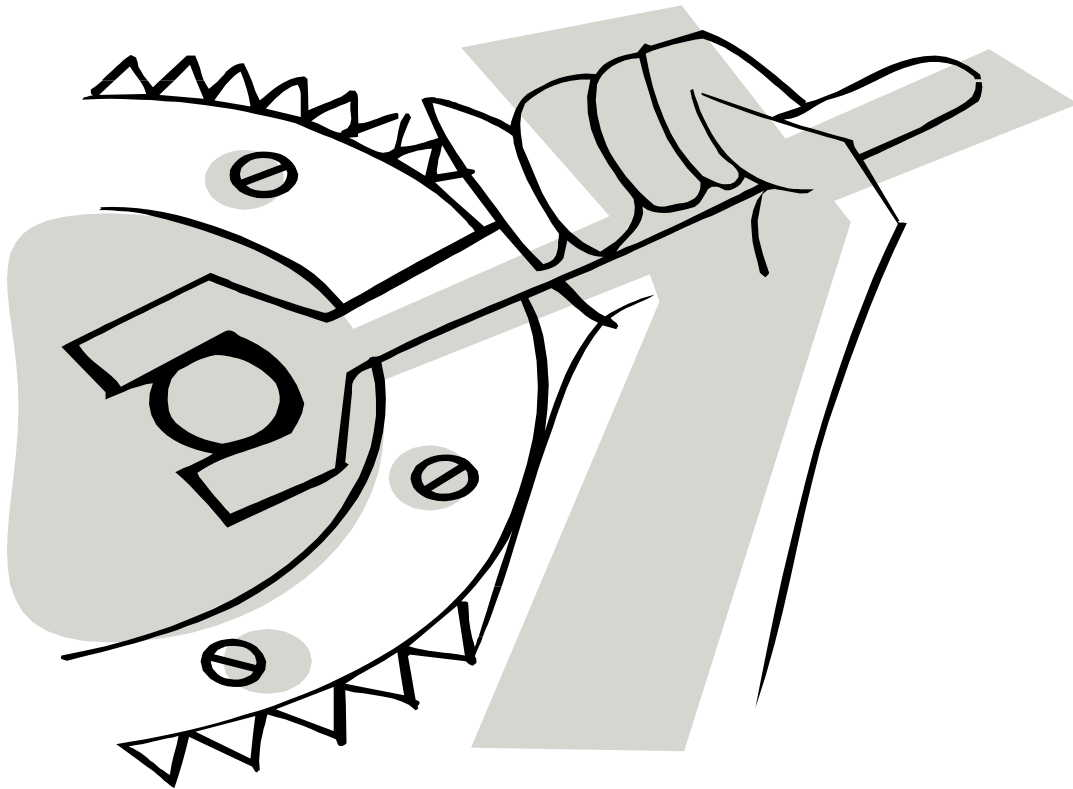




SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD

Learning Through Work

Good Practice Guide





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Learning Through Work

Good Practice Guide

The South Eastern Education and Library Board would like to thank the schools, individual teachers, students and employers who have participated in this project. Without their enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to push boundaries the project would not have been a success. Capturing these experiences has made the production of this guide possible.

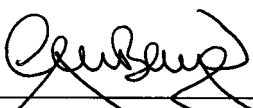
FOREWORD

Young people are growing up in a rapidly changing society. Despite what some might see as uncertainty it is also a time of great opportunity. Technology is bringing about a revolution in the way we live and work. Employers expect that school leavers will join the workforce with good levels of attainment in literacy, numeracy and ICT. They are also asking for more - including the ability to work in teams, to show an aptitude for problem-solving, and being able to deploy effective interpersonal skills. These skills and attributes will be developed more successfully when the learning experiences of our young people are relevant, exciting and have a demonstrable connection with the real world.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) has risen to the curriculum innovation challenge. It has been at the forefront of creating effective partnerships with local businesses and other organisations. The outcomes of this work, undertaken in collaboration with enthusiastic teachers, sets an exemplary standard by which to measure future developments.

This very practical “Learning Through Work” manual is an interactive document which sets out ‘strategic’ questions. By responding to these questions subject teachers and curriculum planners will be able to come up with models of practice appropriate to their circumstances. This publication is all the more useful because it contains authentic, tried-and-tested examples of using businesses as a learning resource. These examples show how young people can truly “learn through work”.

I am delighted to endorse the approach and practice contained within this manual since it reflects CCEA’s vision for the revised Northern Ireland curriculum. I would encourage schools and others to make use of this valuable publication.

Signed 
Gavin Boyd
Chief Executive, CCEA

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Section 1 – Learning Through Work

Introduction

The aim of the Learning Through Work project has been to demonstrate that aspects of the curriculum can successfully be learned and evidenced in the workplace. The purpose of the Good Practice Guide is to provide a practical toolkit for teachers and curriculum planners to use in developing quality work-based learning experiences for students following courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16.

This guide unpacks the experience of students, teachers and employers who have participated in the project and provides exemplar practice through case studies. It is intended that schools build on these experiences to develop further the opportunities for learning in the workplace. In doing so they will be best placed to harness the opportunities the curriculum review will bring.

Original Rationale for the Learning Through Work (LTW) Project

In acknowledging curriculum review the South Eastern Education & Library Board (SEELB) was keen to create opportunities for increasing the level of involvement of the business community in supporting schools in the delivery of education. It was recognised that to bring about substantial change in the way in which education views business and vice versa, any new developments involving education and business partnership must be firmly rooted within the curriculum. It was also necessary to demonstrate that student learning and experience gained through the workplace can form a valuable part of the accreditation system. This recognition was vital if wider acceptance of the value of such activity was to be gained among employers, teachers, students and parents.

Much valuable work has been carried out to develop links between schools and business in order to provide students with work experience opportunities, to facilitate industry visits and arrange guest speakers. It was realised that this work could be further developed and refined by delivering aspects of the curriculum in the workplace. Work-related learning could be taken one stage further to enable 'Learning Through Work.'

The project was established in 1999 to provide a means of testing the hypothesis that student learning within certain subjects and programmes can be enhanced through the provision of learning experiences in the workplace. An initial phase of the project was subsequently evaluated by CCEA with the findings contributing to this guide. The project was then extended further by the appointment of a full time Project Manager for a two year period. The range of subject areas was extended and opportunities were developed at both post-16 and Key Stage 4.

The Case for Learning in the Workplace

The impact of globalisation and technological change means that jobs have increasing skills requirements. Employers are looking for personnel to be increasingly flexible, to possess wide-ranging skills and to be able to adapt to a constantly changing workplace. Young people also need to take personal responsibility for seeking out training opportunities and career development as part of lifelong learning. The challenge for the education system is to continue to develop new and innovative ways for our young people to develop these skills and attributes.

It has been accepted for some time that students need to be able to make a greater connection between the theory learnt in the classroom and practice in the workplace. It is essential that young people see the workplace as a venue for continual learning and development. It is therefore imperative that we explore every possibility for young people to begin this process of learning outside of the classroom.

The following key principles underpinned the good practice evidenced by schools, employers and students involved in this project -

- A commitment to curriculum innovation;
- A strong belief in students' ability to be independent learners;
- The creating and sustaining of effective partnerships;
- The development and retention of clear objectives;
- An openness to the unexpected;
- An attention to detail in planning;
- A sharing of good practice;
- The celebration of success
- A willingness to take risks!!

Section 2 - Learning Through Work

What makes it all worthwhile?

Project Evaluation

Throughout the project monitoring and evaluation procedures have been in place to ensure that useful knowledge was gathered in order to inform future practice. This was achieved through a range of strategies. Firstly the Project Manager was in regular contact with both schools and employers as placements were established and implemented. Secondly, a post-placement evaluation process was also established which involved the completion of structured interviews with a sample of participating employers, students and teachers. In addition all participants completed written questionnaires that focused on the following areas -

- Attitude of students to the placement experience
- Benefits to students and opportunities for learning
- Impact on students future education and careers aspirations
- Value teachers placed on the experiences
- Employers' views on how the placements ran
- Benefits employers saw in the project for students and their businesses

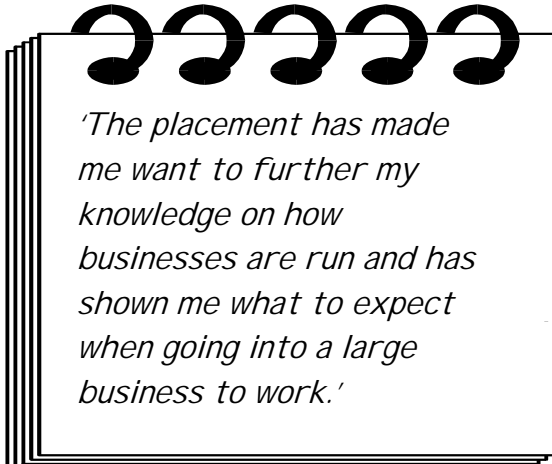
In the evaluation of the project it quickly became evident that students and teachers had found the project both worthwhile and exciting. Employers readily appreciated the structure of the project and their ability to contribute to it. The placements were about taking part in real work-based activities, taking learning out of the classroom, seeing theory in practice and doing it for real.

The following comments provide an overview of the findings from the evaluation of the project. It evidences the perspectives of participating students, teachers and employers.

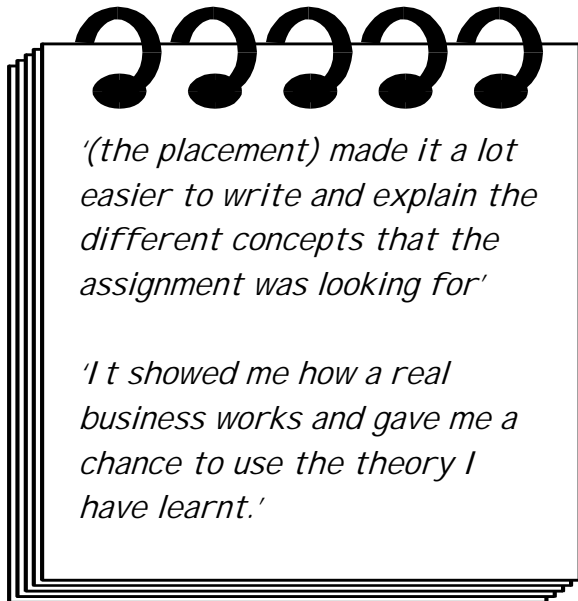
STUDENTS

Students studying for 'A' Level, AVCE and GCSE courses from a range of schools in differing geographic areas took part. Comments from students confirmed that they found the contact with the world of work an excellent means of reinforcing their knowledge not only for examination purposes but from the point of view of career development.

A majority (84%) have rated their placement experience as being enjoyable and worthwhile.



'The placement has made me want to further my knowledge on how businesses are run and has shown me what to expect when going into a large business to work.'



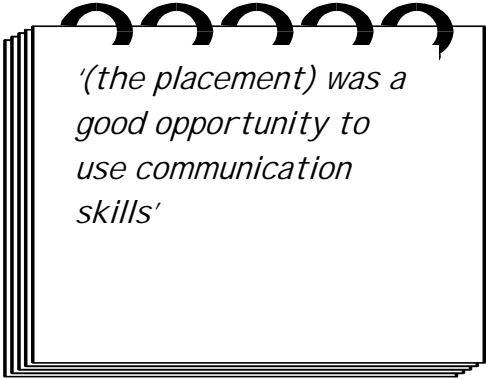
'(the placement) made it a lot easier to write and explain the different concepts that the assignment was looking for'

'It showed me how a real business works and gave me a chance to use the theory I have learnt.'

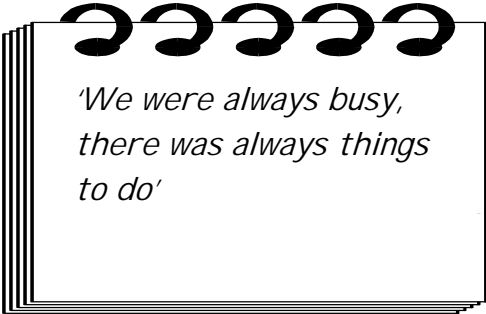
A majority (72%) have seen the placement as a good opportunity to gather evidence, and have been able to make the links between classroom theory and workplace practice.

STUDENTS

In addition a small group of students (approximately 12%) volunteered the information that there were opportunities to develop communication skills.



