and is often linked to the development of key skills.

Whatever the nature of the placement it is vital that all parties are informed in writing of the arrangements and that they understand what their involvement is. WPSs are normally asked to contribute to the assessment process but may be inexperienced in this task. They will probably be unfamiliar with terminology like Learning Outcomes and the concept of relating assessment to them. Clear instructions and good communication between the HEI tutor, to agree which Learning Outcomes the WPS feels competent to assess, is essential. The WPS should also be aware of the internal moderation process within the HEI.

Research projects will be assessed according to the specific course requirements of the HEI. The process used to assess projects in the workplace must be directly comparable to that used for projects carried out internally.
Assessment associated with a sandwich placement
Assessment of a sandwich placement can be beneficial to both the student and employer provided that they complement the job being done, stimulate learning and help to enhance the students understanding and performance. For science students on placement there are elements of learning associated with both the technical/practical aspects of work and also key skills. It is important to devise a scheme that enables students to evaluate, develop and reflect on their performance in these areas but includes tasks and study items which are appropriate to the wide range of laboratories that a student from a particular course may be employed in. Thus no student should be penalised because of their particular employer. Facilities and resources vary between large and small companies, public and private, national and multi-national, research institutions and manufacturing businesses, and assessment items need to be accommodated within all these sectors and not be too prescriptive or resource-rich. Note must also be taken of the fact that much scientific work is confidential and this restricts its inclusion in assessment outside the company.

For science sandwich placements at SHU a framework of assessment for academic credit is applicable, with appropriate modifications, to all the sandwich placements on the range of courses within the School. This is called the Professional Practice Unit. Assessed components are: a report on the placement; an oral presentation or poster; a portfolio of learning, (which includes items linking the course to the placement); an in-depth literature review on a topic related to the placement work; performance reviews, (also used for formative assessment). For each item definite written guidelines on length of work, content, style etc. together with assessment details, are given to the student, the WPS and VT. The VT acts as academic advisor throughout the placement year and they, together with other academic staff carry out the majority of the assessment when the student has returned to SHU. The WPS also contributes to aspects of the assessment process.

Assessment of HND placements
For the shorter HND placements, students studying biomedical sciences have an assessment structure which fulfils BTEC criteria but is flexible enough to be used in a variety of workplace situations. Assessment of short periods of work experience for BTEC courses normally takes place when the student has returned to the HEI and at SHU it is the responsibility of their VT in conjunction with the unit leader. Submission of a portfolio of evidence of learning is required. This contains items relating to the techniques/apparatus/instruments used, experiments performed, and includes a report covering such aspects as: the organisation and the student’s role on placement; review of work and training carried out; a reflection on the experience and learning. A logbook is used to structure the work experience.

Assessment of research projects
The scheme to assess research projects, which has been used successfully at SHU for several years, involves supervisors scoring against a set of Learning Outcomes and moderation by an independent member of academic staff. For work based projects, after discussion with the project tutor the WPS would normally be expected to assess such aspects as: working safely and proficiently in the laboratory; showing independence and initiative; designing and planning a research investigation, etc. However they may lack the experience to contribute to the assessment of the quality, coherence and depth of the research report.

LOG BOOKS, RECORDS OF ACHIEVEMENT
Log books and diaries can be of limited value if they simply record activities without any comment on the associated learning and understanding. However they are a useful component of record keeping for the short HND placements. In order for students to really benefit, such short placements require more structure than longer sandwich placements and at SHU this involves a logbook listing suggested laboratory activities. Students fill in the sections as they are completed and indicate the
level of participation and learning they have achieved. This may be simply to have observed or assisted in certain activities but performed others totally independently. In-depth assessments are then related to a selection of these activities. This allows students in different types of laboratory to present relevant assignments for assessment purposes.

**PORTFOLIOS**

Compiling a portfolio according to specified guidelines can be a very effective mode of learning on placement provided that they include items which indicate a breadth and depth of learning. It is important that students document what they have learned, what benefit the activity was to them and the placement organisation. Students at SHU find it useful to include items which link placement activities and learning to their course of study and these are included both during and after the placement.

**DEVELOPING KEY SKILLS**

Well organised placements include some system which allows students to review their performance in such categories as communication, working with others, problem solving, numeracy and IT. This operates on the sandwich and HND placements at SHU and is not only beneficial during the placement but also introduces the student to the concept of performance review in the workplace.

As part of the Professional Practice unit students designate their various placement activities, both technical and operational, to the key skill categories. At the end of a suitable period of time (e.g. 3 months for a sandwich placement), they self-assess under each heading and their WPS/mentor does likewise. In the ensuing discussion students are encouraged to explore their strengths and weaknesses. Subsequent reviews take place, normally 3 during a 1-year placement, as appropriate to student’s development. In the SHU scheme extra categories are included which cover aspects of work performance such as quality of work and principles of procedures. Such reviews, although formative in nature, are linked to summative assessment in this unit. Similarly students on HND placements perform self-assessments in the BTEC key skill areas, as do their WPS.

**REFLECTION**

An overall, honest reflection on the placement, once it is completed, is essential. Students at SHU are asked to put this in writing, for inclusion in a portfolio or placement report. Placement employers find this information a valuable feedback on their contribution. However, for students, a written reflection is no substitute for an open and in-depth discussion with their VT after they have returned to the HEI. Unless there is a confidentiality issue this can also be very informative for the placement team.

**EXAMPLE OF HEALTH AND SAFETY CHECKLIST:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>School of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**PLACEMENT HEALTH AND SAFETY CHECKLIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please return this questionnaire when completed to:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above statements are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed: Date:

Position:

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return to the above address as soon as possible.

