Partnerships for Placement: Proceedings of the 2004 ASET Annual Conference

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ASET
Integrating Work and Learning

Partnerships for Placement

Proceedings of the 2004 ASET Annual Conference

Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge
7th – 9th September 2004

ASET CONFERENCE

11th Annual Conference
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Editors: Keith Fildes and Dr John Wilson

Partnerships for Placement

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EMPLOYABILITY AND WORK EXPERIENCE

FOREWORD

FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that ASET presents the proceedings of the Annual Conference, held at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge from 7th – 9th September 2004.

To recognise the broadening scope of involvement with a wider range of work-related learning, ASET now focuses on the term "Integrating Work and Learning", which encompasses and goes beyond Sandwich Education.

The Conference title was Partnerships for Placement, with six themes designed to enable presenters to engage delegates with the widest possible range of issues related to work-based learning.

We were delighted to see a continuation of the trend for more overseas delegates to attend the conference – with representatives from institutions in Austria, Belgium, Eire, Germany, Israel and the Netherlands, as well as all parts of the UK.

As always, a great value of the conference lies in the opportunity to network and interface with like-minded (and sometimes unlike-minded!) colleagues, and this process continued as it always does at ASET conferences.

Special thanks go to our guest speakers: Bernd Wächter, Executive Director of the Academic Cooperation Association; John Brennan, Director of the Centre for Higher Education, Research and Information, Open University; and finally the Rt. Hon Alan Johnson, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, who before the end of the conference had moved onwards and upwards to become Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. All three addresses set a framework within which delegates could contribute and discuss.

ASET is indebted to the Conference Committee, particularly Sarah Flynn the Chair, and Keith Fildes the ASET administrator who, working largely behind the scenes, made all this feasible.

Finally I should like to pay a personal tribute to the retiring Chairman Ray Robinson, who was unable to attend this conference because of the illness of his wife Frances, who very sadly died towards the end of the year. Ray played a vital role in steering ASET through a challenging period, and we move forward now largely as a result of his influence. We owe him a debt of gratitude for that, and gratefully acknowledge his contribution over the past few years.

Dr John Wilson
ASET Chairman

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By
Rt. Hon. Alan Johnson MP, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education

ASET is an organisation that's leading the way in promoting graduate employability – a key area for this Government - and I welcome this opportunity to give public recognition, and my personal appreciation, for your many achievements in this important field.

ASET's Mission Statement is very clear: *"To promote and to support the concept of higher and further education programmes that integrate periods of academic study with periods of relevant work in an external organisation."*
Well, I'm pleased to say it's an aim that runs very much in tandem with what we as a government are working to achieve: lifelong learning for personal development and employability. Your hard work and expertise is playing a vital role in delivering solutions based on work and learning. They have benefited universities, the corporate world and above all the many undergraduates you assist.
I applaud your many successes as a leader in the field and encourage more people to become involved.

When I joined the Ministerial team at the Department for Education and Skills last year I was the first ever HE Minister not to have been to university. In fact, I worked as a postman between the ages of 18 and 30. I happened to be lucky – I had opportunities to develop and progress and I took them. But I'm only too aware that a lot of my generation – indeed, some of my closest friends – were not so fortunate. I don't want that to be the case for today's young people or for their children.

In the two decades since I left the postal service the number of people gaining degrees has tripled. And, although I have no regrets about the path that I personally chose, I do feel very strongly that university offers a life enhancing experience and opens up all sorts of opportunities and choices.

I believe passionately that anyone who has the ability and aspiration to undertake higher education should have the opportunity to do so. It's now over 40 years since the Robins Committee published their report on higher education - one of their prime recommendations was the need for expansion. That argument is as strong today as it was back then. I make no apologies for our 50% target and our recently published 'Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners' clearly states how we intend to develop this offer so that *all* who have the potential to benefit *do* have access to a world class HE system.

That said, we are not interested in "expansion" simply for expansion's sake - the fact remains, however, that the economic case for expansion is overwhelming. Research undertaken by the 'Institute for Employment Research' shows that, far from there being too many graduates, 80% of the 2 million plus new jobs expected to be created in the UK over the next decade will be in occupations that will typically require a Higher Education qualification.
I recognise that there are concerns, possibly even amongst this audience, about this drive for expansion. However, I doubt that any of us could make an effective argument against the very strong case for investment. Even to maintain participation at its current rate of 43%, 120,000 additional places need to be created.

Today our world is changing faster than ever before. And whether we like it or not the pace of change will continue to accelerate. The nature of work itself is changing, portfolio careers are fast becoming the 'norm'. Furthermore, we're now competing in a global market place where the 'World Wide Web' allows access to jobs, information and markets throughout the world. This is all at a speed that a generation ago would have been considered the stuff of science fiction. Our graduates, and employers, compete today on a world stage. We need to broaden our outlook just to stay ahead, let alone remain competitive, in this ever-changing environment.

So we have to be open to new ideas and new ways of working. You have found this to be true; ASET no longer concentrates purely on the needs of sandwich placement courses, but has evolved and broadened your remit to encompass all forms of work experience and work based learning, including the relatively new concept of "Co-operative" education.

Employability is a prime theme that runs throughout the 5 Year Strategy, with business involved in designing employability skills education right from 11. Vocational training is crucial to that approach and we intend to provide world-class vocational qualifications of the highest calibre. We intend that this raft of flexible qualifications will once and for all dispel the still prevailing culture of prejudice which surrounds some of these qualifications.

And the scale of reform is radical – frankly, it has to be – this country has one of the highest drop-out rates of 16 year olds of any developed country in the world. In fact, we come a shameful 27th in the OECD league of 30 countries. But we are determined to turn the situation around. The '*Success for All'* initiative is raising quality and participation in post 16 learning, with the continuing expansion of Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVES) to help further education colleges and work based learning providers to respond to the skill needs of employers.

We will continue to record, monitor and respond to skill needs at every level – be they local, regional and national; and to develop better progression into and through HE via the vocational route. Strong partnerships will be the key to success. One idea, for example, is to create *"Lifelong Learning Networks"* to strengthen partnership working between HE, FE and Work-based learning providers with Centres of Vocational Excellence, Sector Skills Councils and Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Yet another aim is to improve progression from the apprenticeship route from NVQ Level 3 to Level 4.

Foundation Degrees will form the cornerstone of this programme of reform – they have already been applauded for their flexibility, and accessibility. But their, to use a marketing expression, 'Unique Selling Point' lies in the fact that employers play a central role in both the design and delivery of every Foundation Degree, whatever the discipline. They are very much 'in the driving seat'.

Our 5 Year Strategy fully commits this Government to their expansion. They are already growing in popularity – currently there are over 24,000 students enrolled – and we are planning that these numbers will increase. In fact, by 2005 we are planning to have 50,000 full time places available.

Work-based learning is central to the Foundation Degree and the latest figures available from the organisation First Release show that this is proving to reap benefits for its students. A sample of 800 Foundation students who graduated in 2002/2003 showed that 96% of these students were taking up immediate employment or further work/study programmes. Encouraging news indeed.

Of course, Traditional Honours Degrees remain the right initial choice for many who have the ability and desire to achieve at that level and beyond. And I'm sure that a significant number of Foundation Degree graduates will progress onto Traditional Honours Degrees over time.

But, whatever HE qualification students are aiming to achieve, *let's not forget life skills*. Again, we have listened to the pleas of employers, to their repeated requests that each and every young person brings to a job those skills which may be less tangible but are nevertheless essential. Skills like initiative, leadership and problem solving, that employers inform us are so often lacking in even the most highly qualified and gifted of graduates.
However employers also tell us that some skill deficiencies relate to skills and knowledge that can be best gained "on-the-job" - hence our commitment to employability and, again, work place learning.

So we have funded ESECT, The Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team, specifically to promote and encourage employability, and ensure that it becomes embedded into the HE curriculum. I know that ASET's John Wilson has made an enormous contribution to ESECT's work, via his participation in the HE Academy's Work Placement Network Group.

And Knowledge Exchange is expanding, through specific schemes such as the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF), which aim to build and strengthen many excellent links with the corporate world. In all this the needs of employers are crucial to our approach. And we are seeing many

examples of the excellent results *for all involved* that these partnerships engender. Rolls-Royce, for example, sponsored an Engineering Doctorate student to undertake in-service monitoring of electrical machinery. The result has been a positive one for both parties: with the young engineer bringing his innovative and technical skills to one of our leading companies, in exchange for new career opportunities.

But let's not forget that other essential skill and talent: entrepreneurship. We need to foster an enterprise culture if we're to stay ahead – indeed we plan to embed enterprise activity as part of the curriculum in every secondary school throughout the country. I think everybody here recognises the need for closer links between business and Higher Education, and how crucial these relationships are to a successful and competitive economy. Indeed, Lambert, in his recently published 'Review of Business and University Collaboration', is quite adamant about precisely that: "*My colleagues and I are excited about the way that business and universities are already working together across the UK*" he says, "*and about the scope for substantial further collaboration in the future*". I'd certainly like to echo that. These partnerships have a vital role to play, not only in the employment field, but in community and social regeneration throughout the UK.

The establishment of 13 Science Enterprise Centres is just such a venture – it involves over 60 universities and has been established nationwide using government funding. It is exactly the kind of exciting initiative I've been talking about; which will allow science students to develop the commercial potential of their work.

And next week the Chancellor of the Exchequer will formally launch a National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship with Karan Bilimoria, of Cobra Beer fame, as its 'Entrepreneur Champion'. I'm sure Karan will prove to be an inspired choice – popular with students and business alike. The Council will forge national and regional links to encourage and support students and graduates who aspire to start up their own businesses.

Students themselves are telling us that they need more than just a paper qualification to compete in the marketplace. They say what they need is proper experience in a working environment which will enhance their degree and help to build an impressive CV. So we're doing everything we can to help. The National Association for Student Employment Services (NASES) recently undertook a project, funded by DfES, to professionalise student employment. Through this, many university 'Jobshops' developed strong local and national links with employers who provide temporary and part time work for students. Students themselves recognise the value of the skills they gain through part-time and vacation work and choose to "earn while they learn", not just for the cash, but to help get a head start when applying for graduate positions.

And so to funding, which I know is a concern to many of you here today. Accessibility is the key, and one of the key principles underpinning the Higher Education Act is flexible and fairer funding with an end to upfront fees. And from 2006 there will be £3000 a year of support, in the form of grants and bursaries, to help the poorest full-time students. There will be more flexibility on repayments too, with graduates only being asked for their contributions once they are earning over £15,000 a year.

I genuinely believe that these measures will encourage any able and ambitious individual to further their education. We all make choices for many reasons and young people are no different. Many choose to "explore" the world, some engage in periods of voluntary, or charity work, a number will opt for courses that involve periods of study abroad whilst others undertake education courses that offer a year "out" working for an employer.

I do not say any of this lightly, and I hope I do not sound complacent. Of course people need to consider the costs and will do so. In return we have to think creatively and consider new and varied ways of delivering both further and higher education – part-time study, distance learning, work-placed and work-based learning all have their place. Similarly, the need for high quality teaching, as well as local partnerships and regional collaboration, will become ever more important. I want to deliver a high value/high equity system for all our young people – and I think that is an aspiration we all share.

Finally, I would like to close today by stating clearly and emphatically that I personally and this Government passionately believe in the importance of higher education for all our futures. We are committed to ensuring that higher education benefits:

all who have the potential to gain;
employers and businesses - the wealth creators of this nation; and
communities and economies nationwide.

In short, we desire a higher education system equipped to meet the demands of a twenty-first century world and I thank and applaud your contribution towards achieving our desires.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By
John Brennan, Director of CHERI (Centre for Higher Education Research and Information), Open University

Equity and employability: supporting students to succeed

John Brennan, Centre for Higher Education Research and Information
The Open University

Equity and employability

- Relationships between higher education and employment
- The educational and social determinants of employment success
- The role of work experience

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Equity and employability

Sources:

1. *'CHEERS' Project – EC funded project of graduate employment in 12 countries*
2. *'Access to what' Project – UK funded study of the employment experiences of graduates from socially disadvantaged groups*
3. *'REFLEX' Project – EC funded study: "The flexible professional in the knowledge society"*

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Relationships between higher education and employment

- The power of qualifications to regulate entry into employment – initially and over the life course
- The extent of the occupational training which has been delegated to higher education by employers – initially and over the life course

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Relationships between higher education and employment

Making sense of *diversity in graduate employment* – the 'flexible professional'

'*Elite specialist* positions such as physicians, lawyers and accountants have a high status based largely on their supposed high degree of expertise, and recruitment for this group is often highly regulated and based on educational credentials, giving them a protected position in the labour market'

(*Reflex project)*

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Relationships between higher education and employment

Making sense of *diversity in graduate employment* - the 'flexible professional' (2)

'Elite generalists are often those occupying the main decision-making positions in society…Such workers are likely to require a certain amount of expertise in the form of 'dossier knowledge' but the demands made on them in terms of functional flexibility and knowledge management may be greater. In some countries such as the UK, Japan and France, the prestige of the university is a typical requirement for entry into this elite group.'

(Reflex Project)

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Relationships between higher education and employment

Making sense of *diversity in graduate employment* - the 'flexible professional' (3)

'The professionalisation of *mass specialist* jobs (such as engineers, teachers, nurses) required high-level training…Recruitment to these positions are also likely to be subject to strict requirements in terms of qualifications, although unlike elite specialists the entry into the qualifying courses is much less heavily rationed. Their position in the labour market is therefore less secure and more dependent on supply and demand fluctuations.'

(Reflex Project)

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Relationships between higher education and employment

Making sense of *diversity in graduate employment* - the 'flexible professional' (4)

'More recently, the growth of HE seems to stem from the demand for more *mass generalists:* studies like economics and business administration… serve increasingly as a source of graduates with high levels of generic competencies for mass positions in marketing, sales, as well as support staff positions. Expertise is likely to be less important for occupants of these positions than functional flexibility. Recruitment for such positions is likely to be much less regulated than for the other categories'

(Reflex Project)

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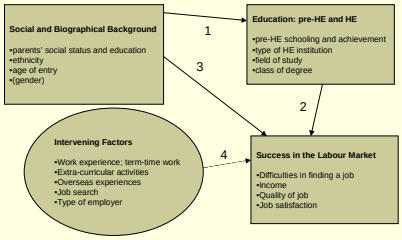
The social and educational determinants of employment success



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Who gets the better jobs: the social factors

The relationship between graduates' background and selected indicators of employment success

	Unemployed once (%)		In 'graduate job' (%)		Don't feel overqualified (%)		Salary (£k)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Parental occupation								
Clerical/manual	15	8	74	65	76	73	21.1	17.5
Professional/managerial	10	7	76	69	79	79	22.1	18.6
Ethnicity								
White	10	8	75	67	78	77	21.6	18.2
Asian	13	8	84	80	81	89	21.7	16.5
Age of entry								
Below 21	11	8	75	68	78	76	21.9	18.2
21-24	10	6	86	68	84	83	22	18.0
25+	18	9	67	65	73	73	18.9	17.4
Numbers	1167	1667	1092	1499	1059	1469	1011	1328

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Who gets the better jobs: the educational factors

The relationship between type of higher education institution attended, subject studies and selected indicators of employment success

	Unemployed Once (%)	In 'graduate job' (%)	Don't feel overqualified (%)	Salary (£k)
Institution attended				
'Old' universities	9	73	82	20.8
'New' universities	9	71	76	19.2
Colleges of HE	11	68	67	16.7
Field of study				
Vocational art	7	79	83	19.4
Vocational science	6	75	87	23.2
Non-vocational art	12	62	67	17.7
Non-vocational science	11	77	80	19
Numbers	2834	2591	2528	2339

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How social and educational factors are related

Relationship between type of institution attended and subject studied and the background characteristics of graduates (%)

	Institution			Subject			
	'Old' university	'New' university	HE College	Vocational art	Vocational science	Non-vocational art	Non-vocational science
Parental occupation							
clerical/manual	41	44	15	25	24	36	16
Prof/managerial	51	37	12	21	25	40	15
Ethnicity							
white British	46	41	13	22	23	39	15
Asian	45	44	11	41	32	30	8
Age of entry							
below 21	54	36	10	19	24	41	16
21-24	28	53	19	34	28	28	10
25+	39	46	16	28	22	38	12

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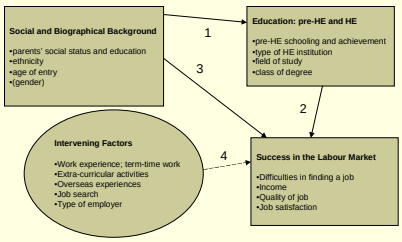
The social and educational determinants of employment success



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What we can do….

Factors which are associated with successful employment outcomes

	All	Older graduates	Lower socio-economic groups
Work experience during HE	✓	*	✓
Absence of term-time working	✓	✓	✓ *
Extra-curricular activities	✓	*	✓ *
Overseas experiences in HE	✓	*	*
Early job search	✓	*	✓
Techniques of job search	✓	✓ *	*
Private employer	✓/X	✓/X *	*
Medium/large employer	✓	✓ *	✓

(✓ = positive effect X = negative effect * = limited access to the positive factor)

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The role of work experience:
Benefits

- Supports and speeds initial entry into the labour market
- Contacts through work experience most effective method of job search (and assist early decisions)
- Graduates – 'more mature, had acquired attributes such as team-working, communication and interpersonal skills, awareness of workplace culture' (Harvey et al, 1997)
- Effect diminishes 'as graduates acquire more job- and occupation specific skills and knowledge through on-the-job training and experience' (Mason et al, 2003)

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The role of work experience:
Types of work experience (Little et al, 2002)

- Organised work experience as part of a programme of study
  - conventional programme plus work experience
  - generic work experience
  - work experience through a programme largely delivered in the workplace
- Organised work experience external to a programme of study
- Ad hoc experience external to a programme of study

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The role of work experience:
Effects of work experience on graduate employment (Access to What, 2003)

	All students	Working class students
1 to 8 months unrelated	- 8%	- 22%
9+ months unrelated	+ 1%	- 4%
1 to 8 months related	+ 2%	- 4%
9+ months	+ 7%	+ 3%

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The role of work experience:
Transforming work experience into learning

- Stakeholders – students, employers, academic staff and employees – all understand the intentions
- Induction and briefing; ongoing reflection;
- Accreditation – to take it seriously
- Low-stakes or formative assessment
- Build up work-experience portfolio
- Explicitness about what has been learned

(Blackwell et al, 2001)

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The role of work experience:
From 'term-time working' to 'work experience'

Linking to 'personal development planning'

- Problems of departmental cultures
- Problems of assessment and accreditation
- Problems of resources and staff expertise

Challenging the curriculum

- Whose knowledge?
- Whose assessment?

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Conditions for effective learning

'The research consistently shows that learning is bound neither by time nor by place, that it occurs continuously in a variety of locations, often unpredictably, and that it is maximised when both the activities and outcomes have meaning for the learner'

'Whatever form curricular and organisational reconfigurations might take, failure to incorporate and capitalize on students' out-of-class experiences risk increasing learning only at the margins' (Terenzini, 2004)

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Conclusions

- 'This project has found a lack of connection between policies on widening participation and policies on enhancing employability but, at the same time, a considerable interconnectedness at the level of practice and experience within institutions. At the level of practice, the effects of widening participation connect not only to issues of employability but also to issues of curriculum and assessment, of organisational structures and cultures within institutions, to the changing role of the academic and the developing role of central student services.'

Brennan and Shah, *Access to what?* 2003

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By
Bernd Wächter, Executive Director of ACA (Academic Cooperation Association)

The European Education Policy Agenda

1. The Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)

My theme is "the European education policy agenda". Before I dive into this, however, I would like to devote a few words to the organisation I am the Director of, the Academic Cooperation Association, or, in short, ACA. What is this ACA? ACA is a not-for-profit organisation under Belgian law, with its seat and secretariat in Brussels. It has 20 members all over Europe, and a few on other continents – so few by ASET's standards. These members are major national-level expert organisations in education and training, which carry out, on behalf of their government, important tasks in the field of international mobility and cooperation in education. This description was the politically correct one, but I wonder if it has made you any wiser. Therefore, I will try again: ACA is the European federation of the British Councils of Europe (or rather, their 'educational arms'). What does ACA do? In short, it promotes innovation and internationalisation in education – first and foremost higher education – in Europe and beyond. I will give you two examples of what that means in our everyday life.

First, ACA is active in research and analysis on internationalisation and international education policy. Most of our intellectual products are published in our own monograph series, the *ACA Papers on International Cooperation in Education*. Next to its own research, ACA carries out work for third parties, such as the European Commission, national governments and private clients.

The second of the many activity legs of ACA – ACA is a special animal, with many legs - consists of conferences and seminars. By way of example: in about six weeks from now, on 18 and 19 September, we are going to organise an international conference in Hamburg, devoted to the question whether and how the so-called Bologna reforms are going to enhance the attractiveness of European higher education outside of our continent. I am sure it will be the second best education conference in Europe this year, after the ASET conference. I want to encourage you to attend.

One more thing: you have noticed by now, I assume, that ACA's focus is on higher education. By necessity, this orientation will reflect on my speech, to a degree. Another focus will become obvious as well, that on the European level of developments. When I use the words Europe and European, I sometimes refer to the European institutions as such, i.e. on the European Union and its different bodies, mostly the Commission, but also to the entirety of the countries and education and training systems of our continent.

2. European Union Education and Training Programmes

After this warming-up, I shall now try to attack my theme. Just in case I should get a bit derailed later, I am telling you at the outset what I will focus on. Three things: first, EU education and training programmes; second, the Bologna process; and, third, the so-called Lisbon agenda.

Well then, European education programmes. For a long time, European education policy, or to be precise, Union education policy, consisted of programmes only. They fund mobility and cooperation, and the provide scholarships and grants. You know them, because you use them, I would expect. The European Commission has just started the legislative process for the successor schemes of the present Socrates and Leonardo schemes, to come into operation in 2007. The

scheme, one single, is to be larger than ever. The budgetary request of the Commission is worth 3 to 4 times the current value.

In assessing the development of European programmes since their beginnings, a few conclusions can be safely drawn.

- **The volume of the exercise has immensely grown over time**. The budget to be expected by 2007 will be easily tenfold of that of the late 1980s, when the first schemes were started.
- Already at the outset, the Union has tried to **cover as many sub-sectors of education and training as possible**. The earliest programmes targeted higher education (ERASMUS) – which the Union has always interpreted widely as 'post-secondary' – and what was at the time called "university-enterprise collaboration", through the COMETT programme. This scheme, of 1986, provided, amongst other things, 'work placements' in industry, something close to the ASET heart, I would think. FORCE, a vocational training scheme, also started before 1990. Over time, adult education and school education were integrated, so that the Union can now rightly claim to be offering a comprehensive 'lifelong learning programme' from 2007 onwards.
- As early as 1990, the Union's programmes started to **transcend, in a major way, the bounds of its own geographical territory**, and reached out to the world. This trend set in with TEMPUS (although there were a few tiny Asia-oriented schemes before that), and it has now reached an erstwhile culmination point with the new ERASMUS MUNDUS scheme. Thus, Europe moved from a self-centred perspective to a global one. Interestingly, this move was accompanied by a second one, from a cooperative to a competitive paradigm. Union policies today try to create or increase the competitiveness of European education and training on a global education market, and focus less on the idea of cooperation for the good of everyone involved.

Despite all of this, one might argue that the above-mentioned efforts are simply funding programmes, and thus very limited in education policy terms. Yes, they are, I would agree, but they have not been without any impact. The effects they had might even have been unintended, but they came about nonetheless. Once the programmes started to have a certain critical mass, they produced something I would like to label "system contact". Hundreds of thousands of pupils, apprentices, students and lecturers went across country borders and were exposed to new approaches to teaching and learning or to new system structures. This created the conditions for the spread of contagious ideas. The programmes clearly developed an infectious quality. The creation of credit point systems in some countries where they were not known is one example. The creation of new institution types of a highly applied or vocational character– Austria's and Switzerland's *Fachhochschulen*, Finland's 'polytechnics' – are partly results of this form of contamination. Of course, they were only one influence among many: global mega-trends towards diversification, the need to generally raise levels of learning, and cost pressures, all contributed to the trend.

So the viruses travelled, and often they could not be isolated. But, as I said before, by and large the European schemes and programmes remained what they had been: programmes, thus falling short of policy-shaping instruments in the strict sense.

I should say, by the way, that I would be very happy if national programmes for international cooperation contained as many opportunities for work-based education as their European counterparts. I am not sure if you share this opinion but, at any rate, I would encourage you to throw in all your weight to influence the future development of EU programmes after 2006 to keep and to extend these possibilities. For the Commission's proposal I spoke of earlier is only the starting point of a legislative process in the course of which much may change. Therefore, do lobby the UK government, which will drive this process on your behalf.

3. The Bologna Process

I said earlier that the Union had restricted itself to programmes, rather than developing a European education policy. This was not a coincidence. The Union's mandate in education and

training, which anyway only came about through the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, was and remains very limited: the Union is to further cooperation between its member states and the rest of the world, but it may not touch on the "content and structure" of education. The member states, who long pursued a no-nonsense policy about this, saw to it that the Union never overstepped this demarcation line. They made clear that the last thing they wanted or were prepared to tolerate was a harmonisation of educational structures and content in Europe. They did not try very hard to hide their suspicion that this was what the Union secretly aspired to.

In 1999, this "European world order" of long standing suddenly collapsed. The Bologna Declaration, or, to name it by its full title, the Declaration on the European Higher Education Area, demanded convergence of system structures in Europe. The nearly 30 education ministers who signed the document in Bologna in May 1999 thus radically departed from their earlier anti-harmonisation course. They went down exactly the road which they had told the Union to stay clear of. The Union itself, or rather the Commission, was robbed of its role as a motor of European educational integration. But not for long: today, the Commission is back in the process. As a result of this turn of events, the Union became a much more "political" actor than it had hitherto been.

You know of course the main items of the Bologna agenda, and I will therefore run through the most important ones only very quickly.

- First, there was the pledge to bring about **more educational mobility** across European borders. Mobility was of course not invented by 'Bologna', it was almost an old hat. But it is true that there is not yet enough of it, especially in some countries.
- Second, Bologna concerns the introduction of **credit point systems**, for transfer between countries, but also for accumulation. Credit points were unknown in many European education systems. In pushing for the ECTS model which the Union had developed in ERASMUS, Bologna also favoured a harmonious European approach (i.e. the same system everywhere).
- Third, Bologna strongly advocated the introduction, where not yet in existence, of **QA measures** and, at a later stage, of **accreditation**. Again, to the degree acceptable to all parties, in comparable or similar, if not identical ways. QA is not new to the UK and, you might even feel, not so desirable after all. You have had your share of the quality blessings, and perhaps you are as under-whelmed as a well-known countryman of yours, Peter Scott, who once labelled QA as a 'policing measure'.
- Fourth and, in terms of structural change and harmonisation of paramount importance in most European countries, Bologna demanded the introduction of a '**readable' (i.e. understandable) degree structure** in Europe. In shorthand, this was also referred to as the two-cycle 'Bachelor / Master' structure. Not at all new in the UK, but quite revolutionary in most of Europe.

The Bachelor / Master perspective on degree structures has in the meantime been widened. One attempt was to add the Ph.D. level, which happened at one of the so-called Bologna follow-up ministerial meetings, in Berlin in 2003. Another one, more generally, concerns the creation of a European qualifications framework. A third one is, as far as I can see, conspicuous largely by its absence. It is of particular relevance to some of you, I would think. Those who drive the process have not yet devoted much coherent thought to the question how to integrate into the Bologna process what is often referred to as "short cycle" education. What about one-year and two-year qualifications? All that the communiqué of the last meeting in Berlin says is the following: "Ministers invite the follow-up group to explore whether and how shorter higher education may be linked to the first cycle (i.e. the Bachelor) of a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area". This does not sound very determined, and it is not either. Therefore, I see a task for ASET here. The interests of 'non-university institutions' in the Bologna Process, as they are somehow awkwardly labelled, are in the hands of EURASHE, one of the official members of the process. EURASHE is still a small organisation, and it is not yet represented in all European countries. To my knowledge, they have no UK members. They need support, if shorter qualifications should really play a more than insignificant role in the Bologna Process in the future. As I think they should.

Incidentally, I harbour some doubts if Bologna is still the focussed and goal oriented process it started out as. There are at least three dangers I perceive:

- **First, Bologna is in danger of "dilution**". It has over time added so many new items to its agenda that it might turn into an all-encompassing education debate. This might make it intellectually very fulfilling, but it takes away some of its change-oriented power, which was based on the determined pursuit of a few highly palpable issues.
- **Second, Bologna is developing a worrying "anti-globalist" tendency**, which was not part of its original set of aims. This strong undercurrent stands in some contradiction to the aim of "enhancing Europe's competitiveness" on a global education market, which was one of the early driving forces of the process.
- **Third, Bologna might lose its power of convergence or harmonisation**. It is difficult to explain that in the time I have here, but I will gladly ask any questions relating to this issue – as indeed to any other – after my presentation.

4. The Lisbon Agenda

I am now coming to my final point, the Lisbon agenda. Like Bologna, and many other things in education and beyond, the work towards the Lisbon objectives is to come to a successful conclusion in the year 2010. In my more ironical moments, I therefore sometimes refer to all of these processes as the "2010 syndrome".

What is the Lisbon process about, and what is its particular significance in the history of EU education policy? First of all, the process goes much beyond education and training, covering almost any policy field. Its overarching objective is enshrined in the bold and famous – some may say, infamous – ambition that Europe should become, by the magic year 2010, *the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*. This our heads of and state and government felt an objective worth and realistic to pursue when they met for one of their European Council meetings in 2000 in the city of Lisbon. In the years after the meeting, detailed work plans were developed for all policy fields, including education. The key document for our – education – purposes was named the "Concrete Work Programme on the Follow-up of the Objectives of Education and Training Systems in Europe". Since titles of this sort are a bit too baroque to be easily remembered by anybody, the whole process was relabelled "Education & Training 2010" some time ago.

What is "Education and Training 2010 about"? It sets out, in three strategic goals, and in 13 related objectives, an agenda for educational improvement in Europe, in the form of "objectives". It is not the Union (nor its executive arm, the Commission) that sets the objectives. These are agreed between the member states. But it is the Commission who, through a process named the "open method of coordination", monitors the implementation. The Commission also proposes *benchmarks* to be used to measure progress towards these objectives (or the lack of them). That the Union should be entrusted with such a far-reaching mandate would have been out of the question only a few years earlier. The sensation behind "Education & Training 2010" is that through it the Union finally conquered the heartland of education policy. Despite its thrust for convergence of system features, Bologna was, and still is, somehow linked to the old idea of moving away obstacles to intra-European cooperation. Such system differences, in the form of diverging degree structures, for example, were viewed as hampering the free movement of students across Europe. Lisbon goes beyond this cooperation rationale. It states in a straightforward way that European education and training needs to become better. This is education poly pure and simple.

Which are these aims? I will not go through them all, since even the 13 "concrete objectives" are in their turn broken down into subordinate aims. I shall by necessity have to be selective. The 13 objectives are, as I already said, grouped under three main goals. They are fairly abstract:

- To improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union;
- To facilitate the access of all to education and training systems;
- To open up education and training systems to the wider world.

Of the more concrete objectives, a fair number is likely to be of some relevance for you, the members of ASET. For example the one which demands "closer links of education and training with work and society". For this business you are already engaged in, and you might possibly serve as one of those 'contagious models' I mentioned before. The same goes for the objective "to develop a spirit of enterprise". Others are equally important, for you as for everybody else: "to improve foreign language learning" and to "increase mobility and exchange". There is, by the way, a European Union Lisbon working group devoted to developing concrete ideas as to the latter, in the form of "examples of good practice". I have served as an expert to this group otherwise composed only of governmental members, and I have tried to convince the group of the merits of a particular form of mobility, composed of traineeships and work-based learning. In a small way, I hope to have thus contributed to furthering the ends of ASET members in this way. I will continue with my work as an advisor, so if there is anything else I can do, please do let me know.

Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

Understanding Workplace Culture – A Key to Employability

Dr Christine Fanthome
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Introduction

The increase in work placements within university course modules and school curricula in recent years supports the assertion that work experience is an important bridge between theory and practice, and between learning and earning. Work placements enable students to develop and practice skills, gain practical experience of the workplace environment and define and shape career aspirations. In addition to enhancing the individual's CV, they also contribute to personal development by boosting confidence and self-knowledge. From an employer's perspective students on work experience offer the potential for introducing fresh ideas and, in addition, may represent a low-cost source of labour.

> *The work placement was invaluable. Because I do not currently work in the sector, vocational experience is as important as the academic study to build my credentials and put the course into a practical perspective.*
> *(Mark, postgraduate student – museum placement)*

> *We get enthusiastic support on productions which are usually under a lot of pressure and it brings fresh talent and ideas to the industry.*
> *(Celia, employer – TV production)*

Employability and work experience are inextricably linked. Not only does work experience enhance employability, but employability itself is a key attraction and deciding factor for employers when selecting candidates for work placement vacancies. However, whilst it is generally acknowledged that employability status is closely related to the relevance of the individual's talents, this paper argues that one fundamental skill is frequently overlooked, namely, that of understanding workplace culture and becoming a proficient operator within it. Employers want staff who are able to make an immediate and viable contribution within the workplace, and students who have already undertaken a placement are more likely to fulfil this expectation since they are already 'acclimatised' to the workplace prior to taking up employment. This allows them behave proactively and concentrate their energies on adapting their skills to suit the job in question, rather than being distracted by preoccupations about the workplace environment. This account deconstructs and demystifies workplace culture, identifying key areas that may be potentially problematic for inexperienced employees and suggesting strategies for dealing with some of the more common issues.

Demystifying workplace culture

Each working environment is unique, not only in terms of the nature of the business and personalities involved but also in the sense of the unwritten and unspoken protocol which permeates the workplace and signals the recommended approach in terms of self-presentation, behaviour, dealing with office hierarchy, and so on. Learning how to identify and work within this framework is a very complex endeavour, especially as the terms are frequently implicit rather than explicit. Consequently, it poses a considerable challenge to the inexperienced student. Proficiency in workplace protocol is largely dependent on an awareness of the issues involved and an understanding of one's own position. The key points to be mastered are as follows:

- Dealing with the workload
- Finding a productive place in the team
- Social issues
- Fitting in with office 'etiquette'

- Handling office politics

Overall, integration in the workplace calls for an ability to appraise the situation and personalities involved and to present and conduct oneself in a manner that is acceptable to all parties. For the student unaccustomed to the workplace environment, the differences between work and university are likely to be immediately apparent, although the appropriate way of dealing with the new situation may not be as obvious.

