

Work Placement Audit Tool

An Audit is a good way to initiate discussion and development on an issue. It enables you to make clear the range of activities which may contribute to the issue and the process can reassure colleagues that quite a lot of work may already be developed in the area. The process can also recognise local autonomy and priorities, within an institutional frame-work, and can:

- encourage development of a strategic plan to clarify how work placements can be developed in relation to a particular discipline;
- identify how far and in what area development should take place; and
- give recognition to existing activity which contributes effectively.

However an Audit also serves broader purposes:

- raising awareness by staff of practice in general and of the institution's plans;
- revealing or clarifying links between the aspect being audited and plans and strategies in other areas;
- engaging a wider constituency within the academic community; and
- facilitating dialogue and development within and between teaching units.

The purpose of this audit is developmental, not simply to come up with an overall score for the course. It is designed to help teachers consider the content and design of a course with respect to the issue of work placements and to see where they could improve the course to better address this issue.

The particular audit is designed for work placements that are:

- NOT a necessary part of the course for every student;
- NOT provided automatically by or in the teaching unit itself.

For other types of placement some of the audit points may need to be edited or deleted.

The Work Placement Audit can be downloaded from the Centre's website: www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/audit.aspx

The audit can be changed to suit your requirements. All we ask is that you clearly acknowledge the UK Centre for Bioscience as the originator. We would appreciate it if you would let us know that you are using the audit tool and the nature of any changes you have made as a result of your analysis.

How to use the Work Placement Audit

The audit should be carried out with respect to the totality of provision within a course. The numeric scoring system allows for the situation where an issue might be addressed but only superficially or at the wrong time. Only score 4 if you believe the course optimally deals with the audit point.

In the various aspects of work placements score (0-4) for each of the audit points depending on how closely you believe these audit points are optimally achieved in the course being audited.

- Score 0 if the audit point has not been seriously considered at all.
- Score 1-4 if the audit point has been considered but reflection indicates it is
 - poorly (1);
 - partially (2);
 - adequately (3); or
 - optimally (4) satisfied.

Make a subjective judgement and score accordingly. Think about it from the student's point of view as well as that of the course team.

Having completed the work placement audit you should analyse each of the audit points with a score of 2 or less:

- i) What possible options could be envisaged which would satisfy the audit point?
- ii) Do resource or other constraints make any of these options unrealistic?
- iii) At what point in the course could appropriate changes be made?
- iv) Which changes would most benefit the work placement aspects of the course?
- v) Can a realistic action plan be formulated to introduce these changes into the course before the next intake of students?

Are there potential quick wins? There may be something that you or your colleagues could do very easily that would not cost a lot in terms of resources or time.

Are there changes that require longer term planning? Does the change require agreement of others/resource allocation/time to implement?

Collect all your action points into the action plan at the back of the audit.

Having instituted changes as a result of the audit the process should be repeated in 12-24 months.

You may also be interested in:

The Centre event 'Improving the work placement year', an event report including presentations and resources from the day is available from www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/events/workpl181207.aspx

Case studies on work placements in the Biosciences
www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/cslandt.aspx

1. Awareness raising

	Score
Is the opportunity for work placements specifically mentioned in material sent to prospective students?	
Are the advantages and disadvantages of placements discussed with students in year 1?	
Does any such discussion take place within the first 6 weeks of year 1?	
Is the importance of their year 1 examination result in obtaining a placement made known to the students?	
Is the importance of strengthening their CV in year 1 emphasised to students?	
Do returning placement students talk to students in year 1?	

2. Application process

	Score
Are students given help identifying possible employers / companies providing placements?	
Are placements available inside and outside the discipline?	
Are students provided with information regarding the whole of the application process, its form and time sequence?	
Are students offered help in completing application forms?	
Are students offered help in producing a good CV?	
Are students advised as to expected dress and behaviour for interviews?	
Are students told what to expect if called for interview?	

