



**MANAGING A
WORK PLACEMENT
PROGRAMME
A GUIDE FOR CENTRES**

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1 INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended for centres running work placement schemes as part of a programme of study.

The purpose of a work placement is to provide learners with an awareness of the world of work, by undertaking a range of activities to develop the skills they need to get a job and to operate successfully in the workplace.

The centre plays a critical role in an effective work placement by

- supporting the learner to identify their strengths and weaknesses
- developing realistic objectives with the learner for the placement which can be shared with the employer
- setting up processes to monitor placements
- providing learners with timely and well-targeted support prior during and post placement
- supporting the learner to find suitable employment or progress into further work-based learning
- ensuring work placement is fit-for-purpose and will support the learner journey.

In support of this process City & Guilds offers recognition of a work placement through the City & Guilds Profile of Achievement (PoA), further details on this scheme can be found in Section 6 of this guide.

2 WHAT IS A WORK PLACEMENT PROGRAMME



A work placement programme relates to any learning activity taking place before, during and after a work placement. All these activities should contribute to supporting the learner's understanding and application of the skills, knowledge and attitudes required by employers today.

The success of any work placement programme will rely on the employer and centre working together to provide the relevant support at the right stage of the programme. Centres should be clear about the support they offer and what they expect of the employer.

Centres should be responsible for ensuring that learners are work ready by undertaking a range of employability activities including, job search, application, labour market research, skills finding, and interview techniques. During the placement, centres will support the learner and employer by reviewing and monitoring activities and learning. Post placement the centre will evaluate the overall experience from all perspectives to inform future programmes.

Employers will be responsible for ensuring the learner has the opportunity to undertake a range of activities, not just observation or work shadowing to give the learner experience of real work. They will be expected to treat the learner as a real employee and undertake review and supervision to promote further learning and development.

THE WORK PLACEMENT

- For the purpose of this guide, work placement
- must be within an employment context where a business activity is undertaken by one or more other people
 - provide exposure to real tasks required of the business which will enable the learner to gain first hand experience of the processes, structures, interdependencies, relationships and protocols of the business
 - may include volunteering provided that the expectations of the employer are that the learner follows the same code of conduct and is treated equal to other employees and as an employee
 - may be paid or unpaid which should not affect the expectations and constraints on the learner
 - should involve interaction with other people either face to face or online/remotely.

3 PLANNING THE WORK PLACEMENT PROGRAMME



TIMETABLING AND CURRICULUM ISSUES

Whilst there may be a need for the times of a work placement to be flexible, consideration to its importance in the overall development of the learner should be acknowledged and therefore timetabled into the programme of study. Centres should therefore ensure that time is allocated to the placement itself and sufficient preparation time is timetabled. The time spent in preparation can be accredited through City & Guilds Employability awards or included in the PoA.

Where there may be a number of centres providing work placement programmes, care will need to be taken when scheduling placements to avoid overload on local employers. Placements may also be dictated by how the proposed employer operates, when they will be available to provide support for the learner and the amount of work involved. This could mean that work placements may be in block, or on a day(s) per week basis depending on the employer or learner needs.

SOURCING PLACEMENTS

Learners should be encouraged to identify and secure their own work placement. This may be through using family contacts and networks, however for some learners this is not possible and they could require extensive support to find a suitable placement. For those learners on a Traineeship programme it is essential that an employer is identified prior to the learner being enrolled onto the programme.

The centre should ensure that there are staff and other resources available to provide advice and practical support for learners in identifying an appropriate work placement. DfE work experience pilots in 2011/2 found that a coordinated approach across a centre or in curriculum areas worked best so that employers were not overwhelmed with requests for placements. This also ensures a common approach to quality and data management across the centre.

Employers with vacancies may be prepared to take learners on placements as part of a selection process. Larger employers in both public and private sector should be contacted regularly to maintain good relationships and explore opportunities for placements.

Employers may be influenced by their past experience of offering work placement when considering future placements. Centre staff should be continuously seeking to find ways to help employers and add value to their experience of work placements.