---

**Visiting Tutor Checklist for Health and Safety**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation:</th>
<th>Student:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health and Safety Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Has the student received a health and safety briefing session before commencing work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the student receive appropriate training for the work being undertaken?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the workplace clean / tidy / well lit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are welfare facilities clean / maintained /adequate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are gangways / stairways / doorways clear of obstruction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fire Precautions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the student understand the organisations emergency procedures? (e.g. Fire warnings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are fire exits clearly marked and unobstructed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there appropriately sited Fire Extinguishers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>First Aid / Accident Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the student aware of the accident reporting procedures?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the student understand the procedures for summoning First Aiders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To date, has the student had any accidents or near miss incidents? If YES obtain details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Risk Assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the work being undertaken subject to a written risk assessment, safe system of work or standard operating procedure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has the student been appraised of the risks associated with the work being undertaken?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the precautions identified in the Risk Assessment being implemented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the student issued with the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the student receive adequate supervision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Computer based work placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If the student uses a PC regularly (e.g. more than 2 hours per day) has the computer workstation been assessed and set up in accordance with the Display Screen Equipment Regs. 1992</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

Date:_____________________________________________________

PLEASE ATTACH THIS TO THE VISIT FORM AND RETURN TO THE PLACEMENT TUTOR
COMPUTING AND ENGINEERING

A VIEW FROM HUDDERSFIELD UNIVERSITY OF THE BEST PRACTICE IN THE DISCIPLINE

Denise Downs

A placement tutor for 16 years and co-ordinator of the School’s placement unit; responsible for sourcing placements for approximately 350 students. We are the largest placement unit in the University, having more students on 12-month placements than any of the other schools.

The School’s of Engineering and Computing & Maths merged on 1st May 2002 and as a result have created a single placement unit responsible for all our school’s sandwich students. The contents in this chapter represent some of the brainstorming and information gathering we produced prior to the merger and are presented here as a different approach to the other chapters and provide a focused, succinct list of aspects to consider for creating good practice.

BACKGROUND

Both schools have a long history of sandwich placements with the majority of their degree and HND students undertaking a 12 month long work experience year which is assessed and required to pass for progression to the next stage. Both Engineering and Computing have a relationship with their respective professional bodies and have accreditation for most of their courses by the professional body. In Computing assessment of the placement also yields a grade and thus has its own external examiner. The grade for degree students contributes to the final classification at the same value as the final year project; this has been the case for a number of years and we are currently working with our third external examiner.

As a result of the decision to merge, placement staff in the two schools got together to plan and suggest how placements should be dealt with for the new school. While the assessment strategy is different, and the staffing balance between administrative staff and academic staff is different, it was felt that the large overlap in activities suggested a single placement unit for all the school’s sandwich students. To facilitate this we listed our ‘guiding principles’, which were largely in common and the activities we undertake. What exists below is the full list for the two schools and so the agenda we have set ourselves for the new placement unit starting in September 2002.

Common Guiding Principles

- Student Centred providing strong student support for all aspects as required
- Efficient administration processes; strong ownership values and reviewed and updated regularly
- Pro-active
- Engage in research related to placements, educational aspects and best practice
- Actively involved with Reach-out at University and school-level, ensuring if opportunities are not suitable placements then may be able to be picked up as consultancy, research, students projects, TCS, etc.
• Provide strategic influence on school activities and course content; ensure industry information is channelled to the various pathway committees to keep courses up-to-date and sometimes generate initiatives for new courses
• Single software application for management of processes and information (agreed on MaPPiT)
• Establish relationship with and sense of loyalty from students – present and past
• Facilitates active promotion of other commercial activities
• Active in promotion of the benefits of placements to prospective students, i.e. admissions/recruitment)
• Friendly and approachable
• Strong ‘personal’ relationships with a number of companies
• ‘Can do’ attitude
• Confidence from students and companies that we will resolve issues
• Always contactable (when the University is open the placement unit is staffed)

Placement as a School Asset

• Both schools obtained excellent in previous HEFCE reviews; it was this excellent rating that allowed FDTL funding to be obtained for a project in relation to placements
• Provide good quality paid placements; will pull students out if placement not suitable
• Good salaries obtained for students – marketing asset to prospective students
• Aim to place all eligible students
• One of the biggest profit centres for school
• Have brought in a substantial research grant plus smaller ones over a number of years
• High reputation with companies and helps raise school profile
• Good sales feature, contributes to high employment stats after graduation in first destination surveys
• Recognition of placement: either by IEE or CATS credits (academic)
• Provides focus for company contacts and channel management to other reach-out services
• Final Year projects are often in conjunction with placement companies

Agreed Activities Undertaken

• Marketing: companies, students, alumni
• Obtain jobs: new, maintain current
• CV preparation sessions/documentation and advice
• Career Development Planning and job aspirations sessions with students
• Interview skills and practice
• Maintain links with careers and promote careers office to students
• Check Job Descriptions and contracts are suitable
• Visits: manage visits and ensure completion, assessment of, documentation and management of any arising issues from visits
• Manage problems; inform/liase with appropriate pathway tutor, manage problems and reporting to exam board on outcomes
• Talks: open days, admissions sessions, visiting schools
• Provide student counselling and mentoring/act as ‘year’ tutor for all students on placement
• Liase with course managers/subjects leaders on course content
• Provide reports and statistics for Teaching Committee and External Relations Committee
• Liase with and support Alumni
• Provide student details for school office including mail labels to placement address
• Liase with School Office to ensure data accuracy on student record system
• Liase with external examiner
• Manage assessment, marking and moderation
• Liase with International Office for overseas placements and funding
• Assist students with funding, registration, ad hoc issues as arise
• Organise overseas placement seminar for new students seeking placements
• Provide mail lists of companies for MSc projects mailshot and ad hoc requests for approval
• Liase with Commercial Activities re possible TCS final year projects
• Provide training for visiting tutors with documentation
• Manage employer feedback to inform courses and procedures, both ad hoc and organise special evaluations
• Deal with any complaints
• Promote and obtain student prizes
• Pass any newsworthy ‘stories’ to marketing for promotion of the school

Various things for consideration

The previous School of Computing & Maths undertook 3 visits (2 for those abroad) to students in addition to requiring students to attend a final year project and options day. While this may seem a heavy resource implication (most visit twice on a 12 month placement), the income generated more than facilitates this and the school reinforced on a number of occasions the desire to keep this.

Both schools have moved away from what was a heavy academic led team for the placement unit to one with full-time placement officers and part-time academic attachments. The overall placements co-ordinator is still an academic member of staff. Placement officers are the students first point of contact and have developed into a very effective means of providing advice and support to students. They ensure we are professional and business like in our operations and deadlines are met and companies provided with a good service in finding the appropriate student. Our placement officers have developed themselves into being able to deal with most aspects that arise.

Placements are part of the overall strategy for students career development planning; the assessment is formulated in this approach and builds on aspects developed previously in the course to do with key skills, self-reflection and goal setting. Placement staff have been actively involved in the records of achievement/CDP projects within the university and the placement year is marketed to students as an integral element of their development as well as enabling better advancement in the final year.

