



Best Practice Template for Employers

Work Experience

Written by Sarah Moran at Oxfordshire Racial Equality Council

This best practice template is comprehensive and designed to guide employers in providing a meaningful work experience for all involved in the process. If you are unable to apply all areas to your organisation or business, then you are free to choose areas that seem most essential or relevant.

If you require any assistance with listed documentation please contact Sarah Moran at info@oeren.org

With the above disclaimer in mind, the best practice for work experience will encompass all or some of the following

SECTION 1

Some Questions and Answers

WHAT IS WORK EXPERIENCE?

The term “work experience” means different things to different people and in different contexts. Generally speaking it refers to a limited period of time that an individual spends with an employer during which they have an opportunity to learn directly about working life and the working environment. Central to quality work experience is learning and development, which must be open and accessible to all without bias or exclusion. Some work experience placements offer people the chance to try their hand at particular tasks or training for a particular role, others simply provide an opportunity to watch and learn or as an introduction to the world of work. It is important to recognise that work experience is complex and can be tailored to benefit both participant and organisation. It is also **very important that the organisation does not underestimate what they can offer**. Regardless of whether the organisation offers a work taster or an opportunity to train, if executed effectively the experience will offer many benefits to all parties involved.

WHO MIGHT WANT IT?

In England and Wales work experience is an obligatory part of the national curriculum and all state school pupils aged 14 are required to undertake a two week work experience placement. There are also an increasing number of further, higher and post-graduate qualifications which require students to complete an element of work experience as part of their course. There is demand for work experience placements from people of any

age or background that are not in formal education and from students outside the requirements of their course. Although these work experience placements are not part of any formal learning programme, they can still offer genuine benefits both to individuals and to employers.

WHERE CAN I GO TO GET PARTICIPANTS?

Here are a few ideas...

Oxford Cherwell Valley College can provide work experience participants.

For further information contact:

- **Ingrid Widdows, Curriculum Manager for Skills for Life - Widening Participation on 01865 551966**
- **Greta Franklin Brown, Learner Data Project Coordinator on 01865 550825**

Refugee Resource

For further information contact:

- cassiperry@refugeeresource.org
- bridgetcrampton@refugeeresource.org
- **Phone on 01865 798280 or 0845 458 0055**

Of course, secondary schools in Oxfordshire would be willing to contribute students for work experience participants. You can contact the schools directly.

HOW LONG SHOULD IT LAST

All state school pupils aged 14 are required to undertake a two week work experience placement and other students including university level may require a specific timeframe. With the exception of state school pupils, the timeframe of work experience can vary a lot. Some placements may last for months, others may last for months but the participant could attend for one or two days a week during that period. There is no right answer and it is usually beneficial to tailor the programme with the participant or work experience provider.

SECTION 2

Best Practice – 4 stages

1. Preparation and Planning

- **Involvement of managers and staff in the decision to offer work experience**

It is extremely important to get organisational commitment in the decision to offer work experience.

- Senior management commitment

The larger organisation needs somebody at the top of the managerial hierarchy to commit to the work experience process. It is important to express this positive intent both vocally and in writing and then make adequate provisions for the process to show seriousness and commitment. It is essential to communicate this information to employees. Moreover, if a member of management (not necessarily senior – see below) could be designated “work experience champion” then all employees would find it useful to know which person to report to regarding work experience queries.

If you are making a junior manager the work experience champion then make it very clear to them what their responsibilities are. By making a junior manager the coordinator you are introducing benefits to all involved:

- It takes a lot of pressure off of senior management
- Gives junior management the opportunity to develop their managerial skills
- Allows all employees to see a clear structure for work experience and infuses confidence
- Gives work experience participant a sense of comfort to see the support system in place

- Coordinator or Work Experience Champion – Junior manager

As detailed above, by making junior managers work experience coordinators it can offer them the opportunity to develop their skills. The sorts of duties that they could be thinking about:

- Thinking about what sort of people could participate in work experience- pupils, return to work, asylum seekers, learning disabled etc.
- Thinking about what sort of placement could you offer?
- Developing paperwork including relevant documentation, job descriptions etc.

- Mentors

It is important that one or more members of staff are designated as Mentors for the work experience participants. The mentors will be there to supervise the participants – to agree on and ensure that the variable guidelines of work experience objectives are followed. The mentor will also be the first point of contact for participants. Individuals on all types of work experience placements are inexperienced and need support and supervision and so the mentor should be somebody who has time and is prepared to take responsibility for overseeing the participant’s work and general welfare.

Make it clear that you will expect a report at every level – From Mentor to Coordinator and Coordinator to senior management.

• Definition and thinking through of the placement task or project

It might be a good idea to ask the coordinator to develop a range of suitable job descriptions ready to send to participants. In this event, the manager should have a general idea of the organisation's targets by liaising with different providers and then tailor the job descriptions accordingly.