Centres will also find it useful to work with intermediaries and organisations representing employers run by employers themselves eg local CBI, Business Links or Councils and other Enterprise agents.



ENSURING QUALITY OF PLACEMENTS

Evidence from Phase 1 of the DfE work experience pilots suggests that successful work placement schemes had the following characteristics:

- Clear aims and objectives
- Up-front agreement of roles and responsibilities between employer and centre, and the learner and centre
- Sufficient preparatory work to ensure the learner is 'work ready' so they are more of an asset than a drain on resources to a company
- Only offering students the opportunity of a work placement when they are considered to be work ready to maximise benefit to both young person and employer
- Record the attitudes and expectations prior to and post placement
- Provide the right level of support and contact time to the student whilst on placement
- Provide health and safety assessments: essential for providing a safe working environment for the learner – see notes on Health and Safety;
- Success is measured on the quality of the employer reference and student self reference.

RECORD KEEPING

Centre staff need to be confident that they hold details of employers with relevant learner details attached, and that these are readily accessible.

Centres will also want to be confident that the learner's own documentation regarding details of individual employers and dates of placements, Goals and Progress Reviews are also available and retained for future reference.

Centres should consider making logs available online, allowing access for the learner, employer and centre to update these on a regular basis. Alternatively paper copies of key parts of the learner log book should be made available to employers and centre staff. For employers this would need to include trainee name, dates and location of placement, details of team/supervisor, goals and objectives and dates of centre visits.

Crucially for the learner a document which covers all the details of their goals and objectives, including dates for review as well as other practical information should be completed early in the programme, usually at induction or in the first goal setting session. This document will normally be part of the learner logbook.

4 THE PROGRAMME

COMPONENTS

THERE ARE 5 MAIN COMPONENTS TO ANY WORK PLACEMENT PROGRAMME

- 1 Induction to Work Placement
- 2 Objective setting and review – an ongoing process with tutor/work placement officer which should run through the other components
- 3 Vacancy research and identification – with support the learner considers the occupational sector they would like to work in, the type of vacancy suitable for them then searches employers on these criteria
- 4 Attitudinal changes and personal development – These will be developed and consolidated through learning activities undertaken prior to the placement and during the placement. These can also form part of the success measures of the programme.
- 5 Work Placement – undertaking successfully a period of work placement with one or more employers

1 INDUCTION TO THE WORK PLACEMENT PROGRAMME

The induction to the programme helps the learner to contextualise the work experience itself:

On completion of the following, learners will understand

- that a placement with an employer needs be arranged and their role in the arrangements (usually that they will have responsibility, with centre support, to secure a work placement)
- the length of placement and any constraints re start and end dates

- any financial considerations such as transport, lunches, uniforms – who pays for these and if any support is available
- any specific requirements for centre based learning activity such as attending workshops, functional skills sessions etc
- how the Programme will be assessed – eg via Profile of Achievement?
- when and with whom the objective setting and review process will take place
- the need for evidence perhaps in the form of a portfolio either paper-based or on-line
- the need for a final statement summarising their learning which will be the basis of their Profile of Achievement.

In the case of a learner on a Traineeship Programme they will also be provided with details on the employer interview, how and when this will be conducted and what the output will be.

At induction learners will be provided with a logbook, which will form part of the portfolio, to record all elements of the programme for practical and assessment purposes

Diagnostics in Induction

For any programme to be successful, it is important that the learner understands their current level of skills and knowledge so that gaps can be filled before or during the placement. Prior to the work placement taking place, any employability skills can be addressed in addition to other development through the offer of functional skills and life skills.



Centres will already have diagnostic tools in place for measuring these areas and information should be included in review with the learner to identify the skills they wish to develop, and an action plan developed.

Depending on the centre's management of the programme an ideal way to start the learning would be an initial session for a group which could be combined with the induction (face to face or online). This would introduce them to the model of goal setting and the process of review during work placement in addition to begin consideration of what they want to accomplish during the placement.