Current Initiatives

The University has a Managed Work Placements Committee which is responsible to the External Relations Committee and provides a forum for all placement tutors and placement offers across the University to meet and discuss issues, share good practice and create centralised promotional materials, etc. We are currently in the process of creating a centralised repository for documentation and support materials which a small group will
maintain and which will address legislative and QAA requirements. Individual groups will be able to use the documentation and amend to their own style and requirements, but with an understanding of what elements are required for QAA, Health & Safety, etc.

The University has developed a database system called MaPPiT which provides a system for tracking activities in securing placements, providing information to students on opportunities and companies over the web; obtaining student CVs and preference details over the web as well as them being able to apply to the unit for their application to go forward. It also provides documentation, guidance and training materials, tracking of internal activities like exam board, correspondence, etc. This is currently being operation by 4 of the 7 schools in the University and data from these MaPPiT systems also provides information to a central University database so that across the institution we can collect statistics on the number of companies we deal with, who deals with what company, etc.

Students are now faced with a different environment financially to the one a few years ago. This has drastically changed the student body, and even when full-time the amount of time they can devote to their studies had changed due to work commitments. In addition, the norm some years ago was for most students not to have worked, now a number have substantial work experience and sometimes completing in 3 years is more of a priority. We therefore created a flexible placements project two years ago which has recommended a number of ways students can gain work based learning/experience which takes account of part-time work that students undertake. Credits can be gained at different levels and value depending on whether the work is related to their studies or general work. In addition, they can undertake their placement year part-time but over two years and continue studying part-time.

MATHEMATICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

PRACTICE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Ray Robinson

Introduction

This chapter describes practice at the University of Ulster where placements are arranged on a Faculty wide basis across three campuses of the university which are approximately 35, 65 and 90 miles apart. There are between 250 and 300 students on computing, software engineering or Mathematics, Statistics and Computing courses, either at degree or HND level, who seek placement on an annual basis. During the penultimate year of their four year degree course, (or their three year HND course), students spend a minimum of 52 weeks as employees of a company in a computer (or mathematics/statistics) related role. In most respects they operate as ordinary employees although there are some specific expectations which are described later.

BACKGROUND

Students benefit from work placements by the application of text book learning, personal development (including self-confidence, self-discipline, responsibility etc.) and the
development of professional and ethical values which are so important in the field of Information Technology. Students should have knowledge of the 1984 Data Protection Act and the 1990 Misuse of Computers Act and an appreciation of ethical values. These are essential in the Information Technology industry and an understanding of their application is best obtained in a working environment.

**Role of Students**

Students do not normally operate in a management role during a placement but, nonetheless, their knowledge of this role facilitates their effective contribution to the employing organisation. Students on placement work in many areas some of which are listed below.

- Systems Analysis & Design
- Database Management & Programming
- Hardware development and installation
- Software Development
- Localisation or Testing of products
- Technical or Customer Support
- Software Marketing
- Network Management
- Web development
- Statistical Modelling and analysis of data
- Management Science modelling and analysis
- Mathematics (utilising computers to solve mathematical and statistical problems)

Students working in the areas above, bring to the workplace many skills and competencies which can make a significant contribution to the employer. Typical examples of these are:

- written and verbal communication;
- problem solving;
- systems analysis and design;
- PC literacy;
- word processing;
- spreadsheet;
- database management;
- programming languages (e.g. C, C++, Java, Visual Basic, Modula2 or Fortran);
- teamwork;
- network administration;
- statistical packages (e.g. Minitab, SAS);
- mathematical packages (e.g. Derive, MathCAD);
- foreign language skills;
- development methodologies (e.g. object oriented);
- DOS, Windows 95/98/NT and UNIX operating systems/environments.

Placement relationships have been developed with a wide range of both large and small companies in a variety of industries/sectors. They include banking, finance, telecommunications, textiles, Health Trusts, national airlines, energy providers, government bodies, the pharmaceutical industry, multinational companies in many sectors as well as the computer industry in general.
ORGANISING PLACEMENTS

Administrative Matters

Students must spend at least 52 weeks on placement and this is normally achieved by a one-year placement with one company. The 52 week minimum can be achieved with a start date between June and September but it is also possible to fit in up to 60 weeks by working through both summer vacations. This has proved attractive to a number of employers who start students in early June and then extend the student contract through to the end of August with the agreement of the student. Other students, having obtained 12 months experience, have sold their skills to the highest bidder for the remaining 3 or 4 months!

A number of employers also use individual learning contracts that are negotiated between the tutor, the student and employer/mentor before the student commences placement. Care should be taken to ensure that these are not too elaborate and therefore too hard to use. An unintended consequence of this is that the focus can shift from learning to managing the learning contract. A basic contract should cover what needs to be learnt, how the learning will be achieved, who and what will provide the resources needed, what will be accomplished, when will it be accomplished, how will the student demonstrate what is learnt and how will the learning be evaluated?

Arranging Placements

The Placement Tutor prepares students for placement as the starting point of the placement process. It is compulsory for students to attend a Placement Preparation module in which students are introduced to the skills and attributes that employers seek, CV or application preparation, interview techniques, mock interviews, professional issues including legal and ethical considerations, the use of the internet to research companies, other sources of information and company presentations. Some of the final year students also make presentations about their placement experiences and an informal opportunity is also provided at Christmas for discussion between students seeking placement and those returned from placement. The Careers Service provides practice in aptitude tests and makes available material to help students prepare for assessment centres.

The Placements Group which consists of a Placement Co-ordinator, Placement Administrator and Placement Tutors meets on a regular basis to discuss all matters relating to Placement. It has the responsibility of assisting students in the location of placements (e.g. by maintaining a Faculty database of suitable companies and administering the process). It is important that the Placement Unit operates in a professional manner in dealing with employers and in managing the selection process and consequently only one person deals directly with a particular company. Normally a tutor will make the first contact with a company and establish its willingness to participate. Where it is a new contact, a job description or outline of the vacancy is obtained and each opportunity is brought to the attention of every student through an individual e-mail. Students are only free to approach a company directly if it is not on the Faculty’s database and even then the student keeps the Tutor fully informed of communication with other companies.

A fairly flexible approach to arranging placements is taken but a typical sequence of events would be:

- Companies are contacted by a Placement Tutor to establish their willingness to consider applications for placements.
Participating companies confirm their interest, possibly indicating preferences and giving details of vacancies.