Firstly, the 'open-endedness' of the work, or the fact that it may not arrive in a steady stream, may come as a surprise. Whilst at university the workload is designed to be predictable and feasible, students on placement may find that they are completely overburdened, or conversely that they have nothing to do. Similarly, the work at university is geared to the level of the student, but in the workplace tasks may be either too difficult or too easy. Whereas at university students have the benefit of a tutor to whom they may turn for advice and support, there may or may not be a similar mentor in the workplace, whilst students may also encounter indifference to their needs. For the first time, students may find that the responsibility of actually determining what needs to be done, and establishing a sensible timeframe in which to carry out the work, is down to them.

> *I was quite excited before I started at the library, but when I got there, half the things I was told I could do I wasn't allowed to do. It ended up as a lot of shelving and tidying. I ended up being incredibly bored for a lot of the time. It was fairly useless.*
> *(Annette, year 11 school student – library placement)*

> *It got to the stage where I was not producing the work. I had tried to address it on the Thursday evening but [their response was] 'Joe don't send me an e-mail if the work is not complete.' They gave me too much responsibility because they were under pressure.*
> *(Joe, undergraduate student – advertising industry placement)*

> *The most common problem I found was the overall poor quality of the boring, mundane tasks. I also found that students liked to show too much initiative too early in the placement. Initiative is good but students need to learn the ropes before making suggestions to current procedures.*
> *(Alistair, employer – marketing for new media)*

Interpersonal skills are likely to be put to the test in interacting with colleagues and working as part of a team. Students need to effect a balance between being willing to help and ensuring that they are not coerced into undertaking work with which they are not comfortable. This may be particularly difficult if the student is working for more than one person. Finding his or her place in the office 'hierarchy' may be difficult, especially if the person in charge does not automatically command respect. Whereas at university it may have been possible for the student to avoid people he/she did not like, in the workplace it is essential to form a working relationship with all employees, regardless of personal feelings, and to treat everybody in a professional manner. Custom and practice in the office may dictate which members of staff mix with each other socially. This situation is a fact of life and students need to learn how to deal with those in authority, their peers, and those who expect guidance from them. It is important to be both friendly and respectful and it can be difficult at first to find the right balance. A newcomer to the workplace is likely find that friendship groups are already in place and these may, for example, determine arrangements at lunchtime or after work. In such circumstances it is often difficult to know whether it is best to make oneself scarce or whether to join in. An 'unfriendly' environment may come as a shock, particularly if the student is accustomed to being surrounded by friends and an established support network.

> *I did feel a level of hostility from some people and others felt a need to exert authority over me. I was asked at one point to clean. I voiced my concern to my boss who told me that was not my job and I was here to work as part of a team.*
> *(Anastasia, undergraduate student – radio station placement)*

> *To begin with I was unsure of what to do with my lunch break. I wasn't sure if I was expected to eat with the staff or not. On the third day, my supervisors asked if I would join them at the café. It turned out that the whole team lunched there.*
> *(Emily, year 11 school student – museum placement)*

Each workplace has different 'rules' about what constitutes acceptable behaviour. These may encompass practical issues such as making and receiving personal telephone calls at work, the use of e-mail, self-presentation and dress code, starting and finishing times, and lunch break conventions. They may also cover the general level of formality or informality or what is considered a reasonable level of personal conversation in the workplace. Office politics exist in every organisation and whilst it is good to be aware of what is going on, active involvement in terms of taking sides, gossiping, or making inappropriate comments can damage an individual's reputation and adversely affect output. Students may well find themselves caught up in difficult situations and will need to devise a personal strategy for dealing with them.

> *Don't burn bridges or do 'home truths'. Most industries are quite small and word-of-mouth is immensely damaging, not to mention the fact that both parties will inevitably bump into each other again.*
> *(Michael, employer – conferences and exhibitions)*

> *Once in an organisation, don't subvert a placement by approaching another department you may be more interested in – it will engender bad feelings between yourself and your host department. People in an organisation do talk.*
> *(Sarah, employer – museum)*

A strategy for success

The main point for students to remember about a work placement is that, whatever happens, it is a learning experience. This applies whether the work is fulfilling or disappointing, and whether or not the person concerned is integrated within a team and accepted socially. Students can learn simply by being in a workplace environment, putting their skills to practical use, observing others at work, taking instructions and reflecting upon each and every aspect of the situation, with a view to improving performance on future occasions. It is likely that many skills and attributes will be developed in the workplace, particularly intellectual and communication skills, self-reliance, organisational ability and initiative. This in itself will render the student more able to deal with difficulties encountered. Problems need to be addressed before they intensify, and taking control of the situation is clearly preferable to turning negative emotions inwards and suppressing them. Any problems encountered need to be identified and then communicated to someone with the responsibility for making changes. If the student can make suggestions as to how to improve the situation, it raises the chances of a successful outcome. Of the students who contributed to my book on work placements, most cited an inappropriate level or quantity of work as the most likely cause of problems. The second most frequent reason given was lack of appreciation from colleagues. Employers' concerns tended to focus on students' lack of willingness to do mundane tasks and unreliability in terms of timekeeping and time management. Tutors cited a mismatch of expectations between students and employers, or a breakdown in the communication chain as the most likely causes of problems. Clearly, discussions between all parties prior to the commencement of the placement as to the exact nature of the work to be done can significantly reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings and disappointments, as can keeping a channel for communication open during the placement.

Students are likely to gain the most from their placements if they ask for feedback on their actions, reflect upon each new experience, and analyse what can be learnt from it. Many universities ask for reflective essays from work placement students as part of the assessment process, and these are invaluable to the students' learning as they encourage them to define and analyse their reactions in different situations, and allow progress to be recorded. Indeed, reflection is the vital link that connects theory and practice and if students are able to master this skill, they will then be able not only to interpret and integrate in workplace culture, but also to draw on the benefits of a lifelong learning resource throughout their careers.

> *I had to write a 5,000-word report. I found it a worthwhile exercise to consolidate all that I had learnt. Partly because it will be helpful when people, i.e. future employers, ask me what my responsibilities were, and what skills I learnt from the experience, but also because it gave me a sense of the achievements I had made.*
> *(Fiona, undergraduate student – PR placement)*

> *We had to do a presentation for this work placement module and it was interesting because it made me realise how much I had actually learnt.*
> *(Katrina, undergraduate student – charity organisation placement)*

The overall aim of this paper has been to raise awareness of the importance of gaining proficiency in workplace culture. It argues that if students are aware of the various aspects of workplace culture outlined in this account and are able to establish personal strategies to deal with them, their employability will be increased significantly.

Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

Integrating English Language Proficiency and Cultural Literacy into a Curriculum: The Enhancement of Employability and Academic Success

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As we all know, English is the world's most common language at present. Students at all levels of education need to be taught a high level of English proficiency in order to succeed in today's highly competitive global marketplace. To prepare our vocational, college, and university students properly in English, we need to evaluate the current needs in academia and the workplace and address these issues in the curriculum. We need to expand relationships between the four basic components of language acquisition (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) to increase language expertise. In this way we are enhancing the employability of our students by giving them the necessary skills – basic and advanced – to compete for key positions offered nationally and globally.

Moreover, we must take into consideration the ethnic diversity of our students. Students who are culturally bound often lack "cultural literacy"; intergenerational or background knowledge assumed to be available to everyone. Cross–cultural boundaries among and between students can also cause interpersonal problems. These cultural literacy gaps, in addition to the lack of English proficiency can cause educational, social, and employment problems if they are not breached through a variety of methods: curriculum, student orientation, faculty-student interaction, and explanation. English Language courses that incorporate these principles can assist in raising the social awareness, employability, and our students' capacity to access, analyse, and synthesise information.

In various cultures English is often the second or third language. And while the English language may be taught in the elementary and secondary school levels, the proficiency gained is minimal at best. These students are unprepared for the rigorous demands made by institutes of higher education where textbooks, articles, and professional manuals are all written in English. Universities assume that when students are accepted they can read, write, speak and understand standard English. There are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration when attempting to create a workable, efficient system of English language expertise for our students. First, we must design a curriculum with an infrastructure that includes not only the basic material to be learned, but also essential elements for success - socially, academically, and financially - in the workplace. American, British and Eurocentric cultures should be highlighted as a means to understanding the English language and its inconsistencies, while striving to incorporate the rich and diverse cultural background of many students.

Second, we must make certain that students are prepared for the academic framework they have chosen to study. One of the major problems seen in first-year students is the lack of orientation to higher education's goals since they see academic courses as a continuation of secondary school level education. They often do not take their course-work seriously as well as lacking the necessary background of academic requirements – proper classroom behavior, note-taking techniques, studying techniques, and research or seminar preparation. We need to help them overcome these deficits through a short orientation course that includes a discussion of the rigorous demands of higher education and academics, expectations, computer literacy, etc.

Finally, faculty-student interaction can help the new student recognise that an individual ethnic-background is just one part of the global puzzle of humanity. Each one of us needs to recognise the limitations of our ethnocentric assumptions in order to allow a tolerance of "the different" to be the operative factor in our actions and not the basis for prejudice. If faculties respect the differences of

students, then students will learn to tolerate differences in other students and faculties reciprocally. English language proficiency can aid in this adjustment. This interface between the "teacher" and the "learner" can become the transformative factor in recognising the need for tolerance through diversity. Moreover, I recommend encouraging students to participate in class by speaking in English and allowing them an "open stage" (within reason, of course) to express their input on the subject at hand, personal beliefs, and cultural background. This added interaction could help develop closer bonds between the students themselves.

Most teachers around the globe use the direct translation method in order to teach a new language. According to Cummins, this type of teaching method follows what is known as "The Balance Effect Theory" where it is believed that there is limited linguistic capacity available (meaning of cognition) to the student. (Cummins, 1981:27-28) Unfortunately, I believe that translation just confuses the issue, since while translation might immediately assist the student in acquiring unknown (and what is perceived as necessary) information, in the long run it will only hinder their overall comprehension of the second language. They waste precious time in looking up unknown words that might not be necessary to the overall reading context.

My primary preface in the classroom is to teach in English, therefore I only speak English in the classroom. This is the pragmatic component of language knowledge – knowing how or when to use words and expressions. The rhythms and forms of English make it, as any language, unique and add to the richness of the language as a whole. Thus, my method is a kind of "meaning-focused input" which relies on the students learning new concepts and vocabulary through reading comprehension and listening to specific information in English. Although some critics of this method claim "learning from meaning-focused input can best occur if learners are familiar with at least 95% of the running words in the input they are focusing on" (Nation, 2001:2), finding students in a class with 95% knowledge of the subject can be a difficult task. We must teach them methods to overcome the lack of concepts and vocabulary while strengthening their command of English.

In theory I follow Cummins "Think Tank Model" which follows three assumptions. First, talking reflects thinking - meaning that comprehension occurs in both languages simultaneously - and that by having the students speak in English, they are exercising their thinking abilities in both languages. Moreover, by listening to me lecture in English I am also strengthening their listening skills in both languages. Second, meanings of words or concepts are not always directly translatable into other languages. Furthermore, certain expressions or usages of words change from one language to another, thus translation only confuses the issue rather than clarifying it. Third, a high-level of proficiency of *either* language will increase the proficiency of all languages being utilized. (Cummins, 1981:29-30) Cummins summarizes:

> Although the linguistic contents of the Think Tank often retain specific L1 or L2 characteristics (that is, they do not become linguistically homogenised), the same mental expertise underlies performance (namely, processing of input and output) in both languages. The quantity and quality of the linguistic input and the feedback received from linguistic output in both languages is an important stimulus for the growth of the *total* Think Tank. (Cummins, 1981:30)

Thus, lecturing in English can only facilitate language proficiency and strengthened critical thinking skills. In addition, we must teach language as a whole, integrated entity including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. We must include cultural or background knowledge as well as the subject matter under discussion. We must work on a variety of skills (accuracy, fluency, strategies, and processing). And finally, we must focus on the text as both discourse and topic. (Nation, 2001:1)

Reading comprehension is the most essential component of the student's English proficiency. First, vocabulary in context skills must be taught. These include: affixes - prefix and suffix identification, synonyms, antonyms, and identification of the parts of speech. Second, I teach the students the standard organisation of an essay or article. Students need to be able to differentiate between the different types of texts, especially academic articles. My rationale here is that if they can recognise the form and know what to expect, then prediction and comprehension becomes easier. Third, patterns of organisation (term and explanation, comparison, contrast, list, time order) must be explained. Fourth, sentence connectors should not only be explained, but also broken down into groups so that they can be recognised easily. I also recommend that students use highlighter pens to mark the sentence connectors

on the pages, and teach them how to do so properly in class. When connectors are emphasised it becomes easier to find information, but only when you know what that information can offer you.

The next phase is to teach reading strategies and methodologies. The old "read it all" method does not work any more, especially at the higher education level. Students just do not have the time to read all the material thoroughly to prepare for a class or lecture. It is important to explain to students how to find the main idea of an article as well as the main idea of each paragraph and work through articles in class with them to demonstrate not only the technique, but to give them the self-confidence they need to be able to read better on their own. Highlighting the main ideas in the text is also a good strategy or creating an outline of the main ideas in English on the board.

Another parameter of EFL teaching involves computer literacy and reading comprehension. Computer literacy is a necessary part of our twenty-first century existence and essential for any student. It will assist him/her to access information on the Internet (also mostly written in English), prepare assignments and write papers, and make him/her more desirable in the job market. The student needs to know that bold, underline, italics buttons, for instance, show emphasis and that when these "signs" appear in a text, they should pay attention to them. Moreover, identification of basic commands on both the keyboard and WORD program should be taught, which can then be developed into more advanced possibilities in the programme. We should have our students search in databases for articles on a similar subject to the one under discussion in the lecture. They should also be encouraged to use e-mail as frequently as possible in English. PowerPoint presentations (or other similar software) have become a staple in the business world and our students should have the capability to put a presentation together on the computer.

Thirdly, verbal English skills are an important part of comprehension and employability. Every one of us speaks with some type of accent. I specifically tell my students this because I want them to use English in the classroom and not their native tongue. Fluency comes from practice and since everyone will "sound funny" with individual accents in English, there is nothing to be ashamed of. First, the student should be able to communicate in English on a basic level – everyday English (navigating a city, ordering a meal, understanding signs). Second, they should be able to converse in English gradually progressing, through concerted practice, to more in-depth subjects of discussion. Finally, they should be able to be involved in a business meeting and negotiations. In today's rapidly changing world this skill is becoming increasingly in demand. Video-conferencing requires accurate and fluent verbal English capabilities, as well as a quick response.

Finally, proper written English demands another set of skills entirely. I believe that writing assignments should be given as homework so the student has adequate time to think the idea through before submitting the assignment. I also recommend that the teacher correct each assignment with explicit comments so that the mistakes can be corrected. A rewrite of the assignment should also be submitted. The simple task of recopying has the benefit of helping the student internalise the correct form. The student should be able to write letters in English to a colleague as well as being able to write business correspondence in English. The student should also be able to write a summary of an article. Moreover, the ability to write an essay (standard three paragraph essay as well as a research paper) should be taught and practiced. Finally, the student should be prepared to both write a presentation in English, as well as deliver it orally.

Language is always used in a cultural format. While lecturing and teaching in the university classroom I have found that it is extremely important to explain vocabulary in the context of the subject being discussed through example – verbally, physical demonstration, and written. In this way, not only do the students have the written connection between the vocabulary word and the text in front of them, but also through explanation I am able to offer another insight into the word's definition. I write the word on the board, including paragraph and line number where it can be found, any synonyms (using an equal sign), antonyms (using an unequal sign), then a definition in English. Moreover, the verbal example gives me the opportunity to add cultural literacy into the discussion. This way I am able to add small amounts of essential information to the student's knowledge bank in an entertaining manner which facilitates the knowledge acquisition process.

In conclusion, the curriculum format I offer here is just one method of assessing the needs, and thereby improving, the English language proficiency of higher education students in order to succeed in today's highly competitive world. Its can aid students by enhancing their employability as well as their

knowledge and understanding of the rapidly changing world around them. In addition, by expanding their cultural literacy we will create more well-rounded students. Then their own ethno-background will be much more advantageous to them during their academic career as well as in the workplace.

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Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

The Effect of Work Placements on the Perceived Skills-Set of Science Students

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Abstract
A one-year placement can have a remarkable and beneficial effect on students. They return from placement with a more positive attitude to study and an improved transferable skills-set. The evidence for these enhancements is largely anecdotal, so we sought to assess how the students perceived their own improvement. In a workshop for returning science placement students we audited their self-assessment of how placement learning affected their skills-set. This paper presents some of the findings.

Introduction
Dearing in his National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education report (1997) said that employers want graduates to have a 'wide range of skills, such as personal and cognitive capabilities that people use to carry out a wide range of tasks and activities.' Although students study subject-specific degree programmes it is often the transferable skills that many employers value more highly.
Our science students return from placement with knowledge and experience of their specific subject area in the work place. The year away from university and their involvement in the world of scientific work hones their laboratory skills which assists them in their final year project. By seeing science applied in the workplace, students better appreciate the value of the academic material covered at university. However, in addition to these specific skills they have also developed their transferable skills to a level far higher than their counterparts who elected not to go on placement.
Students are not always aware of the skills accrued on placement. To make this more explicit, we ran a workshop for students shortly after they returned from placement; for part of this we gave an evaluation form to each student asking them to self-assess a number of transferable skills prior to going on placement compared to when they returned from placement.

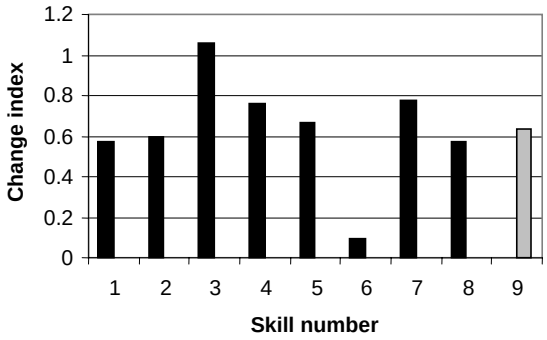
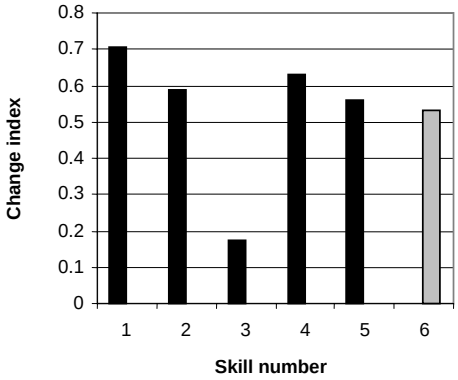
Skills-set self-assessment
During the workshop, students completed a self-assessment sheet which contained 59 questions related to generic skills collated from various sources. The skills were grouped into 7 main categories: communication skills, team work and leadership, organising & planning, problem solving, use of IT & numeracy, self-worth (the results for this category are not presented here), and research skills & opportunities. An example of part of the form is given below.

Communication skills	**Before P**	**Now**
Verbal:		
1. Speaking clearly & succinctly	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
2. Readily understood	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
3. Able to speak confidently with senior people	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
4. Giving a formal presentation to a group	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
5. Speaking on the phone	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
6. Speaking a foreign language	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
7. Expressing complex matters in a simple way	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
8. Persuading others to see your point of view	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

Students were asked to rate themselves on a four-point scale (1-weak to 4–strong; Before P – before placement) for each skill before and after placement.

Results

In all, 40 students completed the self-assessment form. Overall, in all categories the skill-sets audited showed an increase after completion of the placement. The results are shown below in terms of the change index - that is, the numerical difference between their self-assessed levels after placement compared with before. Each solid bar on the graphs represents the mean value for a particular skill. The grey bar on the extreme right of each graph represents the mean for that category. A bar in the positive direction indicates an improvement and the longer the bar, the greater improvement has occurred. The mean change in all cases was positive.

Verbal communication skills	**Written & presentation skills**
	
1. Speaking clearly & succinctly 2. Readily understood 3. Able to speak confidently with senior people 4. Giving a formal presentation to a group 5. Speaking on the phone 6. Speaking a foreign language 7. Expressing complex matters in a simple way 8. Persuading others to see your point of view 9. Mean	1. Writing reports or projects 2. Summarising documents and reports 3. Having a grasp of grammar and spelling 4. Understanding the needs of the reader 5. Using visual aids confidently and effectively 6. Mean

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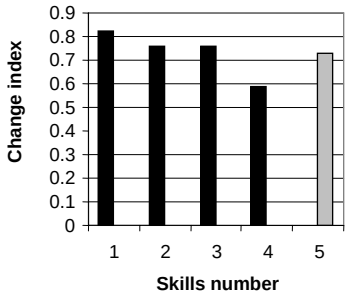
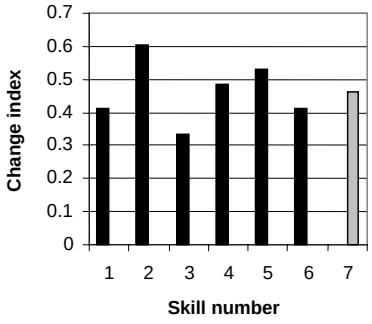
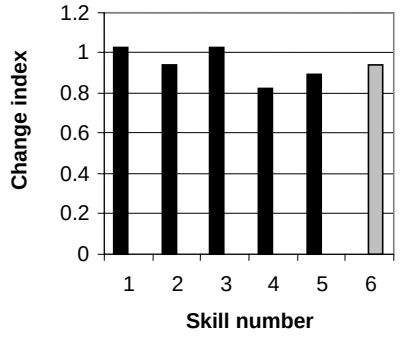
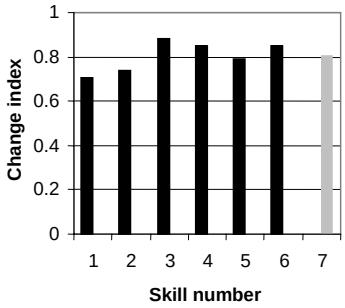
Networking skills	**Team work & leadership**
	
1. Speaking with strangers 2. Establishing a rapport 3. Feeling confident when meeting with strangers 4. Getting people to work with you 5. Mean	1. Assuming leadership 2. Being a constructive team member 3. Motivating others 4. Listening to others 5. Responding to the needs of others 6. Able to overcome conflict 7. Mean

Organising & planning	Problem solving
	
1. Organising a project 2. Managing your time 3. Coping when things go wrong 4. Seeing the big picture 5. Having an eye for detail 6. Mean	1. Creative at finding a solution 2. Resolving difficult situations 3. Coping with pressure 4. Adapting to change 5. Dealing with unexpected situations 6. Thinking of new or improved ways to do something 7. Mean

Charts showing the improvement of self-assessed skills within each of the main categories. A brief interpretation of the data is provided in the Discussion.

Discussion

It is not possible to discuss in detail the results for each of the categories, but suffice it to say that the student group reported an improvement in every category and for each skill within that category. Among the highest-scoring categories are 'organising & planning' and 'problem solving', both of which are valuable skills for the final year of study on a degree programme. The 'networking' and 'team work & leadership' skills also showed an improvement and are valuable for employability. The 'communication' and 'written & presentation' skills showed a lesser improvement but this might be due to the use of these skills during the first two years at university and the fact that the placements are largely practically-based.

The workshop has provided a valuable opportunity for us to determine the improvement in the skills-set of placement students. From the results we are considering how best to prepare students for the world of work; in the first instance for the placement year but ultimately for their future employment upon graduation. The workshop has also allowed students to appreciate the transferable skills they acquire and hone while on placement and which they can exploit in their final year studies and in future employment.

This project was funded by a HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England), FDTL (Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning) Phase 4 project awarded to DL and SG and an NTFS (National Teaching Fellowship Scheme) award to SG.

References:

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Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

The Integration of Professional Competencies in the Assessment of Placement

Chris Hill
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Introduction

Vocational courses make explicit their link between the academic process and the role graduates will be prepared for on completion. This is not to say that the academic process may be of use to an individual following an entirely different path. Indeed, it may be said that the fundamental aim of vocational courses is to prepare people for the world of work. This relates to the view of Barnett (1994) who reports the notion of higher education in its role to provide useful contribution to society and individuals, usually through economic activity.

Nonetheless, vocational courses have a more directive sense in that the role of the graduate is to a great extent predicted by the title of the course: nursing, accountancy, or for this paper Construction Management.

Furthermore, courses which are accredited by external professional or statutory bodies are influenced in their curriculum and assessment by such bodies. Again, there is the expectation that graduates will at some point become members themselves of such professions or bodies, and the academic course is a preparation for that.

For the Construction Management course at Sheffield Hallam University, which is accredited by the Chartered Institute of Building, this briefly describes the background.

Placement Experience

The value of the placement experience has long been recognised as a valuable part of the course (Hill 2001, Hill 2002). Students spend a minimum of 38 weeks between years two and four of the sandwich course in an industrial placement. The variety of these placements is considerable, reflecting the nature of construction activity (Hill 2002). The placement is paid, and opportunities for further sponsorship and employment are very good.

In 2001 the course team advocated assessing the placement academically, to contribute towards the final year credits for the course. (Hill 2001 and Hill 2002). This move reflected the value placed on the experience by the students themselves, and by the employers.

Professional Competencies

Concurrent with the proposal to assess the industrial experience the professional body, the Chartered Institute of Building, was developing the Professional Development Programme, which identified competencies as follows:

"CIOB Professional Competencies:
1. Decision Making
2. Communicating
3. Managing Information
4. Planning Work
5. Managing Work Quality
6. Managing Health and Safety

7. Managing Resources
8. Assess Environmental Risk Factors **or**
9. Managing Costs
10. Personal Management at Work

(CIOB 1999)"

These competencies denote the abilities or attributes which the professional body expects its members to achieve. This may not be completed within the period of an industrial placement, such an event is unlikely, but not impossible. However, by the time full membership is awarded, candidates must have enough evidence to demonstrate their abilities in these areas.

These competencies are all work related, that is construction related. Further, their attainment is dependent on experience being gained and the competence being developed in a work context. This relates to the concept of contextual knowledge which Portwood (2000) describes as that knowledge which has reference in and relevance to its contextual setting. Hinchliffe (2001) uses the phrase contextual skill to similar effect.

The language of competencies as denoted by the CIOB has similarities to the language of academic learning outcomes. The extensive work done by the Learning Teaching Institute at Sheffield Hallam University (Drew, Bingham 2001) was used to interpret the professional competencies into academic learning outcomes. Specifically, a concern was raised about the assessment of the experience rather than the assessment of the reflection on the experience. This was perhaps more of an issue in the academic assessment where a classification is awarded, rather than the professional assessment which is either pass or fail. Whilst both professional and academic assessment require reflection, verification and so on, the academic also requires the subtleties of first class, upper second, lower second and third.

The professional competencies were therefore adopted as the guidance for the preparation of a placement experience portfolio by the students, and also used as a framework for the assessment of the submissions.

Successful Integration of Competencies

The experience of a number of cohorts of students taking the assessed industrial experience units which use this framework has been very positive. Reactions from employers, some of whom have direct involvement in the assessment of professional competencies, has also been very good. The professional body has also taken the opportunity to examine some of the submissions, and was duly impressed.

The successful integration can be considered to be due to a number of factors:

- The prior relationship between the academic course and the professional body. We both had experience of one another and several academics were involved in the development of the CIOB Professional Development Programme.

- The prior development of learning outcomes at Sheffield Hallam University. Academics at SHU are well versed in the usage of learning outcomes and how they can/ should be written and interpreted.

- The language of the CIOB professional competencies. These have been drafted in a common sense and common language manner, avoiding the use of technical terms or profession specific phraseology. This is to be applauded both for their usage in academic courses such as this, but also in their use out with the course.

The integration of the professional competencies, which are intended for development in the workplace is confined to the assessed industrial experience element of the course. To abstract theses competencies for development in the classroom would be to de-contextualise them, contradicting the concepts of Hinchliffe and Portwood above, as well as the CIOB who provided the competencies in the first place.

Conclusion

As noted the integration of professional competencies into the placement assessment of students is entirely possible, and from this experience very positive. For the students, it provides a focus for their learning within the placement period. In addition, it provides them an accelerated route for full member status after graduating. For the employer, it provides a framework of experience they should try to provide if appropriate for the student during placement. For the professional body, it demonstrates the value of the professional competencies, and their effective utilisation. For the university, it strengthens the links to the professional body, and to the employers through the value placed on the placement.

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Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

Promoting Employability at Staffordshire University

Kathryn McFarlane
Staffordshire University

This paper will investigate employability, focusing on the strategies used to enhance the employability of students at Staffordshire University. The current policy-based approach will be explored, including a consideration of the implementation strategy, the obstacles faced, and the auditing of employability activities. The paper will conclude with some examples of employability-enhancing activities, and plans for future development.

1 Employability – the drivers

Much has been written, for example by ESECT[1], about the reasons for promoting employability – both in relation to government policies and our responsibilities to our students. Below are specific examples which illustrate some of the drivers behind an increased focus on employability.

The following two quotations from Staffordshire University graduates shed some light on the importance of work experience, and the need to reflect upon it.

Rashid: *All I did was study, study, study, and that was just half of it. Now I'm really regretting it. I wasn't aware that employers required other examples – not just your degree. It doesn't matter how much education you've got – you need experience.*

Sunil: *I've definitely developed my communication skills for a different situation other than university, as well as professionalism when talking to teachers and explaining my ideas, what I've done and so on.*

Booth[1] points out that:

- if students find themselves at sea in the graduate labour market, then their fate will discourage others, particularly those from groups without a tradition of participation in Higher Education.

This was brought home to me recently when interviewing a mature client with a degree and postgraduate qualification. Her inability to find employment had a detrimental effect on her teenage son's motivation towards his education.

2 Definitions of employability

According to ESECT[1], employability is:

A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.

This means that employability is about more than the traditional measure of destination statistics; it is about the individual's ability to be effective in their selected area, and to make and implement appropriate choices as they progress within the labour market. Employability can be described as a continuum; enhancing employability is about enabling students to progress towards this ideal, and having fewer Rashids and more Sunils. In order to move our students along the continuum, at Staffordshire University we have focused on six employability enhancing activities: work and community-related learning; career management skills; enterprise and entrepreneurship; Personal Development Planning (PDP); key skills; and accreditation for employability learning.

[1] For example, *Good learning and employability: issues for HE careers services and careers guidance practitioners,* ESECT: Briefings on Employability 6 (2003)

3 Obstacles to enhancing employability

Obstacles to moving students along the "employability continuum" can be linked to the students themselves, tutors, academic programmes and structures and cultures within faculties and the institution as a whole.

Where employability is offered as a "bolt-on", through extra-curricular activities or optional modules, what can happen is that those who are most in need of it do not engage with developing their employability skills. Furthermore, with the increasing pressure on students' time due to the need to earn money, if employability-related activities are not assessed, the risk is that students effectively cannot access them. Part time and distance learners face additional obstacles in terms of access to extra-curricular activities. Employability-related activities should value the experience many students are gaining outside their studies, and should be integrated into the curriculum. As Knight and Yorke[2] point out:

- the first degree programme needs to consist of a new blend of content and process that will provide a launching pad for lifelong personal and professional development.

Staff can present obstacles to employability learning, through active opposition, for example the member of staff who asserted to me that employability "dilutes the purity of my subject". A more common approach is passivity - seeing employability as the role of a handful of enthusiasts in their faculty. Knight and Yorke assert the need to foster employability skills at the programme level, and to achieve this staff engagement with employability needs to be taking place at a department or faculty level.

4 Approaches used to enhance employability

There are various examples of good practice in enhancing student employability at Staffordshire University, and we have been faced with the challenge of *disseminating* this practice across the University, and achieving *consistency* in terms of what is available to students. A range of approaches has been used to achieve this.

Shop Window – This strategy is about developing an initiative to demonstrate what is possible, with a view to encouraging other staff to "window shop" and develop similar initiatives. For example, in 1995, a Careers Module was set up by the Careers Service, despite the fact that the Service did not have the staff to deliver a module to all students in the University. The "window shopping" had a positive impact in that other departments have initiated careers modules targeted to their students, and other skills-related modules have been developed.

Bottom up – As a follow on from "shop window", networking and sharing good practice amongst colleagues "on the ground" has been effective in encouraging staff to develop employability initiatives.

Sharing good practice more formally – A network of "employability advocates" was set up to act as Faculty representatives on employability matters as part of a FDTL funded *Work and Community Related Learning* Project in 2002. Their role was to conduct an employability audit within their Faculty, to share good practice within and between Faculties, and to identify future strategies. This has been further developed through the development of a University Employability Policy (below).
IT – Websites have been used as a dissemination tool for employability materials. For example, the Careers Module materials are available through a website, and an electronic system to support PDP is being developed.

Top down – While the above approaches have had a significant impact, contributing to the development of policy has had an influence on the institution as a whole. Over the last three years, employability values have been integrated into key institutional documents, including the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Undergraduate Modular Framework and the University Plan. Following this, a University Employability Policy has been developed in consultation with colleagues throughout the University; this gained official approval in January 2004.

[2] *Assessment, Learning and Employability*, Knight and Yorke (2003).

The policy outlines our commitments in relation to the six employability enhancing activities listed above (section 2). In particular, by 2005/6, all students will have the opportunity to:

- Engage in work or community related learning, for example through briefs set by employers, projects, context-based case studies or placements.
- Access career management skills through the curriculum, either through a discrete module or integrated into modules at different levels
- Develop their key skills through the curriculum
- Engage in PDP through the curriculum, through the tutor system and through an electronic system
- Develop their enterprise skills where appropriate to their career development needs
- Gain accreditation for employability-related activities

5 From policy to practice

Having developed a University Employability Policy, the next stage is to integrate it into our practice. The policy is being implemented by staff in faculties and services, working in partnership with a cross-university Student Employability Sub Group. The Sub Group is chaired by a member of the Careers Service, and consists of representatives from faculties and services at varying levels of seniority. The key elements of the implementation are outlined below.

Launch - A launch event was arranged for the whole University as part of the consultation process when the Policy was being developed. The launch included a high profile academic speaker, followed by break-out groups showcasing good practice, and concluded with a powerful "fishbowl" of current students and graduates discussing their views and experiences in relation to employability.

Staff development - Briefing sessions were run for faculties and services throughout the University. These sessions aimed to familiarise staff with the policy, to give them the opportunity to explore the extent to which they were already achieving the commitments set out in it, and to discuss how to enhance current practice.

Audit - Staff have been asked to map current practice against the commitments set out in the policy. This is taking place firstly at programme level; the next stage is to draw together and compare practice within faculties; and finally an audit for the whole University will be completed, including an audit of activities in services. This audit will facilitate the dissemination of good practice and the development of consistent provision.

