

2010
Diploma
curriculum

Work experience supporting Diploma programmes

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**Qualifications and Curriculum
Development Agency**

83 Piccadilly
London
W1J 8QA

Telephone 0300 303 3010
Enquiry line 0300 303 3011
Textphone 0300 303 3012
Fax 0300 303 3014
info@qcda.gov.uk
www.qcda.gov.uk

QCDA/10/4573

ISBN 978-1-84962-258-5

First published in January 2010

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Introduction

This guide is for all those who are accountable for the successful completion of work experience in Diploma programmes: Diploma teachers, exams officers and work-related learning coordinators in schools and colleges, and representatives of the education business partnerships that support consortia. It provides guidance on the requirements for work experience and shows how it supports Diploma programmes.

What is work experience?

Work experience is 'a placement with an employer in which a young person carries out a range of tasks in much the same way as an employee, with the emphasis on learning from the experience. Work experience provides opportunities for learning about the skills, behaviours, careers, roles and structures that exist within a workplace or organisation.'

The work-related learning guide (second edition), Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF-00417-2009)

For example, a placement with an employer might start with an induction and some observation, but later the student should carry out specific tasks and make an effective contribution.

Why is work experience required?

Work experience is a vital part of Diploma programmes of study because it enables students to:

- gain knowledge and insights about a real working environment
- develop attributes, and apply knowledge and skills in the context of a real working environment.

Work experience: a placement with an employer in which a young person carries out a range of tasks in much the same way as an employee, with the emphasis on learning from the experience.

The work-related learning guide (second edition), DCSF, 2009

Work experience promotes applied learning, establishing important links with principal learning. It provides the opportunity to apply and develop functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS), while enhancing the student's general employability. It can also provide an opportunity for development of the project.

These aims and the student's own needs and level of maturity should inform the choice of placement, and the learning objectives for that placement.

Case study – Planning work experience to support the programme

An IT Diploma teacher at Weston College in Weston-super-Mare was eager that his Higher Diploma students should cover both the PLTS and some principal learning outcomes during their work experience. He focused on this in his planning and his initial contacts with the employers.

During their placements three students worked on the employer's specification for a business networking website. This drew on their team-working and problem-solving skills.

How many days of work experience do students need to complete?

For the Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diplomas in all lines of learning, students must complete at least 10 days of work experience. Sometimes more than 10 days may be appropriate.

Case study – Building in time for work experience

Model: 5 x 2 days' work experience

Purpose: to fit work experience into a one-year course

A construction and the built environment teacher with six post-16 students on a Foundation Diploma programme at Acton and West London College wanted to fit the work experience into a one-year course and give the learners extra motivation by including some practical work during the work placement. He decided on a model of 5 x 2 days on work experience and three days in college, over a period of five weeks in the summer term.

The teacher and the local education business partnership (EBP) representative talked with students about the particular areas they wanted to work in. The EBP representative approached two construction contractors for placements that would combine practical tasks with insights into a wide range of work areas within construction. The teacher then worked with the EBP representative (who liaised with the employers), identifying how he could follow up the practical work with relevant theory in subsequent lessons. The 5 x 2 day model helped to achieve this.

Should placements always be a 10-day block?

No, the work experience doesn't have to be a 10-day block. You should decide how to structure the provision bearing in mind the following points:

- Remember that a placement of several consecutive days can help the student to gain knowledge of an authentic working environment and build their confidence in consolidating skills.
- Think about how placements can be timed to fit in with work experience arrangements in the consortium without students missing lessons.
- Consider how work experience outside the 10-day block used for most of the cohort may nevertheless offer a greater number of sector-related placements.
- Finally, consider whether employers are more likely to offer placements if they are first consulted on the model and the timing.

Case study – Creative placement planning

Model: 3 + 3 + 4 days' work experience
Purpose: to avoid students missing lessons

It was important that key stage 4 students taking the Higher IT and creative and media Diplomas in the Hull 14–19 Partnership didn't miss any of the principal learning delivery during the traditional block of work experience.

For this reason they went out to placements for the first three days in each of the two weeks, returning to the classroom for Diploma teaching on the Thursday and Friday. The students will be placed for a further four days of work experience in the second year of the course.

Can post-16 students count part-time work as their work experience?

For post-16 students part-time work can be counted as work experience. However, the home school/college must ensure that employers have notified their insurer and carried out a preliminary risk assessment for the student's employment, and that they have made the student fully aware of the risks and of how to conduct themselves at work (see page 13). It is advised that health and safety compliance and risk management are further supported through monitoring during the placement (see page 14).

If part-time work is counted as work experience, the home school/college should be satisfied that students have specific learning objectives for their placement, that it is clear how success in meeting these objectives will be evidenced and that there is a follow-up debriefing (see page 14).