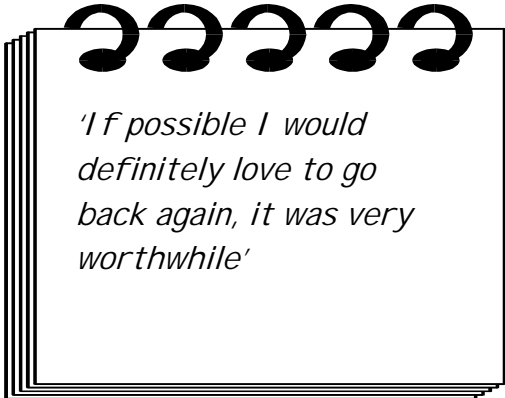
'(the placement) was a good opportunity to use communication skills'



'We were always busy, there was always things to do'

A majority of students (69%) felt sufficiently occupied during their time out on placement.

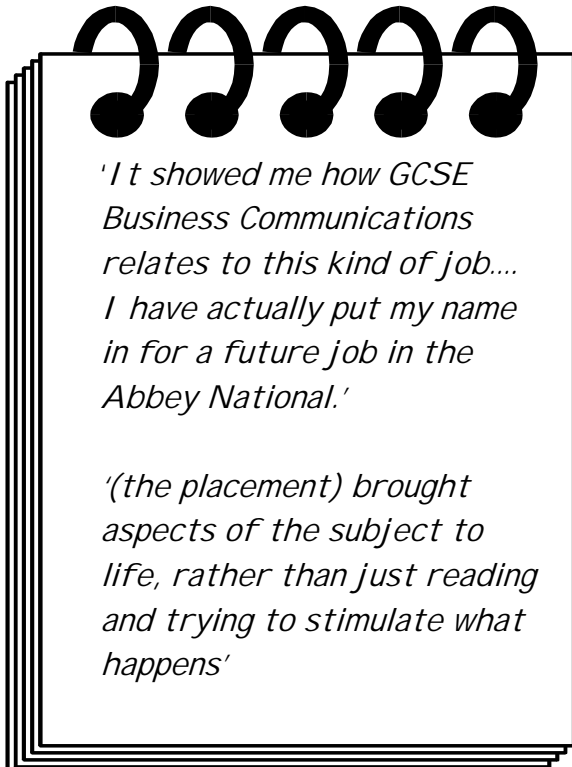
78% felt the placement was long enough, however 58% of this group indicated that they would like to have had the opportunity to spend more time out on placement or to go out again, later on in the course.



'If possible I would definitely love to go back again, it was very worthwhile'

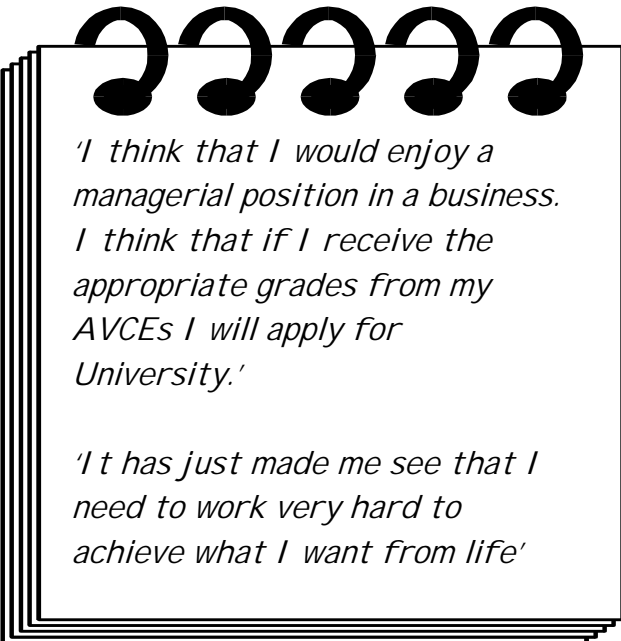
STUDENTS

66% felt it had had an impact on their Career or Further and Higher Education aspirations. 100% noted that they had gained an increased insight into the world of work.



'It showed me how GCSE Business Communications relates to this kind of job... I have actually put my name in for a future job in the Abbey National.'

'(the placement) brought aspects of the subject to life, rather than just reading and trying to stimulate what happens'



'I think that I would enjoy a managerial position in a business. I think that if I receive the appropriate grades from my AVCEs I will apply for University.'

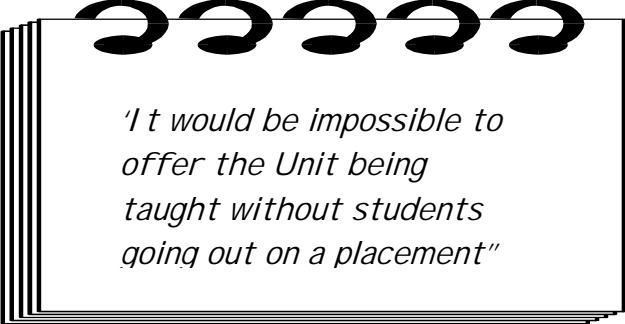
'It has just made me see that I need to work very hard to achieve what I want from life'

For some the placement had confirmed an interest whilst others had been put off certain career choices. Some had found the work harder than they expected.


TEACHERS

100% of the teachers who participated in the project have been extremely positive.

Teachers of Leisure & Tourism and Business Studies have particularly indicated that they would have struggled to deliver the subject without the opportunity for the students to go out on LTW placements.



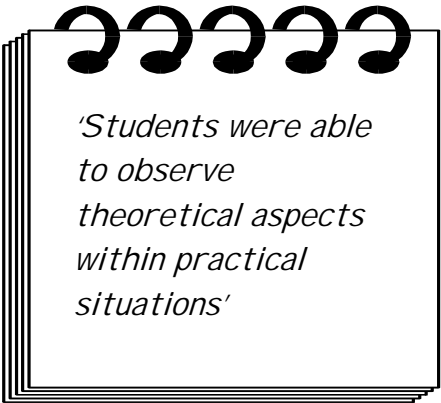
'It would be impossible to offer the Unit being taught without students going out on a placement''



'We are depending on doing it again in the next academic year'

100% of participating teachers now see LTW as a vital part of the on-going delivery of the course.

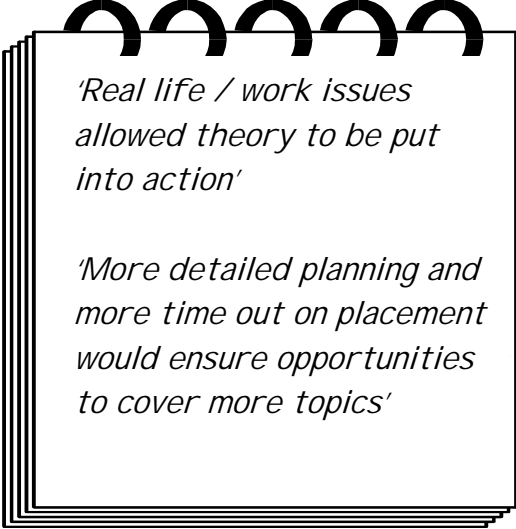
Business Studies teachers in particular are keen to extend opportunities given the requirements that AVCE specifications place on building links with businesses.



'Students were able to observe theoretical aspects within practical situations'

TEACHERS

One teacher who described LTW as a '*fantastic opportunity*' has engaged other subject areas in the school through spreading the word. All teachers have commented on the value of learning outside of the classroom.

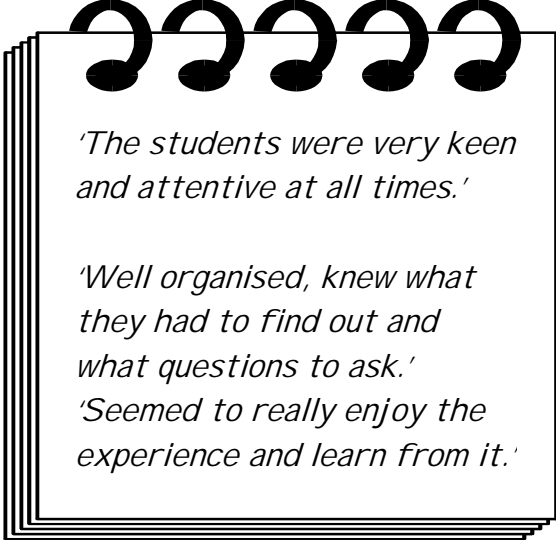


'Real life / work issues allowed theory to be put into action'

'More detailed planning and more time out on placement would ensure opportunities to cover more topics'

EMPLOYERS

100% of employers commented that they appreciated the clear objectives of the placements established, through project. Employers felt it was very useful in terms of determining placement content.



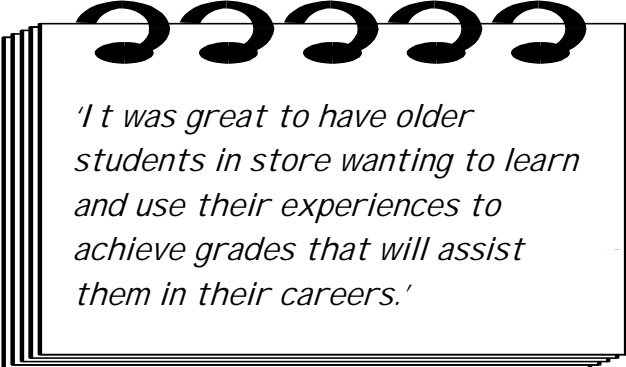
'The students were very keen and attentive at all times.'

'Well organised, knew what they had to find out and what questions to ask.'

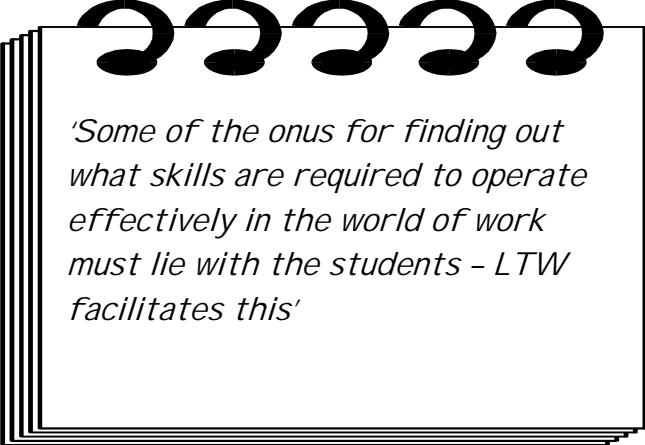
'Seemed to really enjoy the experience and learn from it.'

80% of employers were very happy with the student's attitude towards the placement and valued the pre-placement briefing.

100% of employers felt the project was valuable and worthwhile.



'It was great to have older students in store wanting to learn and use their experiences to achieve grades that will assist them in their careers.'



'Some of the onus for finding out what skills are required to operate effectively in the world of work must lie with the students - LTW facilitates this'

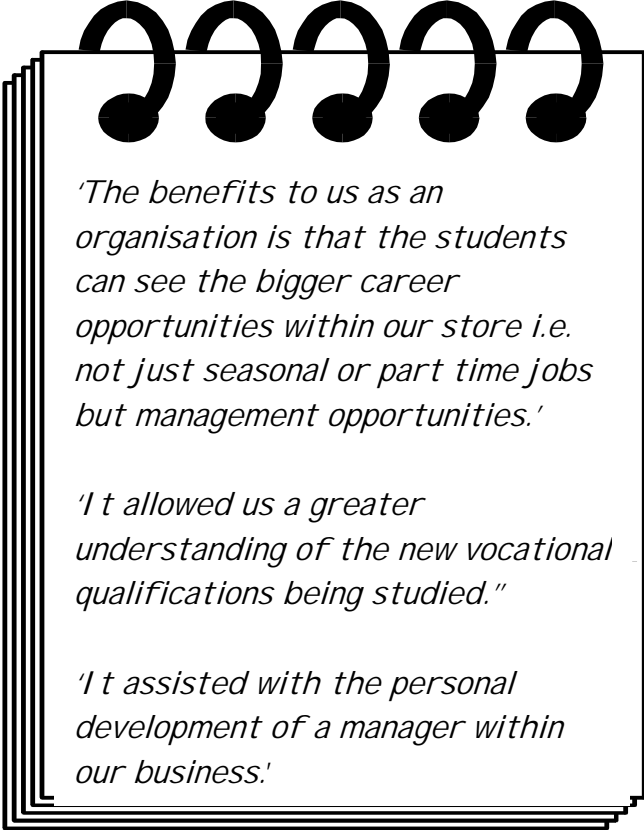
EMPLOYERS

Employers stated the following reasons and benefits for participating in the project.