Action plans - Based on the audit, each faculty will develop a Faculty Employability Action Plan. Within the plan, they will explore how to disseminate good practice and build on areas for development identified by the audit. Effectively this stage is the local interpretation of University policy, making it appropriate to the demands of different disciplines.

Monitoring and evaluation - Within each faculty, Employability Co-ordinators have been identified, and these will form the basis for a Faculty Employability Working Group. Their role will be to monitor and evaluate employability practice, and to contribute to an annual report on how practice is matching up to the action plan.

Central co-ordination - Meanwhile, the Student Employability Sub Group will have a University-wide role in monitoring, evaluation, disseminating good practice and exploring common issues. In particular, it will be working on a strategy for students who are likely to lack access to employability related learning, for example distance learners. It will also explore the accreditation of employability-related activities outside academic study (in particular, student jobs).

6 Examples of good practice

The employability briefing sessions to staff throughout the University have uncovered a range of approaches to enhancing student employability. Some distinctive examples include:

Disability mentoring – This is an extra curricular scheme, linking students with a disability to employers. The scheme aims to develop the confidence and employability skills of the mentees, while at the same time challenging stereotypes about people with a disability.

Employability "basket" – Humanities students are offered a "basket" of employability modules at level one, and they can choose which area they wish to focus on.

Project Oarsome – This project enables Sport and Health students to liase with the local community by introducing the sport of rowing to Stoke-on-Trent. Thirty students went through coaching training and went into schools to promote the project and the sport in 2003/4.

Enterprise Pathway – A "pathway" of modules at levels one, two and three introduces students (from any discipline) to enterprise skills through practical and academic work.

Work and community related learning – Students in sociology have the opportunity to engage with community projects at levels one, two and three, starting with a team project, and completing at level three with an individual project for a community organisation.

Progress Award – Progress is a joint Students Union / University award for students, who produce a portfolio, reflecting on the skills gained through Students Union and other activities outside their studies.

PDP Pilots – Pilots have been taking place in Law, Social Work and Geography, and fourteen pilots will follow in 2004-5 (including one staff pilot). PDP is made available in different ways (outlined above), but in all cases the emphasis is on a structured and progressive process enabling personal development, which is made explicit to students.

7 Summary

A number of strategies have been used to enhance the employability of students at Staffordshire University. The current approach builds on previous work by developing an institution-wide policy which outlines the University's plans for the next two years. This will be implemented by mapping existing practice against the commitments in the policy, and developing faculty-based strategies. Enhancing employability is not only about individual students, it is also about enhancing our development as an institution, so that what is offered to students is more consistent, but at the same time geared to their individual needs - and enables them to be effective in their chosen roles within and beyond University.

Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

Undergraduate Work Placement and Academic Performance: 'Now You See It, Now You Don't'

A comparative study of biosciences and business placement programmes at two separate universities

John Duignan, Stephen Gomez and David Lush
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Description:
This paper considers two independent studies of the relationship between undergraduate work placement and academic performance in two different disciplines and at two separate universities.

Part One: *Business undergraduates, placement and academic performance*
In a paper presented at the ASET 2002 conference, Duignan (2002) reported a statistical study of business undergraduates in which it was found that placement did not enhance the academic performance of a placement cohort relative to its non-placement peer cohort. In explaining this finding, it was argued that the architecture of placement was not configured to elicit positive learning transfer; that the emphasis on the preparation of the students pre-placement was squarely intended to meet the requirements of the host organisations. Over the time period of this original study, and not affecting the original cohort who had returned to studies and taken finals, the architecture of the placement was radically overhauled. Central to this reconfiguration was the expectation that among the usual benefits associated with placement (Harvey, Moon & Geall, 1998) would be enhanced academic performance upon return to studies – termed learning environment architecture. The details of this reconfigured architecture were presented in a preliminary paper by Duignan and Wardrop (2002) and can be found in the Proceedings. The pedagogic foundations for the new architecture can be found in transfer of learning theory; in particular, the pre-placement arrangements (CV preparation, interview training, the setting of a programme of compulsory placement tasks which are grounded in the university domain and style), as well as the placement and post-placement activities, had been expected to close the gap between the two domains of learning – that of the academic domain and that of the host, workplace domain. Effectively, this could be represented as creating some of the conditions necessary for near transfer of learning (Cornford, 2002).

The results were not fully as expected: placement students performed significantly better on return to studies than their non-intern peers, but this was complicated by some evidence of self-selection. The difference in academic performance pre-placement was statistically significant in favour of the intern cohort, but when intra-cohort performances are compared over the two academic years, the observed positive difference for the placement cohort is not statistically significant. The non-placement cohort did show enhanced performance between the base year and finals. That is to say, while there had been a sustained difference in favour of the placement cohort relative to its non-placement peer cohort, there had not been an enhancement of academic performance by the placement cohort relative to its own performance pre-placement; by contrast, the non-placement cohort did enhance performance significantly. One could argue that these results reflect a failure of the placement to add academic value, even where the placement had been designed to increase the probability of enhancing academic performance on return to studies.

Part Two: *Biosciences placement and academic performance*
In an independent study, the academic performance of bioscience students from the Faculty of Applied Sciences at the University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol was compared between placement (four-year Sandwich degree) and non-placement students (three-year Full Time route). Given the

anecdotal evidence that placement experience enhances academic performance in science students, this study aimed to put the evidence on a more empirical basis.

Population sample

The sample comprised students who enrolled between 1996 and 1998 and who graduated in 2001 or 2002; this provided a large enough sample (n=164) for a comprehensive analysis. The sample was described in terms of: gender, HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) score (a measure of student attainment in pre-university qualifications), Level 1 (L1), Level 2 (L2) and Level 3 (L3) aggregate marks (as percentages), mode of study (either the four-year route including the placement year or the three-year route without), year enrolled and year graduated.

Analysis

Preliminary analysis indicated that the year of graduation did not affect achievement, permitting further analysis of the data as a single population. Multiple regression was conducted by coding mode and gender as dummy variables (full-time=0/sandwich=1, male=0/female=1) with L1, L2 and HESA scores as other dependent variables.

The students were considered as a single set and then as two sets, those for whom we had HESA scores and those for whom HESA scores were not available (a small minority, predominantly those joining the degrees via a Foundation year or with an HND).

Predictors of level 3 performance.

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed on Level 3 aggregate percentage as a function of the variables detailed above. In running this model, the influence of the L1 aggregate mark was found to be non-significant in the presence of the other independent variables, so the variable was excluded and the analysis repeated. The results (Table 1) clearly illustrate that each remaining independent variable has a significant predictive effect on final year academic performance.

	Coefficient	p value
Constant	28.80	<0.001
Gender	2.97	<0.01
HESA	0.14	<0.02
Level 2	0.44	<0.001
Mode	3.82	<0.001

Table 1: Re-run of the multiple linear regression analysis of Level 3 aggregate percentage as a function of the other recorded variables, following exclusion of the non-significant Level 1 variable. This repeat analysis (r^2=0.579, n=115) reveals that gender, mode of study, Level 2 percentage and HESA score all have a significant influence on the overall final year mark.

The regression equation can be expressed as follows;

L3% = 28.80 + 2.97 (gender) + 0.14 (HESA score) + 0.44 (L2%) + 3.82 (mode). The study clearly demonstrates an independent effect of placement (sandwich mode = 1 within the equation); compared to their non-Sandwich peers, students taking a Sandwich placement exhibit, on average, an improved academic performance by the end of their final year of nearly 4%. Given that the final year contributes three-quarters of the marks used for determining the degree classification, this suggests that more than a quarter of UWE's bioscience placement students may benefit from this enhancement by crossing a threshold into a higher degree class.

Part Three

The two reported studies appear to indicate that in some cases placement can enhance academic performance, while in others it may not. Two possibilities for these differences are considered here.

In the first place, one might consider that the "goodness of fit" between the academic domain and the host domain is radically different in the two cases: in the case of business undergraduates their placement roles and associated tasks might only be peripherally related to their core academic subject matters, while for the bioscience students and placements the tasks and duties might more closely reflect those which are taught and tested in the academic domain (especially those that feed into the major practical project component in the final year).

For example, the business undergraduates in the test cohort were drawn from specialisms which included Human Resource Management (HRM), Marketing and Finance. While the hosts would

undertake to place wherever possible an HRM student in Personnel, this would not always be the case, and even where it was the case, the task functions might be more applied than theoretical. The same would apply for Marketing and Finance.
In the case of the bioscience students, the placement is almost invariably in a field related to their studies - such as genetics, cell biology or haematology as practised in a hospital, university or government research laboratory. Since students select their placement and apply competitively for interviews, there is a strong tendency to match the student with the placement. Also, all placement opportunities are vetted on the basis of providing a high quality scientific learning experience for students.

Secondly, there is a further explanation which might apply to the business undergraduate model considered above: while the architecture can be described as learning environment, that in itself is not enough to actually create the environment since the students have to be trained for transfer of learning (Cornford, 2002). In other words, the intern has to have an awareness of the concept of learning transfer and of the conditions under which it is likely to be effective, including knowledge of strategies which encourage reflection, self-knowledge and general meta-cognitive strategies (Sternberg, 1998).

In the case of the bioscience students, the potential influence of the Sandwich year on student learning and motivation is substantial, yet it did not contribute towards academic credit for the degree. In response to this apparent 'undervaluing', we have recently moved to award academic credit for the Sandwich year and to assess work-based learning on academic criteria. The aim is to strengthen the connections between work-experience and academic-learning and make the benefits of both more explicit.

The Bioscience project was funded by a HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England), FDTL (Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning) Phase 4 project awarded to DL and SG and an NTFS (National Teaching Fellowship Scheme) award to SG.

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Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

'Coming Full Circle' – Implementing the Employability Agenda Through Work Based Learning Style Modules

A case study of work based learning at Liverpool Hope University College

Caroline Hodgson
Liverpool Hope University College

Historical context

8 years ago Liverpool Hope University College (based in South Liverpool) changed over to a modular system. Previous to modularisation the employability of students[3] was addressed, through the curriculum, by a 1-month block placement in June during the 2nd year of undergraduate study. Students simply had to 'prove' that they had undertaken some form of work, be that paid or voluntary, and this 'proof' was sought through the receipt of a short evaluation form from the placement provider. All of that changed when courses went modular.

What happened when modularisation came in?

Modularisation was a great opportunity to enhance the profile of the employability agenda, through the development of academic modules. In the first instance the Career Development team were provided with a work experience module template by a senior colleague, and were tasked with the job of managing, developing, and rolling out the module to subject areas.

The College's primary strategy for engaging the mass undergraduate population with the employability agenda was to develop work experience, re-establishing it as Work Based Learning (WBL), and rolling it out across all subject areas with the objective being that every undergraduate student would eventually have the opportunity to take part in WBL for academic credit. The emphasis was, in most subject areas, that the WBL module would be available as an option, although a small number of subject areas[4] chose to make WBL a compulsory element of their course.

In the beginning…

In the beginning Career Development promoted, recruited, managed and assessed a generic WBL module. Any student from any discipline in the 2nd or 3rd year of undergraduate study could take part. It was a flexible delivery and 'placements' (voluntary work, paid employment, work projects, Business Bridge[5] projects and so on) could be used to achieve the learning outcomes of the module.

The main disadvantage to this generic model was that, as it was an elective module, students could only gain the credits and not the grade points i.e. 15 credits could be achieved to go towards the student's credit total, but the grade they received could not count towards their degree classification because the module was not part of their main academic subject(s). This was a MAJOR problem, and resulted in many students 'playing the game'; doing the minimum required to pass and progress. At the other end of the scale, however, motivated students did well regardless of the grade point scenario. What this meant was the grade profile of the module became very distorted, with small numbers gaining very high grades, and the mass of students gaining grades at the lower end of the scale – which included a higher than average failure rate.

[3] This excludes trainee teachers.
[4] Subjects that opted to make WBL compulsory were: single honours Health and Physical Recreation, single honours Creative and Performing Arts, and single honours Business and Information Management.
[5] Business Bridge provides a free brokerage service between companies and students in Merseyside to undertake business development projects. For further information please visit their website at http://www.business-bridge.org.uk/

In addition, careful scrutiny of the students' module choice profiles revealed that the module was used by a large proportion of student participants to make good 15-credits they had lost through the failure of a non-compulsory 15-credit subject module. This, more often than not, meant that the type of student the module attracted was generally the weaker academic student, which had a knock on effect on the level of work produced for the module, as well as giving a distorted 'image' of our students' level of ability to local placement providers.

The module gradually became viewed as work experience with credit, which was a good way of making good a loss of subject credit. In other words, this 'work experience' was seen as an easy way of getting back on track with your credit total. This misperception was exacerbated by some subject advisers, who were advising weaker students to actually take this course of action despite advice to the contrary by the Career Development team. These advised that WBL, with its required high level of autonomy and self-motivation, did not in fact suit the weaker students failing in the traditional, more supported modules. Therefore, it is fair to summarise that the pre-conceptions of the rigour of WBL by both colleagues and students created a major hurdle.

Students needed a greater amount of supervisor time and there was a high failure rate as students failed to achieve the learning outcomes. Re-assessments increased, and the Career Development team fairly quickly became over-worked with the number of fails and re-assessments, coupled with the extra supervision that was needed by the higher numbers of weaker students being channelled onto the module. Clearly, the situation was not sustainable long term, or indeed desirable.

Part of the College's strategy was, however, to roll out WBL style modules to all subject areas in order to overcome the problem of the grade points being able to 'go towards' the students' degree classification.

It was felt that ownership of WBL modules by academic subjects would:

1. Enable students to gain the credits and the grade points; and this would
2. Improve the motivation of students to perform to a higher standard.

Additionally, it was felt that ownership by a named academic in the discipline would:

3. Improve understanding of the academic rigour of WBL style modules;
4. Develop expertise within subject areas to encourage self-sufficiency regarding placement learning;
5. Enable academics to develop their networks with local employers (which could help when new modules and/or pathways were being designed and employer input sought); and
6. Reduce the workload/involvement by Career Development over time.

Initially several subjects engaged and introduced WBL style modules. The majority decided to make them available on an optional basis. One thing that was common to all subject areas was the credit rating; all WBL style modules, whether at level 2 or 3 (I or H) were worth 15 credits[6].

Some subject areas, 8 years on, have still to engage in the employability agenda through the use of placement/WBL style modules. However, this will not be discussed in this paper.

Managing the WBL modules

WBL modules spread across subject areas, were piloted, reviewed and updated over a number of years. Subject WBL module leaders were supported by the Career Development team, where required/requested. It was the responsibility of individual students to secure their own placements, and each student participating in a WBL module was allocated to a subject based academic supervisor.

The role of Career Development became more of a support/consultancy function, offering advice and guidance to students and module leaders. In particular, Career Development staff developed expertise

[6] Over the last couple of years there have been a couple of subject areas that have introduced extended WBL i.e. 30-credits, and two new subject areas, Advanced Study of Early Years, and Education Studies, that have incorporated placement learning at all levels.

in relation to placement health, safety and insurance, finding and securing placements, which included CV writing and interview skills, negotiating learning contracts, and assessment methods. Career Development have also taken a central role in helping subjects to embed the QAA Code of Practice for Placement Learning[7] into their procedures.

Where are we today?

8 years on from modularisation and the situation is not a great deal different! The main difference would be that Career Development no longer run a generic WBL module because those subject areas that expressed interest now 'own' their own modules, and as this process evolved, less and less students signed on to the generic module to the point that it was no longer value for money to keep the module 'live'.

Career Development continue to provide advice and support on an ad hoc basis when requested, and periodically campaign to raise the profile of placement learning as and when it is thought to be desirable. Career Development staff often assist with 2nd marking, development of assessment methods and writing of assessment descriptors.

Many 'problems' remain unchanged, 8 years on, and continue to include:

1. A saturated local market for placement opportunities (which continues to restrict the number of students that could, theoretically, engage in a meaningful endeavour);
2. 15-credit 12-week modules, which do not allow for sufficient time to secure, negotiate and work through a 'project' of any meaningful proportion;
3. Insufficient 'space' in the curriculum to address the previous point;
4. Workloads of academic supervisors are too great (in many cases) to provide appropriate support (due to the 'equation' used to allocate tutor hours);
5. Staff turnover in relation to who is responsible for WBL in subject areas;
6. Lack of timetable slots for WBL modules, making it virtually impossible to get groups together for input and support during the semester;
7. A reliance on the assumption that students are able to negotiate and write appropriate learning outcomes, against which they will be assessed, which can often result in low achievement;
8. An implicit assumption that any academic is capable of running a WBL style module – there are several additional training needs, and more time required to do it well;
9. An implicit assumption that students are innately able to critically reflect on their learning, and that this can be graded;
10. An implicit assumption that local employers will want to take on placement students; and
11. An implicit assumption that local employers will be able and willing to engage in negotiation of learning contracts, and in some cases, assessment.

Generally speaking, the main problem continues to revolve around a lack of appreciation of the complexities and the time involved per head of student for a quality WBL experience.

The pros of the Liverpool Hope strategy:

1. Expertise was developed in a central place (Career Development), and disseminated outwards to the academic community, hence a certain degree of conformity/control;
2. Subject areas had to take responsibility for their own WBL provision (some would argue this is also a con, depending on your point of view!); and
3. All students were provided with an opportunity to take part in WBL should they wish to do so.

The cons of the Liverpool Hope strategy:

1. There is not enough timetable space given to ensure good placement experience across the board;
2. Many staff do not have enough time to do a thorough job with all WBL students, as they continue to have heavy workloads with other modules;
3. Assessment, in some cases, is onerous – partly caused by the proliferation of modules and control by inexperienced staff in charge in some subject areas;

[7] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/cop/copplacementfinal/placementlearning.pdf

4. Some assessment strategies could be better – cause as identified in previous point;
5. Weaker students potentially dent the image of our graduates in the local employment market;
6. Lack of 'power' for Career Development experts to enforce positive changes in subject WBL modules means that some modules, and hence student experiences, are not comparable across subject areas; and finally
7. Lack of support in terms of time for training/staff development of all staff involved in WBL provision i.e. implicit assumption that centrally held expertise can/will influence all practice in all subject areas.

The future?

Ironically, there seems to be a political push at Liverpool Hope at present to re-introduce the concept of the generic WBL module – hence the title of this paper: 'Coming Full Circle'.

There has been a reflection on the fact that many issues remain unchanged, despite different ideas along the way, and the increasing numbers of students coming into HE.

The future movement appears to be the desire to embark on the development of generic Deanery WBL modules, supported through a website (support for staff, students and employers), where standard documents and advice can be retrieved, and whereby centralised knowledge and expertise can reside and supervising staff can go for help and advice… in other words, a web-based, Deanery-based provision of a service that has long been offered through Career Development. It will be interesting to see whether any of the problems we face can be tackled any more efficiently through Deanery centralisation of resources.

Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

Interactive Exchange of Work Experience and Academic Knowledge as a Synergistic Process

The case of Academic Studies of Employees

Lirit Abeles and Ester Lavie
Ruppin Academic Centre

The productivity of any organisation, with rare exceptions, lies more in its having an intellectual and knowledge-based competitive edge, than in its hard assets. More and more organisations act upon this premise and pay for the academic studies of their employees, who continue their careers during their studies.

This issue evokes several frames of interpretation, even competing ones. We chose to show this framework to be a synergetic process and not to focus on the varied costs for the workplace, the employee and academia. Many have demonstrated the need of both workplace and employee to reconcile contradicting demands of time, attention and priorities. Both become prey to external additional demands and pressures in short term reference: employees aged 25-55 cope at once with responsibilities in their families, workplace and studies.

Based on the experience of managing and instructing about 800 such students who studied at the Ruppin Academic Centre in Israel from 1999 to the present we will show this arrangement to benefit the workplace, the employee and academia during the learning period and in the long term.

1. The academia as an arena for inter-organisational consultation

   A varied range of organisations and industries, high-tech and low-tech, financial services, etc. comprise the body of the organisations. Employees of all ranks are encouraged to study in order to advance their career and workplace.

   Both in the academic courses and other network interactions among students there is opportunity for inter-organisational exchange of ideas, experiences, patterns of coping etc. Such an arena for continuous and in depth inter-organisational discussion of the issues is rare in a competitive market.
   It is important to note these network interactions continue among the graduates.

2. Organisational upgrading by assimilation of knowledge

   The development of innovative practice relevant to the organisation can be enhanced by updated theory and research. Students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of courses where work experience is utilised as part of their curriculum.

   To infer from theory and apply it in practice is far from automatic. The capacity of an employee to create credibility is increased by getting feedback from the organisational and academic environments.

   These papers sometimes become a base for active intervention in their own organisations to improve their effectiveness. For example,

   1. Knowledge and awareness of employees' work attitudes and job satisfaction becomes a base for enhancing organisational goals without necessarily investing material resources. Withdrawal behavior such as absenteeism and lateness signal feelings of inequity among workers for the alert student. By noticing this he/she is able to change the atmosphere and improve performance.

2. Combining empirical and conceptual knowledge through the exploration and analysis of various organisations' processes and procedures in class, enabled students to propose structural change in the logistic management of a large company.

3. Informed performance spreads through the organisation
One of the side benefits for the organisations is the increased motivation of other employees to pursue academic studies. The informed actions of the working student stimulate others and he/she becomes an agent for change and development. For example, a large communication company paid for 30 of its middle range managers to attend academic studies. Two years later they increased the number of students to 84 in recognition of the students' impact on the organisation and in response to the demands of other employees.

4. Upgrading careers
The application of advanced skills and knowledge led some of the working students to improve their own career. No less important, some of them reported that their studies helped them to secure their workplace in an era of massive unemployment.

Reflective thinking about their own performance and self-management, gained during a course in "negotiation", helped a number of students to define their desired position, to analyse their self interests and to understand organisational interests. On this basis they successfully negotiated their position and terms of employment.

5. Individuals' benefits
Many of the employees discovered new abilities, or long forgotten ones in themselves. Their achievements, both at work and studies, raised their own self-esteem and self-confidence. Often they expressed their renewed feeling of competence by saying: "I didn't believe I could do it, but I really did".
Many employees plan to continue their academic studies toward higher degrees saying: "Even at my age, with my status and obligations I learned that I can do it and in spite of difficulties and pressures I experienced I know it is worthwhile…"

6. The interaction of work experience and academic knowledge as added value
Some of the advantages of this interaction are:
   1. Work experiences are an important source of intellect for the academia. They enhance academic depth by using the kind of awareness that evolves with experience.
   2. It benefits academic purposes when students' career motivations are integrated into academic requirements, as in written assignments.
   3. The workplace challenges students to internalise information/knowledge because it is used to initiate organisational improvements and to promote their own interests.
   4. This interaction encourages the academia to gear itself more to relevant needs of organisations.

As in any synergetic process, each of the involved players gains in their own way: The organisation, which operates in a work environment of increasing challenges, gains a knowledge-based competitive edge by accessing updated applied knowledge and upgrades the quality of its employees.

The employee's growing human intellectual capital influences both his or her own self- confidence and his or her ability for informed pro-active performance.

The academia has an opportunity for a more grounded theory sensitive to actual demands.

In addition it enlarges the scope of alternative, life-long agendas, for organisations, employees and academia.

Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

Helping International Students Become Employable Through Use of the Community

Judith Baines and Samantha Brown
London Metropolitan University

Background to this work at London Metropolitan

London Metropolitan University has almost five thousand overseas-fee paying international students. Of those, the largest five student groups come from China, Nigeria, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. As many of these nationals are keen to work in the UK during and after their studies, the University has established a team of specialist Student Services staff to facilitate international students' job searching and application experiences. The International Careers Adviser, International Students' Adviser and Student Development Manager have developed a model of practice that aims to promote knowledge learning and practical opportunities for international students both within the University's community and local London community.

There are several reasons why our model of practice is centred around a theory of Community Interaction[8]. Through networking, work experience and contact with various internal and external communities, students are able to develop a sense of themselves based on their experience, feedback and role models they might encounter. This approach also helps to break down the main barriers that international students face when looking for work, such as: their lack of employment enhancing skills and work experience; their lack of knowledge of immigration legislation and UK job hunting and application procedures; employers' lack of understanding of business immigration and the benefits of employing international students. We are offering international students the chance to develop their employability as defined by the national Enhancing Student Employability Team (ESECT) as:

"…a set of achievements, understanding and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations." [9]

Overcoming the barriers to employability

1. Helping international students obtain skills and work experience through the community

Our Student Development Service (SDS) within the Career Development and Employment Service (CDES) offers work experience and personal development programmes linked to the community. As the local community has a wide ethnic range, our international students are introduced to new social and cultural experiences within a diverse community and vice visa. This helps challenge both student and employer stereotypes with the aim of introducing people to futures/work not previously considered. In turn, we use our students as role models in the local community and in local schools. The schemes that we run aim to enhance students' skills and knowledge base to enable them to develop their employability and widen their career choices. We have been careful to select projects that require minimal time commitment and to reward/accredit in various ways to encourage them.

The skills set that employers are looking for has been well documented. Our research[10] has showed that of these skills, the three which tend to be most lacking in international students are leadership,

[8] Bill Law (1981) 'Community Interaction: a 'Mid-range' Focus for Theories of Career Development in Young Adults'. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Volume 9 No.2
[9] Brenda Little (2003) *International Perspectives and Employability.* Available from www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre
[10] e.g. KPMG's Graduate Recruitment Officer (2004) *Recruiting international graduates at KPMG.* AGCAS national training event.

teamwork and personal effectiveness. Voluntary placements are an excellent way to develop these skills and many international students (28% of the SDS placement service users in 2003/4) capitalise on this opportunity:

Example of leadership:
"*Volunteering at ACTSA has given me an invaluable insight into the running of a very busy office.*"
(Business Studies student who volunteered as an administrative assistant for Action for Southern Africa)

Example of personal effectiveness:
"*Volunteering is first of all about commitment, flexibility and creativity…about finding strategies to get something done, somehow.*"
(English and Creative Writing student who volunteered as a community journalist for Octopus Community Network)

Example of team-working skills:
"*Working voluntarily…is about interacting with different people in a modern day environment, managing yourself, developing interpersonal and social skills. I now know how things are done in a professional environment to meet deadlines and project goals. I have a broader concept of managing myself at work.*"
(Computer Science Student who volunteered as cancer network IT assistant in 3 London hospitals)

In addition to individual placements we also run a variety of programmes which fall into the following categories:

- tutoring/coaching
- role modelling
- mentoring
- skills development & self reflection
- on-campus jobs and peer support opportunities.

Each scheme offers training, one to one support and certification. The following are examples of the schemes that we offer:

Arsenal Double Club – example of tutoring/coaching (18% international students)
Arsenal Football Club has a responsibility of providing football in the community. One way that they deliver this is through offering 'double clubs'. The 'double club' consists of volunteers going into local primary schools and spending time tutoring in Maths, English, IT and either football or hockey. The student tutors are trained in mentoring and coaching. Promising tutors can be put forward for the coaching certification.

"*The help that London Metropolitan University have given to us here at Arsenal is invaluable in the work that we do in the community. The volunteers have been motivated and responsible when working with the pupils, which has benefited the whole 'Double Club' experience.*"
(Football in the Community Co-ordinator, Arsenal F.C)

Aim Higher – example of role modelling (50% international students)
Aim Higher Project is a scheme run by CEA Islington (Education providers within the Borough of Islington). Aim Higher works with children and young people in schools particularly pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. They aim to support pupils and encourage them to go on to further education. Students mentor pupils in Year 10/11 who are studying for their GCSEs. They also talk to students about their lives and career aspirations, to encourage them to give serious consideration to their futures. CEA provides training sessions for both primary and secondary school mentors.

"*Volunteering with Aim Higher is really enjoyable. I have developed my communication skills and improved my coaching skills. I have gained more confidence through working with children and encouraging them to use their imagination. There is no way of describing the reward you get from helping children to improve their self motivation and learning skills.*"
(Student volunteer)

"*Working with London Metropolitan University has provided us with an opportunity to develop links with students from ethnic minorities. Their input as volunteers will be invaluable for ethnic minority school students who may be at risk of underachievement. Acting as positive role models they will raise pupils' aspirations and prove that further education is possible*."
(Training Manager, CEA)

Learn to Lead – example of skills development (100% international students)
Twenty London based international students are selected to participate in the programme which is funded by the International Students' Trust. It a unique educational programme in the format of a two day residential programme that aims to enhance the leadership skills of students by offering a comprehensive and challenging training opportunity.

"*Learn to Lead was really useful, very enjoyable and personally and professionally useful to me…It is a forum where you can learn from others you would never normally meet, and encourages co-operation and consideration of what Leadership actually means. It was an absolutely amazing experience*."
(Student participant)

Student Welcome Team – example of part-time work (52% international students)
Students are recruited to work as a team during key times in the academic year such as Induction and Freshers' week. Their duties include airport meet and greet, working on help desks, working on Student Services' reception, guided tours and promoting student development opportunities at Freshers' Fairs. The students receive a day's training in teamwork, communication skills, customer service skills, disability awareness and tour-guiding etc.

"*The skills I have gained whilst working for the Welcome Team are transferable to all areas of employment. Communication and teamwork skills are vital in just about any role. It ties in well with my academic studies too. I feel far more confident on these occasions in class now because of my experience on the Welcome Team*."
(Student participant)

Self-reflection schemes
We also incorporate opportunities for students to reflect on and identify the skills learnt from these community activities as national research shows that:

"students who can reflect on learning derived from work experience and who can use it to make good claims to valued achievements, have an edge on the job market." [11]

An example of a national scheme we use is the InsightPlus™ Programme[12] (35% international students). This is an innovative programme designed for university students who want to enhance their career prospects by using their part-time jobs, voluntary work or Student Union activities. It concentrates on the key areas of management including customer service, leadership, teamwork, decision making and problem solving. Successful students are awarded the Management Skills Award, endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management and sponsored by the Royal Mail.

The students are very positive about the experience and found the workshops "inspirational", "informative" and "really good fun":

- 100% would strongly recommend it to others
- 92% found their team working skills had improved
- 91% found that their use of information in reaching decisions had improved
- 89% found that their ability to plan change had improved
- 88% found that their time management skills had improved.

The CDES has also been developing recognition and reward schemes for the students who use our service. There are two modules currently under development: *"Making the Most of Your Student Work Experience"* designed to accredit voluntary work, generic work experience within the university and

[11] Brenda Little (2003) *International Perspectives and Employability.* Available from www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre
[12] www.crac.org.uk/insight/insightplus/insightplus.htm

some of the mentoring schemes; *"Supporting the Learning of Young People"* designed to accredit tutoring, coaching and some mentoring schemes.

2. Helping international students gain knowledge of UK legislation and job application procedures

The second area which international students find challenging is finding out about the UK employment legislation and job searching and application procedures as these are often very different from their own culture and society. Our solution is to combine the knowledge and experience of our cross-cultural and immigration advisers with that of our careers experts in a one-stop-shop approach. We offer tailored information and personal development opportunities in which students can gain up-to-date information on UK legislation and the job market and even learn from our international success stories and alumni:

- web pages and information sheets (e.g. *"Obtaining a National Insurance Number", "Finding an Internship")*
- workshops on "*Gaining permission to work", "Writing a British style CV*" and "*Marketing yourself effectively*"
- mock interviews & role pays using students to empower students
- videos to help with interview technique
- student to student question and answer sessions
- feedback from student user surveys
- WebCT allowing online psychological and skills tests
- WebCT access to "*Skills Manager*" to enable volunteers to organise and record their volunteering in an effective way.

3. Increasing employers' knowledge and understanding

We have found that this is the main barrier which international students have to face even when they have managed to improve their own employability and awareness of the job market. To this end, in addition to increasing employer contact with students in the community programmes described in section one, we are also trying to approach employers collaboratively from within Student Services.

The CDES and SAIFS are using the following web and paper initiatives to target employers through mail shots, events and an on-line information hub:

- international student success stories
- alumni ambassador profiles
- student articles, achievement records and statistics
- case studies of successful University/community projects
- a volunteering web channel to encourage increasing community participation
- offer of advertising for volunteers with an on-line database
- offer of producing in-house publicity
- a WebCT portal facilitating placement finding
- a WebCT community chat area.

Employers are kept up to date with legislation through our:

- "*Letter to employers of international students*"
- information and web up-dates from our business immigration solicitor
- staff participation in national committees such as the AGCAS[13] training and international student task groups.

Conclusion

[13] Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services

Although the Prime Minister kick started (with his 1999 initiative[14]) the easing of entry and employment restrictions for international students, there still remains a large gap between the desire of the Prime Minister to boost the UK economy and skills shortage and the willingness of employers to hire international students. Law[15] talks about the role of the guidance specialist being to coordinate and innovate. At London Metropolitan University we have indeed put his Community Interaction Theory into practice by drawing from all areas of the university and external community, creatively utilising the advice and expertise of the relevant colleagues and organisations to provide students with a diverse range of community experiences. We cannot however reach all employers. One conclusion we have reached is that in order to convince employers nationally of the benefits of employing international students, a combined effort is required from all universities, working closely with organisations such as UKCOSA[16], AGCAS, AGR[17] and ideally the DfES.

[14] http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=1999_0278
[15] Bill Law (1981) 'Community Interaction: a 'Mid-range' Focus for Theories of Career Development in Young Adults'. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Volume 9 No.2
[16] UKCOSA = Council for education of international students
[17] Association of Graduate Recruiters

Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

The Network Project – Employability, Aspiration and Opportunity

Jane McDermott
University of Salford

Investigation into the labour market throughout the past decade has repeatedly identified a skills gap between labour market requirements and outputs from the education system. Within the current climate, employers demand more than academic knowledge and expect a high level of skill, ability and experience. Students are entering into a competitive and fast moving job market[18]. Universities UK stress that '*employers have gone beyond compiling lists of desirable attributes*'[19] and that transferability of skills, self-knowledge and the ability to adapt to change are the kinds of attributes necessary for a successful and rewarding working life. Simply 'having a degree' no longer guarantees a place within the employment market.

The introduction of The Excellence Challenge[20] by the Government in 2000, highlighted the need to ensure students entering higher education were representative of the population as a whole and to increase participation in higher education. Therefore, competition for jobs at the point of graduation will inevitably intensify and the nature of that competition will change (i.e. increased targeting by bluechips will lead to the question of whether the sector can deliver the outcomes expected by students and Government). Equally at the point of recruitment, the associated cost of Higher Education study for pre-University students is soon to be intensified with the introduction of University fees. The financial burden of participation in H.E has an impact both during and beyond University study.

