

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

By Richard Brown, Chief Executive, Council for Industry and Higher Education

We were established as a Work Experience Group in November 2000 by the Department for Education and Skills (formerly the Department for Education and Employment) with the following terms of reference:

"To consider options and recommend a strategy for increasing the full range of opportunities for all Higher Education (HE) students to undertake work experience, including paid and voluntary work, in a way that better enhances their employability."

The membership of the Group, and of the sub-groups we then established, is shown in Appendices A and B. I would like to thank all those listed - our researchers and others we consulted - for their enthusiasm and commitment.

We commend our report to the DfES and hope it will enhance the employability of students and so benefit themselves, employing organisations, HE institutions and society at large.

Richard A Brown

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Summary

This report considers how students on Higher Education courses, staff in HE institutions and organisations in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors can benefit from and contribute to an expansion of work-related learning.

The Group is responding to the Government's wish to expand students' work experience opportunities and to facilitate closer relationships between key partners if this expansion is to become a reality.

The report explores the importance of work-related learning, how it benefits all parties and the need to recognise such learning formally. It investigates the identification and implementation of support mechanisms to ensure students benefit from their experiences. It also examines how to promote good practice on work-related learning to ensure consistency and clarity of understanding.

The key findings are as follows:

- With guidance, students of all ages can learn from their experiences in the world of work to develop their key competencies and skills and enhance their employability.
- Employers value people who have undertaken work experience, been able to reflect upon that experience and then go on to articulate and apply what they have learnt.
- Partnerships between employers and Higher Education are valuable in promoting work-related learning and in improving the quality and quantity of such experiences.
- Support for all forms of work-related learning and appropriate recognition mechanisms should be in place. The Progress File can play a role in recognising the wider context from which work-related skills can be developed.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (page 11)

That the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) issues a statement to all Higher Education institutions, students and influencers such as parents and teachers, emphasising the importance employers attach to work-related learning.

Recommendation 2 (page 13)

That employer organisations consider how the volume of academically recognised work experience can be increased and the benefits communicated to employers, including via supply chains.

Recommendation 3 (page 13)

That the Small Business Service considers, with Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) and local employer groups, how work-based learning can promote closer links between Higher Education institutions and small companies and enhance graduate retention and local wealth creation.

Recommendation 4 (page 13)

We invite the DfES to consider how guidelines might be established for central and local Government on the recruitment of Higher Education students on work placements and subsequently into employment.

Recommendation 5 (page 14)

That the transcript element of the Progress File indicates whether a student has claimed to have undertaken part-time work, volunteering and/or other informal activities that have developed their work-related skills.

Recommendation 6 (page 15)

That institutions brief all staff who play a role in guiding students, so that they can work in partnership within the institution.

Recommendation 7 (page 16)

That institutions adopt procedures to help students identify how to fulfil further learning needs identified while reflecting upon their experiences.

Recommendation 8 (page 17)

That the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) reviews the purpose and level of funding for work-related learning, including sandwich placements, and considers how work-related learning should be properly supported.

Recommendation 9 (page 17)

That Higher Education institutions consider how resources from such initiatives as the Active Community Fund (ACF) can best be used to help identify and access students for work placements and volunteering opportunities. We particularly encourage them to work with existing networks and organisations, such as Student Volunteering UK and Community Service Volunteers.

Recommendation 10 (page 18)

We invite the Small Business Service to consider whether it would be appropriate to offer financial incentives to businesses that take students on placements.

Recommendation 11 (page 19)

We invite the Careers Services Unit (CSU), in liaison with the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), to take the lead in co-ordinating a good practice guide for work-related learning.

Recommendation 12 (page 19)

We invite Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) to encourage this process and consider how best to endorse and disseminate the above guide (as CVCP did for the Code on Health and Safety aspects of placements).

1. Introduction

1.1 With guidance, students of all ages can learn from their experiences in the world of work. If after reflection they can articulate these lessons, as part of the lifelong learning process, they should be able to apply them to the new opportunities they encounter in future work and in life.

1.2 We have called this process 'work-related learning'. This encompasses learning during term-time, in voluntary and paid employment, as well as sandwich courses and other academically recognised learning.