Good practice suggests it is useful, where possible, to include employers and past students in the induction process to present and facilitate sessions. These sessions should help learners to get a realistic view of the demands and constraints of a work placement and to help them understand the expectations which will be placed on them. Employers may also use these as an opportunity to select learners for placement.

Once diagnostics of skills, strengths and key areas for development have been established, whether in a group or individual setting, one to one sessions should be organised to help the learner identify specific goals and objects for their work placement.

2 OBJECTIVE SETTING AND REVIEW

Learners need to know what they want to accomplish and learn during their work placement. Without any overarching goals, progress will not be able to be measured and there will be no sense of achievement for the learner. The level of objectives made will vary from learner to learner depending on their current level and need for development. Each learner will negotiate a goal and a set of objectives with the support of a tutor. Staff with the appropriate coaching and mentoring skills should be allocated to complete this. The use of a simple coaching model such as GROW can be helpful in focusing the conversation and ensure specific outcomes are achieved. For further information please see City & Guilds Guide to Goal Setting for Work Placement.

By setting goals and having steps towards achieving them can inform a good fit with a placement on offer. Employers should also be involved in goal setting to ensure that the work placement will provide sufficient opportunity to experience and develop the outcomes the learner wants to achieve. This ensures a positive experience for all involved.

3 VACANCY SELECTION AND APPLICATION PROCESS

Using short employability workshops will help the learner become more confident and proficient in searching for, applying to and gaining a suitable work placement. These should include:

- Job search skills
- CV and Application forms
- Cover letters
- Interview techniques
- Presentation

Workbooks (on line or paper based) may facilitate this learning so learners can work at their own pace and tutors can provide targeted support where necessary.

The Centre may also wish to ensure that these contacts are also updated on their own Employer Contact database to keep information current.

4 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT/ ATTITUDINAL CHANGE

Areas for personal development and attitudinal change will be identified through objective setting and review and should be seen as key to the programme. The Telegraph in 2012 reported that 96% of employers said that attitude was more important than skills when hiring staff. Undertaking values and motivation at work assessments would help to highlight strength areas and give insight to the tutor for areas that may need to be addressed prior to the learner being work ready.

Helping learners understand what an employer values in terms of work ethic, values and motivation is key to a successful placement. Learners should be encouraged to research prospective employer information to determine the work culture they are likely to be working in. Misaligned work placements could result in a bad experience for both learner and employer and reflect on the centre.

5 MANAGING

WORK PLACEMENTS

THE ROLE OF CENTRE STAFF

Learners should have a named tutor/work placement officer who will normally visit them during their placement. The frequency of the visits will depend on the length of the placement. Centres will need to ensure that as well as supporting learners practically they will also need to keep their own records of employers and ensure that legal frameworks are understood and complied with. Some of the main areas to be checked could be:

- Health and Safety
- Safeguarding
- Insurance
- Data Protection
- Working Hours
- Equal Opportunities

Centre staff will need to ensure the safety of the work placement and to be confident through checking employer certificates, insurances etc that learners are in no physical or moral danger.

SETTING UP PLACEMENTS

Most centres will have employee databases and these can be configured to enable fields relating to work placements to be added in relation to specific learner details, responsibilities, dates etc as well as checklists to ensure all legislation is complied with. Centres will often have staff dedicated to Employer liaison and some of this activity will already have been carried out. It is crucial that learner support staff interact with them to ensure a seamless employer contact strategy is managed and maintained.

Centres are advised to provide a handbook to learners prior to embarking on their placement to cover the following:

- Person responsible for trainees – name and contact details of person responsible for the learners on placement. This can be a manager with specific responsibility for learning within the organisation, a member of HR staff or the Managing Director/owner manager
- Confirmation letter - has a letter been sent confirming the details of the placement including learner's name and dates?