It is with these points in mind that the University of Salford needs to embed employability within the curriculum as well as identify further ways to enhance student progression to HE. Consideration must also be given to providing realistic solutions to some of the financial restraints placed on students whilst studying.

The Network Project is a multi-partnership Project uniting Post-16 Education Institutions (6th Form, FE & HE), Connexions, Voluntary & Community Organisations and Employers across the Greater Manchester area. The key objectives and activities of the Project are to:

1. Develop employability skills in FE/HE students.

The Project has developed and piloted a range of self-access and Tutor-led materials and resources to facilitate reflective learning and the enhancement of employability skills:

- Work Experience Award (WEA) Workbook:
  Student-access modular pack. Includes self-awareness exercises (understanding your learning style, key skills assessment, SWOT analysis) and making sense of the workplace (understanding organisations, action planning, reflective learning). Successful completion of the award is recognised with a Certificate of Achievement from the Careers Service

- Tutor Resource Pack:
  Tutor-led Resource Pack focusing on the EdExcel Professional Development Certificate in

[18] Universities UK and CSU (2002), *Enhancing Employability, Recognising Diversity* (Accessed January 2003) at: www.UniversitiesUK.ac.uk/employability
[19] Universities UK and CSU (2002), *Enhancing Employability, Recognising Diversity:* p. 13 (Accessed January 2003) at: www.UniversitiesUK.ac.uk/employability
[20] Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) (2000) *The Excellence Challenge: The Government's Proposals for Widening the Participation of Young People in Higher Education*: p. 4.

Work-Based Experience, including all materials to deliver workshops and tutorial sessions to students wanting to complete Unit 1 of accreditation.

- Job Application Resource Pack:
  Tutor-led / Independent research modular pack aimed at developing job application skills. The book includes a range of activities and resources to assist students in finding a job, writing a CV, making applications and successful interviews

2. To raise aspirations and awareness of career options and their progression routes.

The Project delivers a range of activity aimed at raising awareness of career options and offers an insight into 'real life' jobs and lifestyles:

- Professional Contacts Database:
  The Project has developed a database of Professional Contacts, including a number of University of Salford graduates, willing to deliver occupational and motivational talks to groups of students

- Sector Specific Career Days:
  To date the Project has delivered a Health Careers Day and a Science & Engineering Event, and over the coming academic year an Arts & Humanities Road Show and Sports Day are planned

- Careers Advisors Network (CAN):
  A Network of Careers Advisors and Guidance Workers operating across the Greater Manchester area promoting the sharing of information, ideas and expertise. The CAN produces a termly newsletter and offers bespoke training and information sessions to encourage positive dialogue between FE/HE Sector Practitioners

3. Provide access to quality work experience opportunities

The Project works closely with the University's Jobshop to promote access to part-time, vacation, placement, voluntary and community work.

If you would like information on any of Network products or activities please visit our web site http://www.careers.salford.ac.uk/network/

Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

Can Part-Time Work Add Value to the Student Experience?

Students' views on the Work Based Learning Module at Sheffield Hallam University

Christine Gilligan and Colette White
Sheffield Hallam University

The School of Business and Finance actively supports the concept of learning from work and aims to give all students a chance to engage in some form of work based learning either through a formal placement process or through the Work Based Learning credit bearing module. All full time undergraduates in the School of Business and Finance are encouraged to undertake a year long work placement but for various reasons, previous experience, family commitments, inability or lack of motivation to secure employment, there are many students who do not embark on a year long placement. These students have to take Work Based Learning in their final year as a 20 credit module.

The rationale is to provide an opportunity to combine practical work experience with academic reflection for those students who are not undertaking a year's work placement as part of a sandwich degree.

The WBL module requires students to find employment, either paid or voluntary, and complete the equivalent of 6 weeks or 30 days full time work throughout their final year. (Students with substantial work experience prior to this may use that as the basis of the module). Students can use existing part time jobs or choose an entirely different area of work. The employment can be in any field and does not have to be specifically related to their area of study. There is an element of business in any employment situation, and the assessment process ensures that students gain valuable insights into the world of work by actively integrating their academic skills and knowledge with their practical work place experience.

There have been studies that have indicated that part time work can be detrimental to students learning but, by combining academic knowledge with practical experience and introducing an element of reflection into the process, the work based learning module attempts to enhance the student experience, whilst at the same time allowing students to benefit from the economic advantages of working if they so wish.

Students have to find their own employment but support is given through the Career's service website and tutor advice. Work can be paid or unpaid, and in any area. Examples include working in the family business, volunteering through Hallam Volunteering, (Hallam Volunteering is funded through the Student Union and a government initiative and exists to provide the opportunity for students to contribute to the community through a variety of voluntary projects and activities), bar work, sales work in major stores, security, cleaning and a variety of other opportunities, such as Sharegift, Gala Bingo, William Hill, DFES, etc.

When first learning of the module requirements, many students feel that doing such menial work is of no value to them for their future employability, but on completion of the final report they tend to find that this module has improved their learning and skills development. Tutor feedback suggests that students generally do well in their job, gain promotion and assume greater responsibility and some even return to the employer after graduation, although statistics are not available to support this information. There is anecdotal evidence. A final year student on a Business Studies degree this academic year did voluntary work through Hallam Volunteering in a sports related area and secured a full time post on the basis of his voluntary contribution and performance. Although the jobs are generally not highly skilled work and there is initial student reluctance, 'haven't got time to work and study', the final reports are

excellent and we believe that this module contributes to student career development, even if only acting as a trigger for deciding on something they do not want to do.

Comments from students' final reports

HND student
From my experience at XXXXXX it helped confirm my choice of course at university and has also given me a target for my future.

Degree students
Reflecting on experience helps you to make links between theory and practice and integrate new knowledge with previous knowledge….an aspect of the work at XXXXXX has given me an insight into myself. Due to the fact that the shop owner is away for long periods of time I have in a way been my own boss and this has taught me self motivation and has shown me that I too would like to be my own boss, albeit in a different business.

I feel that it is important to highlight the enjoyment I have obtained in carrying out my roles and responsibilities with Hallam Volunteering. The sense of satisfaction I have gained from contributing on a voluntary basis and giving something back to the community has been very rewarding.

Working at XXXXX confirmed that I am very keen to pursue a career in finance. However, although initially I wanted to become a stockbroker time at XXXXXX has taught me that being a private client stockbroker is not a career path I would choose.

Module Structure

The module runs over a whole academic year.

There is an introductory lecture followed by small tutor led seminar groups that meet five times throughout the year. Students can also request individual meetings with their tutor at any time.
The assessment consists of an individual presentation in semester 1 to ensure students have found employment and are starting to gather the information needed for the final report, and a final 4000 word report.
The presentation is worth 30% of the module mark and the report 70%.
The report consists of three sections:
Section 1, an overview of the organisation and business environment in which it operates - must be analytical and include SWOT/PEST and other analytical models.
Section 2, in depth analysis of a chosen area with clear links between theory and practice. Students choose an area to study based on the job they are doing and the subject knowledge they have gained in their studies. Examples could include customer service, financial practices, marketing and communication, staffing and training etc.
Section 3 reflection on performance and skills development.

Work Based Learning Module 2003-4 - Questionnaire Analysis

Student numbers 2003/4
HND level 5 full time - 53, part time - 15
degree level 6 - 161

A questionnaire was completed by full time students taking the module in 2003/4

The results were as follows:

60/214 (28%) students responded - a mix of degree and HND students

49 (82%) of them enjoyed the module 11 did not

Below is a list of some of the things they enjoyed about the module:
applying for jobs and doing the work experience 13

work at my pace/flexible/independent	7
no classes every week	2
linking work and study/opportunity to practice learning in real situations	8
interesting	6
no exam/coursework only	5
individual presentation	5
tutor help and support	4
personal reflection	4
skills enhancement	4
choose an aspect to study in depth	2
business related	2
earn money	1
clearly set out requirements	1
different to other modules	1
discussion and debate in class	1
looking at what future employers will want	1

Some aspects they did not enjoy include:

forced to get a job, especially in my final year	5
already had work experience	4
wanted to take more academic modules	3
boring job	2
takes up too much time	1
not developed any new skills	1
irrelevant to my learning	1
did not need to learn about job criteria which are common knowledge	1
seminars were not interesting	1

41 students (68%) felt they had gained new skills, the most commonly cited skill development was communication/interpersonal followed by presentation and reflection

Regarding difficult aspects of the module, 11 found writing the report difficult with other difficulties around getting information, the work study balance/ time management and finding a job.

Most students thought there was the right amount of staff contact time and 36 students (60%) preferred having the option to take WBL rather than a more structured taught module.

Most students felt learning from work was a useful concept for university students but several made comments that the work they found was not appropriate and they would have liked a 'more business related job'.

When asked how we could have improved the module more support in finding work was the most common response, but this was only given by 7 students. 5 students wanted a more business specific job and 5 students commented that it was not a good module to do in the final year, probably to do with time constraints and wanting to achieve good grades.

Most of the students had some previous work experience, paid and unpaid, part time and full time, but 11 students did not state any previous experience and 4 only had two weeks school placement experience.

16 students used a job they had prior to the commencement of the module and 31 students found work in order to complete the module. 12 students undertook voluntary work.

This is quite a surprising finding, suggesting the majority of final year students do not work during term time whilst at university.

To conclude, we believe that the Work Based Learning Module is a good example that supports the university employability framework and enables students to acquire knowledge, and personal and professional skills and encourages attitudes that will support their future development.

Theme 1
Employability and Work Experience

A Strategic Approach to Developing Work Placement Activity at a Research-Orientated University

Darren Scott and Paul Jackson
University of Leeds

Context 2002

Students

A relatively small number of departments and students are engaged in placement activity and, as such, very few are placed. Students are responsible for finding their own placements and securing employment. Some facilitation is provided through departmental contacts and relationship with industry, e.g. Food Science and Food Industry. Students use departmental listings, the Careers Centre and other media to find opportunities.

Where the option for a placement scheme is established, on securing employment students opt for an Industrial year mid programme and change course accordingly. Where the option is not available students can intercalate.

Employers

Those employers who have a relationship with a specific discipline advertise opportunities directly with the department. Most though, particularly those with non-subject specific requirements, will contact the Careers Centre for both general advertising and subsequent distribution to likely discipline area.

Employers contact the Careers centre by virtue of their experience of graduate recruitment. Enquiries are dealt with by one person on an ad hoc basis – most likely the interaction will last no more than one telephone conversation. The opportunity is lost for a more intimate and meaningful engagement.

University Management

Central support for Work Placement development was housed in the "Skills and Employability Unit" with 2 year funding through external sources. Activity consisted of auditing practice, running an academic network, promoting placement activity to students and staff, and managing STEP.

Previous developments led by the centre had largely been incorporated within other developmental agenda such as PDP, Career Management Projects, Making the Most European Project, Guidance and Learner Autonomy Project, Enhancing the Quality of Work Placement Project, and City and Guilds Senior Awards Projects, to name but a few.

Academics

Practice is very discipline based. Where vocational links are strong and obvious, schemes have developed, e.g. Biochemistry, Pharmacology, Food Science, Computer Studies, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, and the Business School.

In modern languages' year abroad, some students are able to work in Industry rather than the traditional assistantship in a school, e.g. Student of German and Management.

Placement Staff

Placement staff are made up of "Industrial Placement Tutors" based in departments. These are academic staff who have established the placement scheme from scratch and subsequently developed the support processes and systems. Often seen rightly as enthusiasts and champions of placement activity within their departments, they provide input and time to the scheme beyond that which might be accounted for in any work load model.

Where the initial developer has passed on the placement tutor role to colleagues it is quite often passed to newer junior members of staff, who are "student orientated". One department has established a "placement board" where the job is rotated through 6 relatively senior staff.

Careers Centre

Historically, Careers kept placements at an arms length – specifically to avoid 'finding placements'. However, interventions such as Enterprise in Higher Education, Career Management, PDP, and, most recently, Employability, alongside University initiatives have drawn Careers into the curriculum and into direct support for placement activity. That activity is primarily in acting in a consultancy role for departmental colleagues and employers, facilitating delivery in terms of researching opportunities, transition skills (CV, Applications and Interviews), setting personal and career learning objectives and debriefing the experience.

Self-Review Of Own Practice

Participants will have the opportunity to analyse their own perspective through an interactive exercise that has emerged out of Leeds' practice. The review tool utilises direct student feedback relating to the Pros and Cons as they see placement opportunities; and, their personal hopes and fears as a stimulus for identifying issues and strategies.

Theme 2
Assessment and Accreditation Frameworks

Profile.ac.uk: An Interactive, Web-Based Electronic Portfolio for Monitoring Placement Education and Training on a Professional Practice Module

Stephen Gomez and David Lush
University of the West of England

Abstract:
Profile.ac.uk offers the Higher Education (HE) sector a secure, web-based, flexible and generic electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) system that placement students can use to document their work-based learning and academics can use to track students' performance. The system will be available free of charge to HE institutions and its functionality will be demonstrated during this paper.

Introduction
In a knowledge-based economy, and in the light of the Government's recent White Paper on Higher Education (HE), the interests of academia and business are rapidly converging. Sandwich degrees represent one way that HE actively seeks to include industry in preparing the country's future graduate workforce. Traditionally, Sandwich learning does not contribute credit towards the degree, partly because of the logistics involved in its assessment. However, we are exploiting recent developments in web-based technologies to offer a cost-effective approach to capture work-based learning in sufficient detail for academic credit. This initiative offers new learning opportunities to all stakeholders.

Science placement assessment
In the Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS) at the University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol we have been offering Sandwich placements to science students for nearly three decades. Most of our placements offer an excellent learning experience with students often working at postgraduate level; yet, until 2003, the Sandwich year attracted only 'p' credits which did not contribute to credit accumulation towards the degree. Given this discrepancy, we decided to incorporate into the assessment of the Sandwich year a Professional Practice Module (PPM) worth 20 Level 3 (L3) credits - the equivalent of one taught module in the final year. To satisfy quality assurance procedures, students need to evidence L3 learning activities, so a system was required to monitor, support and assess students' learning on work placement. Because of the diversity of the placement learning experience and the logistical problems associated with creating a sufficiently rigorous paper-based system, we decided to develop a web-based tracking system that would permit the detailed 'profiling' of individual student's placement learning in terms of specific learning activities. In addition to designing a tracking system we also needed a mechanism to 'convert' placement learning into academic credit.

Credit-rating WBL
Our approach was based on how academic credit is awarded within existing academic programmes. Degrees at UWE are modular, with the component modules described in terms of: Credit value; Notional learning time (where 1 credit equivalent to 10 hours learning time); Levels of learning (such as those described in the Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC, 2003) guidelines); Learning outcomes; and Assessment.
Just as a degree programme is made up of discrete units (i.e. modules) we reasoned that the placement year could be deconstructed into smaller units (which we call 'tasks' or 'activities') that, individually, could assume the characteristics of modules listed above and so be used for the purpose of awarding credit.

FDTL funding
Around this time an initiative in the form of the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) Phase 4 was announced, and we put in an application based on our plans to profile placement learning and develop a web-based system to manage it. The project was called 'Profile' because of the

forensic manner in which we wanted to evidence learning. The bid was successful and the project started in 2002 to build a generic framework for describing a placement (or other WBL experience) in terms of 'tasks' or 'activities' – in our case these are assessed at L3 and contribute towards the Professional Practice Module (PPM).

PPM operation

In outline, the PPM operates as follows:

- Student begins placement and registers on PPM.
- Student and work supervisor produce a Learning Agreement (LA) which identifies a series of learning activities (or 'tasks') that are likely to occur during the placement. The LA however is viewed as a dynamic document that may change as the work progresses.
- The LA is viewed and signed off by the student's academic Visiting Tutor (VT).
- The student works through the learning activities listed in the LA. The activities are described in terms of: *title*; *brief description*; *learning outcomes* (what the student expects to learn from this activity); *generic skills involved*; *specific skills related to the nature of the work*; *evidence of meeting the learning outcomes*; *justification of level* (students are provided with the L3 criteria and justify why they consider the L3 standard has been met); *reflection* (students are required to reflect on their learning).
- Each completed task is signed off by the work supervisor to confirm that the student has performed the work to a satisfactory standard.
- Similarly, the academic tutor signs off the task as meeting academic requirements.

During the year the student effectively builds up a portfolio of verified ('signed-off') tasks and their supporting evidence; this portfolio is used to meet the assessment requirements of the PPM.

Management of the PPM

The requirement of the VT to sign off activities during the Sandwich year represents a level of engagement with placement learning far higher than previously performed. The higher level of communication, co-ordination and detailed tracking required between the various stakeholders during the placement year, coupled with the existing diversity of placement types and geographical location serve to increase the complexity of the administrative system. Central to the operation of the PPM, therefore, was the need to develop an effective management system to mediate the communication and administrative aspects of the module. A web-based electronic-portfolio system was considered the most appropriate system to use, so we started the development of a bespoke system. The current version of the web-site (http://www.profile.ac.uk) represents the interim stage in the development of the Profile project and contains two main areas.

Open access area of Profile

Profile has an 'open access' area containing generic information about the project as well as information for students currently on placement (some of which specifically concerns the operation of the PPM; for example, word templates and examples for the Learning Agreement).

Controlled access area of Profile

Profile also has a 'controlled access' area of the web-site that requires users to logon in order to access their e-portfolio. Once a user's identity is authenticated, all further interaction with the site is subject to an authorisation check which can also be recorded for audit purposes. In the present system, users designated as administrators can create new user accounts and 'link' these together to represent placements (i.e. the association of a student, work supervisor and academic tutor). Each placement student can logon to the Profile web-site using a web-browser and upload any computer files they create on their local machine to a secure file storage area on the web-server set aside for their personal use. The student is expected to upload files contributing to the PPM; e.g. the Learning Agreement and the sets of evidence supporting each of the tasks defined in that agreement. The appropriate work supervisor and academic tutor have view-only access to the student's storage area for the purposes of assessment and feedback, and are automatically informed by email whenever the student uploads files contributing to this 'electronic portfolio'. Furthermore, each placement has a simple but effective communication tool in which the student, work supervisor and academic tutor can 'post' comments to a continuously-accumulating 'diary' - similar to an on-line forum. Since each entry is electronically stamped with the authenticated user's credentials, this communication tool forms a means of 'signing off' the various tasks as the placement progresses as well as providing an audit trail of activity during the year and evidence of reflection.

Developmental stages

The current Profile system represents an interim, staged solution to the challenge of integrating WBL within an academic framework. It addresses credit-rating the diversity of placements by defining aspects of the placement experience in terms of 'tasks' or 'activities' that can contribute to the Professional Practice Module (PPM), and supports effective communication and record-keeping through a controlled-access web-site providing storage and communication functions, the e-portfolio.

As the system builds up, the tasks that describe placement learning can form part of a 'library' that other users can draw upon as there will be similarities between placements within a particular discipline area or between repeat placements. Such an 'electronic library' approach promises to be cost-effective, for in the same way that a new modular degree can be rapidly and efficiently developed and deployed by defining at least part of its specification in terms of existing modules, so it will be possible to 'profile' a proportion of the activities within a new placement in terms of existing activities drawn from the 'library'. This is most apparent for activities covering generic skills (e.g. giving an oral presentation), but there is sufficient overlap in the types of specific activities that take place within our biosciences placements to suggest that even specific activities (e.g. the use of particular laboratory techniques such as polymerase chain reaction, PCR) can be 'recycled' in this way.

The adoption of a consistent, structured approach to defining placements in terms of activities, and those activities in terms of learning outcomes, assessment, etc., makes a database-driven, web-based solution the ideal vehicle for the creation, storage, access and deployment of these activities within individual placements. At present, activities are created, stored and evidenced within the *ad hoc* structure of the individual placement's file storage area. In the next version of the Profile web-site, web-forms will be used to channel the creation, storage and use of activities to and from the back-end database 'library'. It will also be possible, of course, to extend this primarily administrative framework for the monitoring and recording of WBL to include learning support material, so enhancing the quality of the learning experience in addition to simply recording it.

There will be an initial period of time when the majority of activities within a given placement will need to be developed in full, but eventually a 'critical mass' of activities will exist in the library so that the amount of effort required to profile a new placement will be reduced dramatically.

The Profile system is being designed to provide as generic a solution as possible: for example, the current system associates a placement with three users - a student, a work supervisor and an academic tutor – whereas the next version will allow completely flexible associations of users to be made. We are also seeking to keep the design generic so that the system can provide a service to the UK HE sector in general. By adopting free, anonymous access to a common activities library as a feature of the new system, we hope to shorten the time for the library to reach the 'critical mass' that will make it a cost-effective and flexible tool to promote closer integration of theory and practice.

This project is funded by a HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England), FDTL (Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning) Phase 4 project awarded to DL and SG and an NTFS (National Teaching Fellowship Scheme) award to SG.

Theme 2
Assessment and Accreditation Frameworks

The Professional Development Programme Quality Mark, University of Glasgow and GlaxoSmithKline

Simon Roodhouse
University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC)

The aim of this paper is to introduce the professional development programme quality mark established by the University Vocational Awards Council in partnership with the National Council for Work Experience, the University of Glasgow and GlaxoSmithKline.

The Quality Mark Criteria
The PDP quality mark has been developed from related work undertaken by UVAC in accrediting foundation degrees, and graduate apprenticeships. It provides a clearly stated set of criteria (standards), which are focused on work based/related learning, and the direct engagement of employers. The criteria are national, applied consistently, are freely available and linked to a simple but rigorous process of examination.

The following paragraphs provide a detailed description of the criteria, which GSK met in achieving the quality mark.

The Development programme is vocationally relevant
i.e. the programme:

- Delivers specialist occupational knowledge and skills informed by national occupational standards (where these exist).
- Meets the needs of employers by meeting the identified skills and knowledge gaps of the sector.
- Focuses on identifying, acquiring and delivering transferable/key skills and related knowledge.

The PDP has been designed to meets the needs of as wide and as diverse range of potential students as possible
i.e. the programme:

- Gives recognition, as appropriate, to a student's previous certificated learning and learning from past experience and achievements.
- Has admission policies and regulations which are not restrictive, but are designed to be applicable and attractive to students from different backgrounds, with diverse experiences and qualifications including vocational and occupational qualifications

The PDP encourages take-up and enhances the status of vocational programmes
i.e. the programme provides:

- A contemporary occupational skills base that will enhance immediate career prospects.
- Differentiated but effective learning support taking into account students varying backgrounds and circumstances

The PDP has been developed with significant involvement by representatives of business, the public and voluntary sectors and the professions
i.e. there has been:

- a real involvement of employers in the
  - development of learning outcomes
  - development of programme and curriculum design
  - development of assessment strategies
  - support of students in work-based learning (where appropriate)

- monitoring, evaluation and review of programmes

- Collaboration between HEIs, employers, sector skills bodies and colleges where appropriate.

Educational objectives and occupational objectives
Providers should ensure that the educational objectives for the programme are clearly defined and, where appropriate, relate to the outcomes for the particular academic award
Occupational Standards/outcomes utilised by the sector are an essential tool in the measurement of individual performance and competence. The provider is expected to identify clearly the standards used and to demonstrate a mapping of the educational objectives against the occupational standards/outcomes.

Employer collaboration
Applicants should provide evidence of collaboration between HEI, employers, Sector Bodies and Colleges where appropriate to include:

- development of learning outcomes
- development of programme and curriculum design
- development of assessment strategies
- support of students in work-based learning (where appropriate)
- monitoring, evaluation and review of programmes

Integration of APEL
Providers are expected to give recognition, where appropriate, to a student's previous certificated learning and learning from past experience and achievements. In general this relates to the recruitment, admission and assessment processes, but may be included throughout the PDP where appropriate.
APEL policy should reflect QAA guidelines.

Compliance with current legislation
PDP programmes must be fully compliant with current legislation.
Applicant must demonstrate that:

- Health and Safety
  All partners involved in the deliver of the PDP have Health and Safety policies fully compliant with the current legislation.
- Equal Opportunities
  All applicants are treated with equity, irrespective of their gender, race, ethic origin, religion or disability (where disability is not a barrier to completing the training).
  Reference is made in the PDP literature to the provider's Equal Opportunity policy, providing an indication of the key points which impact upon the PDP. Students have access to the relevant documentation.
  Students complete an equal opportunities form for monitoring purposes.

It can be seen from this about the criteria are a thorough work focused and require both the University and the company to look carefully at existing provision in order to meet these requirements. In the case of GSK considerable work had to be undertaken to incorporate national occupational standards and in particular key skills.

The process involves a formal submission by GSK to UVAC, providing evidence of how they have met the criteria. On receipt of this information, independent scrutineers' assessment of the application and request further information, where it is necessary. A report is written and submitted to the UVAC accreditation and education committee, a subcommittee of the UVAC board with a recommendation for approval. No application goes forward to the committee with a recommendation for rejection, as it is expected that further work will be undertaken with the applicants in order to ensure a successful outcome.

The Benefits derived from this approach
The benefits of the quality mark our best described by GSK themselves:

"The benefits of the quality mark to students universities and employers are widespread and numerous. The key aspect for the student is that the quality Mark assures them that work experience at GSK will be of high quality and they will have the opportunity to receive relevant practical experience and training whilst being able to meet their own personal and professional development objectives. For future employers, who seek to quality mark their work experience programmes, it will show students and universities that the company is committed to work experience and prepared to work closely with universities to ensure that the needs of the student, the employer and university are all met.

For GSK in the short term at least, the quality mark will provide a competitive edge for both the UK and European recruitment over other pharmaceutical companies. In the longer term, however, it provides independent endorsement of the leadership of GSK and the quality of the industrial placement programme. This should benefit other disciplines within GSK, the halo effect, and will also play a key role in future chemistry initiatives including those aimed at increasing the diversity of chemistry students and graduates are GSK."[21]

Liz Rhodes, National Council for Work Experience sums up the benefits from her perspective;

"It has now become clear that a period of work experience of whatever kind and length can help an individual:

- Make a more informed career choice and therefore contributes to their career planning
- Learn what they like or do not like doing
- Begin to develop an understanding of business awareness
- Begin to understand the skills required for the world of work

Obviously more will be learnt and greater confidence gained from undertaking a year out as part of a 'sandwich' degree, a gap year or taking part in the 'Year in Industry' programme. But any kind of work experience enables an individual to start to build up their knowledge and experience of the world of work.

On the employer side, it can:

- Be an effective means of recruitment
- Help to get tasks or projects carried out that have had to be put on the back burner
- Be a business benefit
- Help to assist in the skills development of the future workforce

All of this means that it is a win-win situation, particularly if well managed and thought through. In today's competitive job market, work experience programmes are increasingly valued by industry. The GSK project has shown that by incorporating work-related national occupational standards they enable graduates to gain high levels of work-related skills and knowledge and increase the benefits they bring to employers when they join the world of work."

We would suggest that the PDP Quality Mark provides a practical solution to engaging both employers and further/higher education in addressing the issues of student employability and the skills gap frequently alluded to. It demonstrates that work experience is an essential starting point for entering the world of work and thus is something that should be more formerly embedded in the curriculum.

The Implications for higher education and employers

Accreditation and the use of quality marks can be beneficial for higher education as a means of formalising and structuring a dialogue with employers. For both parties, it demonstrates that the activity being provided by the university in partnership with the employer meets national standards particularly by using national occupational standards (see Swailes and Roodhouse).[22]

The UVAC quality mark demonstrates to individuals and employers that a Foundation Degree graduate apprenticeship or PDP delivers the skills and knowledge required by an industry sector. The quality

[21] The Respiratory and Inflammation CEDD, Profile GSK, February 2004

[22] Structural Barriers to the take up of higher level NVQs, Swailes and Roodhouse, Journal of Vocational Education and Training, volume 55 number 1, 2003, pp 85-110, 2003.

mark is beneficial to individuals in that it ensures that the programme delivers the knowledge and skills that they require to carry out their employment functions effectively, by ensuring that National Occupational Standards (NOS), work placement and underpinning knowledge are explicit in the scheme, and meet national standards.

It also gives the individual an opportunity for the recognition of their current knowledge and skills and provides routes for self-development. The Foundation Degree programmes that are quality marked for example also demonstrate to employers how the programmes are linked to national occupational standards set by the relevant industry sector. The current participating SSCs/former NTOs have found the process of collaborating with UVAC beneficial, in that they now have a vehicle for accessing HE institutions that are delivering programmes related to their own sector. This gives the SSCs/former NTOs a route for forging relationships and providing advice and guidance to the HEI relating to current practices and skills needs within their sector.

It is perhaps this ability to establish national frameworks for long-term relationships and deepening understanding that argues most strongly for an accreditation scheme such as the UVAC professional development programme quality mark.

Theme 2
Assessment and Accreditation Frameworks

Assessing Work Placements on Modern Languages Degrees

Françoise Tidball
University of the West of England

Convincing students of Modern Languages of the benefits of doing a placement has never been a problem as the year abroad has for a long time been an integral part of Modern Languages degrees. It is widely acknowledged that mastering the foreign language requires an extended period of residence in the country where the language is spoken. Traditionally, students have spent their third year abroad, either studying at a partner institution or teaching as an English language assistant in a school through the British council programme.

With the diversification of Languages degrees to include more vocational programmes (e.g. Modern Languages with Business Studies) and the increasing popularity of Joint Degrees (e.g. French and Law, German and Marketing), and with employability now a central concern in Higher Education, work placements are frequently sought by languages students. They give them the opportunity to combine the acquisition of the foreign language (their academic subject) with work experience in another field. In institutions where work placements are provided by the Languages Faculty, as is the case at the University of the West of England, most students choose this option, in preference to study or an assistantship.

The Languages Faculty will therefore be managing a wide diversity of work placement students, some of whom may be spending a year with a law firm in Paris, others in the Marketing department of a multinational company in Germany, in a small IT company in Spain, as a teacher /translator in Mexico, or dual linguists working 6 months in each of 2 countries.

Diversity
Diversity is a feature of languages degrees and the study of languages. Learning a language means not only acquiring linguistic proficiency, but also a knowledge of another culture, a range of specific and transferable skills and, through the work placement, vocational experience. The foreign language is both the academic subject and the medium through which a host of other knowledge and skills are acquired.

The great majority of language graduates (over 80%) do not go into teaching or translating, as is often thought, but find employment in a diversity of areas: business services, banking and finance, wholesale and retail, manufacturing, and other public and private sector professions (Keith Marshall, 2003).

Thus, whereas the placement objectives of students on a degree course leading directly to a profession such as Engineering, Science, Law or Nursing, will be mainly to gain professional experience in their discipline with a view to entering the profession, the objectives of Languages students going on a work placement abroad are very diverse. The Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) projects on Residence Abroad (1997-2000) identified these as linguistic, cultural, intercultural, personal and professional.

Placement objectives
Linguistic and cultural objectives are generally mentioned as the most important. Through spending a year abroad, students aim to become fluent users of the language and to gain in-depth knowledge of the country and its culture. The knowledge and skills acquired will be directly relevant to their academic studies and contribute to the quality of their final year and of their degree.

The acquisition of intercultural competence is increasingly seen as a major objective of the year abroad: the ability to understand and adapt to another set of values, customs and behaviours and to look

at things from a different perspective ("to tap into the French psyche", as one student put it) is a highly rated skill, particularly when it applies to the workplace.

The year abroad is seen as offering a unique opportunity for personal development: all students expect the placement experience to give them increased confidence and independence, as well maturity and self-awareness.

The professional objectives focus on the acquisition of work-related transferable skills such as team-working, problem-solving, self-management, negotiating skills, taking initiative, adaptability, combined where relevant with developing a knowledge of the other academic subject (Law, Marketing, IT etc.).

The benefits of the placement abroad are made explicit by the Subject benchmark statement: *The period of residence abroad makes a significant, indeed often essential, contribution to the development and enhancement of knowledge, understanding and skills in LRS*[23]*. It also encourages intercultural awareness and capability, qualities of self-reliance and other transferable graduate skills.* (QAA 2002)

In a survey by the University of Portsmouth, 2 out of 3 language graduates said that the year abroad played an important role in helping them get their first job, in subsequent job moves and in the performance of their job, with work placements bringing the greatest benefits (Coleman 2000). The work placement provides an added dimension to the student's experience of the year abroad, in that it enables him or her to acquire work-related knowledge and skills which are not offered in the home institution, and to which their peers on a study placement will not have access. It is particularly valuable for students on Combined and Joint Degrees who can develop knowledge and skills in two academic disciplines.

Assessing learning

When it comes to assessing placement learning however, the task is a difficult one. Diversity of learning objectives, diversity of work contexts and varying length of placement (one semester or one year), mean that no one model can assess all learning outcomes reliably, validly and practically. Good practice requires, however, that all learning outcomes should be measurable and subject to some form of assessment. The FDTL projects provided a great deal of information on the diversity of assessment strategies, gave examples of good practice and highlighted the difficulties of giving the year abroad appropriate recognition.

The placement year is traditionally assessed by a written Project or Dissertation, on an aspect of the country or the language, researched during the year abroad under the supervision of an academic tutor and submitted at the end of the placement or during the final year. Written in the target language, it allows students to demonstrate linguistic competence, cultural knowledge and research skills. Another common feature is the oral assessment, usually conducted in the final year, in the form of a presentation of the Project or the placement experience. Thus, linguistic/academic/ cultural outcomes are formally assessed and accredited by the home Faculty.

The assessment of professional outcomes presents a bigger challenge. Who should assess and how? What about accreditation?

Assessment by the home faculty is problematic. Given the diversity of contexts (law, marketing, IT, etc.) the Languages faculty is not best placed to assess the professional knowledge and skills gained by all its students. Any kind of formal assessment would make unrealistic demands on the academic tutor in terms of time and expertise. Besides, the learning takes place away from the institution which has no direct control over it and methods used in higher education to assess achievements are not usually suited to the context of work-based learning.

Assessment by the employer appears more realistic. However, although the placement supervisor will be expected to monitor progress, give feedback and appraisal and write a report, s/he may not wish to be involved in a lengthy and time-consuming process of assessment of the student's performance. The objectives and learning outcomes may be more or less clear to an employer who may take a different view of the student's achievements to that of the academic tutor, as each operates in a different

[23] LRS Languages and Related Studies

framework. Formal assessment by an employer may therefore not be wholly suited to the purposes of the home Faculty.

The quality of the work experience can vary quite significantly from one placement to the next, across countries and across employment sectors. A company may take on a foreign student for a number of different reasons: because s/he is good value for money (placement students are often paid very little), for his/her English language skills or IT skills, for general administrative support, as an extra resource for a particular project or because it is part of their work culture to offer training opportunities. A student whose placement offers little responsibility or limited learning opportunities, outside linguistic improvement, may well feel disadvantaged in comparison to a peer with a richer work experience when it comes to assessing achievements and skills development.