1.3 There is a drive to link learning at work with learning in educational institutions. In February 2000 David Blunkett, the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, called for all students to have a minimum period of work experience. HEFCE was invited to consider how work experience of all descriptions could be encouraged by institutions. The Government has established funds, such as the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) and the Active Community Fund (ACF), to facilitate closer relationships between Higher Education institutions, businesses and the community and so support these aims. Furthermore, work-based learning and the development of key skills form an integral part of the new foundation degrees. The undertaking of this project is therefore very timely.

1.4 As a background to this project, research was commissioned via HEFCE to establish the extent and nature of work-related learning within Higher Education. A summary of this is included in Appendix C but the following points set the scene for the report:

- Work experience takes many forms and students can be involved in a combination of any or all of its various types.
- In 1998/99 17.5% of the UK's full-time undergraduate population was engaged on full-time or sandwich programmes involving organised work experience as part of the programme of study (although this figure is probably an underestimation of the extent of such organised activity).
- Organised work experience external to a study programme can take a variety of forms but levels of activity cannot be gauged due to the lack of centrally available data.
- Organised activity outside a study programme includes employer-sponsored schemes offering learning support and certification. However, the number of students participating in such schemes is low.
- The level of student participation in ad hoc work experience external to a study programme is substantial. The 1998/99 Income and Expenditure Survey suggests that over 60% of full-time students worked during the academic year, with over 80% working in the summer vacation.
- Where institutions assess learning derived from such ad hoc work experience, the take-up by students is low.

2. The importance of work-related learning for Higher Education institutions

2.1 One of the purposes of Higher Education is to help students improve their higher level competencies and skills to enhance their long-term employability. The drive to enhance student employability should now be central to all institutional business plans. Managers should consider how the process of learning and the role of extra curricular activities can support this objective.

2.2 Many institutions already refer to learning and employability within their mission statements and in other publications. Institutions should implement procedures to ensure that their responsibilities for placement learning are met and that learning opportunities during a placement are appropriate.

2.3 The reputation of institutions can only benefit if students obtain better jobs as a result of their work-related learning.

2.4 The relationship between academic and experiential learning is central to much of the Higher Education curriculum. We see this in medicine and allied subjects, as well as in education, languages, many engineering courses and other vocational areas such as hospitality and fine arts. Interest in work-based learning and the accreditation of prior learning (APL) has grown as institutions have expanded their involvement with businesses. This is especially the case where work experience relates to the study subject and so theory and practice are closely linked.

2.5 Integrating work-based and study-based learning produces an experience that is more valuable than anything that can be achieved if each activity takes place in isolation. As Professor Lee Harvey said in 1998: *“What distinguishes learning through work experience from much other learning in Higher Education is the partnership between the range of stakeholders that are involved.”* (*Work Experience: Expanding Opportunities for Undergraduates, Council for Industry and Higher Education*).

2.6 Placements in which the work relates directly to the course being studied bring the knowledge alive. They inform the curriculum and keep those working in Higher Education up to date with current business issues. Such placements also open up new avenues to develop R&D, consultancy and company-focused learning.

2.7 The skills acquired on placements can also complement what is being developed in the institution. Evidence from the National Association of Student Employment Staff (NASES), suggests that work experience opportunities approved by that organisation develop students' self-learning skills, improve peer group learning and enhance time management skills. The challenge is for institutions to work with students and employers to make this learning explicit and build upon the compulsory work experience undertaken in schools. This will help to add the reflective depth that is one of the defining features of the Higher Education experience.

“I came back 12 months older and four years wiser after my placement.”
(Central Lancashire Business Information Technology post-placement student)

3. The student perspective

3.1 Many people enter Higher Education to get a better job with higher pay. However, a good degree does not guarantee these and the broader aspects of the Higher Education experience that employers value and often explore at job interviews and staff reviews should not be ignored.

3.2 Employers look for people who have played an active role in college life, who have broadened their perspectives in ways such as volunteering and who have developed their interpersonal and other skills. Above all, employers want individuals who can reflect on their experiences and understand what they have learned.

3.3 Small businesses in particular need graduates who can 'hit the ground running' and need employees who can add value to their organisation as a result of their Higher Education experiences.