Some suggestions of areas to consider whilst formulating job descriptions:

- Which department you will be working in
- The job role(s) the individual will gain an understanding of
- Typical activities they'll be involved in
- Knowledge and skills they can expect to develop

Once a participant has been secured - It is essential that a clear and accurate description of the placement is devised with specific learning objectives agreed between organisation and individual ensuring that any skills gaps that the participant has are addressed. It could be that the mentor will be best placed to agree learning objectives. It is important that work experience participants are not used to perform roles that are contradictory to the mutually agreed learning objectives.

• Planning and execution of publicity and recruitment

Providing clear information about how people can approach your organisation for placements will help you to access the widest possible pool of creative talent and could have a real impact on helping your organisation become more diverse.

• Administrative processes set up and executed

The following is a basic list of documentation you will need. Please note that this need will vary in different organisations

a) Roles and Responsibilities or Frame of Reference

See sample document (under Practical Examples page 8) for an idea of what to include in this document. It will essentially be a briefing pack – written confirmation to provide a framework for the placement. Written confirmation of work experience arrangements will help to make everyone's expectations about the placement clear. The form of the agreement will vary depending on the status of the individual and the nature of the placement.

b) Equality and Diversity

It is important for your organisation to have an Equal Opportunities Policy or a statement of commitment to Equal Opportunities.

c) Risk Assessment:

It is important to have adequate insurance cover including Employers' Liability and Public Liability insurance in place and to consider the principal risks whilst work experience is undertaken. Risks could include injury to the work experience participant, injury to others on the premises e.g. employees or customers, damage to placement providers property or to customers or own property.

It is a good idea to contact your insurance company in advance to confirm that you are covered.

d) Health and Safety

It is paramount that the health, safety and welfare at work of individuals are safeguarded, as far as reasonably practicable in the arrangements for placements. As above, it is advisable to carry out a risk assessment in advance of any placement. It is also important that you brief individuals about health and safety issues on the first day of their placement (see induction document in Practical Examples) As the employing organisation, you will also be responsible for providing appropriate training for all activities that individuals are asked to undertake which have health and safety implications.

e) Relevant Child Protection

If you are offering placements to people under the age of 18 you have to make sure that your employees are aware of this and, if appropriate, use the Government's Criminal Records Bureau to carry out CRB checks on employees who are involved in such placements.

2. The Placement

- **Design and application of appropriate induction to organisation's culture and ways of working**

On the first day of a placement you should provide a comprehensive induction covering practical issues. The nominated mentor will usually be the most appropriate person to carry out the induction. The induction may be tailored to meet the needs of your participant. Please see Practical Examples for sample induction checklists

- **Objective setting with the student**

As detailed above, specific learning objectives should be agreed between the organisation and work experience participant. After the objectives have been agreed upon the mentor should try to ensure that a balance of tasks and observation are arranged for the participant. It is crucial that the tasks are achievable and that the participant feels comfortable. The tasks should be gradual so as not to pile pressure on the participant and therefore introduce problems to the procedure.

- **On-going support mechanisms for students**

Ongoing assessment forms: assessment forms should be completed regularly whilst the participant is performing their duties. The assessment form should be a tick list showing progress. The objective is to end the work experience on a positive note and the assessment form can detail what the participant did well and/or areas to improve upon. The form can almost act as a reference which would reflect well on both participant and organisation.

Weekly phone call: It may be a good idea to introduce the process of a weekly phone call from the work experience provider to the involved organisation. This mechanism is good to address any concerns and to maintain an open and positive relationship.

Clear lines of communication established: Everybody must be clear about their roles and responsibilities. Participants in particular should be open about any responsibilities that they may have outside of the work experience. If participants (or work experience providers) neglect to inform the organisation about issues such as this, it could cause bad feeling. For example, if a participant was absent and didn't inform the manager in advance it could cause the manager to be demoralised. As long as any problems are made clear then everyone knows what to expect.

Complaints Procedures: If you are sufficiently prepared then there are mechanisms in place to help you resolve any issues with internal mediation. The following are a few suggested routes for complaints.

- In the event that the participant believes that a breach of the work placement agreement has taken place they should take this up with their mentor (or person they are working with) in the first instance
- If the first point fails to resolve the matter the participant could refer the matter to another appropriate person in the workplace or to the Coordinator who should take the matter up on their behalf
- In the event that the participant breaches the work placement agreement, their mentor in the work place has the responsibility to point this out or contact the work experience provider.

3. Evaluation of Learning Outcomes

- **Debrief between student and supervisor**

A feedback and evaluation session can be a good opportunity for both the participant and organisation. The session can help you to assess the success of the placement and if necessary, make improvements for the future.

If an evaluation session is not possible then feedback forms could be used because in any case, it is imperative that feedback is given to management. Although it is likely that many lessons are learnt along the way, it is good to formalise these lessons. Equally, things could have gone wrong and need improvement. If all lessons are not recorded then the experience is in danger of being lost.