80% noted that they saw the students as potential future employees.

60% of employers noted that they participated in order to contribute to the local community.

40% noted that they saw it as an opportunity to promote their area of work and the type of skills needed.

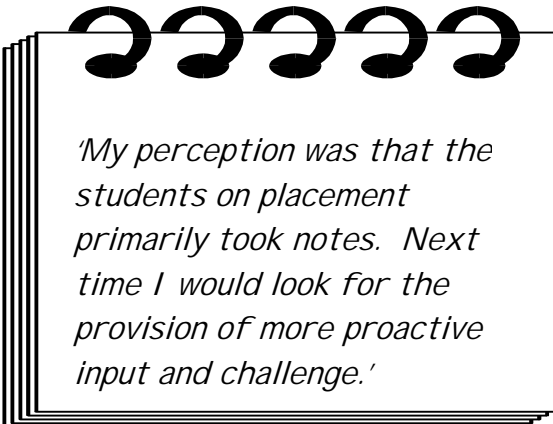


'The benefits to us as an organisation is that the students can see the bigger career opportunities within our store i.e. not just seasonal or part time jobs but management opportunities.'

'It allowed us a greater understanding of the new vocational qualifications being studied.'

'It assisted with the personal development of a manager within our business.'

Most employers commented that they would like to have seen the students using more critical thinking skills in terms of the questions that they ask. One employer commented -

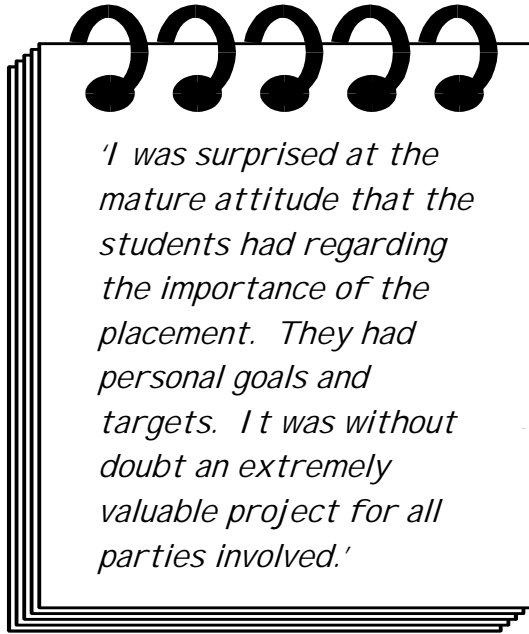


'My perception was that the students on placement primarily took notes. Next time I would look for the provision of more proactive input and challenge.'

EMPLOYERS

100% of employers that have participated have agreed to carry on hosting placements.

One employer commented following the placement experience.

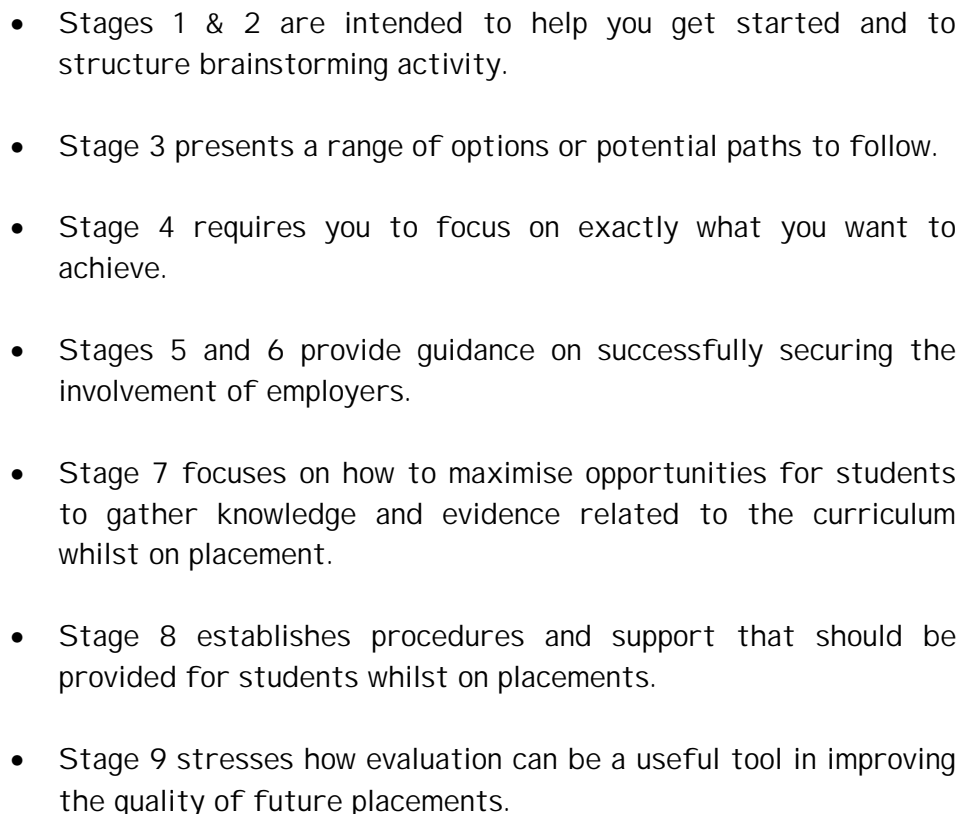


Section 3 – Making the Most of Placements

An important outcome of the project has been to identify and map out the planning processes that have ultimately lead to successful placements. It is crucial that students, teacher and employers are effectively engaged in the process. Maintaining effective involvement of all partners depends largely on good planning and organisation.

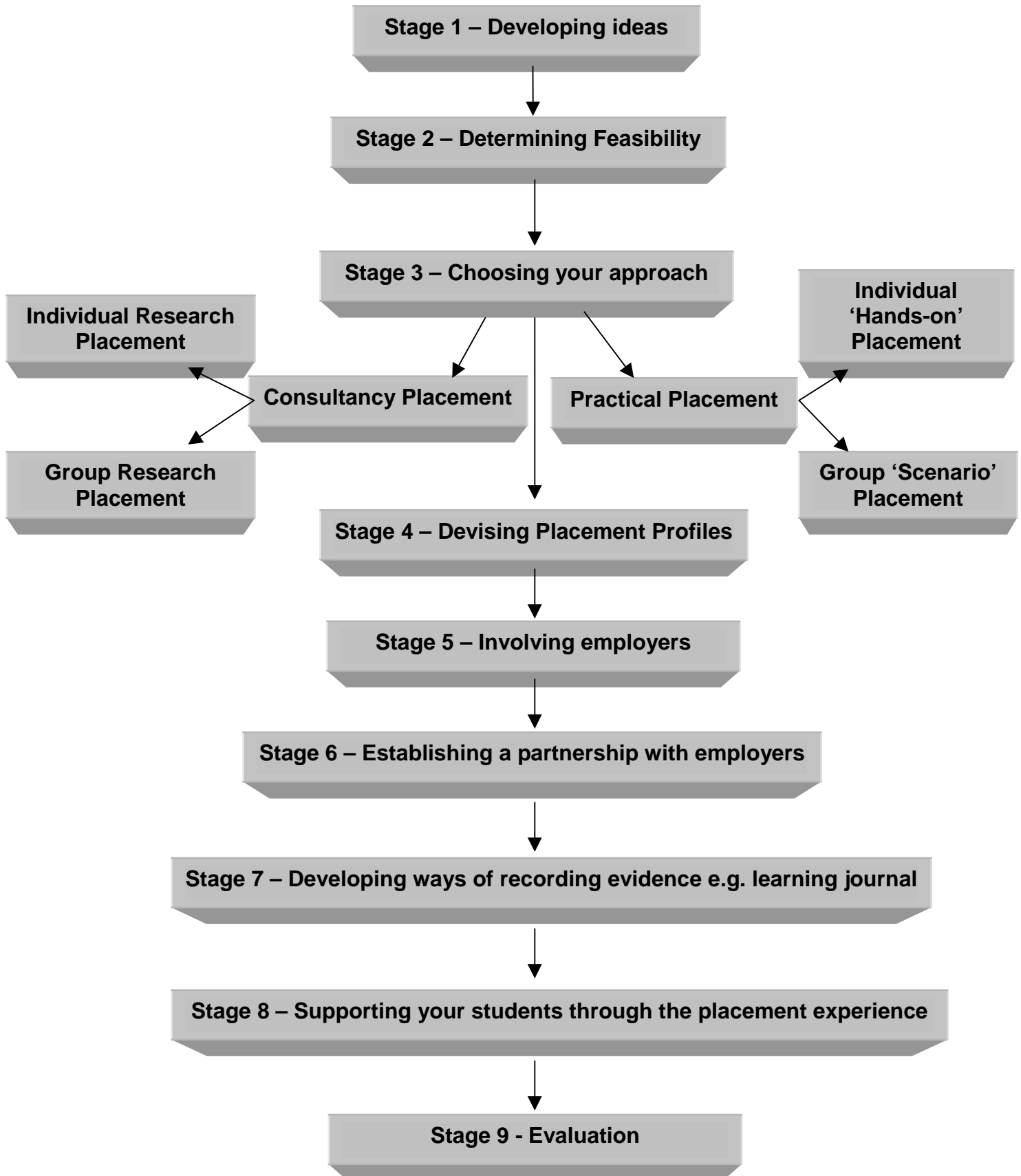
This section of the booklet provides step by step guidance on each of the key stages of the LTW process. In turn, each stage is further broken down explaining what is involved, posing some key questions and offering some suggestions and possible solutions. This will hopefully be of assistance as you to work your way through the booklet.

The following 9 stages have been identified –

- 
- Stages 1 & 2 are intended to help you get started and to structure brainstorming activity.
 - Stage 3 presents a range of options or potential paths to follow.
 - Stage 4 requires you to focus on exactly what you want to achieve.
 - Stages 5 and 6 provide guidance on successfully securing the involvement of employers.
 - Stage 7 focuses on how to maximise opportunities for students to gather knowledge and evidence related to the curriculum whilst on placement.
 - Stage 8 establishes procedures and support that should be provided for students whilst on placements.
 - Stage 9 stresses how evaluation can be a useful tool in improving the quality of future placements.

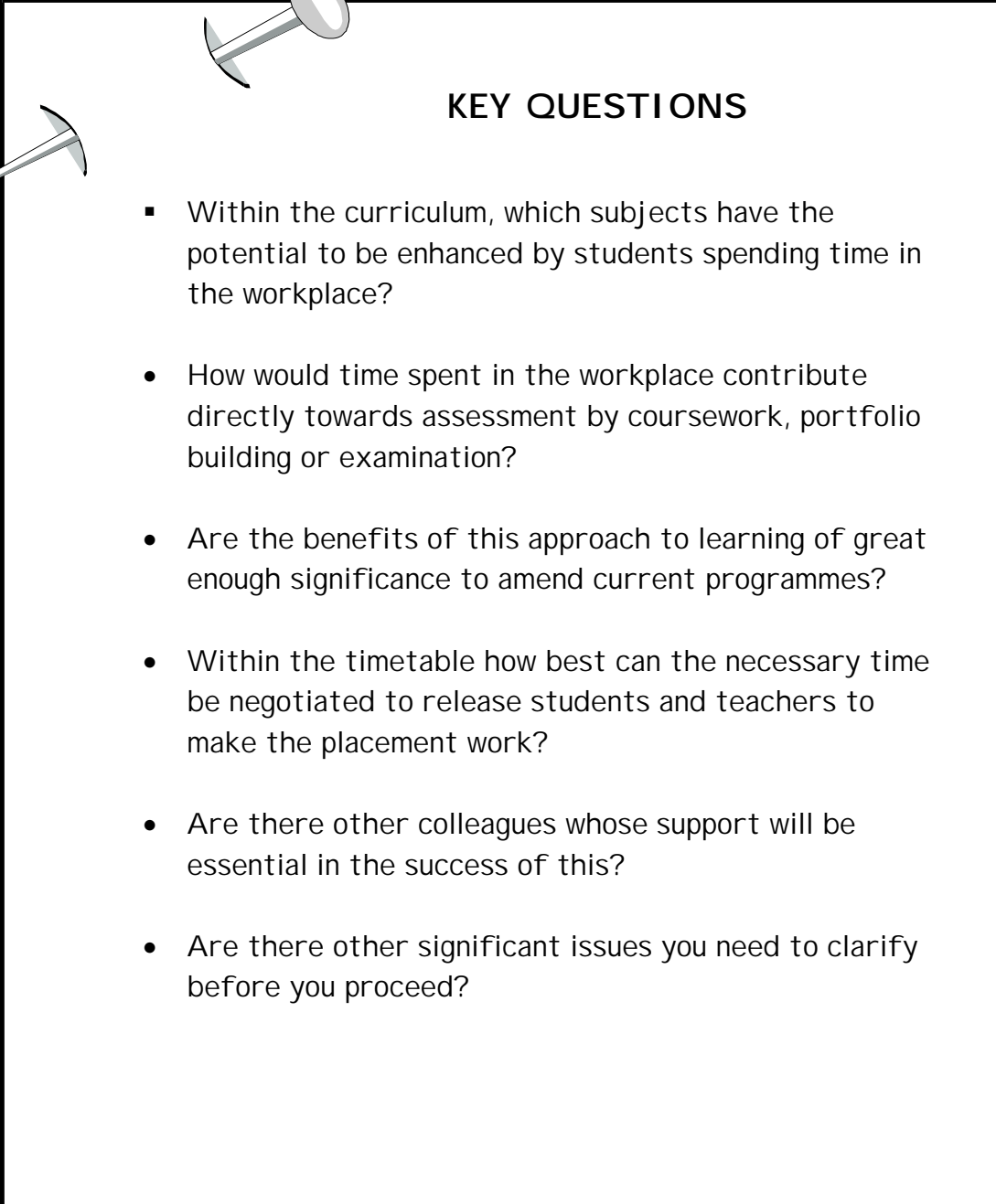
These stages are detailed in a flow chart on the next page.