3.4 Many companies will not take a graduate unless they have had work experience. The report on Graduate Salaries and Vacancies from the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR 2000) shows that people with relevant work experience receive the same £1,000 salary premium as a graduate with a first class honours degree. However, this could also reflect the fact that stronger students may self-select by choosing to involve themselves in quality work experiences.

3.5 Such understanding of business realities can also help those aspiring to start their own enterprise or develop a family business.

3.6 We should not focus purely on economic needs. Many of the skills required for success in work are the same as those needed for success in life more generally. The ability to relate to people from differing backgrounds, to cope with a variety of situations, to communicate, to learn from experiences and apply that learning, are important in all aspects of life. Whilst the development of such skills should be central to the higher education experience, some may be best augmented in a work environment.

"I thought I knew it all, then I realised that it was not knowledge but teams that actually make things happen." (Surrey post-placement student)

3.7 Volunteering is one way of enabling students to experience at first hand the wider social issues facing communities. If Higher Education develops the whole person by contributing to the 'maturing process' then active citizenship is crucial to the wider goals of social inclusion and the creation of a more cohesive society.

"The York Award made me focus on achieving a balance in my university life that had been missing. The emphasis on career development and transferable skills has been fantastic - something I would now consider absolutely necessary." (York Award student 2001)

3.8 Finally, work experience offers 'tasters' of working environments and so informs career planning. More structured experiences could reduce the turnover of graduates with all the costs this entails to both organisations and individuals.

3.9 Unfortunately while many students recognise the value of the learning they undertake as part of the curriculum, they do not appreciate the learning that arises from voluntary or paid work. They even omit it from their CVs, thinking that a prospective employer will not want to know about such things as their “evening work behind the bar”.

3.10 Most students do not analyse the competences employers seek or think properly about their future careers until their final year. Those who need most guidance are least likely to consult the Careers Service. (See the research by Professor Kate Purcell et al for the Review of Higher Education Careers Services: www.dfes.gov.uk/hecareersservicereview)

3.11 Some academics, students and others are concerned that part-time work, especially during term-time, can negatively affect academic performance. We therefore commissioned research from Professor Claire Callender to investigate any link between the amount of time that students work and the perceived effect on their academic achievement, using the data compiled for the report for the DfES “Changing Student Finances”.

3.12 Her conclusion is that “while it is not possible to identify an exact threshold of hours above which students’ studies are affected...it is possible to identify the band of hours within which the majority of those working during term-time thought their studies suffered...This was between 15 and 20 hours a week.” She goes on to say that there is strong evidence that: “working more than an average of 18 hours a week, over all term weeks, has a particularly detrimental effect on students’ perceived academic performance.”

3.13 This supports evidence from the NASES which recommends a limit on the number of hours to be worked on the vacancies it handles. The NUS also suggests that full-time students should not take on term-time employment for more than 10 hours per week, though some Student Unions indicate a figure of 16 hours per week maximum

3.14 We recognise that a balance has to be struck and that individual circumstances will always need to be taken into account but suggest a maximum of 15 hours per week during term-time as a sensible guideline.

4. Issues for employers

4.1 Employers value work-related learning because it helps develop personal and interpersonal skills, fosters attributes such as self-motivation, sharpens analytical skills, enhances subject knowledge and subject-specific skills and provides an insight into what makes businesses tick.

4.2 Our employers' sub-group stresses that employers particularly value forms of work-related learning where:

- there is a process of reflection and absorption of learning (which is more likely to lead to its transferability)
- there is evidence that such reflection has taken place (in a personal development plan, for example)
- students are able to draw attention to their learning (on a CV or job application form) and articulate the lessons learned (in particular at a career interview) with the minimum of prompting.

"Work experience, where it involves the ability to reflect, articulate and apply what has been learned provides distinctive, tangible benefits that increase the likelihood of success for graduates at the recruitment stage and also in their subsequent career. We welcome initiatives that promote the effective recording and presentation of such work experience." (Association of Graduate Recruiters)

"Our employers look for individuals who have some knowledge of the world of work, have reflected on their experiences and can articulate in a job interview what they have learned." (Council for Industry and Higher Education)

4.3 However, the importance employers attach to work-related learning is not universally appreciated and key stakeholders must become more aware of this value.