- **Specific outputs will be generated**

For the organisation:

- Closer links with work experience provider developed by organisation
- To give the employer an opportunity to work with a learner who may then become suitable to apply for employment within the organisation (ensuring that internal selection procedures are followed).
- New ideas and perspectives emerging from the placement encouraged and captured by the performance to ensure they gain the maximum benefit from their experience. (effects and follow-on actions in the organisation as a result of student's work)
- Opportunities to develop the people management skills of junior members of staff through buddy/mentor arrangements

For the Work Experience Participants:

- Examples - Younger people can obtain more of an experience in the world of work. It can be very beneficial for ethnic minorities who have no experience of the world of work in the UK. Or can break down barriers facing women entering the work place.
- To enable learners to apply the skills they have learned within their training programme to real work situations and to develop these skills further.
- Development of employability skills by student as a result of the placement
- To give learners a broader view of possible job and career opportunities and a means of sampling and observing jobs in their chosen field.
- To give a learner the opportunity of working in different environments before deciding which best suits her own aspirations.
- For the learner to gain confidence in their skills and abilities.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

This section contains three sample forms designed to help employers to develop their own paperwork for managing and recording work experience placements.

- Work Experience Agreement -Roles and Responsibilities
- Induction Checklist Form
- Feedback and evaluation form

WORK EXPERIENCE AGREEMENT

Roles and Responsibilities

Learner's Roles and Responsibilities

Learners will have a variety of experience in relation to work – some will not have worked before, others will be undertaking a work placement in an unfamiliar work setting or may be returning to work after time away.

This can be daunting especially if the learner is not sure what to expect or not know what they will be doing. The employer will have expectations and these will be specific to the job role and environment.

In general(employer)..... expects that the learner will:

- ❖ fulfil the requirements of the work placement agreement
- ❖ attend regularly and finish the work placement
- ❖ inform the employer as soon as possible if they are likely to be absent due to ill health or other reasons
- ❖ work as a team member as required
- ❖ report any problems to their immediate supervisor as soon as possible
- ❖ report any ongoing problems with their mentor as soon as possible
- ❖ follow all Health and Safety and other legislation as required
- ❖ take part in all reviews and evaluation of the work placement as required
- ❖ conduct themselves in accordance with the employer's policies and procedures

The Employer will ensure that the learner is inducted into the work placement so that they understand the employer's expectations whilst they are on work placement.

Confidentiality

It should be made clear to students that they must hold in confidence any information about the employing organisation that they may obtain during work experience. Such information may not be disclosed without the employer's permission.

Employer's Roles and Responsibilities

The employer has a responsibility to ensure that the learner is provided with induction, training and support to enable them to fulfil their job role. This must include Health and Safety and other key policies and practices required by all employees.

In general the employer will:

- ❖ provide the learner with a job description or outline of the duties expected during the work placement
- ❖ provide a work placement mentor to support the learner (this may change throughout the course of the placement)
- ❖ agree with the learner the main terms and conditions for the placement e.g. length of placement, hours of work, days of work, main place/s of work, travel and time allowances,
- ❖ ensure that the learner is provided with appropriate induction including information about the organisation, company procedures and Health and Safety
- ❖ support and supervise the learner throughout the placement and enable the learner to complete NVQ competencies where applicable
- ❖ liaise with the learner and work experience provider to resolve any problems
- ❖ contribute to the evaluation of the work placement and make suggestions for improvements

SAMPLE INDUCTION CHECKLIST

Individuals name:
Mentor's name:
Company/department:
Placement start date:
Placement end date:

YES NO

Agreement signed and returned: _____

Temporary ID pass obtained: _____

Who to call and inform in case of sickness: _____

Given details of hours of work and meal breaks: _____

Given outline of placement programme: _____

Introduced to Mentor/Point of Contact: _____

Fire and evacuation procedure explained: _____

Other emergency procedures and health and safety information detailed: _____

Informed of prohibited areas/activities: _____

First Aid facilities explained: _____

Any significant risks associated with work placement explained _____

Given instruction in safe use of any equipment: _____

Any further information:

I have been informed of the above/given the appropriate training.

Signature
Name
Date

ADDITIONAL POINTS THAT COULD BE INCLUDED IN AN INDUCTION

Induction to the 'expectations of the world of work'

- Timekeeping
- Reporting absences
- Telling about doctors appointments
- Etiquette of the workplace
- Basic customer service training (how to answer phones, what to do if you don't know the answer to a question over the phone, how to deal with customers, language you should be using)

EVALUATION FORM

To help us understand how useful you found your work-experience placement, please could you complete the following questions and return to us.

Name of Course: _____

Date of Course: _____

Venue: _____

Employer (Please Print) _____

Date of Work-placement _____

1. How useful did you find your work-experience placement?

- Very useful
- Quite useful
- Not useful at all

2. Was the information you received about your work experience placement prior to starting it:

- Very useful
- Quite useful
- Not useful at all

Please state how this could be improved

3. At the start of your work-experience placement, what were your expectations?

4. Have these been met?

Yes – in what ways?

No – how could this be improved?

5. Was the length of the work-experience placement

Too short

About right

Too long

6. Please could you use the following space to enter any other comments you have about your placement. These could include whether you enjoyed it and why? And if you didn't enjoy it and why? Thank you for taking the time to complete this and good luck for the future.

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