Workload is another issue. Students working long hours 5 days a week feel that too many assessments place an unfair burden on them in relation to their peers on study placements or assistantships working 12 hours a week.

Given the diversity outlined above, it is clear that a standardised model of formal assessment and accreditation of work-based learning is not possible in the context of the work placement abroad. At the same time, the professional outcomes of the placement may be equally important or indeed more important than other outcomes to some students and need to be recognised. It makes sense, then, to place the student at the centre of the assessment process. Self-assessment, undertaken as part of a structured and supported process, can be a valid system for assessing placement learning.

The Learning Agreement

The Learning Agreement adopted at the University of the West of England, based on the FDTL LARA Project, involves students in a 3-stage process of self-appraisal and setting of objectives before leaving, of monitoring these objectives by keeping a diary during the placement, and submitting a reflective report assessing their achievements of each objective at the end of the placement year. The report is compulsory for the satisfactory completion of the placement, although it is not graded or credit bearing, but receives qualitative evaluation from the placement tutor, both in writing and in a debriefing meeting.

This method of assessment presents a number of advantages:

. The learner-centred approach is widely used in work-based learning and is entirely suited to the vocational element of the placement.

. It can be applied to a variety of work contexts and experiences and therefore addresses the issue of diversity.

. It also allows all the learning outcomes to be equally assessed, including the less easily assessable personal development and intercultural skills.

. By encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning and to reflect on it systematically, it is in line with the Code of Practice for Placement learning: *Students should be aware of their responsibilities: ….for managing their learning and professional relationships; for recording their progress and achievement;* (QAA 2001 precept 4).

. It ensures the integration of the placement experience into the degree programme by linking it to the second year through the preparation and the final year through the qualitative feedback.

. It makes the link between the academic experience and the world of employment: keeping a log of activities, evaluating progress and providing evidence of achievements are in themselves valuable transferable skills. Through the process of writing the reflective report, students gain a clear awareness of the knowledge and skills they have gained and will be able to articulate them with confidence in job applications and interviews.

The issue of accreditation remains. Not all achievements on the work placement can be graded and therefore accredited, validly, reliably and practically. It is arguable whether employability skills should be formally assessed and accredited as part of a Languages degree. In The Seven Pillars of Assessment Wisdom, Professor Lewis Elton offers the following principles:

1. Grade what can be assessed validly and reliably
2. Grade pass/fail what can be assessed validly but not reliably
3. Report on what cannot be graded. (Elton 2002)

It is important to give due recognition to the achievement of all learning outcomes so that the placement experience is not devalued in relation to other parts of the degree course. This does not mean, however, that all outcomes must be accredited to contribute to degree classification. The importance of the process rather than the product is acknowledged by the Subject benchmark statement (5.4 Assessment): "*LRS programmes and the broadening of mental horizons which they aim to foster involve a multiplicity of knowledge, skills and understanding, not all of which will necessarily be explicitly assessed*".
In this respect, the reflective report is very much in line with the Personal Development Planning (PDP) being introduced as part of the Progress File in British universities from 2005/06.
Feedback gathered from students at UWE who have completed the reflective report has been positive, allaying fears that "what is not formally assessed is not taken seriously".

The work placement makes a unique contribution to the Languages degree, to the personal development of students and to their subsequent employability. Assessing the multifaceted year abroad presents a number of challenges to Languages Faculties and accreditation proves even more difficult. No one model of assessment can satisfactorily reflect all placement learning, but the need to make this learning explicit is now clear.

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Theme 2
Assessment and Accreditation Frameworks

'Tried That, Changed That, Kept This'

An overview of a range of assessment methods used for assessing the learning outcomes of work based learning modules at Liverpool Hope University College

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The aim of this paper

This paper aims to provide an overview of the assessment methodologies used across a range of subject based work based learning (WBL) modules at Liverpool Hope, and will propose an assessment strategy which takes into consideration several years of practical experience assessing, and training others in the assessment of WBL. This paper will make a case for the use of 'authentic assessment'[24].

Introduction

Liverpool Hope University College currently run a range of WBL modules at undergraduate levels I (2nd year) and H (3rd year). Subjects currently offering WBL include advanced study of early years, education studies, biology, environmental studies, geography, theology, sociology, psychology, business, sport, information technology, creative and performing arts, and several more; but this list provides an overview of the wide range of subjects catered for. The vast majority of WBL modules are worth 15-credits, and most subject areas currently operate at level H (3rd/final year). Over the last 8 years different forms of assessment have been tried, some have been kept, some modified, others 'dumped' from the list.

An overview of the assessment methodologies used for WBL at Liverpool Hope

Several forms of assessment have been used over the last 8 years, since WBL modules were first introduced, and include, roughly in order of popularity:

1. Portfolio based strategies – which have sometimes been highly structured, and other times require the student to make their own judgement as to the content and structure to demonstrate achievement of their learning outcomes.
2. Presentations – usually individual, except in exceptional cases where 2 students have worked together on a work based project.
3. Written reports.
4. Short essays.
5. Dialogues/vivas/simulated interviews – often used to help assess learning that has occurred from the process of taking part in the module, as well as other more instrumental learning.
6. Written reflections/'letter to a friend'.
7. Learning logs.

By far the most popular assessment method is the use of the portfolio/file of evidence. These range from being very prescriptive in the order and required content, to being very open-ended and completely up to the student what they include and how they present it. Too tightly structured, and this is too constraining for some students, as placements and the type of work they do can vary enormously, and too open-ended, and the student can fall into the 'trap' of including anything and everything! All

[24] The concept of authentic assessment was first referred to by Wiggins (1989). There have been several definitions of the term, but in essence assessment is taken to be authentic if "the outcomes measured represent appropriate, meaningful, significant, and worthwhile forms of human accomplishment" (Newman & Archbold, 1992, as cited in Cumming & Maxwell, 1999, p.178).

too often a portfolio can resemble a scrapbook of irrelevant material and/or a dull description of 'what I did on placement' rather than an expression of the achievement of the module learning outcomes.

Presentations are a close second, and the vast majority of WBL modules consist of both forms of assessment i.e. a portfolio and a presentation. This is the most common combination at Liverpool Hope. Written reports, short essays, written reflections and learning logs are often contained within a portfolio of evidence, as ways of evidencing the achievement of learning outcomes.

Dialogues/vivas/simulated interviews are rarely used, but can be very effective, especially in the assessment of reflections on the process of learning throughout a placement module, and the development of skills, or changes in, a student's understanding. It is thought they are rarely used because they are quite unfamiliar to many staff and students, and can be difficult to administer with larger numbers of students. My own personal experience has shown that students gain higher grades for reflection through the use of dialogues/vivas/simulated interviews because an experienced/trained assessor is able to lead a constructive conversation, and students have been able to verbally articulate some developmental processes better than they can articulate them in writing. Being able to ask questions enables the assessor to clear up any ambiguity that could have been present in a short piece of written reflection. Most students, when asked to reflect, end up describing what they did. Unless there is time in the curriculum to enable students to practice reflective writing and/or peer review reflective writing, it is a little unfair to presume they will be able to perform adequately at this form of assessment.

A proposed assessment strategy

Based upon several years of experience assessing and advising on the assessment of WBL, and through my studies and practice as a Work Psychologist, I will propose an assessment strategy that could be uniformly applied to ALL Liverpool Hope WBL modules.

The assessment strategy would be based entirely on coursework[25]. There should be formative as well as summative assessment.

⇨ Proposed formative assessment strategy

With a WBL style module there are a number of practical aspects that need to be achieved before a student should reach any stage of summative assessment. If these are not achieved, they can cause problems for the supervisor and the student. The concept of James' (2000) 'assessment grids' should be used to enable supervisors to 'check off' tasks that need to be completed prior to the end of the 2nd week of the semester[26], and will act as a means of recording compliance, which should enable supervisors to tell at a glance if any student is falling behind schedule. This grid may also act as a useful record for QAA inspection with regard to the Code of Practice for Placement learning.

The elements to be assessed in the grid are classed as formative because the supervisor will need to offer advice to the student in respect of the completion of each of the tasks. In addition, the assessment of, for example, a negotiated learning contract, in terms of grading from fail to grade A is very difficult. Most contracts are very similar in the end, and supervisors should be guiding students in the production of their learning outcomes. Therefore, to assess a completed negotiated learning contract in terms of a summative grade is not appropriate as the tutor will be, in many cases, assessing his/her own efforts to a certain degree. Therefore, assessment at a **threshold level** that indicates the student's readiness to move on to the next stage of the module is most appropriate.

All students need to achieve the elements in the formative assessment grid[27] before the end of the 2nd week of semester, as failure to achieve some will mean that the student will be unable to progress, and in some cases students may need to be transferred to another module. In addition, students should

[25] An examination would not be appropriate because WBL students undertake a wide range of projects and learning outcomes, therefore rendering a uniform examination as impractical. In addition, WBL projects more often than not result in pieces of practical evidence, which lend themselves to the production of a portfolio of evidence.

[26] The significance of the end of week 2 of the semester is that this is traditionally the cut-off point set by the Academic Registry for students wishing or needing to change modules.

[27] Formative assessment grid elements include attendance at preparatory lectures, discussion of placement with supervisor, securing of placement, negotiation of project and learning outcomes, satisfactory completion and return of health and safety questionnaire.

attend pre-arranged support sessions throughout the semester, where guidance on progress can be sought and provided.

⇨ **Proposed summative assessment strategy for a 15-credit undergraduate WBL module**

(20%) 10 minute presentation - In week 3 students should make an oral presentation of their negotiated learning contract, demonstrating how they plan to achieve the learning outcomes of the module.

(80%) Portfolio – In the last week of semester students should submit a portfolio of evidence that enables them to demonstrate their achievement of the module learning outcomes. During meetings with their supervisor, students should have discussed the most appropriate ways that their learning outcomes could be demonstrated. In other words, supervisors should guide students in the way they could compile their portfolio of evidence. Pieces of evidence may include, for example, written reports, critical incident reports, written reflection/letter to a friend, press release, and practical work from the placement.

10 minute appraisal/viva at the end of the semester – in order to enable the student to reflect on the whole experience of the module, each student should prepare for a short 'performance style' self-appraisal whereby they will be required to critically reflect on and evaluate their personal and/or professional development that has occurred as a result of the placement/project (this is usually one of the generic learning outcomes of WBL modules at Liverpool Hope). The student will be required to reach a threshold 'pass' level. The reasons why this should only be assessed on a pass/fail basis are:

i) When students know their reflections are being assessed, "they have an incentive to concoct the reflections which they think the tutor wants to" hear (Al Maskati & Thomas, 1995, as cited in Dickinson, 2000, p.65). The phrase 'impression management' is used to describe this kind of behaviour.

ii) Some people may have a greater degree of self-awareness (which is required in this type of assessment), and are therefore better suited to forms of self-appraisal (Fletcher and Baldry, 2000), which will advantage some students, but disadvantage others.

iii) There is evidence to suggest that when people engage in self-appraisal, they rate themselves more highly than their supervisors do (Fletcher and Baldry, 2000). However, Farh et al. (1991, as cited in Riggio, 2003) suggest this is not always the case, and that culture may play an important role. They showed that, in a study comparing US and Chinese employees, Chinese people rated themselves lower than their supervisors did. Therefore, self-appraisal is fraught with the dangers of difference of opinion and cultural interplay.

Underpinning principles for the proposed strategy

One of the principles that underpins this assessment strategy is that students should engage in authentic assessment, and this is most evident through the flexibility offered in the largest piece of assessment i.e. the portfolio. Because students are able to discuss with their supervisor the best way to demonstrate achievement of their learning outcomes they are empowered to make appropriate choices (guided, but not forced, by the supervisor). As WBL modules are usually concerned with enhancing the employability of students, oral presentations and reflective performance appraisals (both of which will be encountered in the workplace) will enable practice and experience of important workplace skills.

Authentic tasks, that are seen by the student as appropriate to the world of work and their project, should have good face validity with students, i.e. students should see it as meaningful and relevant (Cumming & Maxwell, 1999). Students' motivation should improve because they should be able to see "the relevance of the learning and assessment activities, thereby enhancing learning outcomes" (Cumming & Maxwell, 1999, p.177/8).

Autonomy and empowerment are also key underpinning principles of this assessment strategy, which relate to the flexibility of approach a student can take in compiling their portfolio. One of the four key ideas regarding adult learning (andragogy) is that adult learners should be able to be autonomous (Leach et al., 2001). As assessment should be seen as part of the process of learning, it follows that

autonomy in assessment is also important. Leach et al. (2001, p.293) argue that "in the assessment context empowerment is conceived as learners sharing, if they want, in decisions about assessment". Therefore, the fact that the portfolio assessment offers students autonomy in what and how they demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes, represents this underpinning principle of autonomy and empowerment.

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Theme 2
Assessment and Accreditation Frameworks

Organisational Accreditation: Using a Framework to Support Organisational Learning

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Introduction

Academic accreditation is not a new phenomenon in the UK; it does however remain a controversial one. Although since its introduction from the USA in the 1970s it has become established in an increasing number of universities, it is primarily used as AP[E]L (accreditation of prior [experience] and learning) to support admissions processes and to justify advanced standing against specific modules or learning units. It appears to be most widely embedded in the health and education sectors, particularly in the old universities (Gibbs & Morris 2001). However at Middlesex University, the recognition of Work Based Learning as a subject area in its own right and the development of the National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships (NCWBLP) in the early 1990s enabled widespread uptake of accreditation of individuals' learning and it has been embedded into the Work Based Learning Studies academic programmes at all levels: from level 0 (entry) to level 5 (doctorate level). Outside of the Centre, both accreditation and work-based learning have been adopted most widely in the School of Health and Social Sciences to support students and recognise their learning, particularly those engaged in health care. The use of a clear framework and of level descriptors has enabled us to develop processes that enable us to work not just with individuals, but to extend that to work with external organisations in order to assess learning and consequently award both level and amount of academic credit. This has become particularly important in the areas of health and social care in recent years where there is much investment in education and training in order to enable staff to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for a modern service, and it is our work in this area that is the subject of this paper.

The development of the National Health Service University (NHSU) and in particular the publication of the critical policy document 'Working together, Learning Together' (DOH2001), which stated that work based learning was to be a fundamental aspect of learning in the health sector and that all learning should be credit rated, has resulted in greater interest in seeking and attaining academic recognition of the learning achieved. Whilst the NHSU remains as yet an unknown force, it has the potential for significant impact on education and training, particularly at pre and post qualifying levels for those working in health and social care. It has also served to increase awareness about both choice and value of education and training, particularly in continuous professional development and in the idea of lifelong learning. The debates surrounding the development of the NHSU and its purpose and potential impact reflect some of the challenges facing universities today as their focus and place is subject to question. Work based learning epitomises these challenges to the classic notions of knowledge and critical thinking traditionally held by universities – what has been referred to as '*momentous changes in what counts as knowledge in society*'(Barnett 2000). In addition to this however there is another dimension – it is not only the significance of knowledge but a whole argument and debate about the value of knowledge that is important. There is perhaps a polarisation about the use of knowledge as '*fit for purpose*' i.e. *what does education equip someone to do and where is the evidence to prove it*? This has been and continues to be a controversial area particularly in vocational education. There is a discernable move away from knowledge for itself that confers upon the successful recipient entry to an elite group irrespective of the focus or content of the subject area or learning achieved. Within this climate of change, the ability to work in partnership with external organisations to develop learning that can be assessed for the award of credit offers a new pathway for the University and one that brings new challenges, new ways of thinking and perhaps, most importantly, new opportunities for learning that can enrich both sides.

This paper is based on three case studies which illustrate the way in which the University has used the Accreditation processes to develop partnerships.

The Accreditation Processes

Accreditation is the formal mechanism for the recognition of learning that is achieved outside of the university's main academic programmes and uses the Middlesex University Academic Credit Framework to evaluate and quantify such learning in terms of credit points and academic level. Within the University, the development of an accreditation proposal with an organisation is based both on educational and business principles and each carry equal weight. This is particularly important as accreditation is an academic activity that forms part of the Quality Assurance processes of the School and consequently the university; whilst as a commercial activity it must be costed appropriately. Thus it is critical that each side understands the processes, roles and responsibilities required.

Development of an accreditation proposal

There are four stages to this process:

Stage 1: the Head of the Unit makes an initial assessment of all proposals and appoints an academic advisor from within the School who will arrange an initial meeting to discuss the possibilities and use of accreditation. This focuses particularly on academic levels, learning outcomes and assessment, estimate the consultancy time required, if any, and quality assurance and annual monitoring requirements.

Stage 2: a contract is drawn up and, following acceptance of this, the work continues towards the submission of a complete proposal to the School Accreditation Board.

Stage 3: the proposal is assessed and a report is submitted to the Board which consists of members of the Unit, academic staff from within the School and an external examiner. The Board is asked to focus on the quality and quantity of learning in order to award both a level and an amount of academic credit. It can accept the proposal as it stands, make recommendations which must be considered and addressed prior to the programme of activity starting, or demand conditions which must be met in full before the activity starts. Approval is normally given for six years.

Stage 4: a Memorandum of Co-operation is issued by the Deputy Vice Chancellor and when this is returned and signed, annual monitoring of the activity begins. A link tutor is appointed (usually the same person as the advisor) who will act as external examiner to the programme. It is important to note that whilst the university controls the quality assurance processes, the intellectual property rights of the work remain those of the organisation and the university cannot use this.

Accreditation and Life Long Learning

The roots of academic accreditation within British universities go back to the 1980s when there was increasing concern that demographic trends would mean a reduction in the number eighteen year olds willing and able to enter university, and there was a perceived need to attract mature students into higher education. The ever-increasing number of young people enrolling at university has shown this fear to be false, but the impact of fees may yet demand that this issue be revisited. Certainly, in our experience, Accreditation and Work Based Learning attracts the mature student who may not have the traditional background in schooling and examinations but who has a commitment to work and to the learning that they acquired through it. Particularly, accredited learning appears to go someway towards removing the structural barriers that inhibit attempts to embed life long learning such as cost, time, managerial support, place, gender and family (Coffield, 2000) – what Rees has referred to as a '*framework of opportunities, influences and social expectations that are determined independently'* (Rees et al, 1998). Whilst we would guard against making the exaggerated claims so often associated with life long learning, the investment required from organisations to run their own programmes frequently leads to independent evaluation of the work, and it is from this, and from internal evaluations, that we draw our information. We do not make any claims to having research evidence, although we are aware of the need for this.

Case studies programmes 1 and 2, Healthcare Assistant and Mental Health, are both designed to attract participants who would not normally consider higher education. Traditionally, participation in professional development in the NHS has been mostly restricted to a small part of the (usually already trained) workforce, mainly nurses and doctors. This take up profile is still reflected in adult education and, if the NHS can be considered a microcosm of society, a NIACE survey in 1999 showed that age, class and experience of schooling have the biggest effect on access to learning and the confidence to participate in learning as an adult. The difference in participation is large: 50% of middle class respondents, 36% of skilled working class and 24% of unskilled workers reported involvement in

learning (Sargent 2000). The healthcare assistants who completed the portfolios reflected the category of poor involvement: they had no previous experience of higher education but developed real skill and confidence, not just from becoming more effective workers, but also from gaining the public recognition of achievement, exemplified by the transcript of credits. The mental health carers and users report increased confidence from their success but also will have an influence on professional values and thinking by their engagement and presence with professionals on the course.

There is no doubt that neither of these groups would have enrolled on the programmes had they been traditional university courses, it was local support and enthusiasm and the clear and direct impact of the education on practice that attracted and sustained them. There are however benefits for the university, as the participants on the mental health programme will be able to enrol on a university award, funded by the Mental Health Trust, which hopefully will enhance not just their health but also their capabilities for employment. The healthcare assistant programme can be used as advanced standing towards a nursing programme and thus enables the university to demonstrate its compliance with government initiatives in widening the entry gate to nursing (DoH, 2001).

Knowledge and the Organisation

Case study 3, the Local Authority programme, demonstrated the potential of organisational learning within a local authority context and encourages the development of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). In particular, involvement in the group project, aimed at tackling an area of real concern to the Authority which would impact on their 'Best value' targets, encouraged the development of knowledge. Participation involved the developing, analysing and managing knowledge, identified by Wenger as essential to communities of practice, (Wenger, op cit) and in adapting to and changing work practices, identified by Senge et al, 2000 and Argyris et al, 1996 as central to the notion of the Learning Organisation. It is intended that the critical mass of people developed in the Mental Health programme should also develop such characteristics and influence, however, this will be a greater challenge. Whilst the local authority has a relatively stable workforce in health care and particularly in mental health, turnover rates for staff can reach 40% per year. The work of both Senge and Wenger assume stable environments where development of dynamic, contextualised knowledge is not disrupted by the frequent job changes and restructuring characteristic of current healthcare. It is possible that a London wide initiative could go someway towards alleviating this. However it remains an area in need of investigation.

Each of the case studies demonstrates assessments that enable the identification and articulation of tacit knowledge held by the individual and the organisation. In the healthcare assistant programme, the discovery and description of work practices enabled identification of areas of concern and discussions of best practice with experienced staff and also the spread of these through the co-ordination of the practice development nurse. The mental health programme assessment involved discussion and analyses of work practice and the skills necessary to adopt new ones. The strength of the local authority programme lay both in the connection with the manager to draw up the learning agreement and the adoption of a 'reading party' to assess project work. Within the NHS, where currently more work has been done than in other sectors, the document 'Organisation With A Memory' (DoH, 1999) made the case for the need to capture and disseminate the tacit knowledge gained at work. As well as this, critically it encouraged a move away from a disciplinary, blame culture when errors are made, to one linking these to performance and learning. Whilst the organisations we are working with may have the possibility of tackling this through their means of assessment, there remains another area of concern. It is still common practice within the NHS and certainly the local authority to use courses as a means of dealing with poor practice, rather than using disciplinary means, and this can have a negative influence on learning.

The multi disciplinary nature of both the local authority programme and the mental health one encourages the articulation of tacit knowledge and in particular the sharing of this between different groups and teams. Accessing, articulating and valuing such knowledge can be extremely difficult where people work in 'silos', viewing other trusts, organisations or even teams as rivals rather than partners. Evidence from the local authority evaluation indicates that contact between participants has continued, particularly between those who worked together on projects. Whilst Eraut, 2000 warns that '*tidy maps of knowledge and learning are deceptive*' he suggest four '*good practical reasons*' why we would want to make tacit knowledge explicit:

- To improve the quality of a person's or learner's performance
- To help to communicate knowledge to another person

- To keep one's actions under critical control by linking aspects of performance with more or less desirable outcomes
- To construct artefacts that can assist decision-making or reasoning

(Eraut, 2000)

These are congruent with the intentions of the programmes mentioned, each of which aims to develop new knowledge amongst practitioners, to enhance practice within the organisation and to ensure rigour of achievement through the quality assurance processes of the university. Whether these intentions will reach a critical mass or are maintained is the responsibility of the organisations themselves, however the greatest risk to such achievements is possibly the constant restructuring that is symptomatic of the current public sector climate. There is real potential within each of these programmes to contribute to organisational learning and achievement as well as that of the individual participant. It would be most unfortunate if the constant changes in structures, roles and personnel, common to such organisations, led to the loss of such knowledge, as Nohria described, resulting from the re-engineering exercises of the 1990s (Nohria et al 2003).

Apart from the organisational changes that can disrupt attempts at learning, social contexts of learning can stifle any innovation and learning, exaggerating power relationships, inequalities and competitiveness. In the busy lives of people, embarking on a programme of study can be yet another source of stress, yet not participating may be viewed as failure or lack of motivation. These are both potentially powerful influences on career progression. This is on the whole an ignored but important part of work based learning and was perceived to be the experience of a small number of participants in the local authority programme. Additionally, the public sector is not very good at creating incentives. Shipley takes the view that '*if the link between organisational performance, capability and individual learning is accepted, the challenge for management is to create an environment in which employees engage willingly in performance-focussed learning'*, suggesting that a range of inducements e.g. remuneration, career progression or recognition are the most effective mechanisms for this (Shipley 2001). This is a real challenge for the public sector where career and succession planning or reward for performance is not the norm, although aspects of the NHS the Knowledge and Skills Framework (DoH 2003) may go some way to addressing the latter.

The University

So far the benefits of accreditation have been discussed mainly in relation to the organisations and individuals who participate in and run the programmes mentioned. However, there are tangible benefits to the university from this work. Most obviously is the potential to gain more students as everyone who successfully undertakes a Middlesex University accredited programme can enrol on a programme of study at an appropriate level within the university. Additionally, organisations have developed a relationship with the university and frequently commission university modules to enable participants to gain a university award, with both the local authority and the mental health trust programmes being examples of this. However, the real value to the university is the opportunity for the development of new knowledge and new ideas that have meaning in the vocational and professional areas within which they work. This has enabled Middlesex University to use the experience gained with the healthcare assistants in general practice to work with another NHS Trust to develop another programme for healthcare assistants to gain advanced standing against the first year of nurse training. This has benefits for both sides, each contributing to Department of Health directives. More generally, it aids in ensuring that our staff are grounded in the experiences and needs of the work place.

At a different level, the notions of partnership that are central to our work is congruent with the new model of knowledge described by Gibbons as Mode 2 knowledge (Gibbons et al, 1994). Gibbons talks of mode 1 knowledge (discipline specific, university-centred process) and mode 2 knowledge (transdisciplinary–based knowledge production process in which knowledge is produced at the site of application and with the co-operation of users and stakeholders). Gibbons asserts that mode 2 knowledge which is problem-based is a superior form, more suited to modern thinking and practice. According to Lyotard (1984) and Barnett (2000) this represents not just a threat to the university, but the end of it in its current form – as it will be therefore no longer the sole guardian or legitimator of knowledge. Certainly, the rise of the corporate university in the UK as seen by the intention to create the NHSU would indicate that this is a possibility.

Conclusion

We have demonstrated that academic accreditation can have benefit for the three major stakeholders involved: the participant, the organisation and the university. There are, of course, areas of concern that remain. Gibbs and Morris, (2001) state that the university must ensure that accreditation does not lead to a reduction in the educational experience of participants, that the deeper cultural values are addressed rather than merely the provision of more effective workers. However, our experience of accreditation is mainly positive; in fact for many of the partnerships that we do develop it is our gain to be associated with such high quality and innovative work. The ownership and relevance of the learning to be achieved has the capacity to engage wide participation and support to a far greater extent than a university based course. It is our opinion that academic accreditation opens up possibilities for further and higher education that lead to new ways of working in the rapidly changing world of adult education.

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Theme 3
Supporting Student Learning On Work Placements

Continuity And Community: Supporting Placement Learning Through a Virtual Learning Environment

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It is widely acknowledged that the placement experience can represent an extremely valuable learning opportunity for students. However, there is a significant danger that students see the learning gained from their experience as separate from the rest of their degree, even when the placement is nominally an integral part of the programme.

Under HEFCE's Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning Phase 4, Newcastle University is running a pilot project with students undertaking the Food and Human Nutrition and Applied Biology undergraduate degree programmes. These students undertake a year-long placement after completing Stage 2, before returning to campus for the final year of their programme.

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) can present an opportunity to provide elements of continuity and community to students who are undertaking a placement away from campus. At the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Blackboard has been adopted as the institution-wide VLE. It is widely used as a teaching aid, supporting modules where the predominant mode of delivery is still 'traditional' (lectures, seminars and tutorials), as well as being the primary mode of delivery in a few cases. There are approximately 1,800 active modules registered on the Blackboard server at Newcastle.

Continuity
With so many modules making use of Blackboard, the vast majority of Newcastle students have had at least some exposure to it during the early years of their programme. Consequently, they associate Blackboard with the University and the learning experience they have here. After two years together on campus, they have formed a sense of being a cohort before they disperse to take up placements. By providing a communication channel as well as materials to support learning, a VLE can:

- Help to create an environment which encourages students to see their placement learning as a continuation of the campus-based learning that has preceded it.
- Give the students an opportunity to maintain their sense of cohesiveness.
- Facilitate formal and informal contact between the Placement Coordinator and students (and *visa versa*).

The project has involved the development of materials into a 'module' on which the students are registered during their time on placement. These include interactive elements such as quizzes which are not part of an assessment, they are simply intended to make the materials more engaging and help to ensure that the students don't treat the materials as a straightforward text-based resource that they can simply print at the start of the year and ignore thereafter.

A short training session before the students depart for their placements ensures that they are familiar with the structure of the module and with the interface to Blackboard. Every student in the pilot cohort was familiar with Blackboard and its basic functions. They are expected to submit their initial and subsequent bi-monthly progress reports through the VLE's digital dropbox function and this was the only unfamiliar aspect for them. This has proved effective with the Placement Coordinator receiving the vast majority of reports in this way with far fewer reminders than in previous years.

The students are now nearing the end of their placement and we will be conducting surveys and focus groups to ascertain whether they have recognised and placed value on a sense of continuity. The

participation rate in terms of module usage, particularly some of the elements discussed below in 'community', suggests that the outcome will be positive. Informal discussions with the students by the Placement Coordinator during site visits also confirm this view.

As the students submit for an award that is validated by an external body, we feel it is particularly important to maintain a clear connection between their placement learning and their university experience.

Community
The type of placement undertaken by these students can range from nutrition-based medical research, through food production, to food marketing and retail management. Placements hosts can be as diverse as the Medical Research Council, Masterfoods and Marks & Spencer and some students have chosen to take up opportunities overseas (with, for example, the Australian Bread Research Institute, a Medical Research Council project in The Gambia, and European Universities). Clearly, this can lead to wide geographical separation of the cohort, as well as a diverse experience of the working environment, and the Newcastle project explored ways to use the communication opportunities presented by a VLE to maintain a sense of continued contact for the group.

Noticeboards- these have consistently proved to be the most popular areas of the Blackboard module. We chose to set up three distinct areas:

- *Work related area* – an area where students can post messages and discuss issues they face at work, inviting involvement from others to help them solve problems or tackle new areas of work. The placement coordinator and the project worker are both members of this group and can contribute to discussions.
- *City & Guilds area* – an area where students can discuss issues related to gathering evidence and preparing portfolios for submission for the City & Guilds Licentiateship award. The placement co-ordinator and the project worker are both members of this group and can contribute to discussions.
- *Social gossip and chit-chat area* – this is a 'students only' area where any topic can be discussed. In the project's initial development phase, it emerged that by providing a channel for discussion the University also had some obligation to ensure the well being of the students. This presented a dilemma since we felt it important to provide the students with an area that was solely for their use without the potentially inhibiting involvement of staff. Our solution was to ask a postgraduate student who was a recent graduate of the Food and Human Nutrition programme and was well known to the student cohort to act as a 'moderator' for the group and to alert a member of staff if any difficulties arose.

Calendar
Although the project did make use of the diary function in Blackboard to build in submission dates for the students' regular reports, it was also used for a more social function: student birthdays! At the start of the year, all birthdays were entered into the calendar so that when a user logs in to the module, any forthcoming birthdays are displayed as calendar events. This has proved extremely popular – one of the few occasions that students have e-mailed directly with queries about the Blackboard materials was when technical problems in transferring materials from one version of Blackboard to another meant that the birthdays 'disappeared' temporarily.

Issues
Access – one of the key issues in using a VLE to support students on campus is one of access. Although no special software is needed as the VLE is accessed through a web browser, students do need access to the internet. Some students have placements in working environments where access to the internet is simply not the norm and employees may have their usage monitored, if it is allowed at all. Where access to the internet is a possibility but employees are restricted in their use, this issue has normally been resolved by the Placement Coordinator explaining to the host organisation what is involved in accessing the Blackboard materials and why it is important for the student to do so. This has led to the students being given permission to access the module from work. From a cohort of 24 students, there have been two who have not been able to access the materials during their time at work and have had to make alternative arrangements (such as accessing from home or coming onto the University campus if their placement is in the Newcastle area).

Clearly, it is important that students who do not have access to the technology are not disadvantaged and the situation needs to be monitored for each cohort, with alternative arrangements being made if

necessary. As part of the aim is to maintain a sense of community, there could be a clear disadvantage to the few students who cannot access the module since they would be 'excluded' from the larger group. This is something that needs to be explored in more depth with the participants in the pilot group as they return to the campus at the end of their placements.

Evaluation

The project has the benefit of an external evaluator who has provided comment and advice on the process, as well as the materials as the project has developed. The evaluator has involved students directly in the evaluation, speaking with students before the placement and visiting them in their place of work. The project team feels that this is valuable as the evaluator is a 'neutral' figure who is well placed to elicit feedback from the students as they engage with the module materials. However, as ever with the cycle of the academic year, there are some difficulties in gathering feedback and using it effectively in refining the process and/or materials for the next year's cohort. Students on placement this year will not have completed the process of placement, portfolio production and submission for award before the next cohort take up placement.

Scaling the results

The pilot cohort of students is quite small and although this has advantages in that issues are easier to identify and feedback is focused, it can lead to some uncertainty about the scalability of the developments. However, the practice in this module has been used to inform the development of a similar module for students who are undertaking a piece of consultancy for an external organisation as a final year project. This demonstrates that the approach is flexible enough to accommodate different modes and models, tying an element that has the potential to seem quite separate back in to the core academic experience. After the completion of the pilot phase and any modifications that are made as a result of student feedback and workshop activities with members of staff involved in managing placements for a range of degree programmes, the module will be made available campus-wide.

Conclusion

The VLE provides an excellent medium for enhancing the sense of community for students on placement outside the University. As well as the continuity of contact, the use of a tool which is associated with the University's learning experience helps to tie in placement learning with the rest of the academic programme. The universal compatibility and accessibility of the VLE, with secure access linked to the student's University disk space, allows for safe deposit and storage of materials. To date, use of the VLE in the pilot study has been high, with only limited problems. Usage has been high throughout the year, especially in communications areas, and feedback has been positive, suggesting that development of the module has resulted in an improvement in provision to students on placement.

Theme 3
Supporting Student Learning On Work Placements

Real Learners Doing Real Work

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Education literature suggests that students who actively engage in the learning process are more likely to achieve success (Deware 1995; Hartman 1995). So, to make learning "easier", why not help people to choose to learn in ways that suit them best? (Parsloe and Wray 2003) If students are actively engaged in their own learning process they feel empowered and their personal achievement and self-direction levels rise.

"Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand"[28]
Confucius around 450 BC

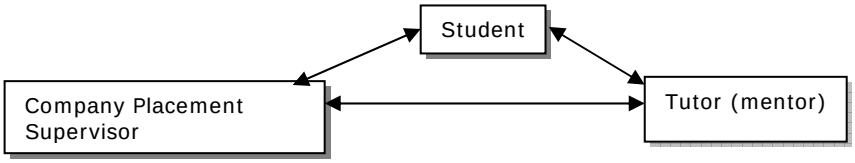
Introduction

This paper provides a brief synopsis of our teaching, learning and assessment approach to evaluating and crediting students' real-life experiences whilst working for companies during a semester in the middle of their 3½-year degree programme. The Placement Learning Project – formerly known as the Work-Based Report – is a 4/5-month (minimum 16 working weeks) module that formalises EBS London's experience in providing and monitoring international placement opportunities for business students.

The Placement Learning Project (PLP) is a **work venture** that provides the crucial link in applying the conceptual knowledge and understanding gained in Levels 1 and 2, with real-life business practice. It thus not only contributes to the overall coherence of the management stream within the undergraduate degree programme, but provides another tool for self-awareness and development for the student. Students are able to experience reality and attempt to understand why and how business "behaves" and, more importantly, acknowledge their skills and develop themselves within this context.

The PLP demands various forms of **assessment** suited to its particular **needs**. In particular, it recognises the value of three stakeholders, namely the student, the tutor (mentor) and the supervisor from the placement company. This can be illustrated below.

The Triangulation Process of the Placement Learning Project



This diagram not only illustrates the key **communication channels** between the relevant stakeholders, but also illustrates that a placement is as much, if not more, about **process** than output and so balance is needed between competency-based assessment (output – the main report) and assessment of process (reflection, self-direction – the various questionnaires and progress reports).

The objectives of the PLP

Experience has taught us that, after successfully completing their placement, students have developed:

[28] Taken from http://www.reviewing.co.uk/research/experential.learning.htm

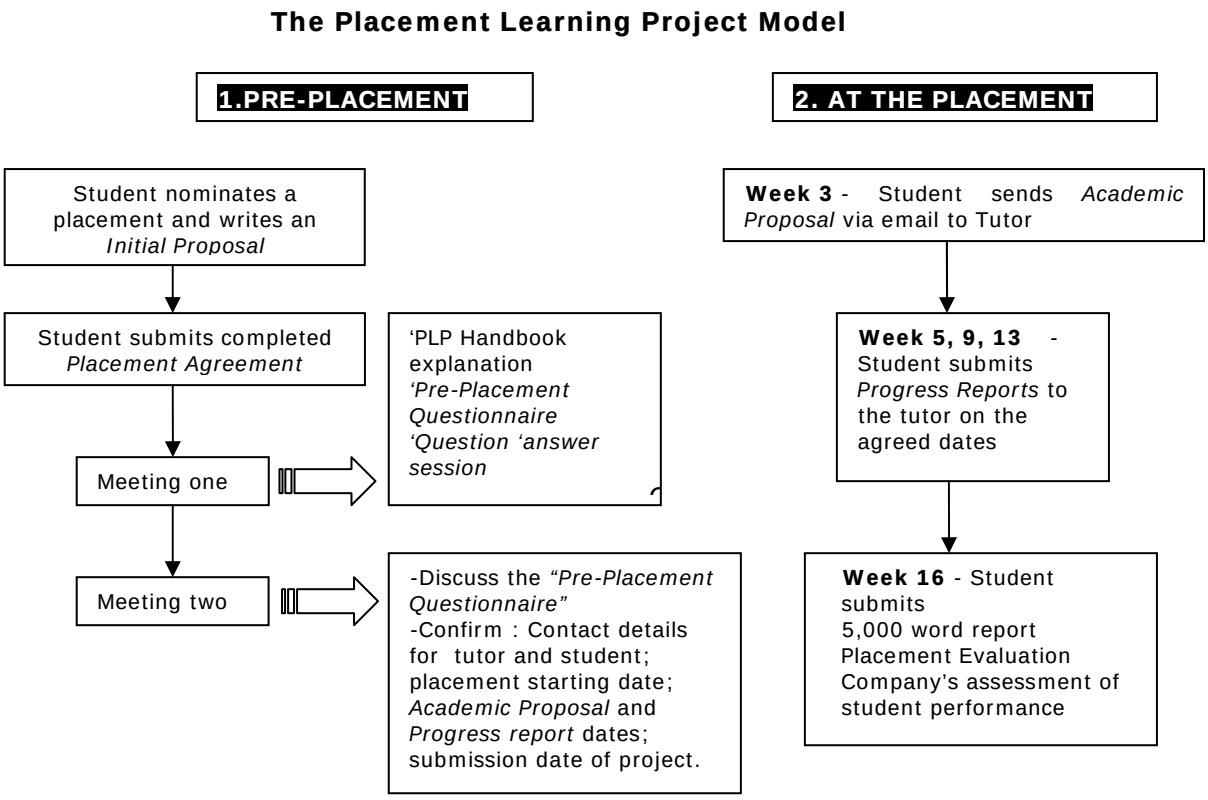
- their critical awareness of business practices and analysis in subsequent studies, especially in Level 3 (final year) modules;
- the necessary skills to become a reflective learner;
- personal learning needs and the means to implement them;
- an awareness of social & ethical responsibilities, for example, in terms of client confidentiality;
- their ability to demonstrate the attainment of competencies and knowledge within a particular working environment;
- their research and report writing skills through the completion of a 5000 word analysis about issues involved in the whole five month **project.**

What do we do?

Underpinning the triangular relationship, as mentioned above, the PLP team has devised our own **Placement Learning Model**. This model (illustrated below) highlights a number of features:

- it recognises that learning is a process and output;
- to be successful, it requires various departments of the School, such as the Careers and Placement Centre and tutors and/or mentors, to work together as a team;
- a variety of learning and assessment methods are recognised and used;
- students are encouraged to think about a placement eighteen months in advance and thus be proactive in their learning.

The Placement Learning Project Model



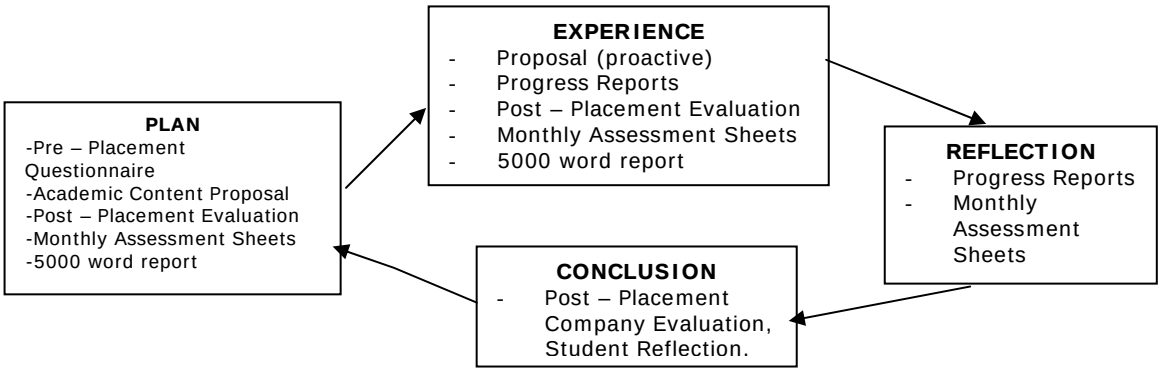
Our methodology

The approach that the PLP team at EBS London has adopted, and subsequently adapted, is based primarily on Kolb's (1984) **Learning Style theories** and the **mentoring approach** advocated by Parsloe and Wray (2003).

Learning strategy

Kolb (1984) argues that *"learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience"*[29]. He describes how experience is translated through reflection into concepts which, in turn, are used as guides for active experimentation and the choice of new experiences.[30] The diagram below illustrates how we link between Kolb's (1984) Learning Process and the learning methods for the Placement Learning Project.

Link between Kolb's (1984) Learning Process and the Learning Methods for the Placement Learning Project



Supervision and mentoring via e-mail

When defining supervision, differences typically reflect aspects of the author's discipline and training focus. The WordNet dictionary defines supervision as *"management by overseeing the performance or operation of a person or group"*. Bernard and Goodyear (1998) highlight the "power relationship" of the parties by noting that it is *"evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the junior members(s)"*. We agree with elements of both definitions and thus define supervision as *"overseeing the performance of the student with the aim of enhancing their professional development during their work placement"*.

At EBS-L, supervision is left to the discretion and professional judgement of the PLP tutor. As most of the placements are international, it is often not feasible to have face-to-face supervision; thus for consistency purposes, **e-mail is the main form of communication during the placement**.

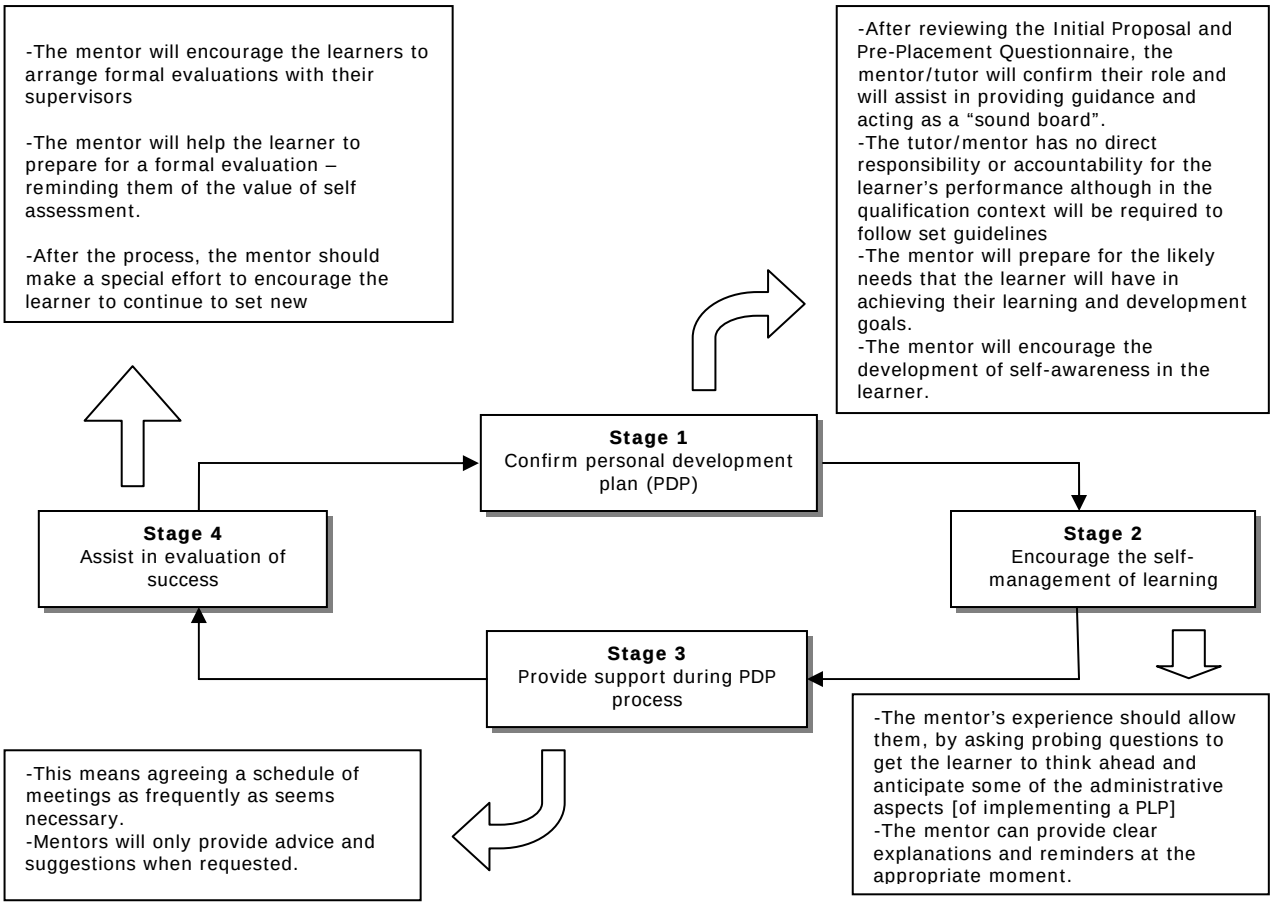
The role of the tutor is to provide academic guidance and support. Based on the *academic proposal* and *pre-evaluation questionnaire*, the tutors provide direction on analysis and guidance of concepts. Occasionally, tutors may stimulate the student's work by introducing new ideas and helping to develop the student's own aptitude for independent thought – one of the outcomes that is being assessed. Consistent with our definition, throughout the placement via the monthly *progress reports* and *assessment sheets*, the tutor is free to monitor and evaluate both academic and personal development.

Parsloe and Wray (2003) describe mentoring as *"a process that supports and encourages learning to happen."* Clutterbuck (2002) says *"… it is the most intimate of learning approaches, with a primary focus not on the development of technical competence or the giving of advice, but on the acquisition of largely intuitive skills that allow people to operate effectively…"*

Parsloe and Wray (2003) argue that mentoring is a supportive process. Once again, the PLP team has adapted the terminology to suit its purposes. The following table provides a link between the four stages and the methodology employed in the Placement Learning Project.

The Mentoring Process (Parsloe and Wray (2003), p. 83)

[29] Taken from http://www.chelt.ac.uk/gdn/discuss/kolb1.htm
[30] Taken from http://www.chelt.ac.uk/gdn/discuss/kolb1.htm



What additional features does the PLP have?

Consistent with the supervision approach, the PLP team advocates the use of the so-called **e-mentoring** - mentoring via e-mail and the internet (Rhodes, 2002).

In line with the QAA (2001), the School has developed a **code of practice**. In addition to the eight precepts advanced by Fell and Kuit (2003), both students and tutors/mentors have codes of conduct. An extract of the Tutors' Code of Practice is outlined below.

Tutors' Code of Practice

What the tutors will do…

- Ensure communication with the student
- Via their responses to the progress reports, provide students with constructive criticism of the development of the report and the "softer" or non-academic side of the placement
- Encourage and provide mentoring support in times of difficulty
- Notify in advance both the company supervisor and the student if visiting the placement
- Moderate other reports before they are sent to the External Examiner

Based on the work by *Roy Leighton Associates* and *Eric Jensen*, a **reflective template** has been designed to measure student development over a period of time. Students submit their own progress against six BECOME criteria, namely *Bravery, Esteem, Confidence, Openness, Motivation and Energy*. This backs up the content in the progress reports and thus is embedded in the assessment methodology.

In addition to the various documents, **company feedback** is used in a formative manner. This closes the loop, as set out in the earlier diagram of this paper. The placement supervisor either completes a company questionnaire, or writes more extensively about the student.

For quality purposes, the tutors have meeting(s) with one another to discuss different cases informally. In fact at the end of the process, the reports are **moderated** and verified by another member of the team. This will ensure fairness, consistency and validity to the assessment process.

So, what have the students experienced?

Some of the students' views on the PLP are set out below. As can be seen, all of them have benefited from the experience. The rigorous but fair assessment strategy, coupled with our mentoring approach, has resulted in the following comments.

"I would say that what I am looking for in this project is to have the opportunity to learn on a real life basis. I find it very exciting as I will be in a real situation where real things will be happening" K.R

" My self-development took into account my whole person and not just developing a specific skill, I reviewed all the "self" area: attitudes, beliefs, values as well as behaviour, capabilities and skills, and improved each one of them...for this reason I consider this as one of the most beautiful and useful experiences I have had" B. T

"I was able to apply my theoretical knowledge in real life practical business situations" R.S

"… I decided to open my mind for any feedback received and new ideas encountered from my supervisors. In addition, I learnt how to listen, how to deal with feedback, and how to deal with criticism due to my lack of work experience" S.R.

"The PLP (Placement Learning Project) improved my ability to learn from experience (e.g. reflecting on the experience, actions and behaviours and considering how it could have been done differently) and thereby develop, extend and refine other skills" B.T.

Conclusion

This brief paper has attempted to show the process of the PLP at the European Business School London, the learning and mentoring models used and adapted in its formation and implementation, the lessons learnt from the process, and some real-life reflections by students on the placement experiences that they have had. From an institutional point of view, the PLP is now a well-established feature of the undergraduate programme, with about 15 students per year opting for a PLP. From the academic standpoint of the PLP team, it has enabled us to develop and refine various learning process models, some of which can be deployed in other parts of the management stream within the programme. From the students' point of view, the PLP has given them an opportunity to undertake real work at a key stage of their own development in preparation for becoming effective managers within international business.

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Theme 3
Supporting Student Learning On Work Placements

The Challenges of Reflection: Students Learning from Work Placements

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The importance of employability on the higher education agenda, combined with the increasing numbers of students having to work through their studies to support themselves, led course leaders on a social science degree to introduce work experience modules onto their courses. Amongst the aims of these modules were to encourage deep-learning, promote reflection, link theory with practice and contribute to student employability and 'graduateness'. This paper reports on a small-scale research project carried out to evaluate these modules. The data set comprises staff and student interviews, the students' reflective assignments, and a focus group session with students a year after completing the module.

This paper reports on a case study in a post-1992 university and focuses on the issues of reflection and the linking of theory to practice. It discusses the challenges students face when conceptualising work in terms of academic knowledge and of transforming experiential/tacit knowledge from the workplace into more abstract forms.

The research study was small scale and exploratory. It was done with the aim of capturing the lived experiences and perceptions of Sociology and Social Policy students who completed the WBE modules in the academic year 2002-2003.

Findings

Reflection

The module called on the students to develop their reflective skills. Within the report they submitted at the end of their placement, they had a section where they were encouraged to write about the ways in which they had developed as a person through the experience, the opportunities and difficulties they had faced and how they hoped they would develop in the future. For most informants, reflection was a new experience and their attitudes towards it differed.

In this part of the assignment few students experimented with form or appeared to problematise the relationship between reflection and practice or the validity of their interpretations. Rather the students tended to focus on the skills that they were acquiring.

It seems that it did not prove particularly problematic for them to recall the specific technical skills that they had learnt and that they drew on a technical rational understanding of employment and were able to evidence the skills acquired in a way that they assumed would be meaningful to prospective employers.

For other students, the reflective element of the assignment was a place for them to comment on the links they have perceived between theory and practice.

This ability to shift perspective and to recognise their own stance appears to be a critical factor in students' capacity to use reflection to think more broadly about employability and connect to the theoretical issues that had been covered in other areas of their course. Many students did find that learning to be reflective about themselves as participants in the workplace, as well as reflecting on the workplace around them was a major challenge.

Links to Employment

The links between the WBE modules and future careers and employment were clear to most students. They recognised that the WBE module would have a positive effect on their future careers. During the interviews, many of the students commented on the more general skills which they have acquired during their work experience. These skills were often connected with their notions of the skills required for employability: report writing, interviewing, listening and identifying salient points in a discussion, explaining complex issues, adaptability and finding information; increased confidence, knowledge of advertising and funding issues, use of resources and computer skills. The acquisition of these skills is framed very much in the informants' present study context, yet they recognised the transferability to other subject areas, and in the wider context of future employment. They perceive the skills and benefits gained through experience as being generic and transferable to any career. For other students, the benefits of the WBE were more specific - to try out a field they would like to enter when they graduate.

The findings show that making links between the work experience modules and their future employment was not difficult for students and that they felt they had learnt skills which could be transferred into a working environment.

Links to Theory

Another part of the assignment required students to make links between their experiences and the theories of sociology and social policy. Some students found it difficult to relate the work experience module to other modules that they had studied as part of their degree, not seeing how the module fitted into the degree course as a whole. For some students and teachers there is a degree of ambivalence about the module based on seeing academic work and WBE as polarities rather than as complementary as the designers intended. For other students, however, the link was much stronger, seeing the module as fitting well into the context of the degree as a whole.

For many students the WBE module was successful in challenging students to think carefully about their attitude to work, themselves as workers, their future careers and developed their capacities to think sociologically and make all links with their current studies. Linking theory to practice was difficult, but when the connection was made, the students spoke of new ways of seeing sociology and social policy.

Concluding Reflections

The experiences of the students represented in the case studies show that for them, reflection appears to be a place to note the technical skills learnt during their WBE. The reflective section of their assignments can be seen as a skills audit, giving evidence useful for their CVs. This suggests that students are aware of the broader employability agenda, but that they tend to interpret it in a narrow, technical-rational way. This may reflect what they perceive employers to want, rather than their own judgement of what contributes towards employability. Other students, however, do appear to reflect on broader generic skills which suggests that the modules are a useful means of promoting employability and 'graduateness'. However, our data does seem to confirm that the challenges of reflection are considerable and that not all students are able to develop reflective approaches which would allow them to gain real insights into the sorts of learning that happens in the work place and their roles within those processes. One reason for this may be is that, unlike professional courses in health or initial teacher education where reflective practice is a core professional competency and set of values which are reinforced within a strong professional community of practice, social science students face a more diffuse set of values which privilege the virtues of the academic. Of course there is no reason, in principle, to see the two as polar opposites, but many students appear to be working with a narrow definition of the boundaries of both the academic and reflection. The assessment strategy for the modules encouraged a reflective approach, which recognised learning from experience. It appeared from the interviews that most students found this to be a very rewarding, but also challenging experience. The ability to reflect upon the role as employee or volunteer and, simultaneously, recognise the role as researcher/student, was a challenge. Indeed, the process of reflecting on their experiences was a new practice for many, though several seemed to cope well with this element, others found it more problematic.

The research has stimulated questions for the module tutors about the way in which they teach about 'reflection'. These difficulties are highlighted by Sumsion and Fleet (1996), who found that there were great variations in the ways in which meanings of the term/concept are articulated in the literature. It may be that a more guided approach to reflection needs to be adopted where the students are given more specific questions to consider through their experiences. Since the practice of reflection is relatively new, such guidance is arguably justified. However, the course team are aware of the need to balance explicit guidance with attempts to engage students in the broader debates about the meaning of reflection, recognising the dangers of limiting the scope of reflection and the dangers of encouraging a formulaic approach to reflective writing (Ecclestone1996; Clegg 2004).

The modules were designed to offer students the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of the key concepts and theoretical approaches that have been developed and are developing within social policy and/or sociology. Students were also encouraged to make connections between the work experience module and other modules that they were studying, whilst it was also expected that the module would provide an opportunity to develop skills that are appropriate and transferable to the job market. As the broader employability agenda is likely to remain a high priority and moreover as more students will, of necessity, continue to engage in work alongside their studies, we would argue that work experience modules are likely to become increasingly important in the social sciences. Moreover, as we have indicated there are pedagogical benefits from students being challenged to consider the relations between their theoretical studies and work-based experiences. A number of the students valued the opportunity to bring together theory and practice, making the theoretical dimension less abstract and more authentic for students. This was highlighted in the assessment projects where the discursive framework was grounded in the disciplines of sociology and social policy. The modules encouraged deeper learning. There were some students, however, who found making these connections more difficult. The role of the tutors remains crucial in guiding and supporting these students if the full potential of WBE modules for student learning is to be realised (Smith et al, 2004)

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Theme 3
Supporting Student Learning On Work Placements

The Role of E-Learning Technology in Trainee Teachers' Professional Development

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Synergistic teaching and the professional identity and development of teachers

A symbiotic relationship exists between teachers' roles and the success of Whole School Approaches (WSAs) that encapsulates a radical view of teacher identity that unifies the professional world of work and the social world of private life under the not unproblematic banner of citizen. For a synergistic whole school pedagogy to be introduced into schools, there needs to be a stress on transforming teachers (and teacher education and training), because only transformative teachers can fully address action-focused education. Teachers cannot divorce the professional advocacy of action in the formal curriculum from their ethical responsibility as active citizens to practise these actions in their own institutional and private lives. The most effective synergistic teaching will come from those who accept this personal responsibility to practise what they teach. It is indecent for a teacher to proclaim an ethic for tactical reasons only. Thus the teachers' roles as individuals, classroom practitioners and members of school communities become seamless.

WSAs place great responsibility on adults, as moral agents to demonstrate democracy in the variety of roles they adopt in schools not just by discussing social and ecological justice in classroom but by reducing 'the harshness of social inequities in school (and changing) the conditions that create them'. The translation of moral imperatives into action requires teachers to be transformative intellectuals marked by moral courage and critical competence as well as educational *practitioners* who by integrating theory and practice become the real innovators in synergistic teaching. Teachers' roles becoming less individualised and more associated with teamwork in collaborative school cultures. Central to teaching for action-focused education is the return of the teacher as role model, not as the custodians of the right values and attitudes, but by striving to act in a virtuous way by seeking consistency between the values that they and their institutions espouse and their values in action. This conception of role model appeals heuristically to the ideologies and self-interests of teachers rather than their vested interests. Role models who are consistent in how they judge moral predicaments generally have greater impact on children's moral reasoning than those who disagree with each other.

Fullan and Hargreaves' (1992) concept of total teachers resonates with WSAs and the teacher as role model. Total teachers have four distinct qualities: purpose, personhood, the culture of teaching and the real world context in which teachers work. Total teachers provide a conceptual guideline for the profound moral role that teachers have in post-modern society. Total teachers locate and articulate their inner voice, reflect in, on and about action, develop a risk taking mentality, trust processes and people, appreciate others as total people, work with colleagues, seek variety, avoid balkanisation, redefine their role to extend beyond their classroom, balance work and life, push and support heads and managers to develop interactive professionalism, commit to continuous improvement and perpetual learning and monitor and strengthen the link between their professional improvement and pupil development (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992). They are concerned with broad achievement rather than narrow attainment.

Personal, professional and institutional standpoints merge within a spirit of critical and contested professionalism for the total teacher. This is not professionalism as a category, but professionalism in which they did not characterize an entity so much as they depicted dynamic and ambivalent aspects of situated performance. Some total teachers conjure dynamic, synergistic practices out of this professional ambivalence. For example, many teachers involved in a pilot project that promoted a U.K. Citizenship Values Award pilot were adept at synergising ambivalence through urbane contestation by extolling the liberal and cultural socialisation purposes of education as one justification for their

involvement in the scheme, while indulging in the discourse of narrower, attainment based, performance oriented outcomes as a second intertwined level of justification.

Action-focused education entails teachers who can demonstrate the transformation to higher orders of understanding and the skill to act convergently with these new understandings. Increasing pupil participation requires teachers with participative values adapted for education who will embrace pupils' involvement in decision-making within and beyond the classroom. If collaborative cultures are to develop, teachers need to be proficient in interpersonal skills and knowledgeable about group processes such as communication and conflict resolution. It is possible to identify a number of different roles that teachers take in relation to their promotion of action (Table 1). While teachers will move between these roles according to professional circumstances, only relationships five and six are consistent with synergistic teaching because WSAs are the territory of the extended professional concerned with the synchronic integration of subjects, rather than the restricted professional who is mainly interested in subject focused diachronic integration.

Table 1: Teachers' Roles and Action-focused Education.

Relationship with Change.	Characteristics.
1. Instrumental.	The social and physical environment is only of value as the location in which educative actions occur or the context about which teachers teach.
2. Osmotic.	Ecological concern emerges naturally from outdoor experiences and social concern results from social interaction. Specific teaching strategies are not required to address social and ecological justice.
3. Cognitive.	Teaching and learning strategies are used to develop ecological and social awareness. No direct concern with teaching for action as this is assumed to develop naturally from awareness.
4. Affective.	Specific teaching strategies to develop social and ecological attitudes and values. Where there is a concern for action this is seen to result from values or attitudinal change.
5. Active.	Specific strategies are used to develop social or ecological interventions. Education is directly concerned with social and ecological change in the school and its grounds.
6. Integrated.	The curriculum, evaluation, community links, institutional culture and practices are integrated in WSAs to social and ecological change. High-level pupil participation is encouraged.

Teaching is at heart a relational activity with children. Where positive relationships exist these can open the door to high self-esteem and the determination of pupils to please not only teachers but also themselves. Synergistic teaching implies teachers who recognise that pupils can teach adults. Such relationships are not built solely through teachers' knowledge, understanding and application of pedagogy and classroom management, they are also deeply rooted in their body language.

We want to outline a research project that aims to develop the opportunities for trainee teachers to develop the reflective skills and also achieve a more sustainable future. The aim of the research is to assess the effectiveness and transferability of synthesising research evidence for trainees and monitoring the impact of this evidence on trainees' research informed practice and their reflection on their own practice through their own school focused evaluations. The research has five objectives:

1. Evaluating the impact of linking synopses of seminal research with trainees' classroom practices
2. Monitoring the effectiveness of this link through webcam technology that will allow trainees to reflect on their teaching, in consultation with mentors and/or tutors, by viewing one recorded sample of their teaching per week.
3. Assessing the impact of this more considered reflection on trainees' development as reflective professionals by monitoring the quality of their evaluations of their own classroom based practices and the impact of these evaluations on their future teaching.
4. Highlighting the technical, legal and ethical issues related to the recording of trainees and their pupils. The Institute has already implemented steps that meet the legal requirements relating to the recording of pupil images.
5. Examining the feasibility of providing trainees portfolios and/or professional development reviews on CDRoms that contained video clips of their teaching.

The pilot research would initially develop a web-based resource that would place 10 synopses of research relevant to whole class teaching studies in front of primary and secondary trainees in their penultimate year of training students. These synopses will be supplemented by access to the systematic literature review data extraction database on the electronic library (REEL) of the EPPI-Centre using EPPI Reviewer (http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk). There would be links from the site to other research based websites, including the NFER, TTA and the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme. Each piece of research can be supported by a focussed activity aimed at students. However, while e-learning can make trainees more aware of recent and relevant research, it cannot monitor whether this knowledge leads to evidence based practice in schools. Therefore the use of webcam technology will be explored to observe and record trainees on school experience, to gather evaluative data about the impact of evidence based practice on the connections trainees make between research evidence and their own classroom practices. This technological initiative will provide the opportunity for students to observe and reflect on their own practice, creating the framework for improving the quality of trainees' lesson evaluations, traditionally the weakest feature of student portfolios. The potential of the transformative effect that e-communities can bring is being foregrounded here. Commeaux (2002) and Commeaux and McKenna-Byinton (2003) have identified how Computer-mediated Communications (CMCs), including webcam technology, promote collaborative learning practices that can lead to the development of constructivist learning communities. Whilst their work applies to universities and schools in the USA, little, if anything is known about how the specific ecology of learning to teach might impact on the way CMCs can be exploited to develop critical reflective practice through the development of theory in practice.

A key element of this is that e-learning is an insufficient terminology to describe what is being proposed here. E-sharing of critical incidents, and the opportunities to engage with emerging professional identities in the process of being formed would enhance the teaching studies component of the student experience significantly, and this alone renders this an important aspect of this research proposal.

The outcomes arising from the use of WebCT in this research will include:

- Lesson recordings provide further opportunities for mentors and trainees to revisit issues arising from their emerging professionalism in the classroom.
- Opportunities to revisit recorded images serve to enhance monitoring and assessing trainees, creating further opportunities for developing an electronic portfolio.
- Recorded images allow trainees to base their reflection on clearer evidence with more time to reflect, thus reducing the burden of having to recall lesson activity from memory.
- Web cameras allow University mentors to view trainee performance from a distance, with potential savings on time and travel.
- Recorded images provide the opportunity for mentors to present more considered, refined and elaborate feedback to trainees, which in some instances, and with additional reflection, could be negotiated between the parties, involved using Webcam links. This process will mean a more continuous process of feedback and evaluation.
- Sharing evidence recorded in this way will help in the centralised and school-based training of university and school mentors.
- The development of CDROMS that capture trainees' school experiences and their own analyses of these experiences.

If this pilot project develops the research-based learning which we hope for then it could be envisaged that groups of teachers in and between schools could be linked in a similar way, drawing on a bank of research-informed practice to reflect with other professionals about their own practice, whilst at the same time using e-technologies to reduce the resource footprint of teacher professional development.

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Theme 3
Supporting Student Learning On Work Placements

Worker or Student? Creating a Positive Learning Environment for Students Undertaking Practice Learning Placements in their Workplace

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Introduction: The Employment Based Route through the BSc (Hons) Social Work

The University of Hertfordshire runs an Employment Based Route (EBR) through the BSc (Hons) Social Work. On this pathway, students undertake their first practice learning placement in their workplaces. This paper will identify some of the difficulties for students undertaking their practice learning placements in their workplace and discuss some possible strategies to support students and facilitate successful outcomes. Firstly, a brief outline will be given of the background to the Employment Based Route at the University of Hertfordshire.

Due to the current shortages of trained social workers, many social work agencies rely heavily on unqualified staff particularly in residential care. Employers are keen to encourage their mature and experienced staff, who have demonstrated a commitment to the agencies and the local communities, to gain a professional qualification. There is therefore a need for social work qualifying programmes to be flexible in their approach to the training of social workers to meet this demand. The Employment Based Route has been designed jointly with our stakeholders in Brent and Hertfordshire Social Services to facilitate this objective. On this route, workers are sponsored by their employers on to the social work degree programme. They attend for part of the week at university and part at their place of work. This pathway also contributes to the Government's agenda on recruitment, selection and retention of social workers, and encourages lifelong learning.

It is a requirement of the General Social Care Council that as part of the BSc Social Work programme, students undertake 200 days of assessed practice learning in a social work agency. This is done over the second and third years of the degree course. For financial and practical reasons, the employers require the sponsored students on the Employment Based Route to undertake their first 100-day assessed practice learning placement in their workplace. This can raise particular difficulties for the students and needs careful management. Various issues need to be considered in order to support students and promote a successful outcome to the placement.

How can a student experience be ensured when a placement is undertaken in the workplace?

This is a question that arises every year for each new cohort of students on the Employment Based Route. The following are some of the areas that, in our experience at the University of Hertfordshire, need to be addressed in order to support students effectively in their workplaces.

Clarity concerning boundaries: 'workers having a student experience'

Determining the boundaries for students on the Employment Based Route is important in providing a firm base from which the student can learn and develop. There is a danger that while the student is on their placement in their workplace, they will just continue with their regular job and not make time for the student role and the necessary learning. Students are often confused over the boundaries between being a student and being a worker. They express anxiety over how they can fulfil their role in the workplace and be a student on placement at the same time. We have tried to clarify this, explaining to students that when on placement in their workplaces, they are 'workers having a student experience'. In

other words, they are workers first and foremost, unlike the students on the mainstream social work course. Their managers, while taking into account their student role, have to ensure that the agency is working effectively, especially in residential work where particular difficulties may arise such as ensuring sufficient staff to safely cover shifts.

The balance between the role of worker and student needs to be addressed sensitively with managers by the student's tutor. It is not uncommon for students to complain of being torn between the demands of their agencies and the learning requirements of the placement. They may be anxious about not having enough time for reading or completing their daily learning logs, an important element of the placement assessment and necessary for gathering evidence to meet the practice learning requirements. Good negotiation between the university tutor and the workplace is essential in order to enable the student to feel supported while recognising the agendas of the workplace.