RECOMMENDATION 1

We recommend that the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) issues a statement to all Higher Education institutions, students and influencers (such as parents and teachers) emphasising the importance employers attach to work-related learning.

4.4 The following summarises the skill areas considered most important by the employers we consulted. It is intended to be helpful rather than definitive. It recognises the Qualifications Curriculum Authority (QCA) key skills but also takes into account other work.

The key competencies

The criteria that make up the competencies

Interpersonal

Communication (influencing, oral and written communication, questioning, listening)
Working with others (building relationships, interpersonal sensitivity)

Information handling

Working with information (planning and organising, attention to detail) application of number, data and risk analysis
Drawing conclusions (analysis, judgement, risk appreciation and working with uncertainty)
Problem-solving

Self-application	Getting started (creativity, decisiveness, initiative) Getting it done (adaptability, achievement orientation, tolerance to stress)
Personal development	Improving own self-awareness and performance Developing enthusiasm for continuous learning.

Source: Employers' sub-group

"Work experience enables students to get a feel for cultural changes in ways that cannot always be taught. Being in a real situation also provides a degree of insight into manufacturing, marketing and other business costs - something that it is also difficult to fit into the curriculum." (Linking Industry with Education, RSA, 1999)

4.5 Organisations are interested in reflective, creative people who add value and help to transform their organisation. Individual attitudes are as important as the development of specific skills, as is the ability to integrate knowledge, skills and capabilities. The "Skills Plus" project on developing employability skills through Higher Education addresses this issue. (Lancaster and Liverpool John Moores Universities 2001: www.lancs.ac.uk/users/edres/research/skillsplus/).

4.6 Many employer websites list the competencies the organisation needs and invite job applicants to provide examples of their experience and how they can demonstrate these competencies. However, as stated earlier, most students are slow to analyse employer requirements and access such websites.

4.7 As recruiters of graduates, employers value the role of work experience in developing prospective employees. Many employers also encourage and finance Higher Education study to develop their existing staff and the benefits can be particularly significant where academic experiences are closely related to those in the workplace. Equally as providers of placements and projects, employers reap long-term advantages as well as more immediate business benefits.

4.8 Some employers are actively involved in work-related learning, often having posts they fill on a rolling basis. Many have good links with the Higher Education sector and view placements as part of the graduate recruitment process. Some even play a part in the assessment of the student. While smaller employers may not be able to commit to such close involvement it is important to demonstrate how they can benefit. More needs to be done to spread positive messages to employing organisations.

4.9 Employers are commercially aware and the benefits of work placements need to be sold to them in this context. The messages need to be carefully tailored to the appropriate employer markets. Some have preconceived ideas that need to be addressed (such as the 'hassle factor' of dealing with students) and the communication of benefits must address this. Flexible schemes that respond to organisational needs rather than the timings of student vacations should, in particular, be promoted.

Benefits to companies: STEP 2000 company exit survey

- 82% of companies said the placement would have a long-term impact on the business.
- 54% of companies said the placement had an immediate impact on company performance.
- 89% of companies are now 'more likely' to provide placements for undergraduates in the future.

- 55% made a profit of more than £2,000 on the (£500 or so) subsidised cost of the placement.

4.10 Given the benefits of integrating work-based and institution-based learning, employers should be encouraged to take students on sandwich placements and other academically recognised work experience.

RECOMMENDATION 2

We recommend that employer organisations consider how the volume of academically recognised work experience can best be increased and the benefits communicated to all employers, including via supply chains.

4.11 Once small businesses have experienced the benefits of a student placement they are more likely to repeat the process.

4.12 Project-focused work can be particularly valuable but can be resource-intensive to manage. Small companies often need help in articulating their needs and the nature of the project may change as it develops.

4.13 The Small Business Service (SBS) and other networks should consider the relative value of student placements against other business-based solutions offered to companies.

4.14 Research suggests that there may be a demand amongst smaller companies for Higher Education services (training, computing, research and development) if only access could be made easier. (*Modern Universities and SMEs: Building Relationships, University of Westminster 2000*). Students on placement can offer that access, raise awareness of what potential graduates could bring to a company and hence promote local graduate retention.