Vacancy information is brought to the attention of students by email and they indicate their interest by return email.

CV’s (or application forms) from interested students are sent to the company.

The Company may elect to hold aptitude tests and/or interview one or more students. Interviews are held either at the company premises or at the University.

The company advises the Placement Administrator and/or the student of the outcome.

The student or the Placement Administrator advises the company of the student’s decision to accept (or, very occasionally, to decline) the offer.

In order to nurture and maintain good relations with employing organisations there is a policy that "students must accept the first placement offered".

The timetable for the above is suited to the company’s requirements and therefore variable. Placements are arranged on a continuing basis throughout the year between October and September for the following academic year (provided, of course, that there are still students available). Most of the above functions can be carried out electronically and I.T. Faculties/Departments are ideally placed to maximise the benefits of this. All of our I.T. students have email addresses and from the administration or management function much of the communication is carried out by email. This includes communication relating to:

- Placement Opportunities
- Their interest in these opportunities
- CV or Application Form Transfer
- Informing students about their interview details
- Students confirming availability for interview
- Informing students about the results of interview and feedback on why they were unsuccessful
- Placement Monitoring

Many employers are using students within their Information Technology sections and consequently they too have email addresses. In many cases so have the Human Resources Departments and this means that it is also possible to use email as the main method of communication with respect to:

- Placement Details (Job descriptions)
- Sending CV or SAF (Standard Application Form) of interested students
- Interview details and confirmation of attendance
- Interview Results

As Placement is organised on a Faculty and campus-wide basis the communication between Co-ordinator, Administrator and Placement Tutors is mainly carried out electronically, not only in all of the areas above, but also involving normal management functions, meetings, problem solving etc.

**Standard Application Form**

Many employers have requested that students complete the graduate standard application form (SAF) which has been available in the University Careers Office. We have designed our own version as a Word template and students complete this online and email it to the
Placements Tutor or Placement Administrator. Employers have asked us permission to show these to other institutions as an example of good practice.

Some employers also request that the SAF be accompanied by a letter of application from the student so the opportunity for individuality to shine through still exists. We have found that surprisingly few employers require students to complete their own company application forms.

ON PLACEMENT

Students on placement are responsible to a supervisor or line manager within the employing organisation just as ordinary employees are. It is to be expected that the company provide:

- a supervisor to manage and monitor the student’s work and participate in the assessment of the student at the end of the placement;
- a suitable programme of work
- the opportunity to complete ‘real’ tasks that will eventually benefit the company;
- suitable working environment, including adequate accesses to computers etc.;
- if possible, a mentor who will help the student settle in and “show them the ropes” during the first few weeks (this may be the outgoing placement student);
- at the start of the placement, suitable introductory material, background reading, training, health and safety induction etc. as required;
- The student with an appropriate salary – although there are wide variations!

Students are expected to:

- comply with all company regulations and conditions of employment;
- work diligently and, at all times, behave in a manner appropriate to the work environment;
- complete the required assessment tasks;
- keep in contact with the Placements Tutor throughout the placement year and keep him/her fully informed of any difficulties or problems that may arise
- Maintain a logbook and produce a report at the end of the placement.

Supervision

For each student the University appoints a Visiting Tutor who will normally visit the student at work twice during the course of the placement year. The Company Supervisor monitors the day to day work of the student and also completes an assessment questionnaire at the end of the placement. If any problem arises that threatens the successful progress of the placement student then this is taken up immediately between the student and the Company Supervisor. If a satisfactory solution cannot be found, the aggrieved party (student or Supervisor) contacts the relevant Placement or Visiting Tutor as soon as possible.

ASSESSMENT

During their placement students are required to maintain a logbook. This details training received, regular duties, special duties and any unusual projects or occurrences. Students are asked to submit this, along with an end of placement report to the Placements Tutor for assessment at the end of the placement. The report is not restricted to specific tasks carried out during the placement but also contains information ranging over the total placement experience. While adequate coverage is given to the technical role, the department
organisation and its position in the employing organisation, etc., the student is also encouraged to progress him/herself freely about how the placement met or did not meet his/her expectations. Students include details of the social aspect of the place of work and anything else that gives tutors, and students who may follow, a good picture of the placement. By way of courtesy the student is asked to let the employer see the report before submitting it, and the student is directed not to include any sensitive or confidential information on the employing organisation.

Students are encouraged to use the following as a checklist for their report.

- The organisational structure of the employing body
- Training received
- Duties performed
- Applications/projects worked on
- Applications used (includes programming environments and tools)
- Languages used
- Documents produced
- Problems arising
- Reflection
- Social activities
- Environment
- Photographs

**Visiting Tutor Reports**

Each student is allocated a Visiting Tutor, (who may in some cases be the Placements Tutor) with the initial visit being made early in the first semester to ensure the student has settled into his/her new environment and if not to address any problems as quickly as possible. During a visit the tutor discusses the progress of the placement with the student and his/her Company Supervisor or Line Manager. The tutor assesses the student in the workplace and completes a report form for each visit. This is then submitted via the Placement Administrator to the appropriate Placement Tutor.

**Performance Questionnaire**

Towards the end of the placement the student's line manager or supervisor is asked to complete an assessment form on the performance of the student. A standard form is provided for this purpose but sometimes the company also includes its own standard assessment form especially where staff are reviewed every 6 months or less.

The following criteria are pertinent in the overall assessment of the placement.

- Whether the student was satisfactorily employed for the required period.
- The quality of the student’s Log book.
- The quality of the student’s Placement Report.
- The Visiting Tutor’s report(s).
- The end of placement assessment from the company supervisor or line manager.
- Any oral presentation which is part of the assessment process.

In the light of the above sources of information, and any other pertinent communications with the student and/or company, the Placements Tutor assesses the placement and makes a written
recommendation to the Exam Board on the basis of which a student may be permitted to proceed to Final Year. Course regulations do not normally permit students to embark on the final year until they have passed their placement year. In the case of a student failing the placement year the reasons for failure would determine whether a student is required to repeat the placement year or discontinue studies.