- Employer Insurance – has the employer confirmed they have this?
- Health and Safety checks – does the employer have evidence that they comply with Health and Safety legislation?
- Any other compliance issues such as DBS (previously CRB) checks and policy for Safeguarding Adults and Young People. Checks on young people in placements may be required if they are working with children or in healthcare. However checks on existing employees should not be required in these settings. In other settings centres may want to see any company policies relating to working with young people to ensure that employers offering placements have thought about the issues involved and their responsibility towards the young people on placement – see below 'Health and Safety'.
- In addition centres should provide employers with a letter confirming the work placement. An example letter to an employer is included in Appendix

Health and Safety

The HSE has currently revised its guidelines for Health and Safety requirements as they relate to work placement in order to simplify these and reduce the burden on centres and employers. The overarching responsibilities of the employer are detailed below.

- The Employer is best-placed to decide arrangements for managing risk
- Existing risk management arrangements may well be sufficient, but reviewed where necessary
- Keep controls in proportion to level of risk in working environment, and discuss with organiser (centre) in advance
- Should have arrangements for explaining risks to student and parents, and for recording assessment in writing where necessary

More information on Work Experience and Health and Safety is available on the DfE website (<http://www.education.gov.uk>)



Conducting work placement visits and reviewing learner progress

Normally staff will visit learners on work placements and will need to agree times and dates for a review visit. This should be organised as soon as possible in the process so that the employer and learner can prepare. The arranging of the review visit may be something which can be delegated to the learner.

The visit should be promoted as a benefit to both the employer and learner. The learner should be confident that the visit is to review their progress towards their goal. The involvement of the employer can be as much or as little as they wish and the confirmation letter they received will have outlined the objective of the process. Employers having an HR department with similar processes in place may want to have a very active role in review. In other businesses, information and feedback should be obtained from supervisors and co-workers without disrupting workflow.

An informal chat in a canteen for 20 minutes can often be sufficient to support the learner in understanding how far they have progressed and agree any further actions needed towards achieving their objectives. Outcomes of reviews should be recorded in the logbook.

Depending on the issues raised, further discussion with other centre staff or the employer may need to be conducted. Care should be taken to act on these promptly and in checking facts with third parties where possible.

With more autonomous learners it might be possible to carry out reviews remotely in real time or delayed – in a chat session or via an online portfolio or both.

Learners who are used to reviews may have the skills to reflect for themselves on how well they have done and what else they need to do to get closer to their goal. In these instances they should log their reflections and actions and share them with the centre staff or a co-worker/supervisor.

Recording Evidence of Progress

Learners should be encouraged to keep samples of their outputs at work in their portfolio. In addition, all those having any input or involvement with the learner should be requested to make comments in their portfolio (paper or online). Videos and photographs can also be used as evidence of progress towards goals. The development of interpersonal skills, individual attitudes and behaviours are the key measures of success and these will not always be readily visible through this type of evidence. Centre staff will need to be confident that sufficient progress has been made to record in the PoA. Learners should be encouraged to make decisions and identify the most suitable evidence for themselves.

Post-work placement activities

Learners should contact the employer to thank them and provide feedback on the placement. This will ensure that excellent relations are maintained between centres and employers.

Learners' portfolios should be completed and have sufficient, reliable and valid evidence for their accreditation. At this stage it should only be a final check where any major gaps and omissions will have been remedied whilst the learner was on placement.

Recognising and celebrating learning from a work placement should be acknowledged by the centre. Learners should be provided with a method to promote their experience gained and evidence of learning through small group presentations, discussions and where appropriate exhibitions. This will bring about a culture of respecting the value of work placement across all areas of the centre.

To ensure that learning is embedded and that employability skills do not fade, centres should aim to continue the theme of 'work placement' with learners. This may be through establishing ongoing relationships with employers as part of a mentoring scheme. Learners should be encouraged to set up follow-up objectives such as 'helping other learners to prepare for placement'. Staff in all curriculum areas should ensure integration of these skills in their teaching, learning and development of schemes of work.

6 RECOGNISING

WORK PLACEMENT

VIA CITY & GUILDS

PROFILE OF ACHIEVEMENT

City & Guilds offers a Profile of Achievement which centres can use to support a work placement programme. More details can be found on the City & Guilds Profile of Achievement (3791) web-page (www.cityandguilds.com)



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

WWW.CITYANDGUILDS.COM