RECOMMENDATION 3

We invite the Small Business Service to consider, with Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) and local employer groups, how work-based learning can promote closer links between Higher Education institutions and small companies and enhance graduate retention and local wealth creation.

4.15 There are several sectors in which work-related learning should be further encouraged, including the IT and creative industries. We advocate the establishment of work schemes to raise students' understanding of working in such sectors and so improve career decision-making.

4.16 We considered whether regional organisations and local employer groups might give recognition to small businesses that take students on work placements, as this would deliver valuable PR to such companies.

4.17 In the public sector, central and local Government should be encouraged to take students on work placements.

RECOMMENDATION 4

We invite the DfES to consider how guidelines might be established for central and local Government on the recruitment of Higher Education students on work placements and subsequently into employment.

5. Recognising work-related learning: the role of the Progress File

5.1 Some would say that the concept of full-time Higher Education is becoming outmoded and that the UK is following the US model where students pay their way through HE. If so, it is imperative that students appreciate and capture their learning wherever it takes place - whether through earning or volunteering and whether outside or within the traditional academic context.

5.2 It is not possible for all courses to offer formal placements but ad hoc work experience can result in credits that count towards the degree. This should ensure students take the learning value of their work more seriously.

5.3 However, most students will probably continue to undertake work that is not accredited as part of a course or linked to programmes/initiatives that certificate skills developed outside the curriculum such as the York Award. Yet we want all students to be able to capture the varied and valuable learning derived from all their work-related experiences.

"This opportunity has made me open my eyes and deeply appreciate the fact that, regardless of your chosen profession, all learning is extremely valuable. In a world where employers want their graduates to 'hit the ground running', the wealth of experience I have gained fills me with confidence for the future."
(Nate Evuarherhe, NEBS Management Year in Industry Award winner, 2001).

5.4 We have considered how the learning value of all these experiences can be better appreciated by academics and students, reflected on, recorded and then made known to potential employers. The formal assessment of levels of competence, for example, would require resources far and above those that are likely to be available. Therefore, it is proposed that recognition arrangements should be based around what employers seek as a basis for testing whether applicants can articulate their learning on application forms and at interviews.

5.5 There is potential for integrating this process within the Higher Education Progress File which includes both a formal transcript provided by the institution and the process of personal development planning undertaken by the student. The File should be designed to support reflection on all types of learning, including informal work and volunteering and has the further advantages that it will involve tutors and will be embedded in every institution.

5.6 The Progress File can meet all present employers' requirements. It should:

- enable students to reflect with minimal resources, bureaucracy and maintenance
- signpost students to training opportunities
- fill gaps identified during reflection
- be available to all students.

RECOMMENDATION 5

We recommend that the transcript element of the Progress File indicates whether a student has claimed to have undertaken part-time work, volunteering and/or other informal activities that have developed their work-related skills.

5.7 This additional information should be included in the section on 'Other types of learning within the context of a programme'. However, the heading should be changed to 'Other types of learning while registered on the programme'. The student's claims should be included in the subsection 'Work experience'.

5.8 The student should provide evidence to an employer or other interested parties of work undertaken and the skills developed as a consequence. Personal development planning should provide the opportunity for the student to reflect on this.

5.9 In this way the breadth of valid opportunities for work-related learning will be clearly identified in the transcript. Entries can be phased to indicate the nature and duration of the employment, although this could be left to the discretion of the institution.

5.10 The Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) is developing a web-based resource including guidelines for good practice and case studies (www.recordingachievement.org). The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) also has relevant information on its website, especially on personal development planning (www.ltsn.ac.uk).

"The existence, significance and necessity of informal learning needs to be more widely acknowledged.... It should no longer be regarded as an inferior form of learning.... We need a greater understanding of informal learning as a means of sparking off curiosity in all types of apparently useless knowledge and in all types of formal and informal settings."
(Frank Coffield, ed. *The Necessity of Informal Learning*, The ESRC Learning Society Programme, 2000)

5.11 Since it is the learning and reflection that are the crucial elements of work experience, the duration is not the key factor. Two weeks of total immersion in a position of responsibility - or at a critical time for an organisation's future - might mature a student more than 10 weeks of work shadowing.