Sometimes it can be difficult for the worker to allow themselves to have a student experience. They may often not be seen as students by their work colleagues. Workers in more senior posts may have difficulties in allowing themselves to undertake the necessary student learning. They may feel that they should already be in a position of 'knowing' and that admitting to any lack of knowledge makes them vulnerable, diminishing them in the eyes of more junior colleagues, as well as their managers. They may have difficulty in standing back from their roles to allow themselves time to reflect on their practice. The fact that they have been selected for sponsorship may add to the pressure on them to 'prove themselves' within the team.

Good communication with managers

Effective communication between tutors and managers in the student's workplace helps to raise awareness of the expectations and requirements of the programme and the pressures these put on students on the Employment Based Route. It is also helpful if the rest of the team understand what the student is undertaking. The support of colleagues can be very beneficial to the student and can dispel misunderstanding and resentment. It is suggested to students that they take some time to inform the team about their studies, possibly by giving a short presentation at a team meeting.

Workload reduction

It is necessary for managers to recognise that having been sponsored, students need to be given every possible chance to complete the course successfully. This involves workload reduction, so that the student has time for their learning and completing the necessary assignments. Managers need to plan in advance how the work is to be covered. In Hertfordshire, teams receive staff replacement costs to allow them to take on extra staff to cover some of the student's work while they are on the programme. However, difficulties in recruitment have led to problems for managers and students in some workplaces.

Offsite Practice Learning Assessors

All students on social work placements are allocated a practice assessor. These are usually experienced social workers in the placement agency. Students on the Employment Based Route are allocated a practice supervisor, usually their manager or a senior worker in their workplace, whose role it is to supervise the day-to-day work of the student. In order to prevent possible collusion and ensure an objective and detached view of the student's progress, they are also allocated an offsite practice learning assessor, whose role it is to oversee the placement process, co-ordinate their practice learning with their academic theory, and ensure that the student is meeting the practice requirements, as set down by the General Social Care Council. The student may also feel more comfortable discussing possible dilemmas in practice and any criticisms about the agency with a practice learning assessor who is not based in the workplace.

Identifying student learning objectives

An important element towards a successful work based placement is the learning agreement undertaken at the beginning of the placement. All students have a placement working agreement, a contract setting out the conditions of the placement which is discussed and agreed at a meeting between the student, practice supervisor, offsite practice learning assessor and tutor. In this agreement there is a section

completed by the student on their personal learning needs and objectives. This is particularly important for students on the Employment Based Route if they are not merely going to carry on with their existing tasks. Before going on placement, tutorial time is used to help students identify their personal learning needs, what they hope to learn from the 'student' time in their workplace, and what knowledge and skills they wish to develop. By the end of placement, the expectation is that they will have progressed in their practice towards the next level of the training. In this way, students are encouraged to be proactive in setting the practice learning agenda in their workplace.

Specific learning opportunities can then be clearly identified on which the student will be assessed which address the student's personal learning needs and meet the requirements of the General Social Care Council. The placement meetings also clearly define the roles of the practice supervisor, the offsite practice learning assessor and the tutor, whilst making clear how the student will be supported in the placement. Time needs to be dedicated to visits to outside agencies, completing the learning logs, regular meetings with their supervisor and offsite practice learning assessor, and undertaking the necessary reading to support their learning. These are all tasks that may not be in the usual remit of the student in their place of work, the importance of which needs to be highlighted at this meeting and in the documentation

Developing Reflective Practice

An important element of professional practice is to develop reflective skills and be able to evaluate work undertaken. The learning logs provide an effective tool for this, requiring students to describe the context of the piece of work undertaken, their role, their reflections and link theory to practice.

It can be difficult for students on the Employment Based Route to stand back and view their work in this manner, especially if they have been in their posts for a number of years. It is not uncommon for students to struggle with this element of the practice learning. Some may tend to adopt an ' I just do it' approach without being able to take apart the elements that make up their work, reflect on their role and identify the skills they are using. The nature of social work may put students in touch with feelings triggered by contact with the service users and it is important that they are aware of their 'inner worlds' and how their attitudes and values may impact on practice. Some experienced students may feel that it is a sign of weakness to admit that they are affected by their work and try to adopt an 'I can handle this' approach. Having to reflect on their work in this way may make students feel de-skilled. Again, it is the role of the tutor and practice learning assessor to support them through this process and help them recognise the importance of acknowledging their feelings as part of their professional growth and development.

Support within the University

Regular group tutorials at the University allow the students to discuss and share their placement experiences and benefit from the support of their tutor and fellow students. The tutorial creates a safe environment in which they can offload any anxieties and dilemmas they may have. It also helps to bring about a group identity that endures throughout the course. Individual contact with the tutors is important in supporting students with their learning and addressing any particular problems they may have.

Good communication allows concerns to be quickly and effectively addressed with student's managers directly or with the practice learning co-ordinators who have responsibility for training and development in the agencies. In Hertfordshire and Brent, the practice learning co-ordinators have been very effective in working jointly with university tutors in preventing and dealing with difficulties in the workplace, enabling the placement to proceed to a successful conclusion.

Conclusion

The process of students undertaking their practice learning placement in their workplace can have its difficulties. Workplaces all function differently and have varying agendas, requirements and modes of practice. It is important to relate to each student and their workplace on an individual basis to ensure a successful placement. Students are warned that there will be differences in how their workplaces manage the placement process and that they should avoid making comparisons with other students' experiences on the Employment Based Route.

Much has been learned from the experiences of past students. By giving consideration to the areas raised in this paper, we try to ensure that each student has, as far as possible, a rewarding and satisfying practice learning experience in their workplace. The Employment Based Route students have proved an asset to the programme, sharing their experience and maturity for the benefit of the students on the mainstream course. This route has proved valuable for training and retaining staff currently employed in social work.

Theme 4
International Partnerships And Placements

European Framework for Work Experience: Developing a European Standard for Assessment and Accreditation of Employability Skills

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Objectives

This project aims to develop a European standard for the assessment and accreditation of employability skills developed through paid/unpaid work experience undertaken by students whilst studying. The project's period of funding from the Leonardo da Vinci programme is November 2002-April 2005.

Specifically, we aim to:

- Review existing work experience programmes, systems for assessment and accreditation, initiatives and good practice
- Develop a 'glossary' of transferable terminology
- Develop a framework for work experience
- Develop standards for the structured reflection, understanding and articulation of the value of work experience by students.

Our primary target groups are:

- Post-16 students who undertake paid/unpaid work experience whilst studying
- Employer organisations including SMEs
- Careers services and educational charities which help students in finding placements (paid and unpaid)
- Universities & Further Education organisations who are doing research in this area.

EFWE will help to establish work experience as a basis to develop key skills and student employability, helping students to reflect on their work experience and to translate the skills they gain into sellable attributes. In addition, it should help employers who continue to express that there is still a real need for evidence of the extra-curricular skills of students. EFWE is a result of this need for students/graduates entering employment directly from education to be able to evidence their employability skills to future employers.

EFWE also aims to work with key initiatives in partner countries, such as the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team in the UK, and across Europe, such as the Europass scheme. This will create a coherent message concerning work experience, employability and its value for all stakeholders.

Initial Work and Outcomes

Existing Work Experience Programmes

The first phase of the project researched and explored existing work experience systems and initiatives within partner countries and the purposes to which the work experience is used. Briefly, EFWE discovered that there was only one national scheme for the assessment and accreditation of employability skills: the UK's InsightPlus™ programme, developed and managed by CRAC (the

EFWE contractor). Across Europe, schemes applied variously but were usually managed either by employers or Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

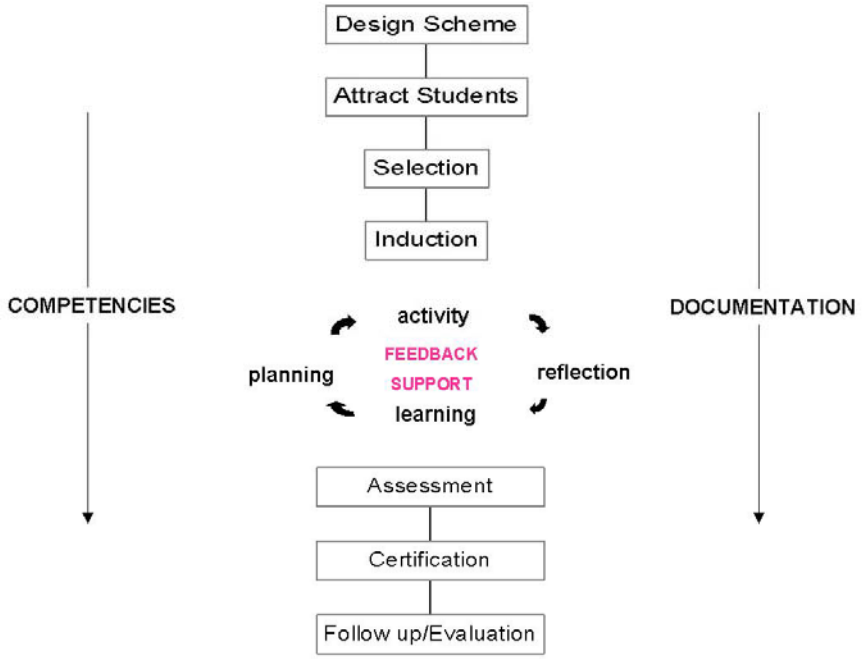
Employer Input
The partnership sought the opinion of employers across all partner countries through quantitative research. The research aimed to find out i) which skills and experiences were a priority for employers when recruiting graduates and ii) how equipped graduates are with these skills.

The findings are to be published shortly through the EFWE website (www.efwe.org). Briefly, there was a substantial gap between the importance of the skill and how equipped graduates were on starting full time work across all partner countries. Other interesting results show the value placed on the different types of work experience by different partner country employers.

This research helped form the basis of our core competencies, which inform the development of the framework.

Expected Outcomes

Framework for Work Experience



This framework intends to show the ideal stages for work experience. It has at its core the Kolb Learning Cycle; all partner practitioners feel that an experiential learning model is fundamental to the development of employability skills.

The framework above is supported by 'schedules' for student, university and employer. This intends to show best practice, and the steps that should be taken by each party to ensure that all involved get the best out of the work experience programme.

All other outcomes are developed bearing this framework in mind. They are tools to support all parties in developing their work experience models.

Competencies
- ICT Skills
- Verbal and Written Communication

- Numbers for Business
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Influencing & Negotiating
- Customer Awareness
- Self Development
- Managing Change
- Time Management
- Networking

Behind each of these competencies is a set of attributes that students should be able to demonstrate and articulate if they have achieved the competency.

Resources
The Resources Library is a set of materials to enable employers and HEIs to be able to manage their students effectively, for students to find experiences and to get the most out of it. Resources aim to meet the needs of each participant in order to meet the ideal framework of work experience. The Resources Library will include:

- What is work experience? A guide to explain the varying formats for work experience, which would include the EFWE definition of work experience
- How can you benefit? Explaining the benefits for key stakeholders of work experience programmes.
- Examples of best practice/success stories
- Codes of Practice (for employers and HEIs)
- Partnerships: EFWE aims to link to other relevant organisations that will support practitioners and students alike in all stages of the work experience framework, such as European work placement organisations.

EFWE Programme ('Off the Shelf')
EFWE will create an 'off the shelf' or 'ready-made' programme support practitioners who would like to implement a framework for assessing and accrediting work experience. All partner countries will input from different programmes that exist.

After review of the competencies, it seems apt to use different methods of assessment for each. In some cases, assessment may be 'soft', such as participation in business simulations rather than written assignments. In one case, ICT skills, it was felt that this was not the role of EFWE, when the ECDL is already in place.

In order to put into the practice the experiential learning model, the EFWE programme will comprise workshops, at the beginning, middle and end of the programme, assignments, a personal development portfolio and plan, online resources and student presentations. The workshops will incorporate teaching, business simulations and team activities, giving students rich opportunities to put their skills into practice as well as to develop their own skills portfolios.

COMPETENCY	SUGGESTED METHOD OF ASSESSMENT
Time Management	Workshop activities and attendance
Self-Development	Personal Development Portfolio & Plan
Critical Thinking & Problem Solving	Assignment, workshop activities
Influencing & Negotiating	TO DISCUSS
Teamworking	Assignment, workshop activities
Verbal & Written Communication	Assignment, presentation
ICT Skills	Fundamentally not for EFWE – may be explored by use of IT for presentation
Numbers for Business	Workshop activities
Leadership	Assignment, workshop activities

Managing Change	TO DISCUSS
Customer Awareness	Assignment

The EFWE programme aims to gain endorsed status from the Institute of Leadership and Management, an international body that accredits management qualifications. This ensures the international recognition of the programme as well as the provision of quality assurance. The ILM is a partner to the EFWE project and has already expressed enthusiasm for such a programme.

Future Developments

The partnership has already gained continuation funding in order to test our products from the Joint Actions programme. This period of funding commenced in November 2003, and runs until November 2005.

The partnership is currently seeking additional funding in order to sustain the products post-Leonardo and Joint Actions funding, as it is vital for this project to remain up to date and be disseminated as widely as possible. Part of this includes developing core relationships with exiting projects.

An International Conference is being planned for April 2005.

The EFWE Partnership

The partnership of this project is extremely diverse: it includes academic institutions, educational agencies, careers specialists and, crucially, employers. The partnership also reflects the broad target audience of the project: post-compulsory (post-16) students, employer organisations (including SMEs), careers services, educational charities and institutions. The geographical scope of the project is also wide as partners cover 5 EU Member States (UK, Germany, Spain, Finland, Belgium) and Romania as an acceding country by 2004. For detailed information on the partnership please see www.efwe.org.uk

Theme 4
International Partnerships And Placements

Career Offices Supporting Students in International Placements – Example from the Career Centre of the TU Berlin

Agnes von Matuschka
Leo-Net/TU Berlin

Poster

Having the right skills and practical work experience is most important in today's competitive job market. For recruiters, increasing globalisation means that their potential pool of recent graduates they can "choose" from is increasing and also more diverse. Placements give both employers and students/recent graduates the unique opportunity to get to know each other. Students/recent graduates can prove their cultural and academic abilities and clarify future employment possibilities. Employers will profit from young, highly motivated academics, who might become their future employees.

The service provided by Career services is meant to support students and recent graduates in raising employability. Courses involving practical placements abroad have proven to be most competitive in the labour market. Career services are in charge of specific measures of key qualifications and student counselling, as well as placement services.

The focus of the session focused on the use of a database tool to manage international placements and the work of Career services. This included management of student/graduates applications, job offers, an online placement tool, and office communication within an international network structure.

Theme 4
International Partnerships And Placements

Vocational Traineeship in European Enterprises with Additional Financing by Leonardo da Vinci

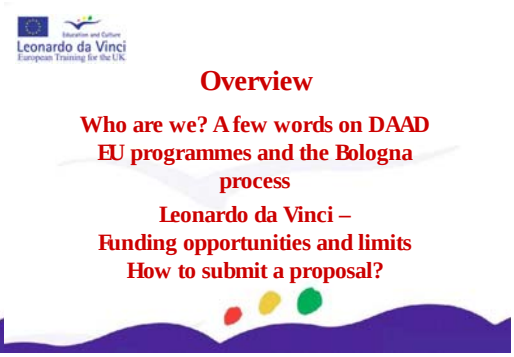
Alexandra Angress
Leo-Net/DAAD Germany

Mobility and language competency are important topics within the European Union. Every year hundreds of students and recent graduates get the chance to participate in the European vocational training programme LEONARDO DA VINCI, doing an initial vocational traineeship in European enterprises with additional financing by LEONARDO DA VINCI. These traineeships last from 3-12 months with an average duration of 5 months. The ever increasing demand for international job opportunities makes it necessary to prove practical knowledge and cultural and academic abilities in order to enhance future employment possibilities.

By applying to Leonardo da Vinci for mobility projects, hundreds of grants can be obtained for students and recent graduates going on a traineeship in Europe. The financial support of Leonardo covers a monthly remuneration, costs of language preparation and travel costs. In addition to Leonardo grants, host organisations in Europe also should contribute financially, or in kind, in order to motivate and to pay the work of students/recent graduates during the traineeship, accordingly to his/her education.

Leonardo co-ordinators have to be aware of the fact that Leonardo traineeships also have to include, apart from the Leonardo grant, a financial contribution from the host organisation. On the one hand this contribution makes the company realise the work carried out by students and recent graduates, on the other hand it also gives the beneficiaries and trainees an additional motivation for doing their placements.

The session aimed to raise awareness of the fact that Leonardo funding needs more and more consideration. Furthermore, the session included a general introduction to the Leonardo da Vinci Programme as well as a review of changes in Leonardo and the perspective future of Leonardo beyond 2006.

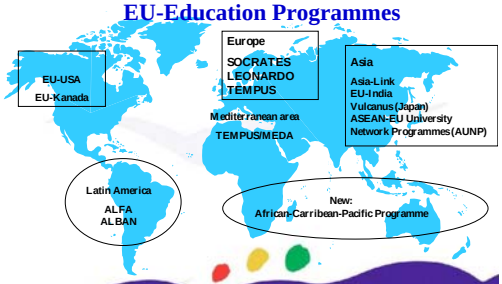


DAAD is ... www.daad.de

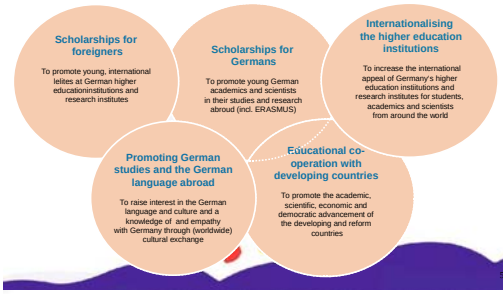
An organisation for the implementation of foreign cultural policy, German higher education policy, and development cooperation measures.

- 14 regional branch offices and Berlin office
- 46 Information Centres (IC)
- 457 DAAD lecturer positions
- 51.962 scholarship holders
- member institutions: 230 institutions of higher education, 126 student bodies
- 100 selection committees
- National office of IAESTE
- National agency for EU education programmes
- Sokrates/Erasmus
- Leonardo da Vinci (Higher education)
- National contact point for EU third country programmes (Alban, Tempus, Erasmus mundus)

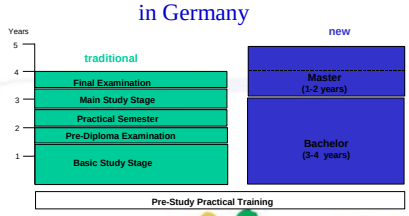
EU-Education Programmes



The DAAD and its Objectives and Responsibilities



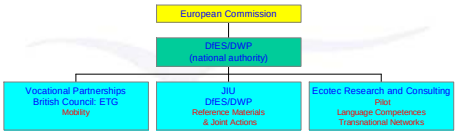
New degree structure at universities of applied sciences in Germany



Leonardo da Vinci

- **The Programme Overview:**
  - Implementation of the programme – the European and national perspective
  - Objectives
  - Priorities
  - (Measures)
  - Participating countries
  - Who can submit a proposal?
  - Budget

Leonardo da Vinci in the UK Administrative Structure



Programme Objectives

1.	2.	3.
To improve skills and competences of people, especially young people, in initial vocational training	To improve the quality of and access to continuing vocational training and life-long learning	To promote and reinforce the contribution of VT to the process of innovation, with a view to improving competitiveness & entrepreneurship

Participating Countries

The 25 Member States of the **European Union**

including CEEC, Cyprus

and Malta

The **EFTA** countries participating in the European Economic Area (EEA) (Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein)

Turkey

The Measures

- **Mobility**
- Pilot (including Thematic Actions)
- Language Competences
- Transnational Networks
- Reference Materials
- Statistical Projects
- Joint Actions

Leonardo da Vinci

- Who can submit a proposal?
  - Private, public and semi- public organisations
  - Individuals not eligible to apply
  - A project can only be submitted ONCE in a programme year
- Budgets
  - €1.15 billion for the overall programme
  - € 9 million approx. for 2004 for Mobility in the UK

Valorisation

- **Impact of the project**
  - Dissemination
    - a shared responsibility
    - a continuing process
  - Experimentation
  - Exploitation
  - Accreditation

The Mobility Measure

Mobility

- Types of opportunity
- Target groups
- Duration
- Benefits
- Funding
- Assessment process and application
- Mobility deadlines

What?

- Placements
- Exchanges

Who?

- **Placements**
  - People in initial vocational training
  - Higher education students
  - Workers, recent graduates and job seekers
- **Exchanges**
  - Human resource managers
  - Training managers
  - Language specialists
  - Vocational guidance specialists

Duration

- **Placements**
  - Initial vocational training: 3 weeks to 9 months
  - Higher education: 3 - 12 months
  - Workers, recent graduates, job seekers: 2 - 12 months
- **Exchanges**
  - 1 - 6 weeks

Why?

Benefits to the trainees

Benefits to the institutions

Benefits to business

Funding

- Allocated on a per participant basis
- Maximum Leonardo contribution 75%
  - management
  - mobility
  - preparation
  - additional allowances

Funding

- **Management and monitoring**
  - under 13 weeks: up to €100
  - over 13 weeks: up to €200

Ceiling €25,000 per promoter per programme year

Funding

- **Mobility**
  - actual travel and insurance costs
  - basic subsistence allowance

Ceiling €5,000 per participant per programme year

Funding

- **Pedagogical, linguistic and cultural preparation**
  - Under 13 weeks: up to €200
  - Over 13 weeks: up to €500

Ceiling €25,000 per promoter per programme year

Funding

- **Additional Allowances**
  - disabled participants: up to €10,000
  - preparatory visits: up to €500
  - SME allowance: up to €500
  - jobseekers allowance: €150 per week, subject to €5,000 ceiling

Applications

- What to do now...
  - Correct version application form submitted to the NA
  - 1 original - with original signature - & **2 copies**
  - Include letter of intent from at least 1 European partner (should be current dated but will accept if within 6 months)
  - Should address 1 programme priority and 1 objective
  - Memorandum and Articles of Association submitted with application, a Declaration of Honour to be signed
  - External audits and annual accounts for previous three financial years may also be required (e.g. private bodies)
  - Apply on-line at **www.leonardo.ecotec.co.uk**

Ineligible Placements

- English language teaching placements
- European institutions
- Organisations which manage Community programmes
- UK national organisations - embassies/ consulates, cultural institutions and regional or national representations

New call - programme priorities 2005/ 6

- Promoting transparency of qualifications
- Developing the quality of VET systems and practices
- Developing relevant and innovative e-learning content

*Each application must address only **ONE** priority*

New call – priorities mobility

Preference will be given to projects specifying the following elements:

- Linguistic and cultural preparation
- Objectives, content and duration of placement
- Pedagogical organisation, tutoring and mentoring
- Validation of the competencies acquired in the training placement

Europass

Link: http://europe.tiscali.co.uk/index.jsp?section=JobsCareers&level=pre

- European pathways
  - Periods of vocational training undertaken in another EU / EFTA country
- Record of experience
- Employability
- Transparency

British National Agency -Contact Details-

www.leonardo.org.uk
www.europass-uk.co.uk
Telephone - 020 7389 4389
Fax - 020 7389 4426
Email - leonardo@britishcouncil.org
On-line applications - leonardo.ecotec.co.uk
Vocational Training Links Service
vocationallinks@britishcouncil.org

11. February 2005
is the next deadline
for submitting Leonardo mobility projects all over Europe!

Good luck and
thank you for your attention!

Contact: angress@daad.de

Theme 4
International Partnerships And Placements

The Dublin Institute of Technology – Living and Learning Through Mobility Programme

Patrick Keys
Dublin Institute of Technology

The Dublin Institute of Technology/ Leonardo da Vinci living and learning through mobility programme.

The Dublin Institute of Technology in Ireland offers a BA (Hons) Degree in Culinary Arts. Culinary Arts is defined as *"the study of Food and Wine and their impact on society" (*Interim report 1998). Its main purpose is to raise the profile of the Culinary Arts Professional and to give greater career opportunities to our graduates worldwide.
4Research undertaken by the Dublin Institute of Technology (Interim report 1998) has indicated that traditional culinary vocational training in Ireland has been far too narrow for tomorrow's knowledge based industry professionals. The BA in Culinary Arts at the DIT is designed to provide tomorrow's culinary graduate with a solid professional and academic background that will give graduates a wide range of opportunities and mobility in their professional careers. Its purpose is to enhance the value of their education, extend the scope and opportunities for the professional culinary arts graduate not only in the hospitality, but in all sectors of society where food and wine is important
The research undertaken clearly indicated that huge changes are taking place in society and the international hospitality industry. Technology, demographics, changing life styles and the expansion of the foodservice industry into retailing and other non-hospitality industries are amongst the most notable developments. The response from educational establishments worldwide shows that many universities and higher education institutes are taking a more innovative approach to modern culinary arts and food education. This includes the provision of degree level programmes in broad-based food disciplines.

BA Philosophy
The BA course reflects the dynamic developments taking place worldwide in the area of culinary arts as a creative, problem-solving, research-based profession, across a broad spectrum of the tourism, hospitality and food related industries.
Students undergo a four-year rigorous practical and academic course to an honours degree level. The programme gives them the capacity to reconstruct their experiences and the confidence to pursue a career in any aspect of culinary arts, in either academia or in a wide range of businesses, in any part of Europe.
The artistic and core skills of culinary arts integrate with the scientific, technological, cultural, linguistic and enterprise subjects in a holistic learning opportunity which is supported by the teaching and learning procedures in both college and in the workplace. Years one and two focus on the acquisition of knowledge. In year three, students are encouraged to apply their knowledge and broaden the vision in a European context, while in year four they explore, research, reflect and synthesise.

Strategies for the International internship programme project
The School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology is in the third year of their International Internship Programme. It is, however, still in its infancy and demands a considerable amount of hard work, dedication and critical awareness to achieve its objectives.
In recent years the school has delivered two modules in particular that have the potential to stir or awaken the students ability to be self reliant, independent, and creative. They also help the student to become aware of their place in the world. When this happens, the student begins to seriously prepare for what life has to offer. The first, delivered before the student goes on placement is a six-week 'Problem Based Learning' module. The second, being the International Internship Programme. Both programmes are related and both seek to engage the student in their own learning through a process of

trial and error so that deep learning can take place. Students return to college better equipped for their final year at college.

Internship and Industry

However, our concern has always been that industry would share and understand our philosophy with regard to student internship. In the Irish situation this has been achieved through a series of workshops involving tutors, industry mentors and students held prior to the internship. In the international context this has been much more difficult to achieve.

The BA internship programme is one of the key synthesising and integrating elements of the new innovative honours degree programme. It comprises of two six-week periods in years one and two and one thirteen-week period in year three. Years one and two are spent in Ireland, while year three is an international placement. Internship is a major contributor to the student's personal, cultural and professional development and is a compulsory part of the course. Each student is assigned a workplace mentor who, working in conjunction with the student and the college, will help develop the student's knowledge, skills, competence and awareness of social and cultural interactions.

In 2004, the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology was granted Leonardo da Vinci funding to the value of €110,000 through Leargas, the Irish National Agency, for an international internship programme 'Living and Learning through Mobility'. The school is presently applying for funding for three different projects for 2004 / 2005.

In 2002 Culinary Arts students undertook internship programmes in Austria, France, Luxembourg, Greece and the UK. In 2003 the programme was extended to Germany, Portugal and Italy. In 2004 students undertook internship programmes in France, Italy, Greece, Finland, Malta, Holland, Sweden and the UK. 2004 was the first year the school received EU funding for their internship programme. The focus of the programme is on immersing students in the European culture and lifestyle, as well as professional practice. Students are encouraged to continue in their employment abroad for the summer period to enhance and improve their language and professional skills prior to entering their final year.

The school is very much aware of the difficulties some students have had during their placement in culinary establishments. The hospitality industry in particular seems prone to worker exploitation, poor working conditions and staff abuse.

> *'For the duration of my internship I was looked down upon, mocked, embarrassed and belittled at every opportunity. Each day I wake up dreading what I am going to face'. (*A student's report in 2001)
>
> *'The deeper issues of bullying and kitchen violence seem to have been either ignored or sanitised from official records'* (Mac Con Iomaire 2003*).*

Perhaps the most worrying aspect of all is a report by a recent graduate, written in 2004 about her 2002 international internship, where there seems to be an acceptance of such standards.

> ***Long hours, abusive chefs, cramped, damp working conditions and appallingly low wages; this is how I describe my internship in X… and yet, I wouldn't change a thing.***
> (A graduate's report 2004)

The student was aware of the problems encountered during international internship programmes elsewhere. She expressed her concerns to the tutor before her internship about the *'horror stories about hospitality students living in squalid, poor condition, students being abused and attacked'*. In response she was given permission to arrange her own internship programme through close family connections. At no time during her Internship or in her internship reports did she give any indication of the conditions she was working under.

The School only places students in establishments that have been vetted by the DIT staff, a local educational establishments, personal professional contact and/or an international industry partner such as Accor. All establishments are visited at least once every three years.

Even with this support problems can arise and a twenty four-hour, seven day a week help line is in place for the duration of the internship programme. Students are provided with credit on the mobile phones for the purpose of personal support in times of difficulties. Students are obliged to log on to the college Website at regular intervals during their internship.

Personal contact is made with the student's mentor and the mentor is advised of the college policy with regard to their 'duty of care' to the student. This is not always easy to manage in an international context but is a vital part of building our support network.

Cultural and Linguistic preparation of beneficiaries.

Our experience is that most students gain little confidence in the use of language in the normal classroom environment. The School uses a series of cultural evenings to promote the use of the

language by giving the students the opportunity to present, translate and use the chosen language in an everyday environment.
The cultural evenings consist of presentations by the students on various aspects of the country they are going to on their placement. The presentation is given by groups of four students to their peers, lecturers and to a number of invited guests. The groups perform in the restaurant where the use of the language in a real life situation enhances the cultural experience. Tasks such as greetings guests, presenting and explaining the menu, describing the preparation of the food, translating for the guests, and introducing people to each other are used so that the students will gain a confidence and familiarity with the use of the language. The events have a classroom atmosphere as opposed to a dining experience, with the focus on learning and the use of the language by the guest and students alike. The preparation of audiotapes highlighting, where possible, the 'local' accent is being planned for 2005. Participation in the research and delivery of the cultural events is compulsory for each student.

Where a number of students choose the same country, they are advised to research different aspects or regions of the country. Students are instructed to vary the presentations and focus on areas such as history, music, art, the way of life of the country and to draw on the knowledge in DIT, particularly the College of Music, School of Languages, the School of Art and Design. Academic staff facilitate and manage all aspects of the cultural preparation.

Student exchange
In March of this year a group of 25 French students visited the Dublin Institute of Technology and participated in classes with their Irish counterparts. The Jean Quaree School in Paris reciprocated in April when 20 Irish student started their placement in Paris. The expectation is that the French and Irish students will help each other in terms of language, lifestyle, jobs, friendship, and social life. Student and lecturer visits and exchanges are being arranged with colleges in Tours, Toulouse, and Biarritz in France, in Malta, in Ilsalmi and Pirkanmaa in Finland and in Spain. The DIT is anxious to extend this kind of co-operation to other Institutions in the EU.

Preparation for the placement programme
(1) Academic preparation
In first and second years of the course, students write a short paper on 'Their Fears and Expectations for an International Internship'. These papers are used as the bases of the students learning objectives in the planning stage of the internship in the third year.
(2) Module on Internship
The School of Culinary Arts deliver a module entitled National/International Internship.
(3) School Seminar
A range of partners and countries are presented to students at a school seminar each October. They are advised to identify the country of their choice and to make a preliminary application to the most appropriate partner by the end of November each year, based on their own personal and professional learning objectives.
This process does not preclude students researching their own placement. However the DIT is very slow to accept a new partner and any new proposed placement will be vetted by the DIT and must conform to all the DIT selection criteria.
The cultural, linguistic and pedagogic preparation starts immediately after the countries have been identified.
4) WebCT
This is a web-based IT platform the School of Culinary Arts is using as a virtual classroom while the students are on placement in Europe. Students receive training in the use of WebCT in October of each year. The school plans to provide an allowance of €150 to support students in the purchase of airtime so they can communicate directly with the virtual class room if they do not have easy access to computers. The DIT Teaching and Learning Centre is developing a facility to allow students communicate directly with the college WebCT site using their mobile phones.

Partner Assessment

The rigorous assessment of our industry partners across Europe is perhaps the most difficult aspect of the programme and continues to be a problem. Internship programmes have a history of exploitation, poor pay, bad conditions, and often racial discrimination. Our placement officer in the DIT and the programme co-ordinator go to endless lengths to safeguard our students from such situations. The formal linking with educational establishments and industry partners in the EU has become a priority.

Additional insurance cover to 'top up' the DIT policy is funded by the Leonardo programme to insure against all eventualities.

Conclusion

However, students really are out on their own when it comes to international internship. This is an essential part of the learning process and students are expected to deal with most eventualities. For many of the students, six months in France, Sweden, Italy, Greece or Finland can be a rewarding and memorable experience. When students describe their internship as *'a life changing experience', 'the best experience of my life', 'the most positive experience of my life', 'it has made me more assertive, more confident and more caring of others' or 'Paris - an amazing experience'* it makes it all worth while. We do everything in our power to ensure they experience a truly educational, enjoyable and safe environment for their internship. This has been the focus of our work on the international internship programme over the past few years and will continue to be so in the future.

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Theme 4
International Partnerships And Placements

Problem SOLVE: A Leonardo da Vinci Pilot Project

Kristin Brogan and Dr Matt Smith
Institute of Technology Tralee and Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

1. Introduction
The Problem SOLVE pilot project is EU Leonardo da Vinci funded project to help students prepare for work placements abroad. The project is guided by feedback from EU "Mobility" project coordinators, highlighting the need to support students' problem-solving and practical language skills, prior to their placement. Problem SOLVE consists of an international group of EU language and multi-media learning partners, investigating past student experiences and recommendations, and developing a multi-media, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, interactive CD-ROM learning resource to support students' language skills preparation before arrival in their country of work placement.

2. Overview of Problem-SOLVE project
Problem SOLVE is a two year project which started with its first partner meeting in Dublin in November 2003 and a second meeting in Palermo, Sicily in May 2004. The project partners are from Ireland, Germany, Spain, Slovakia, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland.

The project has been developed through feedback from Mobility coordinators at HLP's Mobility Meeting in September 2002. Representatives indicated a need for a preparation tool for students undertaking placements abroad. Deficiencies in language skills relating to practical issues and culturally-biased problem solving abilities were identified as key areas for development. Most mobility coordinators at International Offices do not have the time to give courses to prepare their students prior to departure for the placement abroad. A means of autonomous learning was needed.