Reflection

Students are encouraged to include a section on reflection in their report addressing issues such as how well the placement met their expectations, any pleasant surprises or shocks they had etc. As part of the reflective process interviews have been held with students when they return for final year. Whilst some form of reflection should be included in the assessment process this is becoming increasingly difficult because the number of students on placement is approaching three hundred. Assuming at least two members of staff take part in each interview, it would be necessary to allocate a minimum of 150 hours staff time to enable all of the students to be interviewed (or make a presentation) for just 15 minutes! All returning students are consequently asked to complete a questionnaire which requires them to reflect on their overall opinion of placement, the general effect of placement on their future careers and the development of personal and technical skills whilst on placement. Although this is not an ideal solution it is being used until something more effective evolves!

Accreditation

Nationwide there are a variety of methods of accreditation from internal university awards through pseudo NVQ awards to NVQ's/GNVQ's or separate accreditation by bodies such as the City and Guilds Licentiateship or the British Computer Society's Professional Development Programme. University accredited awards generally have different names in different institutions (e.g. Diploma in Industrial Studies) but are similar in that they are not nationally awarded. They recognise the fact that a student has successfully undertaken a placement year in industry. NVQ's or NVQ related awards certify that a student has obtained a relevant portfolio of employment related competencies and we are currently piloting such an award, the Diploma in Professional Practice, with a sub-group of our students. However the majority of our students are currently awarded the Diploma in Industrial Studies (DIS) for successful completion of their placement year, (Certificate in Industrial Studies for HND), but those who perform exceptionally well are awarded the DIS (or CIS) with commendation.
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

PLACEMENT PRACTICE AT NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

Colin Yarwood MA PGCHE FRICS

BACKGROUND

This chapter focuses on practice within the Built Environment (BE) Faculty at Nottingham Trent University. The Faculty comprises 12 undergraduate Sandwich Degrees and one Higher National Diploma course with a Sandwich element. Management of placement in the faculty is effected in 4 departments by 8 Academics and one administrative assistant. There are very few shared work practices and a wide range of approaches is in place. Between them they have placed up to 385 students in each year.

Sandwich courses are prevalent across the whole of the Built Environment sector - in one university prospectus all but one of 20 Built Environment Faculty courses at undergraduate level offered a sandwich placement, usually in place of the third year of a four year course.

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Partnerships with employers

Such partnerships provide continuing awareness of industry developments, a way to maintain the relevance of the course and its subject content and can also lead to research and consultancy opportunities. Employers often afford valuable support for course teams at the time of inspection visits and validation when they are able to speak of the ability and employability of the students, the adequacy of the course and the quality of the student placement and careers services.

Partnerships with professional bodies

Professional bodies that validate the course support many courses in the Built Environment. Many of the bodies require graduates, often as ‘student members’, to complete a period of supervised work experience – usually 2 or more years of which the sandwich year may count as one - before they qualify for membership.

This corporate membership, affording transferability between employment in the members chosen profession, is the chief reason why school leavers follow most vocational courses in the Built Environment. They reason that while the FT students may be in practice a year earlier, they will still have to complete two years of supervised work experience before they can apply for professional membership. SW graduates thus qualify at the same time as the FT graduates, at higher salaries and stay in their first post graduate job longer - possibly because after a placement they should know better what they want to be doing and are more committed - having gained that employment faster than FT graduates.
It is thus evident that BE courses gain advantages for all their students by active partnerships with professional bodies and that employers particularly value graduates of the sandwich courses of such partnerships.

**Partnerships with other Higher Education Institutions**

Many universities have established relationships with others in the UK and often in other countries, especially in Europe and North America. This may enable students to exchange a semester or a year of study in one country for a like period in another while maintaining progress in their studies.

These opportunities can give students a wider appreciation of their professional work area and may lead to them spending their placements in the host country.

**Partnerships with students**

Placement staff who fail to recognise that s/he is in partnership with the students endanger the course reputation, relations with employers and future enrolment. Students thus need to be motivated towards placement in every possible and positive way.

Placement teams recognise that the student is the person who pays the university fees, partly for the placement service, and who are thus entitled to receive a service and ‘best endeavours’. Equally students can be brought to see themselves as partners with one another in the placement exercise and with the placement teams. In doing so it is hoped that the students will recognise teamwork and partnerships as part of proper professional behaviour.

**PLACEMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

**The Placement Tutor**

The placement tutor’s role is normally taken on voluntarily, in addition to teaching duties, sometimes with work with part time or temporary administrative support.

Managing placement and teaching have long been recognised as conflicting tasks. In the past, Placement Tutors teaching hours were reduced across institutions by a remission. CNAA tried to come up with a formula by which to calculate the tutor’s time required for placement activities and thus his/her appropriate remission from teaching. It also specified what resources and facilities were desirable or essential. Few BE faculties seem to have adopted these recommendations.

Recent developments have seen foreign students on placement acting as Placement Assistants. The work experience that they gain and the language enhancement opportunities open to them are seen as a valuable by them and by their placement co-ordinators. This can be successful, especially when students on the course are being placed outside their home country. The presence of the foreign student who is also a placement student is reassuring for the UK student. The cost of such support compares very well with that of employing administrator, particularly as student assistants may be available only between September and June, the very period when most placement work is effected.

**Training tutors**
Titles of personnel in placement management in BE faculties are varied. The words ‘placement’, ‘work experience’, ‘training’ possibly proceeded by ‘industrial’ or ‘professional’ and followed by ‘tutor’ ‘manager’ ‘advisor’ ‘administrator’ ‘organiser’ and ‘co-ordinator’ are apparently interchangeable. They may refer to the person who manages placement of students from one or more courses in a department. While there are some BE Departments with administrator run and student driven placement models they seem to be the exception rather than the rule and a tutor run, college driven model is far more the norm.

**Supervisors**

Once the student is on placement their employer will usually appoint a supervisor. This will usually be the person who will issue the students work instructions and receives or checks completed work. Supervisors will normally have the professional qualifications that the student is studying for and thus the supervisor is effecting the students professional training and probably signing off the students competences as they are achieved in the professional diary or log book. When tutors visit their student it is expected that tutor and supervisor will meet to discuss the students progress.

**Finding Placements**

The main work of the placement tutor is to find or organise suitable placements for the students. Suitability is usually measured by reference to the nature of the work, the quality of supervision, and the salary level. It also refers to the Health & Safety conditions in the placement. In BE courses this may be a particularly important problem as in Civil Engineering or Building the risks on site are generally higher than in work that is mostly office based.