3. Placement approval

	Score
It there a written agreement specifying the responsibilities of each of the three parties during placement:	
1) The institution?	
2) The student?	
3) The placement company?	
Is this agreement signed by each party?	
Is the company signature somebody other than the direct supervisor of the student's work in the company?	
Is there a named supervisor responsible for the student in the company?	
Are Health and Safety issues specifically addressed in the agreement?	
Is the placement and the nature of the work involved formally approved in writing within the institution early in the placement (ideally before the placement starts)?	
Are the placement processes, policies and procedures approved by the departments Learning and Teaching Committee?	

4. Placement objectives

	Score
Are the objectives of the placement specified in a document available to the student and agreed by the work place supervisor?	
Is there a strategy in place to change these if the nature of the work changes?	
Are subject-specific and generic or transferable objectives specified?	
Is there opportunity for the student to add their own learning objectives to those formally specified?	
Are work placements available / possible for varying periods (e.g. 1 year, 6 months, 3 months)?	
Do the learning objectives of the placement contribute to the learning objectives of the degree programme?	

5. Placement support

	Score
Is there a named, trained or experienced and approved placement tutor in the institution responsible for the student?	
Is contact information for the academic supervisor available to the placement student?	
Is contact provided / facilitated between placements students in different companies? Perhaps through an online networking tool.	
Are students on work placements supported by a process which encourages reflection and emphasises breadth of learning opportunities?	
Is there an ongoing written process to monitor progress in the placement and to monitor the student experience?	
Are placement students included in the process the employer uses to monitor and appraise permanent staff?	
Are the students visited on site by the placement tutor within the first half of the placement?	
Are industrial supervisors provided with written support to clarify their role?	
Are industrial supervisors explicitly asked to address career development issues with the placement student?	

6. Placement assessment

	Score
Are the outcomes of the placement assessed?	
Are the assessment methods aligned with the assessment strategy specified for the unit?	
Are the outcomes which are assessed clearly specified to industrial supervisor and student at the start of the placement?	
Are generic skills (e.g. communication, group working, IT) explicitly assessed?	
Are the assessment criteria specified and available to the student?	
Does performance in the assessed areas contribute to the final degree classification?	
Where assessment takes place by the industrial supervisor is there a process to ensure all students are treated fairly and equal standards are imposed?	

6. Placement assessment (cont.)

	Score
Are students required to produce written evidence that they have reflected on their development during the placement?	
Is the format of any report required both clearly specified and sufficiently flexible to cope with very different projects / placements?	
Is there opportunity for the student, the work place supervisor and the academic supervisor to record comments on the student's performance and are these open to the student? A Web 2.0 tool may be appropriate for this.	
Is student self-assessment utilised appropriately?	

7. Integration back into course

	Score
Is the student formally debriefed by the academic supervisor on return to the course?	
Is the industrial supervisor formally debriefed by the academic supervisor when the student has returned to the course?	
Are students provided with detailed feedback on their performance during placement and in the assessed items?	
Is consideration given to how the returning students integrate socially with the year of students into which they are returning?	
Are returning students special skills and experience made use of / made available to the other students in the year?	
Are students out on placement provided with equal opportunities to make choices for their final year as students not on placement?	

8. General

	Score
Does the title of the degree awarded recognise the completed placement?	
Is a City and Guilds award available to the student? (e.g. C&G licentiateship?)	
Are opportunities taken to develop, on the back of a student placement, research links between the company and the research groups in the university?	
Are overseas placements possible and if so are the special problems of overseas placements recognised?	
Are possible confidentiality issues addressed early in the student's placement?	
Are there opportunities for students on placement to explore other areas of work available within the company to aid career choices?	
Are students explicitly advised to create and to take opportunities to participate in training courses in the company?	
Is there a formal procedure, known to students, through which complaints about placements can be recorded and progressed?	
Are the policies, procedures and paperwork associated with the placements year reviewed by the unit L&T committee on a regular basis?	

Action Plan

Make a note of the resources you will need and whose help will be required.

1.

2.

3.

4.