The Problem SOLVE project is in the process of developing and testing a multi-lingual, multi-cultural preparation module for students undertaking mobility placements in vocational training. This module consists of language and cultural exercises in problem solving via virtual journeys on a foreign placement. This preparation tool will encourage students to interactively troubleshoot potential challenges they may encounter while training in a different country. The pre-departure module will facilitate students in increasing their language skills as well as giving cultural and practical knowledge of their host country.

Problem SOLVE will address the mobility preparation needs through virtual journeys developed on a user-friendly CD-Rom. Users will be led through a variety of real life problem situations including: travel, accommodation, socialising, working abroad and emergencies. The software will be interactive as the student will be required to employ and develop problem-solving skills relating to each category. The software will also provide technical language relating to the virtual situations and useful logistical and cultural information for each host country.

3. Summary of research under the project
Mobility coordinators in each partner country have surveyed past and current beneficiaries on placement. The survey has questioned students on the following:

- Placement preparation
- Difficulties encountered relating to communication
- Difficulties encountered relating to cultural differences
- Actual problems encountered relating to the five identified key topics of:
  - travel, accommodation, socialising, working abroad and emergencies
- Reactions to the problems
  - Their own reaction
  - Their recommendation (with hindsight) for others' reaction

The results of this research will ensure that problems used in the virtual circumstances cover a variety of challenges. In addition to the surveys, each partner country is researching orientation, cultural and language preparation for their country. This will ensure a thorough compilation of each country's logistical information relating to each of the five topics. Partners will then meet to develop a tutorial for each country. Mobility students in each partner country will then test the tutorial.

4. Information about organisations

4.1 Institute of Technology Tralee (ITT)
The Institute of Technology, Tralee is a medium sized Higher Education Institute in the South West of Ireland. It offers a wide range of courses at Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor Degree, Masters and PhD levels. ITT was established in 1977. Courses are offered by the School of Business & Social Studies, the School of Science & Computing and the School of Engineering & Construction Studies. There are 4,000 full-time and part-time students and over 250 staff. ITT has been part of *Hibernia Learning Partnership* since 1995. The International Office operates the *Leonardo* and *Socrates Programmes* and has numerous links to partner institutions within the EU. It also participated in various projects, i.e. *http://eco.ittralee.ie* and is currently involved in two EU projects:

- Problem SOLVE Pilot Project
- "Lingua 2" project.

4.2 Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB)
The Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown is a small Higher Education Institute in North Dublin. It offers a range of courses at Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor Degree, Masters and PhD levels. ITB was established in 1999 and is the newest and fastest growing Institute of Technology in Ireland. Courses are offered by the School of Informatics and Engineering and the School of Business and Humanities. There are approximately 2,000 students and over 150 staff.

4.3 Hibernian Learning Partnership (HLP)
HLP is a non-profit organisation dedicated to developing learning partnerships between industry and universities, at both European and National Levels, in order to design and deliver learning products and processes. HLP was founded in 1987 by 12 Irish colleges. It has grown over the years to serve 21 partner colleges, hundreds of companies and thousands of students.

HLP aims to:

- Develop mobility programmes for students and staff that contribute to technical transfer of knowledge and skills upgrading.
- Simplify access to a wide range of EU training programmes for organisations ranging from large enterprises, through SMEs and training institutes to voluntary organisations.
- Foster and develop training partnerships that promote human resource initiatives on a national and European level.
- Design and deliver tailored training courses by accessing expertise from 21 member Institutes.

The 21 Member Institutes are:

Universities: Dublin City University, University College Cork, National University of Ireland Galway, University College Dublin, National College of Art & Design, TCD, and National University of Ireland Maynooth

Institutes of Technology: Athlone, Blanchardstown, Carlow, Cork, Dundalk, Dun Laoghaire Art & Design, Galway/Mayo, Letterkenny, Limerick, Tallaght, Tralee, Sligo, Waterford, and The Tipperary Institute

HLP Board of Directors consists of senior institute staff, which regularly administers research and development programmes, funded by a wide range of agency, in excess of €250m. Hibernia Learning Partnership has been directly involved in 15 EU funded programmes, including Leonardo II, COST, PHARE TEMPUS, SOCRATES, EQUAL and OBJECTIF.

5 Summary of Student Questionnaire Results for Ireland
Partners in each placement country distributed a questionnaire to current students, and students who had previously undertaken work placements abroad. The following presents a summary of the range of answers from Irish students who responded to the questionnaire.

General Information

- Be aware of the breaks in the working day
- Do not use titles in the workplace
- Bring a travel adaptor (plugs)
- Make time for a chat with colleagues and other people
- In some rural areas, the National Anthem is played at the end of the night in some pubs and nightclubs

Cultural Information
- Timing (important for workplace situations and in everyday life)
- Workplace breaks
- Be careful of political comments in certain areas

Emergencies
- Prescriptions
- Chemist

General Vocabulary
- Good stuff
- Are you going for one?
- What's the craic?
- Take it handy
- How about you?
- Keep your hair on
- That's grand
- Chat

Work Language
- Dosser
- Monday morning blues
- Get on with it
- The week is dragging
- PRSI number

The use of sorry
The word 'sorry' is used in different contexts in Irish society and it is important to be aware of them:
- It can mean *'excuse me'* when trying to get past someone who may be in your way, or can be used after accidentally bumping into someone.
- *'Sorry' [I apologise]* As in its regular form of regret.
- *'Sorry? [I didn't hear]* Please could you repeat what you just said
- *'Sorry' [Excuse me]* As a way of gaining a person's attention

6 Example virtual tour
At the time of writing the only part of the CD-ROM completed is the section on "Travel". This section is summarised below. The "Work" section of the CD-ROM will shortly be complete. Some screen shots are included at the end of this paper to give an idea of the form of multimedia computing resources being development for the project. The figures are as follows:

Figure 1 – Students choose country to learn about.
Figure 2 – Selection of country information topic (5 to choose from).
Figure 3 – General information about "Travel" in Ireland.
Figure 4 – Animated "Virtual Tour".
Figure 5 – Useful vocabulary (spoken audio played when word/phrase selected).

Each section (travel, work, emergencies etc.) will contain 2 or 3 virtual tours (animated dialogues). Following each virtual tour is a set of questions (multiple choice, true/false, and drag word to correct gap in sentence). At the end of each section there will be a problem solving quiz, questioning the student about the contents and language of the virtual tours and general information in the section. Students will be presented with a score and feedback after answering the quiz.

7. Location of the multimedia learning resource
The Irish section of the multimedia learning materials can be viewed at the following web site:

http://www.problemsolve.org/

Figure 1

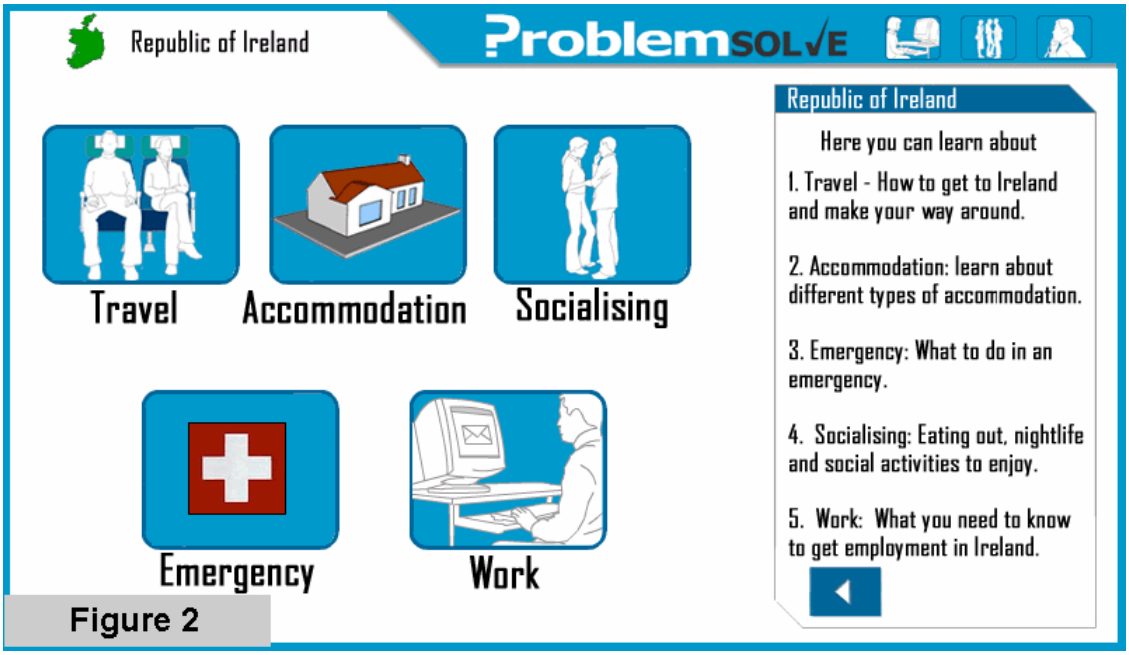


Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

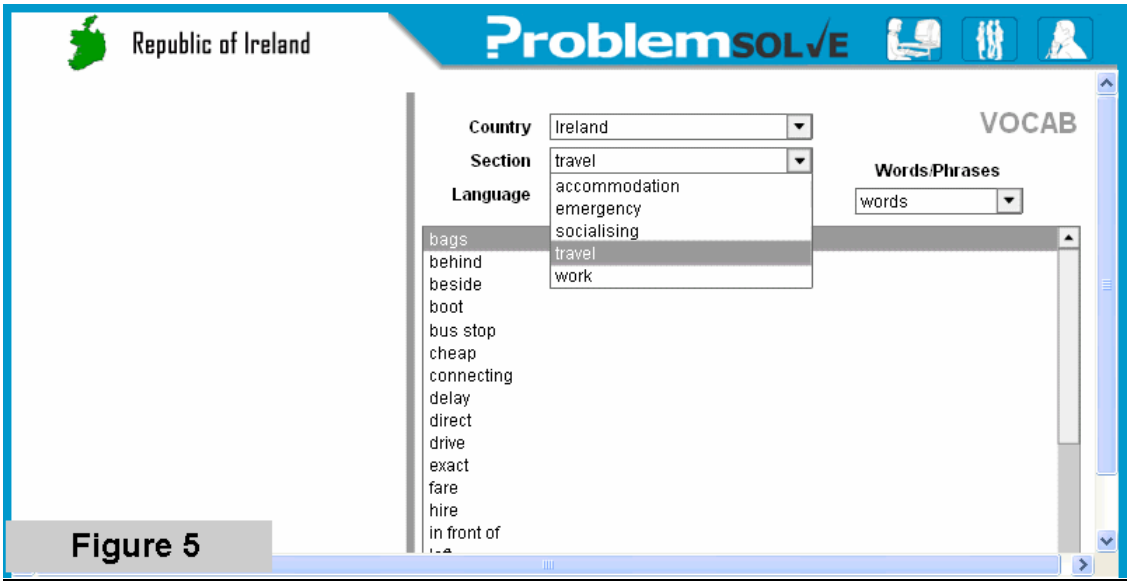


Figure 5

Theme 5
Managing Work Placements

Leo-Net – An Innovative Network for Best Placement Results (of Students/Graduates) Throughout Europe

Iris Gruber and Marjo van der Valk-Kuijpers
Leo-Net and Technische Universiteit Eindhoven

Leo-Net
Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility – www.LEO-NET.org
Your Dynamic support network throughout Europe

Every year thousands of students and recent graduates get the chance to participate in the European vocational training programme LEONARDO DA VINCI, doing an initial vocational traineeship in European enterprises with additional financing by LEONARDO DA VINCI. Such a traineeship lasts from 3 to 12 months with an average duration of 5 months. The ever increasing need of organising innovative work placements for practical training for students and recent graduates in leading-edge companies in a Europe of now 30 eligible countries can only be done properly and efficiently in a networking environment. LEO-NET provides for such a platform.

Background of Leo-Net
www.leo-net.org - Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility is a network of over 120 dynamic partners from universities, colleges and intermediate organisations in 26 European countries, all of them involved in Academic Mobility within the European Vocational Training Programme LEONARDO DA VINCI.

The idea was to establish a platform performing on three levels. The **Basic Level** represents the working level for all members, for exchanges, for discussion of common opportunities and difficulties; the **Central Level** comprises of one representative of each participating country to effectively communicate country respective information; on the **Top Level** the network Board presents the concerns and demands of all members to decision makers as well as the development of strategies for improvement in the field of higher education.

Stimulation and facilitation of internationalisation of higher education mobility in Europe is a major goal of the network.

From 2002 to 2003 some 20 members joined the network. The ever growing number of members proves the concept right – communication, co-operation and interaction between the network partners is needed in order to guarantee a high standard of student placements within a Europe of 30 under LEONARDO DA VINCI.

Activities and Services of Leo-Net

With the newly designed Leo-Net - website members very easily get up-to-date information on Leonardo relevant topics. The website offers a special access area for its members, where latest information regarding the Higher Education Mobility can be gained – a regular edited Newsflash provides all members additional information on activities and planned actions.

Members and all interested parties have the opportunity to participate in workshops organised by Leo-Net, i.e. during the annual EAIE conference, where they can update and learn more about specific topics in higher education mobility projects, especially how to handle Leonardo mobility projects, project management and reporting. This is as well as facilitating transnational networking amongst partners, which probably constitutes the most successful mechanism for enabling close co-operation across Europe.

A network needs a strong background, given by the Board of Leo-Net, acting in the interest of its members. Setting actions in order to bring forward ideas and important input from the practical side defines the mission of the Leo-Net Board. It is of great importance for the Leo-Net Board to put forward their ideas and points of views to the European Commission and national authorities regarding the New Programme outline for the future of mobility in higher education, i.e. the inclusion of mobility placement opportunities for higher education under the new Programme structure beyond 2006.

On its new designed website www.leo-net.org Leo-Net will quite soon start to offer an online tool for job offers exchange services, the so-called "JOE". European companies and network partners can place job offers. This tool will enable students to find placements according to their fields of studies and provide company information and contact details. Students and recent graduates can enter some criteria which define the exact job they are looking for. The database proposes then jobs that match those criteria specifications. Once they have found a job or jobs they are interested in, students can directly contact the company.

In that sense Leo-Net is actively contributing to the future development in the field of higher education and mobility in Europe. For more information please contact us via info@leo-net.org or via the website www.leo-net.org.

Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

LEONARDO NETWORK for Academic Mobility

WWW.LEO-NET.ORG

Aset conference, 7-9 September 2004

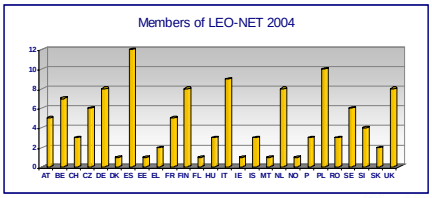
Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

LEO-NET as a supporting tool

- Network for Academic Mobility throughout Europe 28
- Founded in 1999 in Maastricht with 60 members in 15 countries
- Grown to 128 members in 26 countries in 2004

Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

128 organisations in 26 nations



Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

LEO-NET Structure

- Members - 128 and counting!
- Central Level Representatives
- Board (4-6 elected members)
- Secretary General

Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

Three levels of action

- Basic Level
- Central Level
- Top Level

Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

Basic Level

All members involved in day-to-day contacts

- Partner search for mobility projects
- Search for placements in companies
- Search for students
- Use of network support to answer questions

Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

Central Level

One representative of each country in charge of

- reporting national differences
- co-ordinate procedures to communicate national practices to all LEO-NET members throughout Europe

Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

Top Level

Responsibilities of the Board include

- arranging network activities to be carried out
- contacts with national authorities and the EC
- developing new initiatives defined and agreed upon basic and central level
- searching for extra funding

Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

Products/Activities so far

- List server
- NEW!!! Website www.leo-net.org
- Workshops
- Promotional activities, i.e. posters, leaflets, conference presentations
- Annual member meeting held during EAIE
- Transnational Network application

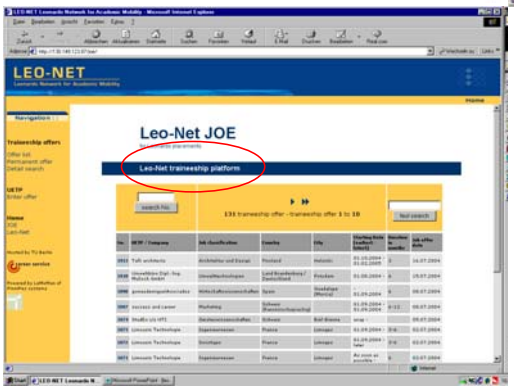
Leo-Net

Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

Products/Activities 2004

- New Workshops in 2004 held in Turkey
- Continuous upgrade of website
- Implimentation of JOE on Leo-Net website
- Strategic board meeting for implications of LEONARDO beyond 2006
- Activities during 16th EAIE 2004 in Torino

Leo-Net



Leo-Net Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

LEO-NET Leonardo Network for Academic Mobility

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Leo-Net

Theme 5
Managing Work Placements

LeMoMan – An Innovative Database to Professionally Manage your Mobility Problems

Agnes von Matuschka
Leo-Net/TU Berlin

Poster

Successful project management requires an efficient tool – this can be assured by *LEMOMAN*, a multi-functional database. This session focused on enhancing the efficiency of the management of placement programmes, especially in Leonardo Mobility Projects. The use of a well-functioning database tool to manage international placements helps Career Service managers and placement co-ordinators ensure good preparation, management and evaluation of mobility projects. This includes the management of student/recent graduates applications, job offers in Europe enhanced by a possible online placement tool, office communication, integration of MS Office, reporting and financial checks.

Quality standards in the management of placement programmes needs to be applied on all levels of the management. In order to save time, *LEMOMAN* is a tool that can be used very easily due to its clear layout and logical structure. The setting-up of the database makes the handling of the tool very easy: different colours define the different section of the database: students, partners, offers, placements, controlling and financing. Besides that, there is a management area where figures for the various projects are taken from. A steady control of numbers of beneficiaries sent out and up-to-date budget figures can prove time saving. An additional feature of *LEMOMAN* is the creation of interim and final reports by one mouse-click.

LEMOMAN offers lots of features. Emphasis was put on the fact that *LEMOMAN* easily matches company offers and student profiles. Furthermore, the database has been especially designed to pass on interim and final reports to the respective National Agency.

The session gave practical examples from a working database used at the Career Centre of TU Berlin.

Theme 6
University-Business Link

SME Toolkit

Berni Dickinson, Sarah Gibbons and Liz Rhodes
External Consultant, University of Nottingham and
National Council for Work Experience (NCWE)

This University of Nottingham/NCWE toolkit has recently been developed for the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) market. It will enable SMEs to recruit and manage students on a range of work-related opportunities such as: completing short-term business related projects, part-time employment, temporary employment and other opportunities. This paper will contextualise the toolkit and outline the design and development phases undertaken to produce the prototype before charting the potential opportunities for further development and future funding possibilities.

Context
In recent years the following debates, encouraged by Government policy, have gained a higher priority within Higher Education - the employability of students graduating from university and the need to develop closer links between universities and business.

There is no doubt that a period of work experience, of whatever kind, enables students to gain an understanding of, and the skills required for, the world of work and begin to develop business awareness; both of which employers continue to say they would like to see in graduates. Recent reports confirm this:

"Almost without exception, employers felt that young people who had undergone a period of work experience were better equipped than others for the world of work".
"Young people, employability and the induction process",
Steve Johnson and Tom Burden,
Leeds Metropolitan University & Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Lambert Review, set up by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, looked at ways in which universities and business can develop closer links at all levels. It states:

"2.4 Most UK businesses have no experience of working with universities and therefore no idea of the benefits that can arise from collaborating with them."

"6.6 Work experience was universally regarded as an important way of developing employability skills and business awareness… However, concerns were expressed about the variability in the quality of work experience and the value of more mundane work, with some suggesting a need for some form of accreditation."

Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration December 2003

While many large employers have established links with universities and offer work experience opportunities, the real challenge lies in making better contact with SMEs and persuading them to take students on work experience.

Taking students on work experience, if properly thought through, can bring business benefits to the SME and in so doing contributes, not only to workforce and skills development, but also to the competitiveness agenda as well.

Universities are moving further towards supporting the regional economy and "play an increasingly important role in regional economic development" 5.1 Lambert Review (Dec 2003)

This toolkit supports various regional policy initiatives underway at present. The Framework for Employment and Skills Action (FRESA) sets in place strategies to promote a healthy regional labour market. One way they propose to do this is by "stimulating demand for higher skills levels, particularly within the SME community". Once this demand is initially stimulated, the toolkit will support businesses looking to plug their skills gaps with students. Bringing in a student on a short-term placement can often stimulate current employees to develop their own skills.

The East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) also looks to retain graduates in the region. One of the ways to do this is to raise awareness amongst the graduate population of the regional opportunities open to them. Graduates who have already experienced regional work experience with SMEs have an understanding of the local labour market. Students seeking to source their own local opportunities can also use this toolkit.

The regional economic strategy 'Destination 2010' developed by EMDA also aims to increase knowledge transfer from universities to business. Students are one of the University of Nottingham's greatest commodities and to support them in gaining quality interactions will support this outcome as well as helping to provide effective business support across the region.

This toolkit raises awareness for the potential of recruiting students and graduates, therefore encouraging graduate retention in the region. It also enables SMEs to develop better links with the University of Nottingham, which could lead to co-operation with a range of departments leading to other forms of knowledge transfer.

"Making a difference – the contribution of graduates to small business success" (Dec 2002), a report by the Small Business Service outlines the common features required to produce a successful placement:

- "Quality of brokerage between support agencies and SMEs;
- Thoroughness of the matching process between individuals and jobs;
- Specificity of managers in establishing pre-entry skill, aptitude and knowledge requirements and;
- Post-entry follow up and support to graduate entrants and managers."

The overall objective is to produce a practical tool enabling both the employer and the student to make the most of the work experience/placement opportunity. It encourages best practice in recruitment and selection by making managers focus on their requirements, shaping the project to clarify their expectations and crystallise the skills and aptitudes required for the successful completion of the project.

Design & Development

The toolkit has been designed and developed through consultation with a range of relevant external organisations, both support agencies to small business and professional bodies:

- Chartered Institute of Personnel Development
- Investors in People
- Construction Industry Training Board
- EMDA
- Learning and Skills Council Workforce Development Team
- Nottingham Education and Business Alliance
- Shell Technology Enterprise Programme (STEP)
- Partnership for Progression
- Nottingham Business Venture
- Federation for Small Businesses
- Business Link
- Chamber of Commerce – Employment Education and Training Committee

A draft framework was designed and developed as a result of individual meetings and focus groups. The focus groups took place to explore the need for such a toolkit, discuss the draft framework and obtain constructive feedback.

Two focus groups were held and four main questions were asked. Firstly, the perceptions of a need for this kind of resource - how the draft framework could be improved, how the materials might be

developed, and if there was a more suitable wording or format for the term work experience. The last question was in response to an awareness that work experience as a term has connotations with school-aged students spending two weeks in an office doing meaningless tasks. The following summarised their responses.

All partners agreed it was a useful piece of work but questioned whether such resources already existed. Extensive research was carried out into any available resources and it has been impossible to identify tailored materials that would support SMEs with the recruitment and development of students. The groups decided that undergraduates need to have a 'quality experience' and need 'quality employers' and therefore recruiting the 'right student for the right job' needs investment.

It was also agreed that reaching out to SMEs is a real challenge. Recent research from Broxtowe Borough Council has highlighted that 70% of micro SMEs had not heard of Business Link. So a big challenge would be to get the 'toolkit' out to the SMEs that need it the most. The Small Business Service report 'Making a Difference – The Contribution of Graduates to Small Business Success, December 2002' highlighted that the SME graduate labour market is a neglected rather than a new phenomenon. New graduates do find first destinations employment in SMEs. However, for many of these, the recruitment and selection processes of firms leave them under-utilised and often with weak prospects for continuing development. The SME toolkit has a real opportunity to address some of these weaknesses through effectively recruiting students on part-time work or project work. The SME toolkit was emerging at a 'good time' with the developing notion of students having to 'learn and earn'. Therefore, more students are looking for quality placements and it is important that the support is there for employers to provide them.

Marketing materials are available to employers, spelling out the skills that undergraduates or graduates bring to the workplace but quite often it really fails to 'hit home' with the real business benefits. The groups felt that the toolkit needed to spell these benefits out to SMEs and be relevant to the needs of business. The trick is to create the need and then fulfil that need with the student knowledge and skills. SMEs need to be very confident students will 'make a difference' and 'add real value'. Case study materials would be a very good way of getting the message across. The groups also felt that the toolkit needed to be simple, user friendly and have the facility to navigate the SME through the toolkit – a 'Pick and Mix' approach to minimise the amount of time required by the employer to provide a quality experience.

Both focus groups felt the materials should initially be paper-based with a long-term view to be in every type of format to reach as wide an audience as possible. The term 'work experience' can be interpreted as the employer giving and the student taking. It is important that the message that students will be in the workplace completing a 'real' piece of work and making a contribution to the business gets across. The suggestion was to just call it 'work' or 'projects'.

Prototype

The concept of the toolkit has been branded as 'Red Hot Talent'. Once the SME has been 'hooked' into the concept, the toolkit navigates the SME through the following sections:

- Section A (How can I use student skills in the workplace?)

This section summarises how the SME can use University of Nottingham students either by paid part-time work, paid business related project work or curriculum based projects.

- Section B (What do I need to do to access these skills?)

This sections navigates the SME and gives examples of the following processes: advertising a vacancy, drafting a job description and person specification, interviews, references and employment contracts.

- Section C (How do I make the most of these skills?)

This section navigates the SME through, and gives examples of, induction, progress and performance review and project mentoring.

The Future

The initial funding was to develop a prototype and pilot it. The toolkit is currently being piloted in a small project. Inevitably there will be minor adjustments required and the subsequent evaluation of the pilot will be circulated to all partners.

As the development of this material is timely there are many different opportunities to take it further and adapt it, for example, in partnership with the Sector Skills Councils or Learning and Skills Council. At the time of writing, research is being undertaken to capture all the possibilities and make decisions on the way forward and from whom to secure appropriate funding. The CIPD are keen to endorse the materials and use them to support their own development work with SMEs. Ongoing negotiations and discussions are also being held with the DTI to develop the framework for their 'Access to Best Practice section'.

One theme that came out very strongly from all discussions was that a student guide needed to be developed alongside the current toolkit. The Lambert Review highlighted that work experience was important to students and discussed "the extent to which universities equip undergraduates with the skills that business and the economy need." The ESECT briefing "Issues for Employers" also identified that "the placement should incorporate review and reflection when students can receive feedback on their performance". The student toolkit must be developed to raise awareness amongst the undergraduate population of the value of working in SMEs, but also enable the student to develop appropriate expectations of the SME workplace and the way they can contribute to that businesses commercial success. Many universities already have some resources in this area and it is therefore important these materials are developed in collaboration with these.

In order to move forward with the toolkit, the project team must also debate and decide on the following questions: How would the SME get the toolkit? Would they be introduced to the toolkit and pointed to the relevant sections? Would the SME then operate autonomously to recruit and retain the student to suit their requirements? At present a framework has been developed which requires adaptation to suit either sector or university needs. Is it then given/sold directly to SMEs in those sectors or given/sold to support agencies that then customise the materials? It is also essential that consideration be given to the update and maintenance of the materials to ensure compliance with new legislation.

The national and regional agendas have encouraged universities and SMEs to interact together and the toolkit has been developed in response to this. The University of Nottingham and the National Council for Work Experience obtained funding to support a consultant to develop materials to support SMEs with the recruitment and retention of students into their business. Many different support agencies have shown an interest in the work and further funding needs to be secured to develop the materials to different sectors as well as producing a student toolkit to run alongside this one.


Toolkit Sections
Section A (How can I use student skills in the workplace?)
This section summarises how the SME can use University of Nottingham students either by paid part-time work, paid business related project work or curriculum based projects.
Section B (What do I need to do to access these skills?)
This sections navigates the SME and gives examples of the following processes: advertising a vacancy, drafting a job description and person specification, interviews, references and employment contracts.
Section C (How do I make the most of these skills?)
This section navigates the SME through and gives examples of induction, progress and performance review and project mentoring.
Next Steps
Pilot materials
Circulate feedback from pilot to all partners
Research further funding sources
Identify potential for sector based resources
Solve charging/ copyright issues
Promotion for toolkit
How will it be managed and maintained?


Issues for discussion
Thoughts?
Avenues for further development
Should be self-directed or support materials
Other contexts?

Theme 6
University-Business Link

Industry-Academic Cooperation in a Peripheral Area - A Case Study

Dr Ran Ziv
Tel-Hai Academic College

Poster

Tel Hai Academic College is located in the Upper Galilee, the northern periphery of Israel, an area that suffers from population migration, partly due to a lack of available jobs. In order to improve the attraction of the area to a young, skilled population, a three-year academic programme in Computer Sciences, that includes a placement programme in Research and Development departments of High-Tech companies, was administered by the college.

The academic umbrella was provided by the Department of Computer Sciences at Tel Hai Academic College. Scholarships for students participating in the programme were funded by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour. Leading Israeli High-Tech companies sent senior engineers to establish R&D extension facilities near the college. Students that were chosen for the program carried out a 500 hour project in industry. The project was guided by the Tel Hai Computer Science faculty in collaboration with the R&D engineers. The students were accredited for their projects in the B.Sc. academic program.

The programme provided students with the opportunity of gaining experience in the High-Tech world in the course of their studies, and of improving their chances of finding employment in High-Tech companies. The project had a strong impact on the academic studies in the college by bringing real-life experiences into the classroom, stimulating students to broaden their academic interest and to discuss in class 'real world' problems. These made the 'dry and theoretical' academic studies more vivid and relevant.

One of the important benefits of the project was the increase in the region's attraction for High-Tech companies, resulting in more then 150 new High-Tech positions (half of which were taken by Tel Hai graduates) – a remarkable increase, considering the fact that 5 years ago only a minimal number of programmers could be found in this peripheral region.

Delegate List

Attendee	Institution
Abeles, Lirit	Ruppin Academic Centre
Ali, Azam	European Business School London
Allison, Joanne	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Angress, Alexandra	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
Baines, Judith	London Metropolitan University
Bowen, Nicholas	European Business School London
Brogan, Kristin	Institute of Technology, Tralee
Brown, Samantha	London Metropolitan University
Buckley, Alison	University of Greenwich
Buckley, Emma	Nottingham Trent University
Bullivant, Nicola	Aston Business School
Byers, Carmel	University of Hertfordshire
Byrne, Sheila	University College Cork
Cargill, Erica	Robert Gordon University
Centellas-Melia, Mariona	European Business School London
Clements, Jo	University of Salford
Cronin, Jerry	University of Limerick
Deery, Deirdre	Queen's University Belfast / ASET
Dickinson, Berni	University of Nottingham
Doris, Ann	Queen's University of Belfast
Duignan, John	University of Paisley
Edenborough, Stephen	University of Paisley
Eisner, Karin	APS - Büro Graz
Fanthome, Christine	Independent Consultant
Fildes, Keith	ASET
Flynn, Sarah	University of Hertfordshire / ASET
Fraser, Sheila	University of Abertay Dundee
Gallagher, Padraic	University of Limerick
Gibbons, Sarah	University of Nottingham
Gilligan, Christine	Sheffield Hallam University
Golshekan, Hamid	University of Huddersfield
Gomez, Stephen	University of the West of England / ASET
Hargreaves, Sylvia	Nottingham Trent University
Harrington, Angela	University of Bath
Hawksworth, Adrian	Imperial College London
Herde, Dieter	Thames Valley University
Hill, Chris	Sheffield Hallam University
Hodgson, Caroline	Liverpool Hope University College
Hurren, Derek	University of Leeds
Ingleson, Sam	University of Salford
Jackson, Paul	University of Leeds
Keys, Patrick	Dublin Institute of Technology
Laird, Ronald	University of Ulster
Lavie, Ester	Ruppin Academic Centre
Lawrence, Elizabeth	Sheffield Hallam University

Attendee	Institution
Lijkendijk, Gert	Utrecht Business School
Lush, David	University of the West of England
Lynch, Linda	University College Cork
McConomy, Seamus	University of Ulster
McDermott, Jane	University of Salford
McFarlane, Kathryn	Staffordshire University
Mewett, Mette	Kent Institute of Art & Design
O'Connell, Patrick	University College Cork
Peers, Angela	Manchester Metropolitan University
Peeters, Francois	University of Antwerp
Rees, Diane	University of Plymouth
Rhodes, Liz	National Council for Work Experience
Robinson, John	Manchester Metropolitan University
Roodhouse, Simon	University Vocational Awards Council
Rounce, Katherine	Middlesex University
Schoenfeld, Bethe	Western Galilee Academic College
Scott, Darren	University of Leeds / ASET
Shackleton, Sarah	University of Kent
Shoor, Seema	Brunel University
Slater, Deborah	University of Central Lancashire
Smith, Ian	University of the West of England
Smith, Matt	Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown
Tidball, Francoise	University of the West of England
Todd, Malcolm	Sheffield Hallam University
Trouille, Jean-Marc	University of Bradford
van der Valk, Marjo	Technische Universitelt Eindhoven
von Matuschka, Agnes	Technische Universitat Berlin
Waterman, Aileen	University College Cork
White, Colette	Sheffield Hallam University / ASET
Wilson, John	University of Central Lancashire / ASET
Workman, Barbara	Middlesex University
Yarwood, Colin	Nottingham Trent University
Ziv, Ran	Tel-Hai Academic College

ASET

Integrating Work and Learning

For almost 25 years ASET, the professional body for work-based learning practitioners, has been at the forefront of developments in sandwich courses and other integrated periods of work in both higher and further education. It has been the catalyst for the development of guidelines in many areas and also the promotion and dissemination of best practice. ASET is a charity run by work-based learning practitioners for work-based learning practitioners and so we are able to offer support, advice, and guidance to all professionals who work in the field.

Our association will do all we can to promote the concept of work placements and to help all staff meet the challenges posed by the ever changing and expanding debate on work experience/placement learning.

ASET now has 88 members from a range of HE, FE and industrial organisations, in the UK and also Eire and the Netherlands. If you wish to discuss any aspect of ASET's work, please contact the ASET office or any of the executive members. Contact details are below:

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Administrator Keith Fildes

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ASET Conference 2005

The 2005 Annual Conference will take place between 6-8 September at York Conference Park, University of York. Please keep an eye on the ASET website for further news.

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