Key Stages in Establishing Effective Placements



Stage 1 - Developing Ideas

This first stage is crucial. The identification of an appropriate focus for the introduction of the LTW process, to the curriculum, is the key to ultimate success. To assist in this identification process it may be useful to consider the following questions either at a whole school or at department level.

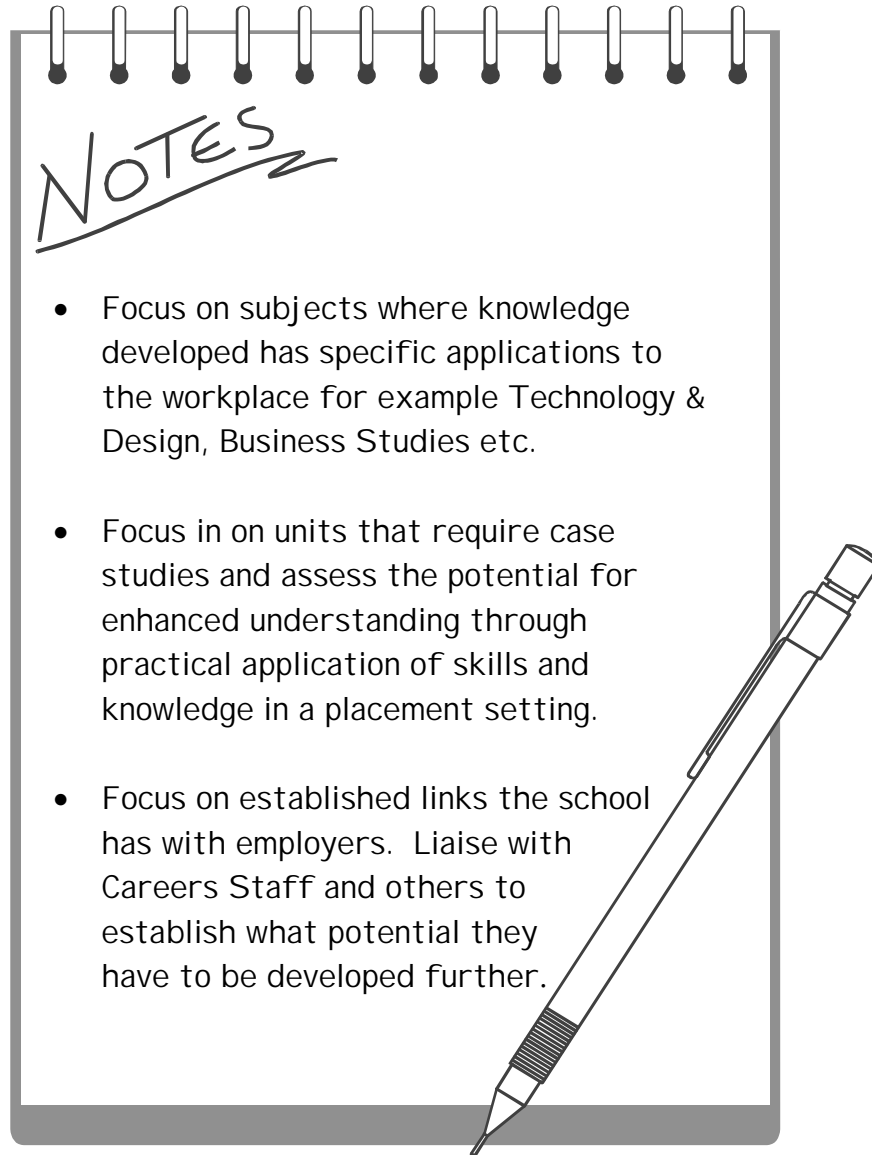


KEY QUESTIONS

- Within the curriculum, which subjects have the potential to be enhanced by students spending time in the workplace?
- How would time spent in the workplace contribute directly towards assessment by coursework, portfolio building or examination?
- Are the benefits of this approach to learning of great enough significance to amend current programmes?
- Within the timetable how best can the necessary time be negotiated to release students and teachers to make the placement work?
- Are there other colleagues whose support will be essential in the success of this?
- Are there other significant issues you need to clarify before you proceed?

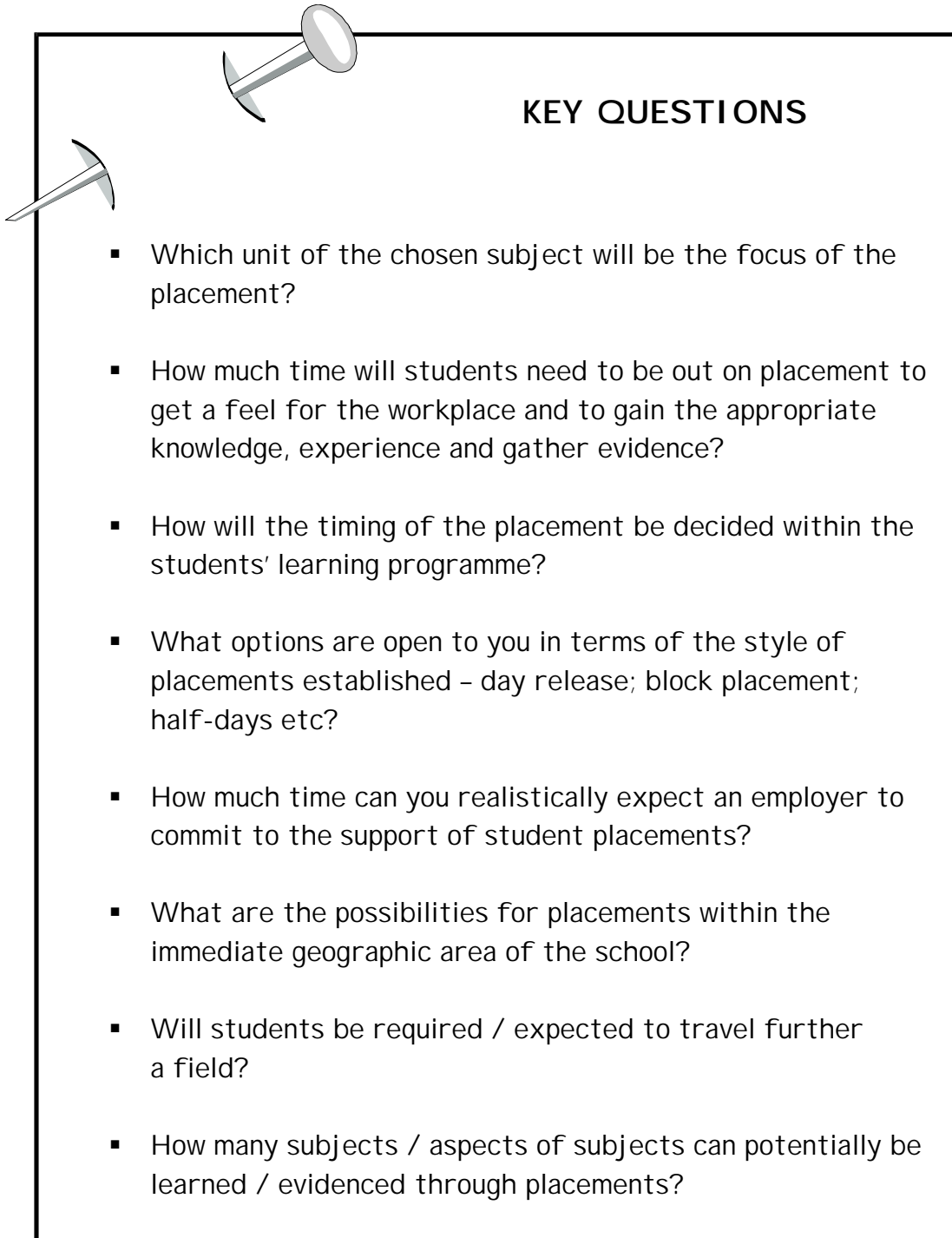
Some Ideas

Experience from the project suggests that most subject areas have the potential for some element of learning to be achieved in the workplace. It may be useful for schools or departments to consider the following ideas –



Stage 2 - Determining Feasibility

Experience has shown that careful planning and setting a realistic time-scale is a key factor in achieving your objectives. The more time you have to plan and prepare the more potential there is for the outcomes to be successful. The following questions should be addressed at an early stage in order to avoid difficulties in terms of expectations, arising at a later stage.



KEY QUESTIONS

- Which unit of the chosen subject will be the focus of the placement?
- How much time will students need to be out on placement to get a feel for the workplace and to gain the appropriate knowledge, experience and gather evidence?
- How will the timing of the placement be decided within the students' learning programme?
- What options are open to you in terms of the style of placements established – day release; block placement; half-days etc?
- How much time can you realistically expect an employer to commit to the support of student placements?
- What are the possibilities for placements within the immediate geographic area of the school?
- Will students be required / expected to travel further a field?
- How many subjects / aspects of subjects can potentially be learned / evidenced through placements?

Choosing a Focus

- In determining the potential value of a placement it is important to focus on areas of the programme of learning that can be met tangibly in the workplace. Units of study that are more applied than conceptual will obviously lend themselves better to a 'hands-on' approach.
- Employers will only have a limited amount of time to give and it is important to work out your priorities in terms of meeting the subject specification. This will ensure that you are not expecting to achieve too much from the placement experience. Typically within the project the placements that worked best focussed specifically on one unit of study that could be evidenced in a variety of organisations.

Timetabling of Placements

Schools in the project worked pro-actively to make the time for students to go out on placement. Examples include –

Time Allocation	Advantage
Half a day a week, over a six week period (9.30am-12.30pm or 2.00pm-5.00pm)	This method worked well as it caused minimal disruption to the timetable and was not overly time-consuming on the part of employers.
A full day, over a six week period	This method worked well for placements that focused on gaining practical experience e.g. customer care, communication etc.
A block week	This worked well as it enabled students to immerse themselves in what was happening over the course of a week.