Employers do not normally ‘offer’ placements to universities. The position is far more readily compared to a staff bureau in that the employer may invite several universities to submit CVs for consideration. They may select students for interview and advise the selected student’s university or they may ask the university for help to pre-select students in accordance with a prescribed ‘screen’. There is no guarantee of annual ‘repeat business’ and one bad experience can disaffect the relationship for a period or even permanently.

The Placement Tutor will contact employers who s/he believes may be able to offer suitable posts. BE Placements may be with professional firms, commercial concerns, contractors, local authorities, government departments and businesses of all sizes inside and outside UK. Built Environment students are half as likely to be placed abroad as students from other faculties (4%: 9%; Nottingham Trent University 1997) but the proportion is improving. 80% of Built Environment students are likely to be placed within commuting distance of their home – 30% more than the average of all students on placement.

**Candidacy circulation**

The more usual format for BE courses is the ‘College Driven’ model - in which the Placement Tutor deals with the circulation of CVs or application forms to employers in accordance with students pre-stated preferences. The alternative is a student driven model where administration is done by non-academics. Students are made aware of vacancies but are expected to do most of the work in despatching their CVs or obtaining and returning application forms. In BE this model is rare.

**Monitoring and visiting**
When the student has accepted a post and is ‘on placement’ his/her personal tutor will normally visit him/her on one or two occasions during the year. The aim is to ensure that all is well, to discover whether the work experience is proving to be suitable, appropriate and challenging and to find out how the employer sees the student’s progress. The visits will occur normally before Christmas and in early summer – when teaching is reduced or temporarily halted. The visit and any assessment effected at that time are not intended to replace any appraisal the employer may put the student through. Indeed employers are encouraged to include sandwich students in staff appraisals. Such practice includes the student in the team ethos, tells them how they are progressing and ensures that the employers see and treat them as a member of staff and not just ‘the sandwich student’.

Some courses send the placement tutor to effect the first visit so cementing the relationship with the employer and, hopefully, a placement post for the next year, for which students will already be on course. The second visit then becomes one for personal tutors when perhaps the students progress is clearer and discussions about dissertations, projects or theses are valuable.

Consideration has also been given to a three visit strategy, where a first visit may be from an H&S accredited visitor, a second in the form of a joint meeting of perhaps several students placed in one area, followed by a final visit to the student by his/her personal tutor or final year project supervisor.

In some areas a former practitioner may be employed to arrange placements, not so much as a Placement Tutor but more as a Training Organiser. S/he may be able to carry out all the roles of finding the placements and monitoring, assessment and Health & Safety checking – if s/he is suitably trained. This has been seen as having the advantage of removing the resource hungry obligation of visiting students from other academics. On the other hand it may also reduce the level of direct academic support for the student and may also interfere with continuity of pastoral care. Its effect upon the university - employer relationship can be excellent but should the placement organiser leave, then all such relationships may need to be remade.

**Employer links**

Employer links are maintained by the placement teams and visiting tutors / final year project supervisors. Some courses require students to return to the university for a day or more over the placement year. Some invite employers in for a day or more, some invite employers to attend and assist in the assessment of returning students placements even to the point of their taking part in assessment or a viva voce.

Maintaining partnerships with employers is largely left to placement teams and is effected by letters, phone calls and perhaps by personal visits.

**Preplacement preparation**

Student preparation for placement is often overlooked. Recognition of the need for such preparation – which has been criticised by students as one of two weak points in placement management, is often only begrudgingly given.
In some universities the careers service recognises that time spent in helping to prepare
groups of sandwich students pre-placement will save time in giving individual help later.

A popular workshop at the ASET Annual Conference (1999) elicited over 20 subjects which
tutors felt should be included in second year student pre-placement preparation, including
hearing presentations on their placements given by Final Year SW students. Availability of
returned student Placement Reports on university Intranet pages is also growing.

Classes for a University Certificate/Diploma in Professional skills or similar (E.g. City &
Guilds) awards have been validated by one BE faculty. Such formal courses often without a
formal Level can enable preparation to be timetabled in lecture/seminar/workshop or tutorial
format. Such courses can afford added value by improving students performance in the
recruitment process, achieve a better placement, perform better on placement and return to the
university better able to appreciate the subject matter of the studies.

**ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING**

The value of the placement ‘year’, which may be 36-48 weeks, depending upon the course
and validating body, is often assessed, by the university or employer or both, in accordance
with developed systems of skills or competence. In BE these are often established by a
validating professional body and may be supervised by one or more members of an employers
professional staff. Alternative schemes involve university and professional body developed
modules of assessment covering specified facets such as defined learning objectives,
interpersonal and social skills, practical skills and professional aptitude assessments. Very
few examples of BE studies could be found in UK HEIs of placements attracting credits for a
course. But unsatisfactory completion of the year out could half a student’s progress in to
the final year. Such a student might have the opportunity to proceed on the basis of ‘a Full
Time award on a sandwich course’ instead of a ‘Sandwich award’.

**Mentors**

Mentors are a required element of the assessment of professional competence for at least one
group of students in BE placements. In one system of ‘competence approval’ both supervisor
and mentor approvals are required before a student can be signed off on a ‘competence’ at one
of three ‘levels’ - either may approve a ‘competence’ at a ‘level’ before the other.

Mentors may also be members of the staff of the employer or may be fellow professionals
working nearby, perhaps - in the RICS model – as an ‘APC Doctor’, often a recently qualified
member of the Junior Organisation of the Local Branch of the body.

**Learning logs, Contracts**

Learning contracts are not frequently used as such in Built Environment placements but
various professional diaries and log books figure frequently in the recording of placement
students progress and achievements on placement. HEIs often have their own reporting
systems, usually involving students and employers separate written reports prepared before or
at the time of each student visit, many are copied to the Department and Placement Teams, for
recording, progressing and information updating.

**Recording achievement**
Student’s progress on placement may be recorded in terms of Skills and or Professional competence. Skills may be assessed and recorded for the university, by the visiting tutor and / or the employer supervisor and for the company or professional body by the employer supervisor and/or mentor. Assessments may relate to a university award but in BE courses not usually to the degree itself.

Reflection is achieved in many BE courses by the requirement for students to return for their next academic year with an employer countersigned Placement Report covering a stated number of aspects of the placement often supplemented by a presentation to their peers or their successors, possibly with employers present. Some employers include such a presentation in their placement student-training program.

Health & Safety

The CVCP (now UUK) guidance of 1996 suggests that placement organisers and visitors have obligations to assure the adequacy of H&S conditions. Universities have Public Liability Insurance Policies to cover them should a claim occur, for example if a student suffers injury on placement where the H&S Act is not being properly followed.