5.12 However, some employers, especially small companies, may feel that a student will only have learned something in depth and improved their key skills after a set amount of time. We therefore invite students, academics and employing organisations to make judgements about the length of time that is needed if certain learning outcomes are to be achieved.

5.13 Students need early and ongoing support to help them appreciate the nature of the competencies employers seek. They also need support in seeing how competencies might best be developed and how they can reflect on and articulate their experiences. Individual institutions are best placed to identify the most appropriate sources of that support.

5.14 Web support can be a useful tool in the process of reflection, though students say that web-based delivery has to be 'right first time' or they are not likely to persevere with it. Because access to some web-based support is limited, it should be supplemented by face-to-face contact with tutors and/or Careers Services. This has further resource implications for the preparation of web-based material and for personal contacts. The resource issue is further explored in section 6.

RECOMMENDATION 6

We recommend that institutions brief all staff who play a role in guiding students, so that they can work in partnership within the institution.

5.15 Reflection during the study programme is likely to lead students to identify additional tuition needs to prepare them for subsequent periods of work-related learning or even as part of their programme. There should be a means of identifying how these needs can best be satisfied.

RECOMMENDATION 7

We recommend that institutions adopt procedures to help students identify how to fulfil further learning needs identified while reflecting upon their experiences.

6. Addressing funding issues

6.1 It is important that HEFCE funding properly supports work-related learning and that institutional practices should encourage it.

6.2 Students on a sandwich placement year currently contribute £510 to tuition fees to cover the costs to the institution of supporting the placement. This is an additional cost for those (about 50%) who pay fees and adds to other debts they may have. Furthermore, some students on sandwich placements are either not paid or earn a nominal sum. In other cases the placement may restrict the ability of students to earn through a part-time job.

6.3 Some believe that requiring students to pay fees while undertaking work placements sends the wrong messages and some students and their tutors view it as a tax. We consider that all funding formulae should encourage, not discourage, work-based learning.

6.4 The *QAA Code of Practice* has a section that considers placement learning but the nature of the support offered to students by institutions varies considerably. In the best examples of good practice the issues of preparation, support, visiting, assessment and accreditation are taken seriously and students are aware of the learning value of the placement. In poor examples feedback and attempts to capture learning are non-existent. There is not always an explicit and clearly understood relationship between the learning on the placement and what happens on the rest of the course. It is not surprising that some students on such courses question the value of the sandwich approach.

6.5 If students are to record their work-related learning in a Progress File, HE institutions need appropriate levels of staff resource to support this. Some institutions attach greater priority to work-related learning than others and consequently allocate greater resources to supporting it. The same picture emerged in the review of the Careers Services (*the Harris Review, DfES 2001*). Institutions have the right to determine how they allocate their resources, but in some cases the allocation does not adequately reflect the costs.

RECOMMENDATION 8

We invite HEFCE to review the purpose and level of funding for work-related learning, including sandwich placements, and to consider how work-related learning should be properly supported.

6.6 We also need to consider what resource there might be to make it easier for organisations (especially smaller ones) to access students. Job-shops are successful in matching students to businesses, volunteering organisations and community based bodies, but from an employer perspective, the matching processes for other forms of work placement can appear inconsistent. Employers would welcome a more structured approach, perhaps involving local or sector-based agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 9

We invite Higher Education institutions to consider how the resources available from such initiatives as the Active Community Fund (ACF) can best be used to help identify and access students for work placements and volunteering opportunities. We particularly encourage them to work with existing networks and organisations such as Student Volunteering UK and Community Service Volunteers.

6.7 We debated the idea of financial incentives for small businesses to take students, including tax incentives either across the board or aimed at specific sectors. We do not feel we have the expertise to take this forward and are mindful of the bureaucracy that can beset such financial measures.

RECOMMENDATION 10

We invite the Small Business Service to consider whether it would be appropriate to offer financial incentives to businesses that take students on placements.

7. A good practice guide to work-related learning

7.1 Students who are well prepared for their work-based learning are likely to learn more and to make better employees. It would be helpful if there were greater consistency and clarity on such issues as:

- the objectives of the placement
- the agreed expectations of the key players (the student, employers and the institution)
- the roles and responsibilities of each
- how achievements will be measured.