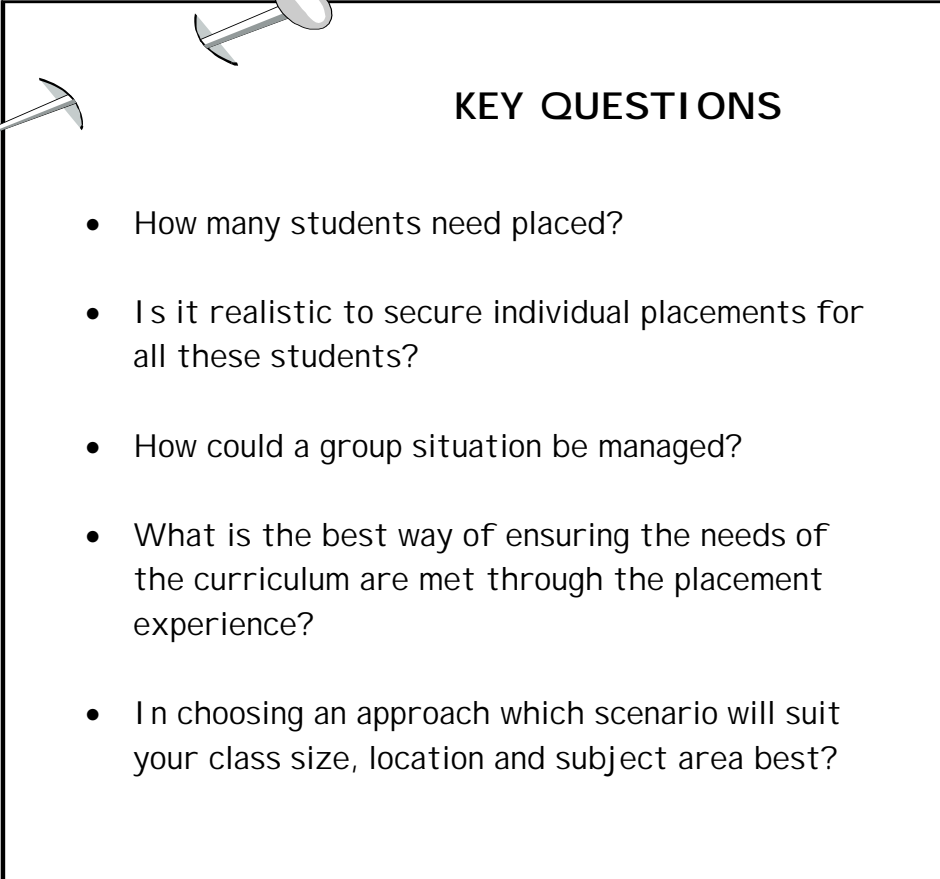
Some points for consideration -

- It is worth ensuring that sufficient time is allowed to enable departmental staff to visit students on placement
- Many schools offer at least a weeks' work experience at Key Stage 4 to allow students to find out what sort of general expectations will be placed on them in the world of work, and to pursue specific career interests. Offering Learning Through Work placements as separate provision avoids a conflict of interest, and encourages the students to focus on curriculum needs.

Transport

- Careful consideration also needs to be given to locality of placement and issues in relation to transport. Students may not necessarily feel comfortable travelling to all areas, or lack of public transport may be a barrier. Some schools in the project were able to overcome these difficulties by arranging to use their own transport.

Stage 3 - Deciding on an Approach



KEY QUESTIONS

- How many students need placed?
- Is it realistic to secure individual placements for all these students?
- How could a group situation be managed?
- What is the best way of ensuring the needs of the curriculum are met through the placement experience?
- In choosing an approach which scenario will suit your class size, location and subject area best?

Potential Solutions

Working out logistics plays a large part in deciding on an approach. A large number of students going to the same host organisation may seem the most straightforward. However it may result in fewer opportunities for individuals to engage in practical work. During the project a range of approaches were used to address these issues. Four types of placement experience were identified which have been categorised as follows: –

- Practical 'Hands-on' placements – Individual
- Practical 'Scenario' placements – Group
- Consultancy placements – Individual
- Consultancy placements – Group

These types are detailed on the next page. Detailed case studies of these approaches can be found in appendix 1.

Practical 'Hands-on' Placements for Individuals

This style of placement was established where there was an onus on individual students to meet assessment objectives through practical activities. For example, in AVCE Leisure & Recreation the handling of a real life complaint as part of customer service in a host organisation, rather than the teacher using role-play in the classroom, is essential.

Practical Placements for Groups

This scenario described placements where small groups of students participated in practical work. An example of this was Business Studies students undertaking practical management tasks. As a guideline, a maximum of four students per organisation worked well in the project. This also allowed opportunities for group work - "working with others" - e.g. planning and delivering a presentation on findings to a senior management team and gathering and sharing evidence to take back to school, to add to their portfolios.

Consultancy Placements for Individuals

This style of placement generally occurred where students were studying for 'A' Level courses. These experiences were related to research for individual coursework projects. An example of this was a student of Home Economics who undertook a research project in response to a health promotion brief, set by a charity. This is a useful approach where students within class groups have a range of coursework options to choose from.

Consultancy Placements for Groups

This style of placement was used in situations where class sizes were very large or when it was impractical to place a group with a single employer. Students took on the role of 'consultant' to an organisation. This model provided an excellent way of working with small employers. A good example of this was an AVCE ICT class who worked with a small employer to design a database in order to improve efficiency, using ICT equipment within the school.

On the following page the table locates examples of placements within the four different styles. It will help you to identify what style of placement best suits your objectives.

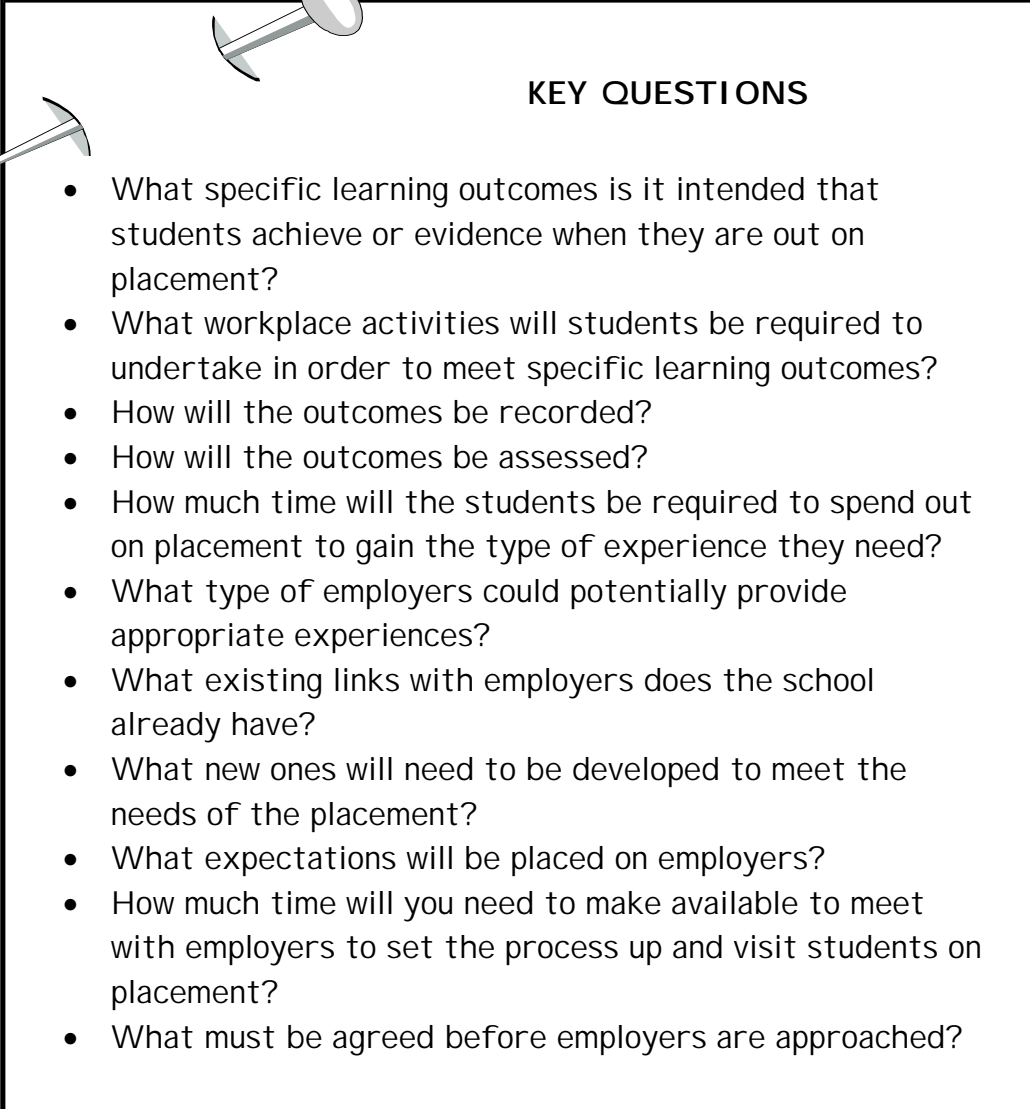
Choosing an Approach

Consultancy Placements		Practical Placements	
<i>Individual</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Individual</i>
<p>A Level Technology Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students trialled and received critiques on initial design and make projects to inform their coursework in Denroy International Plc ◆ Students spent time in Huddleston's Engineering working in manufacturing to inform their coursework. <p>A Level Home Economics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A student used their coursework to respond to research briefs established by the Chest, Heart & Stroke Association. 	<p>AVCE Information Communication Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students, as a group, undertook a consultancy project with Guidelines Tourism to evidence the Units in 'Presenting Information.' <p>AVCE Business Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students, as a group, undertook a consultancy project for Bangor & Holywood Town Centre Management Company to devise a marketing strategy for the towns as retail destinations 	<p>AVCE/GNVQ Business Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students evidenced units in Human Resources through working in Munster Simms Engineering Ltd. ◆ Students evidenced units in Marketing through working in the marketing department in Northern Bank. ◆ Students evidenced units in Management & Enterprise through working in Marks & Spencer, Makro, Tesco and the Hastings Hotel Group. ◆ Students evidenced units in use of ICT in Business in the Nationwide. <p>AVCE Construction and the Built Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students evidenced units in Resource Management through working in R G Coulter Ltd. <p>GCSE Business Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students evidenced aspects of the course through practically working in the Abbey National and Halifax. 	<p>AVCE/GNVQ Travel & Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students evidenced units in Customer Care through working in the Hastings Hotel Group. <p>AVCE Leisure and Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students evidenced units in Customer Service through working in the Hastings Hotel Group, The Burrendale Hotel & Country Club, Board Outdoor Education Centres and Down District Council Leisure Centres. <p>GCSE Leisure and Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students worked in a variety of leisure and hospitality settings to gain practical experience of customer care. <p>AVCE Health & Social Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Students worked in a variety of health and social care settings to evidence their use of communication skills.

Stage 4 - Developing a Placement Profile

You will need to build up a "placement profile" which sets out what knowledge and experience you require your students to gain, in order to meet specific curriculum outcomes. The placement profile provides an excellent basis upon which to begin discussions with employers. This will help potential employers to see the placement experience as something tangible, with clear outcomes to which they can contribute effectively.

Once you have decided on the student group, subject area and topic(s), which are to be the focus of the placement, a detailed placement profile, can be drawn up. In so doing a useful approach to the development of placement profiles is to consider, with colleagues, the following questions.



KEY QUESTIONS

- What specific learning outcomes is it intended that students achieve or evidence when they are out on placement?
- What workplace activities will students be required to undertake in order to meet specific learning outcomes?
- How will the outcomes be recorded?
- How will the outcomes be assessed?
- How much time will the students be required to spend out on placement to gain the type of experience they need?
- What type of employers could potentially provide appropriate experiences?
- What existing links with employers does the school already have?
- What new ones will need to be developed to meet the needs of the placement?
- What expectations will be placed on employers?
- How much time will you need to make available to meet with employers to set the process up and visit students on placement?
- What must be agreed before employers are approached?

Before approaching employers it is vital to have a clear idea of the times when your students can be released from school and ensure that 'in-house' arrangements within the school are taken care of. On the next page is an example of a placement profile from the project which a school used in seeking opportunities for AVCE Leisure & Recreation students.

LTW PLACEMENT PROFILE

Subject Area: AVCE Leisure & Tourism.....

No of students needing placed? 14.....

Time of Year: First Term (October / November)

Day: One Monday afternoon per week

Number of weeks: 6.....

Specific Learning objectives to be achieved:

In order to meet the minimum requirements of the Unit in Customer Service it is essential for students to gain experience in -

- Providing information and advice to individuals and groups
- Using communication and selling skills appropriately
- Dealing with customers on the telephone
- Dealing with customers in writing
- Handling customer complaints effectively and sensitively
- Researching the key customer service quality criteria for each organisation
- Monitoring the effectiveness of customer service in the host organisation
- Evaluate the effectiveness of customer service in each organisation

Essential Learning opportunities required through placement:

- Any placement secured must provide students with the opportunity to gain face-to-face customer contact

Types of Employers / Which Location?

Following brainstorming and liaison with other departments in the school a range of leisure and tourism organisations were identified.