Case study – Linking students' part-time work to the principal learning

Post-16 Higher IT Diploma students in Weston College, Weston-super-Mare, agreed with their tutor how they would meet some of the learning objectives of the topic 'Exploring organisations' through investigation and reflection during their own part-time work. Their employers had notified their insurer and carried out the preliminary Health and Safety Procurement Standards (HASPS) assessment procedures.

One student compared the use of IT applications between the two hotels where she worked. Another was able to compare the stock control devices used by the large retailer where he worked on Saturdays with other IT business applications encountered through his principal learning.

Does work experience for the Diploma programme have to be assessed?

Work experience for the Diploma isn't assessed. However, work experience placements should provide opportunities to enhance understanding and skill development in the rest of the Diploma programme. For this reason, those delivering the Diploma should be involved in identifying the work experience objectives and establishing how learning from the placement will be evidenced.

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Planning work experience



Does work experience have to be in a sector covered by the line of learning?

It's not essential, but to gain real insight into what it's like to work in a sector, this is desirable. See page 16 to find out where you can get further information on work experience in the sectors of the first ten lines of learning.

Think creatively when searching for work experience placements. In all kinds of placements students should be actively encouraged to make connections between different learning environments and contexts, and to transfer knowledge and skills. This is part of applied learning.

- **Creative and media** students might find placements in reprographics and marketing departments in many sectors.
- Virtually every company uses **IT** as part of its business, allowing huge scope for IT Diploma students to investigate how various applications support different business functions.
- **Construction and the built environment** students can consider electro-technical areas, engineering, surveying, architecture, property planning and sales, project management and procurement.
- For students taking **business, administration and finance**, many sectors can offer insights into business practice, enterprise, customer service and market research.

- For **engineering** students, many local authorities, health authorities and other public service organisations employ buildings maintenance staff, architects and civil engineers.
- **Hair and beauty studies** students might be placed in businesses offering customer care. Advanced Diploma students could explore the retailing, marketing or people management aspects. Laboratories conducting product research and development might also be appropriate.
- **Hospitality** Diplomas can be supported by placements concerned with human resources and training. Events management enterprises are worth exploring, particularly for Advanced Diploma students. Also, consider local authority tourism services.
- **Environmental and land-based studies** students might consider businesses and organisations dealing with the environment or environmental conservation. Each local authority will have an environmental department. Also think about businesses and organisations dealing with plants and animals, and the business and ethical insights these can offer. Charities might also offer valuable placements.
- **Manufacturing and product design** students might find placements in the areas of food and drink, chemicals, polymers and pharmaceuticals, processing and print, textiles and clothing and engineering materials. Many businesses have specialists in purchasing, supply chain logistics, sales and research and development.
- **Society, health and development** students might be placed in the children's workforce, the healthcare industry, the community justice sector (including the community police service and prison service) and the adult social care services.

Linking work experience with the rest of the programme

It is paramount that each student's work experience is linked with the rest of their Diploma programme. You can do this through good planning, using either a skills profile or a structured diary that features elements from the programme, and through making the most of the debriefing. A skills profile is a document outlining the skills and processes a student could be required to apply during the placement, for example taking and accurately noting a phone message.

The first step is identifying the work experience learning objectives that will reinforce aspects of the principal learning, provide opportunities to apply and develop the PLTS and functional skills, and possibly support the project. This should be the starting point for the choice of placement.

The proposed learning objectives should be shared with the student, who should have a say in determining them. Ideally objectives should also be agreed with the employer offering the placement, so that they can support them and testify to their completion.

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Case study – A structured approach

Preparation for work experience for the 44 engineering Diploma students at Walworth Academy in Southwark began when the course started. The school used its industry contacts and local authority leads to place each student in a company related to engineering.

Academy staff discussed each placement with the prospective employer, describing the principal learning requirements and the specific learning objectives expected for each student.

After their work experience, the students had an engineering Diploma debriefing to evaluate what they learnt and to ensure the learning objectives were successfully achieved.

It was clear that the students' experiences had helped to make engineering real and exciting, bringing a buzz back to the classroom.

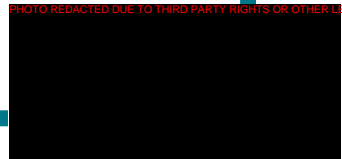


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Skills profiles and structured diaries

A work experience skills profile or structured diary can be a good way to focus on the learning objectives and provide evidence that they have been achieved. If there is already a skills profile or diary in the consortium it might be possible to include customised items. There are off-the-shelf profiles covering aspects of principal learning, and some support PLTS or general employability skills.

Case study – Using skills profiles to share learning objectives with employers

Within the Lincolnshire and Rutland Education Business Partnership, the work-related learning manager consulted with employers and analysed the principal learning specifications to develop placement skills profiles. Produced for the Foundation Diplomas in business, administration and finance, manufacturing and product design, and creative and media, the profiles contain industry-related tasks derived from the principal learning outcomes and the PLTS. In this way they support applied learning and provide students and employers with a structured and focused placement specification. The tasks can be set by the employer during the placement. Early feedback from employers is promising. Skills profiles provide them with a better understanding of the Diploma learning.



