

The elements of a good work experience placement

1. Agree the aims for the work experience placements
2. Brief students about the work experience placement
3. Use the work experience placement to provide students with a quality learning experience
4. Organise debriefing sessions to help students confirm what they have learned.
5. Plan Work Experience Placements
6. Support students during their work experience placements
7. Review and evaluate how work experience placements are organised and managed



1) Agree the aims of the placement

Agree what the work experience placement aims to achieve and identify the expected outcomes e.g. do you want the student to experience different sectors within the retail automotive industry? Or do you want the student to understand how people can develop a career in one area of the industry such as maintenance and repair, where over time employees develop their skills and become Master Technicians or managers?

Work experience placements help students to:

- ✓ Prepare to join the world of work
- ✓ Understand how different the world of work is from the world of school
- ✓ Understand what is expected of employees
- ✓ Understand the responsibilities of employment and what is expected of employees (See the IMI's Employability Skills Toolkit for more on this)
- ✓ Develop their social skills
- ✓ Make informed choices about what career routes are available
- ✓ Understand what qualifications are required to help them manage and realise their career aspirations
- ✓ Put into practice what they have learned in the classroom

Work experience placements should be as realistic as possible, but must be organised within some framework where students **do not**:

- × Work for more than 8 hours a day
- × Work for more than 37 hours in a week
- × Start work before 0700hrs in the morning
- × Finish work after 2000hrs in the evening

By requiring students to work a normal day, which would typically mean working 9am – 5pm (with an hour for lunch plus refreshment breaks) they will grow to understand the difference between the world of school and the world of work. Students should always be encouraged to work longer than a normal school day.

When identifying and planning activities that the students can complete, do not be afraid to give employers permission to manage the activity: ask them what the students could do as they will probably have ideas of their own and want to get actively involved.

2) Brief students about the work experience placement

Prior to students actually going out to the employer it is advisable to run briefing sessions for them. These sessions should be designed to bring out into the open any fears or worries they might have about going to an employer and brief them on what is expected of them and what they can expect. During these sessions the opportunity should be taken to:

- Describe what the world of work is like and how it is different from school
- Talk about what sort of clothing would be acceptable in the workplace
- Discuss if they will be expected to wear and protective clothing (provided by the employer) or if they will need to take any other items with them
- What sort of behaviour is expected of them
- Do they need to take lunch / is there a canteen
- What they must do if they are not able to turn up for work and who they should contact
- Agree any learning objectives
- Explain the purpose of the diary / logbook and how to complete it
- Explain if and when they can expect to be contacted or visited by a teacher
- Identify and common problems that may arise during a placement and explain what a student should do if they have a problem
- Answer any questions and reassure students

As part of this induction type programme it might be useful for the student to visit the employer before the start of the placement (if possible). An informal visit might help make them feel more confident about where they are going / who they are meeting etc.

For more information and suggested activities on the above bullet point please see the IMI's Employability Skills Toolkit.