Stage 5 - Involving Employers

Employers are often under pressure from competing demands so brevity and clarity in your approach are essential. It is also a good idea to avoid using unnecessary educational jargon as this can alienate employers. In planning the placement you can provide employers with the opportunity to contribute ideas to its content and shape. Their knowledge and expertise can only add value to the overall experience that your students have. The following questions may be of assistance in starting the process of identifying suitable employers.

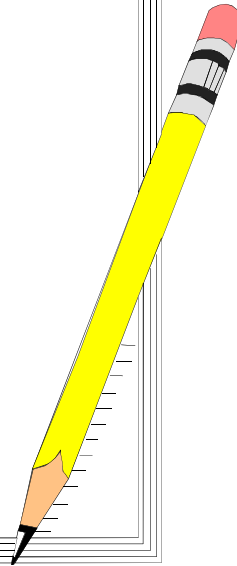


KEY QUESTIONS

- How can you build on existing links with employers, which the school has built up through visits and work experience?
- How can you identify organisations, which may be able to supply you with relevant information and contact details?
e.g. -
 - your local Business Education Partnership
 - the economic development unit of your local council
 - sector training councils
 - employer organisations
- What exactly is it that you want to achieve from your contact with the employer?
- How can you use your placement profiles?
- What is the most effective way of approaching employers?
- Can you find out how the business or organisation plans/schedules their activities?
- What times of year are you most likely to be successful in working with an employer?
- Are there mutual benefits that could emanate from the placement, which could be used by you as a selling point?

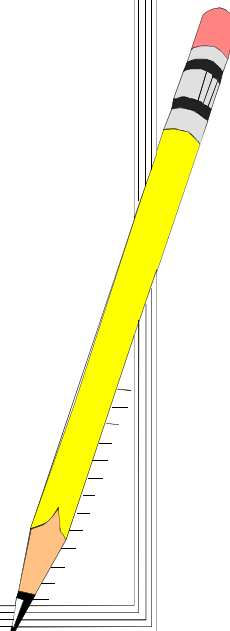
In advance of making initial contact work out what style of approach will yield the most effective results.

- Cold calling can be time consuming sometimes yielding few results.
- Sending out a letter in advance and following it up with a phone call often means both parties are clear about why you are phoning. (See Example in Appendix 2)
- Providing an employer with an email address often works well as it allows people working shifts to respond as well as giving you a written record of correspondence.



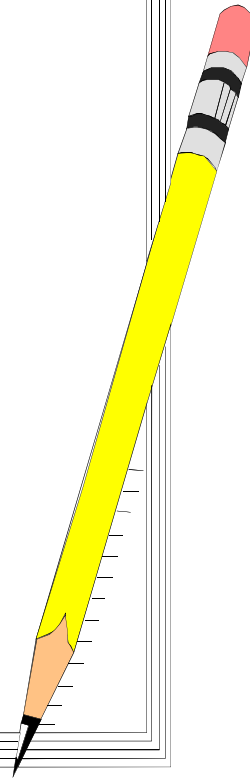
Establishing the correct timing of placement is also fundamental. There is a need to be focused but flexible and realistic in your dealings with employers. As well as considering the needs of the school, the student and the intended learning it is important that the needs of the employer's business is also given due consideration. It may be necessary to amend plans in order to gain the placements you require.

- Many customer service orientated employers will be less likely to take students in the Autumn period coming up to Christmas
- January is a very slow period in the Retail and Hospitality Industries
- The New Year is a very busy period for "Health and Fitness" organisations



Think about some of the mutual benefits that can be provided by the link and do not be afraid to use them as a selling point. From the employers perspective these may include –

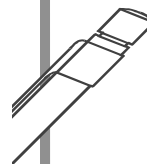
- being able to promote their company or area of work as a potential career path
- contributing directly to innovative delivery of the curriculum
- gaining an up-to-date working knowledge of the current qualifications structure
- providing personal development opportunities for staff who may not otherwise have the opportunity to develop their "soft skills" by taking the opportunity to manage the work-based activities of young people
- having students undertake or carry out useful activities which can contribute to company development



Ultimately the employer may not be able or willing to give you everything you are looking for.

NOTES

- If your plan is to proceed are you prepared to compromise on your original objective?
- Do you need to reassess your demands /requirements?
- Do you make the best use of the opportunities available?
- If an employer cannot accommodate you time wise or provide work based activities at the right level can you still make use of the link in some other way?



Stage 6 - Establishing a Partnership with Employers

It is essential that all parties are clear about their role in this process - the employer, the teacher and the students. In discussing the placement with an employer it is essential to narrow down what the programme of activity will be on each day the students are out on placement. The placement profile described in Stage 4 will give both parties the opportunity to focus on a shared goal. The placement profile gives you the opportunity to simplify the information contained in the subject specification.

It is also necessary to identify who will be supervising the students on placement, often the initial person in the company that you have contact with will not be the same person that is supervising the students on placement. It is important to establish who will support the students in the case of illness, annual leave etc of the nominated supervisor.

It is important to get this information formally agreed. In the LTW Project a 'Partnership Agreement' was established, an example of which follows on the next page. It details arrangements made for AVCE Business Studies students going to a large multiple retailer.

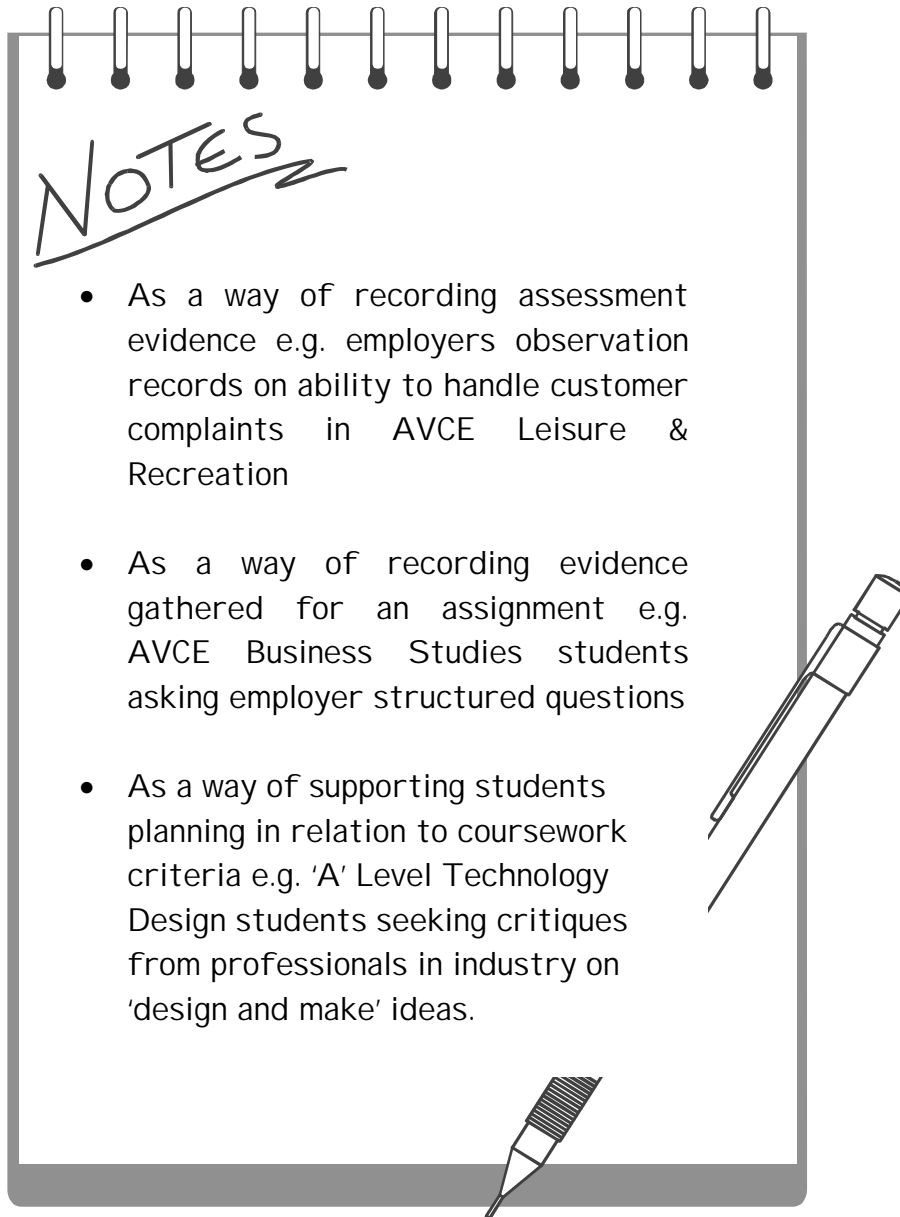
The purpose of the 'Partnership Agreement' was to clearly set out everything that had been agreed prior to the placement. As well as detailing key contacts and dates the Partnership Agreement should detail for the employer objectives; intended learning outcomes; provide coherent information about the placement content and action to be taken by the school, company and students.

Learning Through Work – Partnership Agreement

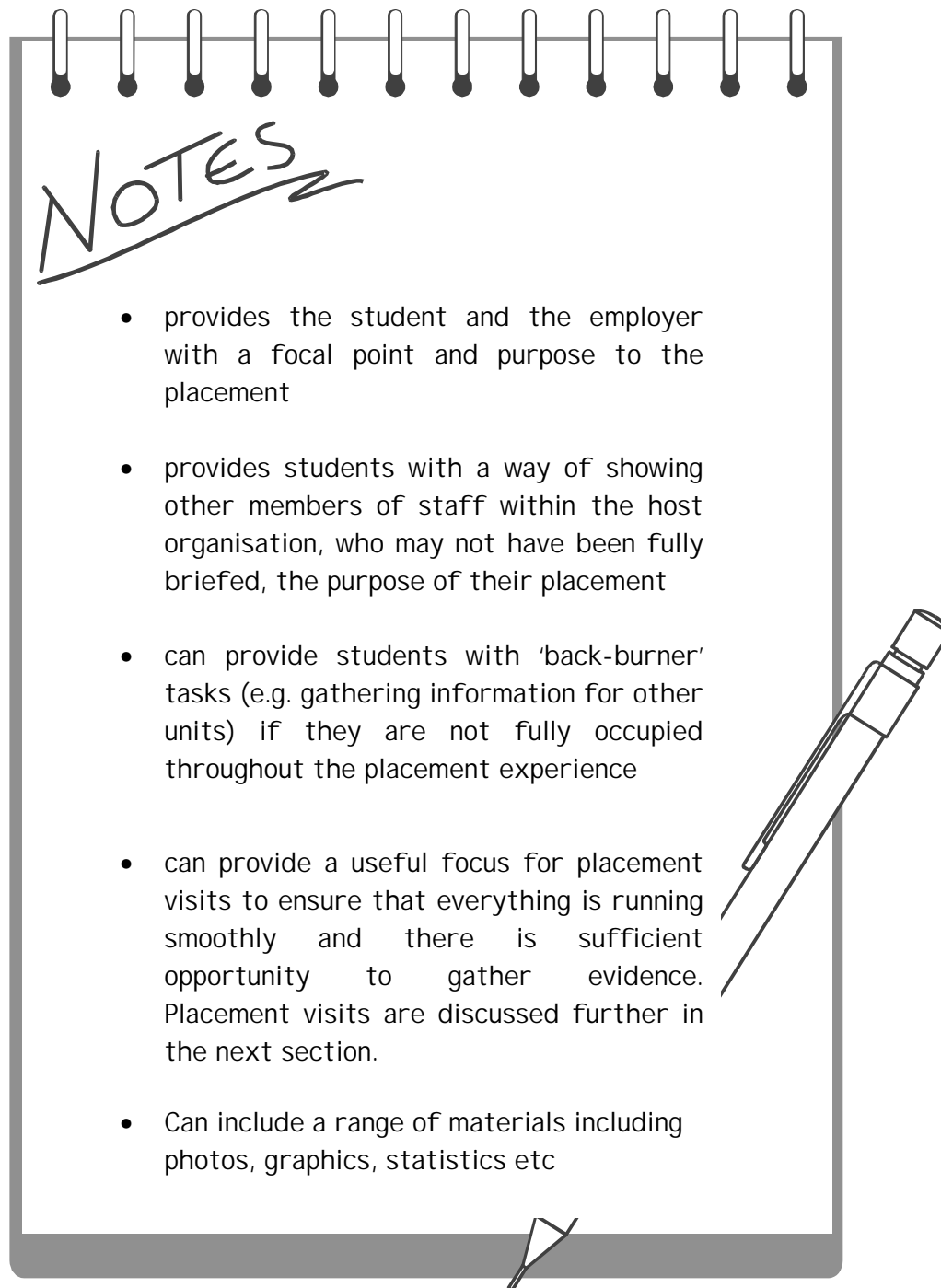
Employer: Large multiple retailer	Key Contact: Training Co-ordinator and Recruitment and Development Manager		
School:	Key Contact: Business Studies Teacher		
Subject Area: AVCE Business Studies			
Objectives of Activity:	For AVCE Business Studies students to learn through work about Management and Enterprise functions in both a retail and wholesale capacity in order to provide evidence for coursework		
Intended Learning Outcomes:	To develop an understanding of the role of management and the importance of enterprise in the growth and development of a business		
Placement Content:	The placement will consist of two groups – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Week 1</i> will involve the students in drawing up an organisational chart and looking at the issues involved in drawing up a staff roster. Students will also have the opportunity to look at whether management functions are centralised or localised and to think about internal and external constraints • <i>Week 2</i> will involve looking at the styles and skills that managers use. Students will be involved in shadowing managers and will have the opportunity to ask questions to complete their workbooks. • <i>Week 3</i> will involve the students in using observation skills and develop ideas for innovation within the store. This information will contribute to a presentation to a panel of managers. 		
Action by School Staff:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a workbook and assignment for students to use • Brief students on expectations, dress code etc • Submit indemnity forms 		
Action by Company Staff:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Co-ordinator will meet students at 8.45am on the first morning 		
Action by Students:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn up on time • Comply with dress code • Seek information to provide evidence for assignment • Take responsibility for managing their own learning 		
Dates:	First Group – 7 th ; 14 th and 21 st March (8.45am-11.45am) Second Group – 11 th ; 18 th and 25 th April		
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> Signed: _____ Employer Representative </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> Signed: _____ Teacher Responsible </td> </tr> </table>		Signed: _____ Employer Representative	Signed: _____ Teacher Responsible
Signed: _____ Employer Representative	Signed: _____ Teacher Responsible		