7.2 A Good Practice Guide should be developed to set out the responsibilities of students and organisations as well as what might reasonably be expected from institutions.

7.3 This Guide could build on the *Code of Good Practice for the Operation of the Placement Element of Sandwich Courses in Higher Education* launched jointly by the Association for Sandwich Education and Training (ASET) and the National Centre for Work Experience (NCWE). The Guide would offer generic guidance on good practice for HE institutions, students and employers but leave institutions to develop their own mechanisms for assessment and accreditation.

7.4 The Guide would supplement the section of the *QAA Code of Practice* that considers placement learning. It would cover institutional responsibilities for policies and procedures, the involvement of placement providers, student responsibilities and rights, staff development, the monitoring and evaluation of placement learning and the role of other departments involved, such as Careers Services.

RECOMMENDATION 11

We invite the Careers Services Unit (CSU), in liaison with the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), to take the lead in co-ordinating a Good Practice Guide for work-related learning.

RECOMMENDATION 12

We invite Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) to encourage this process and consider how best to endorse and disseminate the Guide (as CVCP did for the Code on Health and Safety aspects of placements).

7.5 The Guide might be endorsed by appropriate employers and professional organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and the Federation of Small Businesses. It should be relevant to students undertaking all forms of work-related learning.

Appendix A

Membership of the main group

Richard Brown	Council for Industry and Higher Education (Chair)
Kelly Drake	Student Volunteering UK
Dominic Drane	National Association of Student Employment Staff (NASES)
Geraldine Grainger	John Lewis Partnership
Nick Harris	Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
Sophie Holmes	Student Activities & Development in Action (STADIA)
William Locke	Universities UK
Patricia McChesney	Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)
Jan McFall	Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
Dr David Pollard	University of Surrey
Helen Pownall	Careers Services Unit (CSU)
Liz Rhodes MBE	National Centre for Work Experience (NCWE)
Helen Rolph	Royal Mail
Professor Gillian Slater	Bournemouth University
Dr Sheila Watt	Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
Secretary:	Val Chambers, DfES

Dr John Wilson (University of Central Lancashire and ASET Executive) helped us to write this report.

We established three sub-groups to consider:

- the extent of current work experience across Higher Education (*"Statistics and Research"*)
- the views of employers (*"Employer Issues"*)
- the concept of a national certificate in work experience (*"Certification"*)

The composition of these sub-groups is shown in Appendix B.

Others have been involved in offering advice (including the CBI, AGR, IoD, and ASET) and to all we offer our thanks.

Research was commissioned via HEFCE for the first of the sub-groups in Appendix B. It was undertaken by Lee Harvey, Sue Moon and Nicola Marlow-Hayne (CRQ, University of Central England), Brenda Little (CHERI, Open University) and David Pierce. Their work has informed our thinking and their findings are summarised in Appendix C and issued in an accompanying report.

Further research, on the effects on students' academic progress of their extra-curricular work, was commissioned from Professor Claire Callender and is referred to in the text.

Appendix B

Membership and aims of the sub-groups

Sub-group on statistics and research

Aims

To identify the current level of different types of work-based learning, including structured work placements, part-time, casual, vacation, gap year and voluntary work.

Membership

Dr Sheila Watt	HEFCE (Chair)
Dominic Drane	NASES
Helen Pownall	CSU
Liz Rhodes MBE	NCWE
Graeme Rosenberg	HEFCE
Secretary:	Angee Threlfall, DfES

Sub-group on employer issues

Aims

To encourage and improve employer involvement in the provision and accreditation of work-based learning among HE students.

Membership

Helen Rolph	Royal Mail (Chair)
Ann Bailey	Engineering Employers' Federation
Peter Forbes	NCWE and AGR
Ian Handford	Chairman, Federation of Small Businesses
Dr Sheila Watt	HEFCE
Andy Palmer	e-skills NTO
Ann Mason	Hospitality Training Foundation
Beverley Paddey	Distributive NTO
Secretary:	Angee Threlfall, DfES

Sub-group on certification

Aims

To develop a framework for the assessment, accreditation and certification of work-based learning (particularly part-time, casual, vacation, gap year and voluntary work) that will be valued and used by students, employers and institutions.