Some courses in the Built Environment, particularly civil engineering and construction, include Health & Safety as integral or optional modules. These courses may have tutors with specific expertise in Health & Safety but most course tutors do not have such expertise. Equally, few placement organisers, as the Guidelines call them, have H&S expertise.

The CVCP guidance has thus created a reluctance to visit students in view of some HEIs refusal to confirm to staff that they are indemnified from any subsequent claims. The offer or even requirement that an organiser accept induction, to assure such expertise, may not be welcomed by placement personnel who might see such training as removing their ability to claim any protection from legal action – due to their lack of training in H&S.

BE course students can be scattered across the UK, many changing placement locations, for example between building sites, frequently during the year. In these circumstances maintaining awareness of the adequacy of students placement location for H&S purposes is unachievable. A percentage of students may be placed outside their home country. Visiting placement students outside UK may not occur or may be effected by a local academic with little awareness of H&S. France specifically excludes employers from any obligation to cover placement students (stagaires). Following the Treaty of Maastricht most other EU and prospective member countries have put H&S legislation in place.

Payment

Salaries for Sandwich students are exempt from the UK minimum pay legislation. However students remain liable for tax and national insurance, unless on a trans-national placement under the EU Leonardo Da Vinci programme where the salary and subsistence sums have been retained at levels that fall below the tax and insurance thresholds of all EU current and prospective member countries. Some countries may see the accommodation benefits as being taxable but students are generally advised to ensure that payments for such benefits are made direct to the landlord by the employer.

Pre-placement preparation should cover the students tax and NHI liability, the effect of the placement being spread over two fiscal years, the tax implications of employers providing
financial assistance or loans to help pay for travel to and from work, or perhaps to pay university fees.

Reported salaries for students on Built Environment courses range from less than £5,000 to over £15,000 p.a. plus ‘London weighting’. Salaries may differ between corporate concerns and professional firms and may reflect regional variations.

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM PLACEMENTS

Isabell Hodgson and Helene Chambers

Background and Recent Developments

The concept of integrating work experience within an academic course is not new to the Hotel and Catering Industry. The first sandwich degree courses in Hotel and Catering were introduced in the 1970s so there is a long tradition of work placement within the hospitality industry. Since the 1990s there has been a marked increase in the number of Tourism related degrees and subsequent demand for related placements. There are a number of formats for the placement from traditional 48 weeks placements, which comprise the second or third year of the undergraduate programme to recent innovative ways of introducing this element of practical professional experience during the academic year.

Formats include:

48 week traditional placement
1 x 24 weeks traditional placement
Accredited part-time work
2 x 24 week placement after the first and second year
10 weeks Off Campus Study during year 2

Traditionally, the placement was often on a short term unpaid basis, 3/6 weeks during year 1 and 2, however were of a varied nature. The placement was made up of 3 x 3 week blocks in school meals; college catering; hotels; hospitals; universities etc. and usually at a practical operative level. Later in the course, usually year 3, a more supervisory experience would be arranged for a 6 to 10 week duration.

In the 1970s higher national diplomas and degrees were introduced into the portfolio of courses and ‘thin sandwich’ placements were the norm. Here students would spend a 20-26 week block paid placement in one organisation. The timing varied but was usually during year two of the 3-year course. Later the ‘thick’ sandwich placement was introduced where a full 48-week or yearlong placement was completed, again in one organisation. This is still the most common arrangement today, with the exception of Scotland where 6 months only is completed.

Placements were offered in all sectors of the hospitality industry but traditionally most students chose hotels where many opportunities were offered. In recent years there has been a growing interest towards the more ‘trendy’ sectors of the industry: pubs, clubs, themed bars
and restaurants. However, the range of sectors has expanded to match the provision of courses now offered across the UK, such as, Event Management, Resort Management, Golf Club Management and Casinos and Gaming. Hotels still prove popular as most students associate the hospitality industry with this sector.

The numbers of Tourism Management courses are increasing each year and placements are offered with various sectors such as: tour operators, travel agents, and theme parks. However, it remains a challenge to secure paid placements with Tourist Boards and Local Councils owing to funding issues.

The Industrial Tutors Group- renamed PATH in 2002

In 1985, the Industrial Tutors Group (ITG) was formed as a sub group of CHME (Council for Hospitality Management Education). The aim was to form a group of people, who were responsible for placing students in industry, and who wished to:

- share good practice;
- network as a group to assist each other with the placement process;
- provide opportunities to discuss issues surrounding placements
- act as an advisory group to other colleagues and industrialists.

The group is still in existence and has been re-launched in 2002 as PATH, (Placement Advisers for Tourism and Hospitality). The Mission Statement, which was adopted at the re-launch reads- *PATH will actively promote the personal, professional and academic benefits of quality Work Based learning within Hospitality and Tourism Programmes in Higher Education whilst raising the profile of career opportunities in the industry.*

The annual conference proves to be a popular platform, where old and new members meet to share experiences, discuss topical issues and interact with industrial partners to plan, improve and extend the placement for all parties. Furthermore, it ensures an increasing membership of the group.

In 1994, the Hospitality Partnership Group produced a Code of Practice for Placements. It has since been adopted and used by various stakeholders in the placement process. PATH encourages all members to adopt a Code of Practice and to issue it to all employers who accept students on a placement. The code is an excellent vehicle in establishing quality placements, as all parties are fully aware of their obligations and expectations. Furthermore, it assists in the development of excellent working partnerships.

Setting Objectives

Each university/college/course has their own remit in deciding the expectations or learning outcomes for the placement period. However, generally, most agree that the prime objective is for the students to gain an insight into the real world of work, and to apply the concepts and theories to a practical situation. Many students may never have worked in the industry prior to enrolling on the course.

Clarifying and establishing objectives

The setting of objectives is essential for all parties involved in the work experience so that

- expectations are realistic
• there is a measurable indication of how the work experience is progressing
• each party can assess their level of success
• reviews can be effectively carried out
• each party is clear about their role

Other objectives or learning outcomes include:
• working at an operative and eventually supervisory level in as many areas of the operation as possible
• developing transferable and employability skills and knowledge relevant to their course
• developing managerial skills such as negotiation; confidence; leadership; analytical
• gaining an insight into the strategic aspects of running a business.