Remember...

your local authority will have a policy on approved work experience placements and can advise on sources of support.

Getting support with finding work placements

Your local authority will have a policy on approved work experience placements and can advise on sources of support. It may be funding a local broker working with education and businesses (for example, education business partnerships, training providers, Trident and some colleges) to deliver core services such as procurement of work experience placements.

At a minimum the broker will be carrying out health, safety and welfare checks. However the local authority may have commissioned a level of service that goes beyond this.

Diploma deliverers should consider whether to request a service level that specifically supports Diploma learning. In-depth work might be required to form direct links to Diploma programmes and to ensure that employers fully understand the support they are to provide for students. An enhanced service level may require additional funding.

Health, safety and welfare checks and procedures

The home school/college has a duty to promote 'safe learners' (see www.safelearner.info). This is the case for any work experience involving school/college students. The local authority can advise on this.

This duty means that the home school/college must:

- ensure that a health, safety and welfare visit to the prospective placement has been undertaken by a competent person in accordance with Health and Safety Procurement Standards (HASPS)
- ensure in advance that students understand any health and safety issues particular to their placement, can identify and control risks in the context of their placement, and know how to conduct themselves safely during their placement.

If the home school/college has any level of service agreement with a local education business partnership organisation (EBPO), they will liaise with the employers and carry out these checks for the school/college. An EBPO can also carry out checks on placements that the school/college or the students themselves organise.

During and after work experience

Monitoring students on placements

The duty of care required of the home school/college means that students should be monitored during placements. A visit should be made, but if this is impossible there should be a phone call made to the employer during the placement. The purposes of monitoring are to:

- reinforce student understanding of the health and safety and risk management issues and what this means in terms of how they should conduct themselves
- help ensure that students and the employer are clear on the learning objectives
- give the employer and the student the opportunity to discuss any issues and concerns.

Monitoring also provides the opportunity to consider the employer's equalities policy, as this might have a bearing on the student's welfare.

Debriefing after a placement

A debriefing following the work experience enables the student to reflect on what they have done and learnt, and how this can shape future learning. It also provides the opportunity to evaluate the suitability, strengths and weaknesses of the placement, and to produce feedback for the employer. A skills profile or structured diary can support the debriefing process.

Reporting work experience

The home school/college needs to report to the *Diploma aggregation service* that the student has completed 10 days of work experience.

Where to get more information

Useful publications

- *Work-related learning and the law: guidance for schools and school-business link practitioners* (DFES-0340-2006): publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DFES-0340-2006.pdf
- *Time well spent: embedding employability in work experience*, (CBI 2007): www.cbi.org.uk/pdf/timewellspent.pdf
- *Quality standard for work experience* (D35/3863/0608). A guide for education business partnerships and employers on good practice in organising work experience placements: www.qcda.gov.uk/17875.aspx
- *The work-related learning guide (second edition)* (DCSF-00417-2009): <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk>
- *Career, work-related learning and enterprise 11–19* (QCA/08/3980): www.qcda.gov.uk/20339.aspx

Additional links

- Safelearner website (www.safelearner.info)
- The Criminal Records Bureau website (www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk)
- The 'Diploma' section of the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) website (www.qcda.gov.uk/diploma)

Line of learning information and guides to work experience

- Business, administration and finance: www.fssc.org.uk/720_5.html
- Construction and the built environment: www.cbediploma.co.uk/uploads/WEXguidanceCBE_tcm20-11394.pdf
- Creative and media: www.skillset.org/qualifications/diploma/wrl/article_7296_1.asp
- Engineering: www.semta.org.uk/careers__qualifications/plan_your_career/diplomas__apprenticeships.aspx
- Environmental and land-based studies: www.diplomaelbs.co.uk/welcome/consortia/
- Hair and beauty studies: www.habia.org/index.php?page=667
- Hospitality: www.people1st.co.uk/diplomas/the-diploma-in-hospitality
- Information technology: www.e-skills.com/Diploma-in-IT/Schools-and-Colleges/Employer-Engagement/2440
- Manufacturing and product design: www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk/employers/faqs
- Public services: www.skillsforjustice.com/template01.asp?pageid=693 and www.diplomainpublicservices.co.uk/your-diploma/schools-and-colleges/schools/
- Retail business: www.diplomainretailbusiness.com/Diploma/Educational/Workexperienceandwork-relatedlearning/default.aspx
- Society, health and development: shd.skillsforhealth.org.uk/page
- Sport and active leisure: saldiploma.skillsactive.com/faqs/careers/
- Travel and tourism: www.tandtdiploma.co.uk/faqs/#workexperience



About this publication

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