Membership

Dr David Pollard	University of Surrey (Chair)
Kelly Drake	Student Volunteering UK
Geraldine Grainger	John Lewis Partnership
Sophie Holmes	NUS/STADIA
Patricia McChesney	AGCAS
Bianca Kubler	NCWE
William Locke	Universities UK
Dr Sheila Watt	HEFCE
Nick Harris	QAA
Nick Buchanan	University of Bournemouth
Secretary:	Jan McFall, DfES

Appendix C

Research work: The extent and variety of forms of work-related learning

1. This appendix summarises the research work commissioned via HEFCE (for our statistics and research sub-group). The full research, entitled 'Nature and extent of undergraduates' work experience' is published separately and contains the formal detailed references.

2. Work experience can take a variety of forms. It includes experience that is embedded in the curriculum; experience (perhaps project-linked) that is assessed and accredited; and the part-time vacation and term-time paid and voluntary work that students are increasingly undertaking. In the main, the research took the term 'work experience' to include any form of work that an undergraduate undertakes during his/her period of study. As such, three main categories of work experience were examined:

- organised work experience as part of a programme of study
- organised work experience external to a programme of study
- ad hoc work experience external to a programme of study.

3. The researchers acknowledge that there are inevitably overlaps between the three categories, particularly the second and third. In estimating current levels of activity it is important to remember that for any single student the experience may include any or all of the various elements.

4. The research work suggests that in 1998/99 some 180,000 UK undergraduates were engaged on full-time and sandwich programmes that included organised work experience as part of the programme of study. This represented 17.5% of the total full-time undergraduate population (HESA statistics). This statistic almost certainly underestimates the full extent of such organised work experience. It excludes, for example, students on programmes such as nursing that include compulsory blocks of work experience. Surveys carried out by our researchers found that, in addition to students on sandwich programmes and full-time programmes that include compulsory blocks of professional practice, a significant minority of full-time students were involved in organised work experience in the form of short placements or 'live' projects with employers. Centrally-held institutional data tends to exclude information on the number of students involved in these other forms of organised work experience.

5. Surveys by academic subject complement this overall picture. For example, a 1998 survey of art and design graduates found that 29% had undertaken a period of work placement as part of their degree. A 1999 survey of sociology courses found that almost 40% offered placements.

6. In addition to organised work experience as part of a programme of study, the research noted a variety of forms of work experience that are external to any specific programme of study. This might include structured activity geared to undergraduates with some relevance to work such as courses offered by private organisations to enhance students' personal skills and/or introduce them to the world of work. However, as these did not involve work experience as such, they fell outside the researchers' remit.

7. There was some difficulty in distinguishing between organised work experiences (in that help is given in finding the work opportunities) and those where the work experience is to some extent structured to maximise the benefit to the participant, particularly in terms of learning from it. The lack of centrally available data about the range of activities of this type meant that the researchers were unable to estimate overall levels of activity.
8. Some employers encourage students to work on schemes they sponsor themselves and give some form of recognition. The Asda Flying Start and Shell STEP schemes are examples. Lloyds TSB has recently funded schemes to place Cambridge students in entrepreneurial companies in the Cambridge area and to place students, especially ones from ethnic backgrounds, in small companies in London.
9. The researchers noted that little is reliably known about the numbers of undergraduates benefiting from initiatives like those described above. However, the researchers conclude that numbers on schemes offering organised work experience (external to the programme of study) and support for learning are probably low. This might be because of a lack of capacity or because of a lack of student interest. The limited numbers involved on schemes that offer support for learning and some form of independent certification suggest that the certificate does not carry enough weight in the labour market to impress employers and so motivate students to seek certification.
10. When institutions offer assessment of learning derived from ad hoc work experience, the researchers conclude that students fail to make the most of the opportunities available. This is because they seek this kind of work mainly for financial reasons. The level of student participation in this kind of work experience is nevertheless substantial.
11. The Income and Expenditure Survey for 1998/99 suggests that just over 60% of full-time students worked during the year, with 30% working for the same employer throughout. Some 46% of full-time students were employed during term-time, working on average 11 hours per week. Over 80% of full-time students worked over the summer vacation (against 71% in 1995/6). The overall percentages may well have increased again since 1998/9.

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