Whatever the objectives, it is very important to establish the aims and objectives and ensure all parties - especially the industrial partners- are aware of them and of the importance of the development and training aspect of the placement. Students can sometimes be viewed as ‘an extra pair of hands’ particularly in the hospitality industry resulting in bad publicity and students often being ‘turned off’ the industry.

It is therefore advisable to produce employers’ guidebooks, which clearly outline all the expectations regarding learning outcomes and assessment, benefits, pay and safe working conditions. These can be sent to all interested employers from the outset. A visit to the employer or at least a telephone call is essential to explain all aspects, clarify any queries and ensure everything is fully understood before the placement is offered to the students. During the visit it is further advisable to carry out a risk assessment on the premises.

It is also advisable to request that a member of staff is appointed as the student’s ‘mentor’ who will oversee all aspects of the placement and offer a pastoral role. This is especially important with overseas placement when students can feel more vulnerable, lonely and homesick and may need additional support.

The roles for each person should also be clearly outlined in the employers' and students' handbooks to avoid any misunderstandings and confusion.

**Finding Placements**

The key to the success of the work experience is preparation and commitment from all parties involved. Whilst the students must realise that they are working in an environment where the needs of the business may often supersede their personal wishes, there needs to be an understanding from the placement provider that the student is not simply "an extra pair of hands". Professional and personal learning objectives should be set out before and during placement. This can take the form of a learning contract.

Effective partnerships can be forged through:

• links through Alumni organisations
• professional links through organisations such as
  British Institute of Innkeepers (BII) and
  Hotel, Catering and International Management Association (HCIMA)
  International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (I- CHRIE)
  European Federation of Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education
  EuroCHRIE
Most universities and colleges have established databases with several hundred names and addresses of suitable employers, who are contacted each year requesting placements. Some are arranged through the head office where the central human resources personnel oversee the responsibility for the organisation and supervision of the training. However, most placements tend to be organised at unit level.

It is generally recognised that the head office placements tend to be of a higher quality, better organised, have more structure to the training and development, more ongoing supervision, more off-the-job training, developing the students’ maximum potential. Students are continually challenged through projects and added responsibilities.

At the unit level, it is imperative to have a human resource input and overview to ensure the students are being continually developed and challenged. Furthermore, communication with all supervisors and department heads is equally important.

Visits to the host-company from HEI staff play a major role in ensuring these aspects are in place and encouraging further development if absent. All potential host companies must complete a Health and Safety questionnaire to ensure they comply with the requirements and can offer a safe working environment. Both the student and the visiting tutor should also complete risk assessments.

When contacting organisations for placements it is important to contact as many different companies, sectors and organisations as possible. Each group of students’ views and requests differ from year to year. Whilst hotels are still in demand, they are decreasing in popularity, with students preferring the more trendy establishments e.g. American themed bars and restaurants. The licensed retail sector is growing rapidly, offering very good pay and conditions, career prospects and structured management development training. This training period is then recognised on completion of the students' study programme, allowing them (the students) to fast track the graduate-training programme.

Contact is usually made each summer for the following year. As much detail as possible about the placement on offer is requested. This information is then entered onto the database or held on file for students to gain access and assist with their choices and decision making. This access to the placement information cannot be overstated. Students must be encouraged to read, digest and really think about the choices available before making a decision. Most tutors take the responsibility for sending student CVs to employers, as this helps with the tracking process, knowing which student is going where. Many employers also prefer this approach, as they believe it to be more reliable.

**Student Preparation prior to the Commencement of the Placement**

Preparation for placement should commence from week one of the course or the year prior to the scheduled start of the placement period. *This could be either the first or second year of their course.*

Each college or university should compile a preparation handbook, which should outline all necessary details about the placement including advice about the placement process, the placement itself and information regarding pre and post placement workshop and tutorials.
The following information must be included

- advice on CV compilation
- the skills to be developed e.g. negotiation, assertiveness, listening, and observation.
- interview technique and assessment centres
- guidance on visa and work permits
- advice on viewing accommodation e.g. viewing company supplied housing (if required)
- protocol for accepting/declining
- finding own placement

An essential requirement of the preparation is the completion of a skill’s audit, which should highlight the student’s skill’s deficiencies. This is then used as a basis for discussing their training and development during their placement. This encourages the student to take responsibility for their own development and not rely on tutors or employees to take the initiative.

Students are encouraged to recognise the value of reflecting on each and every situation - learning from them - both negative and positive learning situations and to record these in a portfolio format.

Information regarding any assessed work also needs to be included, such as training and learning agreement/contracts, portfolio of learning/ learning logs, company projects etc.

When selecting a placement, students should be encouraged to think long-term i.e. their graduate ambition, lifestyle choice, career aspiration, their preferred geographical location and sector for work on graduation. The placement should enable them to achieve their ambition by assisting them to gain an insight into the sector and aid their prospects of gaining long term employment. Research conducted in 1995 by ITG indicated that 75-80% of students gained employment as a direct result of their placement. Further and more recent research indicated that the placement plays a crucial role in determining future career choices, (Springboard UK, 2001).

Assessment and Accreditation

These two elements are often dealt with separately when deciding how to allocate a value to the work experience period. The Work Experience must be assessed, as it is an integral part of the student's educational programme. The assessment method should provide the tools for the student and the tutor to determine what (and how) learning has occurred. There is also a role for the employer to participate in this evaluative exercise

Assessment methods can consist of:

- Written management report or problem solving exercise which would enable the students to apply their theoretical knowledge to the work environment
- Evaluation of a project in which they have been involved
- Personal Logbook to register and reflect on personal development
- Portfolio
- Employer's appraisal of the student's performance
- Visiting Tutor's assessment
- Student's self assessment
Accreditation

There is disagreement about whether the work placement assessment should contribute towards the final degree classification. Some universities believe that the assessment of the learning, which has occurred during the placement period should be embedded in a final year unit, thus ensuring that all students have a fair and equitable chance with the same opportunities for support in terms of resources, access to libraries, computers etc. In these cases the placement period is registered as a simple pass or fail, a pass ensuring that the student is eligible for a sandwich award.

Other institutions, however, apportion a percentage (some around 5%) of the overall mark from the work experience towards the final degree classification.

Other methods of adding value to the work experience assessment have involved the students preparing a portfolio of evidence for their GNVQ level 4 in Personal Skills registration with City and Guilds for the Licentiate award.