Stage 7 - Developing a Learning Journal

In order to give structure to the placement for both students and the host employer it is essential that some mechanism is devised to record evidence of learning. A 'Learning Journal' can be used for a range of purposes -



In addition to being a valuable resource for recording evidence for assignments and coursework the Learning Journal is a useful tool as it -



Exemplar pages from a Learning Journal devised for GCSE (Double Award) Leisure and Tourism and used on placement can be found on the next page.

The complete booklet will be available to be down loaded from www.seelb.org.uk

Sample Learning Journal – GCSE Leisure and Tourism

Students were asked to research their host organisation

Students were asked to give examples of how they used their customer service skills on placement

They were also asked to observe and find out how staff dealt with these situations

BACKGROUND INFORMATION		CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS	
Facilities:		Situation	How was it handled?
What facilities does the organisation have?		Providing Information	
Number of employees: _____		Giving Advice	
Internal organisation - Who reports to who etc?		Receiving messages	
		Providing Assistance	
Staff training - Does it occur? Who for? Who by? When?		Keeping Records	
		Dealing with problems	

Students were asked to detail how their host organisation met customer needs, and to gather any evidence e.g. leaflets, photos etc

CUSTOMER NEEDS		GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE	
Type of Customer	How are needs met?	Examples of Good Customer Service	
Individuals		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
Groups		Suggestions for improved customer service	
Ages		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
Cultures			
Non-English speaker			
Special Needs			
Businesses			
Additional evidence gathered?			

Students were asked to find out how their host organisation dealt with complaints

The student's supervisor was asked to rate the student's ability and comment on strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement

DEALING WITH CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS		COMMUNICATING WITH CUSTOMERS		
Does the organisation have a policy for dealing with complaints?		Brief description of the situation that you handled		
		Assessors Opinions		
What is policy for dealing with written and verbal complaints?			1	5
		Language		
What training is offered to staff?		Pitch & Tone		
		Pauses		
Additional evidence gathered?		Body Lang.		
		Listen		
		Accuracy		
		Questions		
		Strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement		

Stage 8 - Supporting your Students through the Placement Experience

Undertaking a placement can be very daunting for many students. If they are to make the most of this valuable opportunity it is important that they are properly supported throughout the experience. A structured approach to this support should be developed. This should include:-

- A detailed student briefing prior to placement.
- Provision of on-going support and monitoring whilst on placement.
- A debrief once the placement activity is completed.

In addition, when establishing placements, you should ensure that the appropriate procedures are followed. This is essential in order to ensure that the schools "duty of care" is maintained, parental consent is obtained, appropriate child protection procedures are instituted, and appropriate insurance indemnity is provided. Controlled and Maintained schools should follow procedures as laid out in the **SEELB Work Experience Scheme for Schools**, while schools in the Voluntary sector will have their own schemes.

The following section outlines the important areas, which need to be, addressed before, during and after placement in order to ensure that students gain the maximum benefit from the experience.

Prior to Placement

Experience would indicate that the preparation of students before placement is crucial if the placement is to run smoothly and produce the expected outcomes. It is important therefore that students feel in control of the process, in which they are involved and fully understand their responsibilities in terms of meeting agreed expectations (both school and employer), gathering evidence, and producing expected learning outcomes. The effective briefing of students is therefore crucial. The briefing of students before going out on placement should focus on the following areas.

Practical details such as: -

- the name and position of the person to whom they will be responsible
- hours of work
- requirements in terms of completing a journal or logbook

An understanding of the purpose of the placement, for example: -

- to gain knowledge and understanding directly related to their learning programme
- to demonstrate the ability to practice skills
- to gather essential evidence for assignments or

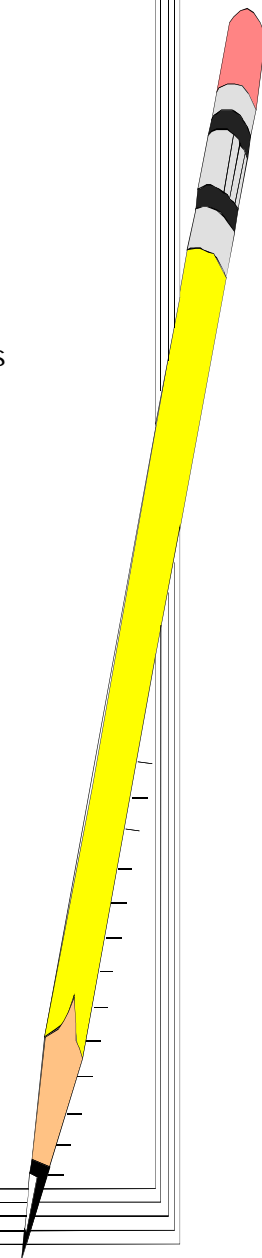
School-based activities

An understanding of employers' requirements and expectations in relation to: -

- dress code,
- time keeping
- health and safety

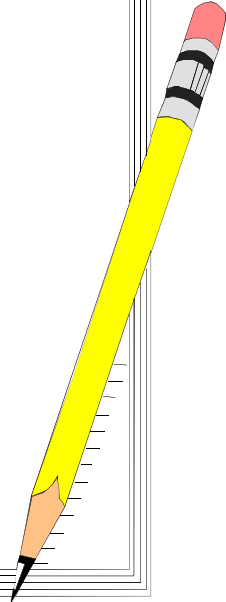
An ability to manage their own learning experience (particularly post-16) by: -

- demonstrating effective use of personal skills (particularly communication and working with others)
- demonstrating the ability to fit in / adapt to the organisations way of working
- demonstrating the ability to take responsibility and use their own initiative
- demonstrating the ability to ask critical questions and make suggestions

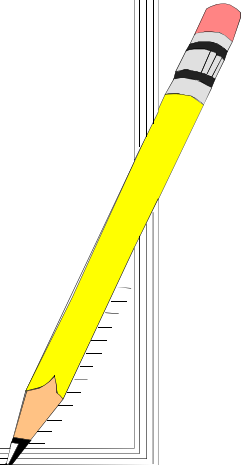


Prior to Placement

Increasingly employers are requesting to meet students prior to coming out on placement for an informal interview. It is therefore important students understand the importance of:-

- 
- creating the right impression at the initial meeting
 - demonstrating some knowledge of the business activities of the organisation
 - showing interest in the work to be undertaken
 - asking questions to clarify expectations

Whilst best practice would suggest that the host employer will brief all members of staff, that the student is likely to come in to contact with, this is not always the case. Therefore, students need to be prepared to: -

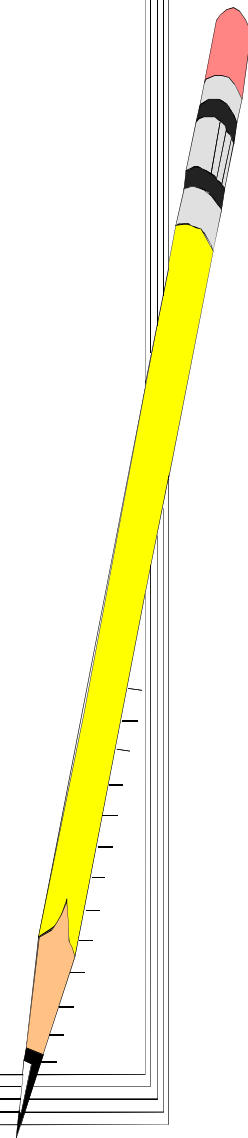
- 
- explain the purpose of their placement
 - ask for information and assistance as required
 - show other employees what information they are trying to access.

During Placement

It is important that students are visited whilst on placement. This is essential not only to safeguard their welfare and monitor progress but also to establish an effective working relationship with the employer. This is vital if the placement is to be sustained for the future. However, the regularity of these visits will depend upon the mode of attendance agreed.

Visits are essential in order to: -

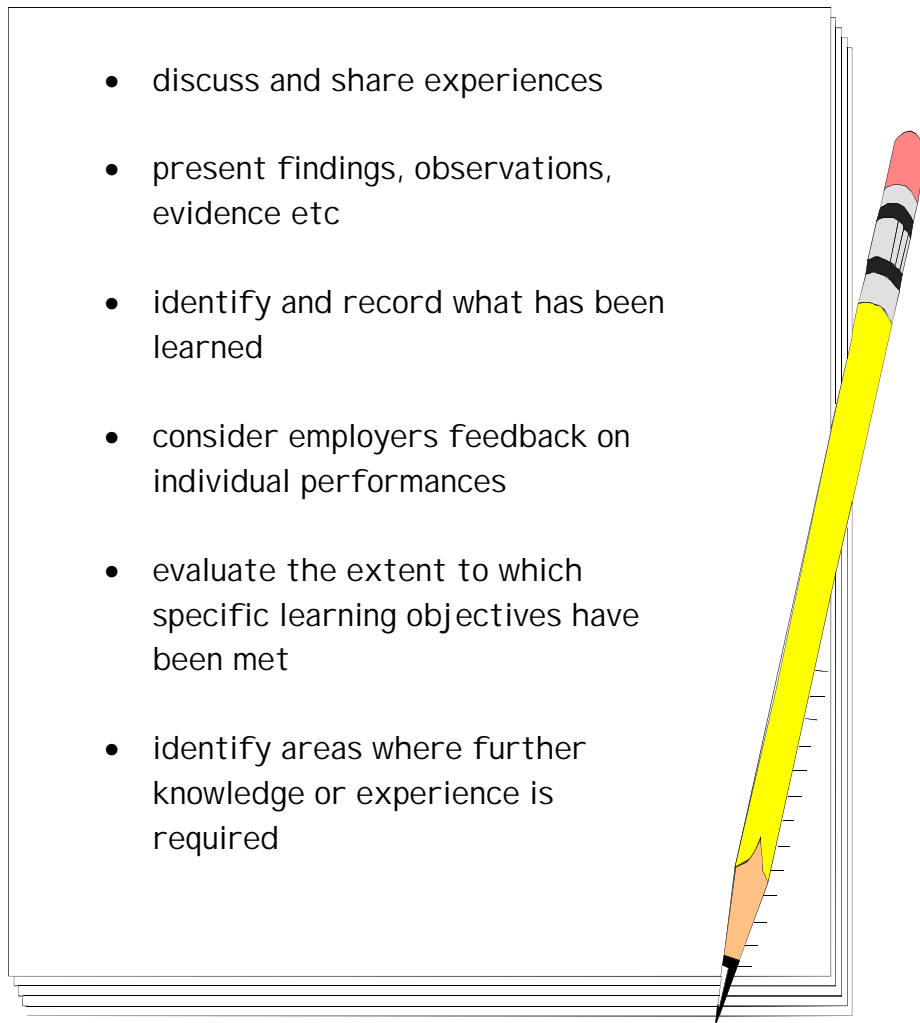
- establish that the student feels comfortable in the work situation (students should have the opportunity to speak privately with the teacher)
- confirm that the employer is satisfied with the arrangements
- sort out any difficulties or issues which may arise
- check that the student is gaining appropriate access to activities and experiences
- discuss student performance and general progress
- ensure the student is completing logbook/journal as required
- undertake practical assessments of student performance



Post Placement Debrief

Well-structured debriefing sessions are of importance if students are to gain full benefit from the placement experience. These may be part of the ongoing learning programme, held on a weekly basis, or be held once the entire placement is completed. This will largely depend upon the structure and purpose of the placements.

Debriefing activities, which can take a range of formats e.g. group discussions, oral/written presentations, completion of questionnaires etc, should provide opportunities for students to: -



A student evaluation of the overall process should also be undertaken as part of a general debrief. The next section details suggested questions.

Stage 9 - Evaluation

Students and employers should both be given the opportunity to evaluate the placement experience. This feedback is vital to help shape the future success of on-going placements.

Employers

Employers who offered placements in the project valued the opportunity to discuss what had worked well and identify areas that could be improved. The evaluation process provides a valuable opportunity to ensure that the door remains open for placements in the following year. It also provides the opportunity to look at the potential for other areas of the curriculum to be evidenced within the placement. Ideally this will be face to face, however written responses are also useful

The following questions may be helpful.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- At the time of initial contact, how clear were you about what the school was trying to achieve through setting up the placement?
- Were you happy with the level of information given during the planning process?
- Were you made fully aware of the requirements / demands of the placement?
- Do you feel you could have been provided with more detailed information?
- Would you like to have been more involved in the planning process?
- Do you feel the students were well prepared for placement with your company? If not, could you suggest areas for improvement
- Please make a comment on the attitude of the students towards the placement?
- As an employer do you think such placements are worthwhile?
- Please make a comment on why your organisation agreed to host a placement?
- Do you perceive there to be any benefits to your organisation as a result of hosting such a placement?
- Would you be willing to host further groups of students in the future?

Students

As part of the general placement debrief evaluation is very important. It will provide you with a general insight into how the placement ran. It will also enable you to establish how much evidence your students have been able to gather.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

- In what way was your placement worthwhile? Was it an enjoyable experience?
- In what ways were you able to gather the evidence you needed for your course?
- Were you occupied all the time whilst out on placement?
- What was good about the experience?
- What could have been improved?
- Would you have liked the placement to be shorter or longer?
- How has the placement influenced any of your thoughts about your future career or choice of Further & Higher Education?

CASE STUDIES

Case Studies

The following section contains five case studies from the project. These case studies exemplify the different approaches identified in Section 2:-

- Individual 'Hands-on' Placement
- Group 'Scenario' Placement
- Group Consultancy Placement
- Individual Consultancy Placement

School A ran an Individual 'Hands-on' Placement for AVCE Leisure & Recreation students in partnership with employers from the leisure and tourism sector.

School B ran a Group 'Scenario' Placement for AVCE Business Studies students in partnership with employers from the retail sector.

School C ran a Group 'Scenario' Placement for GCSE Business Communications students in partnership with a national bank.

School D ran an Individual Consultancy Placement for A Level Design Technology students in partnership with an Engineering firm.

School E ran a Group Consultancy Placement for AVCE Business Studies students in partnership with their local town centre management company.



CASE STUDY OF AN INDIVIDUAL PRACTICAL PLACEMENT

Area of Study - AVCE Leisure and Recreation

Unit - Customer Service in Leisure and Recreation

Year Group - Year 14

No. of Students involved - 9

Employers involved - Range of local Leisure and
Tourism organisations

Type of Placement - this practical placement
involved individual students being assessed in the
workplace on their ability to deliver effective
customer service

Individual Practical Placement

Placement content

The placement involved students working one day a week, over a six week period gaining hands-on experience of customer service in a variety of settings. It also involved analysing the quality of customer service delivered by the organisation.

Prior to the placement commencing employers were briefed on what the school was looking for in terms of placement content and were given a copy of the learning journal.

To evidence the essential learning for the unit students had to record evidence in the learning journal, that the teacher had prepared, on how they dealt with, and what they learnt from the following experiences –

- Providing information to groups
- Using communication & selling skills appropriately
- Dealing with customers on the phone and in writing
- Handling complaints effectively and sensitively

Students also had to devise methods for measuring and monitoring customer service procedures and practices within their host organisation. The students' placement supervisor had to provide feedback on the standard of their work.

What was achieved?

Students were able to gather the essential evidence they needed for their coursework in real workplaces

Evaluation

- Students – Very positive about the experience, would welcome more opportunities to go out on placement
- Teacher – Found the placement a very positive experience and much more effective than trying to deliver the Unit in the classroom
- Employers – One employer commented that they were surprised at the mature attitude that the students had regarding the importance of the placement, commenting that they had personal targets and goals.

Future Outcomes

Links have now been established and this will be offered as a core part of the subject's delivery. The school has decided to offer Learning Through Work as part of other AVCE subjects on offer.



CASE STUDY OF A GROUP 'SCENARIO' PLACEMENT

Area of Study - AVCE Business Studies

Unit - Management & Enterprise

Year Group - Year 13

No. of Students involved - 12

Employers involved - 3 large multiple retailers

Type of Placement - this placement involved students working as a group to experience management and enterprise for real with local employers

Placement content

In order to complete the Unit students were required to investigate management skills and enterprise in two separate organisations. The school chose to target retail and wholesale outlets and used the placement profile to negotiate placements with potential employers and a contract was agreed.

Students were released one morning a week over a six week period, each spending 3 weeks in a retail environment and then swapping over and spending 3 weeks in a wholesale environment. The teacher devised a learning journal and the students were briefed on how to use it to gather evidence prior to going out on placement.

In each of the two organisations the students spent three weeks working in the following areas to meet the essential learning requirements of the specification –

- Week 1 – Involved the students in drawing up an organisational chart and looking at the issues involved in drawing up a staff roster. Students also had the opportunity to look at whether management functions are centralised or localised and to think about internal and external constraints.
- Week 2 – Involved students looking at the styles and skills that managers use. Students were involved in shadowing managers and had the opportunity to ask questions to complete their logbooks.
- Week 3 – Involved the students using observation skills and then making suggestions about in-store innovation. These findings were presented to a panel of senior managers.

This process was then repeated in the next placement.

The process was completed with evaluation being undertaken by the students, and host employers.

What was Achieved?

After the two placements were over students had had the opportunity to gather enough evidence to complete their assignments.

Evaluation

Employers – commented that students were well organised, knew what they had to find out and what questions to ask

Benefits to businesses included assisting with the personal development of potential managers. The project also helped to raise awareness of the new vocational qualifications being offered.

Teacher – It added value to the curriculum in that students were able to observe theoretical aspects of the Unit within practical situations.

Students – noted that the placement brought aspects of the subject to life, and that it made it easier to write and explain the different concepts that the assignment required.



CASE STUDY OF A GROUP 'SCENARIO' PLACEMENT

Area of Study - GCSE Business Communications

Year Group - Year 12

No. of Students involved - 12

Employer involved - Large national bank

Type of Placement - this placement required a group of students to get involved in practical tasks and join in team based activities within a communication environment

Group Scenario Placement

Placement content

The placement content was agreed between the teacher and employer to cover a broad range of areas from the specification including –

- E-mail; Use of Voice Mail; Viewing Video Conferencing; Written Communication; Business Letters; Memos (Internal and External); Understanding how the Data Protection Act applies to the organisation; Understanding Health & Safety Regulations; Understanding the layout of the office; Recruitment Procedures and types of employment available within the organisation; Training procedures within the company; Salaries and Wages

The school used the work experience week and the employer constructed a programme to cover the essential learning. The placement consisted of undertaking training in a multi-media training suite and spending time 'buddying' within teams.

What was achieved?

Students were able to gain hands-on experience, outside of the classroom and were able to see real life aspects of business communications.

Evaluation

- Students – felt they could see the relevance of the placement to their course and particularly gained from their understanding of the use of ICT in the workplace.
- Teacher – Highly valued the experience
- Employer – used this opportunity to promote the company as a potential employer and found the students willing to learn and participate



CASE STUDY OF A GROUP CONSULTANCY PLACEMENT

Area of Study - AVCE Business Studies

Unit - Marketing

Year Group - Year 13

No. of Students involved - 23

Employer involved - local Town Centre Management
Company

Type of Placement - this placement involved students
working in groups to design a marketing strategy on
behalf of the local Town Centre Management Company,
to market the town as a retail destination.

Group Consultancy Placement

Placement content

Students were required to develop a marketing strategy and indicate the promotional mix (advertising, public relations etc) that they would use to attract people in to the town centre. In order to complete their assessment they were able to gather primary market research data through potential customer surveys and access to secondary evidence from the Town Centre Management Company.

What was achieved?

Students made presentations of their marketing strategies to the host employer and received feedback.

This placement facilitated the opportunity for a large class (23 students) to work with a local small employer

Evaluation

Employer – commented that the students were enthusiastic, provided a useful focus group and that a useful link had been created with the school.

Teacher – valued the opportunity for the students to gather relevant data.

Students – found the experience enjoyable and worthwhile.



CASE STUDY OF AN INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PLACEMENT

Area of Study - 'A' Level Design Technology

Unit - Coursework Assignment

Year Group - Year 14

No. of students involved - 6

Employer involved - Engineering firm

Type of Placement - this placement involved students researching the feasibility of their 'design & make' coursework ideas through spending time in industry

Individual Research Project

Placement content

- An initial planning meeting took place between teacher and employer to agree placement content.
- A visit then followed by the employer to the school to meet the students and to gauge what level 'A' Level students were working at. At this meeting the students were asked in advance of the placement to come prepared to present their ideas.
- The placement then ran over a 3 week period with students going out in pairs for two days each.
- On placement students were given the opportunity to learn how product innovation developed from concept to reality, and to understand manufacturing processes.
- Students were specifically given the opportunity to gain a professional critique on their own coursework design ideas and to discuss and how they would be developed and manufactured in an industrial setting. This took place through presentation and group discussion.
- The final stage involved teacher and employer meeting to discuss what had worked well, and what areas could be improved upon

What was achieved?

The placement gave students the opportunity to gain an industrial critique on their coursework ideas at the outset of their projects, and the employer was able to give valuable pointers for developing their ideas further.

Evaluation

Students – Found the experience very enjoyable and felt they had gathered a range of ideas and benefited from the critiques offered

Teacher – Found the project 'very positive,' and noted students were more motivated about starting their projects upon returning from their placement.

Employer – Saw the value and benefit of the project and is keen to work with the school to improve the relevance and opportunities that they can offer to the school.

SAMPLE LETTER

TO AN

EMPLOYER

SAMPLE LETTER – Requesting a Placement

Dear Employer

Learning Through Work Pilot Project

I am writing to outline an innovative project that the School has developed to build working partnerships with local business. The project enables employers to contribute directly to innovative delivery of the curriculum in a practical way that aims to actively stimulate students thinking about the skills they need to develop in order to prepare for the world of work.

Learning Through Work operates by participating schools identifying areas of the curriculum that would be greatly enhanced through students spending time in the workplace. The school then prepares students to focus on specific learning whilst out on placement with the participating employer. Learning Through Work is much more than work experience as it engages students in structured work-based tasks that provide valuable evidence for their assessment through coursework and examinations.

The School is currently exploring opportunities for Subject X students to undertake placements with local companies. Year 13 students are undertaking a unit of study in Unit Y. The school is currently developing practical assignments relating to Unit Y that can be practically explored in the workplace through undertaking tasks and activities.

I am writing to establish if your company would be interested in participating in this exciting project by hosting a group of students for a practical placement within your marketing section. It is anticipated that this would take place over a six-week period, for one morning a week. The project offers a significant range of benefits to businesses as well as to schools. These include –

- Employers being able to promote their area of work as a potential career path
- Employers being able to contribute directly to innovative delivery of the curriculum
- Employers being able to gain an up-to-date working knowledge of the current qualifications structure
- Personnel, who may not otherwise have the opportunity to develop their soft skills by managing the work activities of young people

I look forward to contacting you in the near future to discuss this project. In the meantime if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the stated telephone number.

Yours sincerely