

TITLE

Supporting students and engaging with mentors and employers in the workplace

SUB-TITLE

Good practice examples from Teacher Education and Engineering programmes, ideal for adoption for HDA work-based learning provision

AIM

What did you set out to do and why? (100 words)

Both the D&S and ACES faculty departments undertake a consistent approach to student engagement when out in the workplace, to address a number of concurrent requirements. Beyond the primary statutory 'duty of care' safeguarding requirements, both departments utilise the opportunity for richer, reflective pastoral support and as an opportunity to develop further relationships with student mentors and employers. The proactive nature of engagement affords qualitative and longitudinal visibility of all key relationships while the students undertakes their extended period of work-based learning.

BENEFITS

About 3 or 4 bullet points (50 words)

- *Statutory 'duty of care' safeguarding and more qualitative pastoral support are equally provided*
- *Enables regular, open and honest communication between learner, employer and university*
- *Provides a longitudinal and visible evidence base from which to address any issues*
- *Promotes developing relationships with employers, which may lead to other business development opportunities, including consultation and KTP work*
- *Establishes opportunities for final year student work-based project/dissertation opportunities, and potentially ongoing employment*

THE APPROACH

What's involved and what happened (up to 350 words)

Both the D&S Education and ACES Engineering degree courses involve students out on placement in the workplace for an extended period. Students are visited a minimum of twice a year by the university link / visiting tutor respectively.

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A principally proactive and open communication ethos underpins the approach, supported by key monitoring documents. Both programmes utilise their version of a student 'placement and employer form'. The visits, supported by the documentation, afford a range of care opportunities, from statutory 'duty of care' safeguarding to more pastoral and qualitative, in service of strong student experience and attainment. Key considerations include:

- Is adequate HSE provision in place?
- Is a placement plan in place and the learner's log book in use?
- Are the prerequisite operational and performance reviews being undertaken (by both the student and employer?)
- Does the learner have enough (varied) work to do?
- Is there a good fit between programme curriculum and work being undertaken?
- Does the workplace *feel* like a good place to work? (future placement implications)
- Is there a good 'cultural fit' between the SHU learner and the employer?

Additionally, the visits provide the opportunity for a range of different conversations with the SHU placement / visiting tutor – privately with the learner, privately with the employer/mentor, and then collectively together. This approach, if managed well, acts as an 'early warning system' to provide a mature 'adult-adult' (in Transactional Analysis terms) platform from which to reflectively and honestly consider any relational issues that may be occurring. It essentially gives learners the permission to 'speak up' about things that are concerning them and also to reflectively explore mistakes without fear of repercussion.

Overall, the engagement process provides a longitudinal documented, evidence-based approach to proactively address any concerns before they escalate.

THE OUTCOME

What was the result of this intervention or activity? Do you have any evidence you can include? (150 words)

Overall, the engagement process provides a longitudinal documented, evidence-based approach to proactively address any concerns before they escalate. Both courses have a long-running history at SHU and this process has helped significantly to consider work-based learning issues before they escalate.

“High quality, professional and supportive relationships ensure the success of placements through a careful monitoring of targets and progress throughout. Triangulation between student, university and mentor(employer) ensure effective communication channels exist to support the student and employer and address any concerns as they

arise. The outcome are highly successful partnerships which are mutually beneficial to students and employers.”

(Susan O'Brien, insert job title from directory)

“Proactive supervision of placement students has kept the number of unresolvable issues to an absolute minimum. In the 16 years I have visited placement students, I have had just two incidents where the student's and the employer's differences were un-reconcilable. Typically issues are the result of the student not showing initiative, which often is as a result of the student not understanding the extent of autonomy granted to them. The initial placement visit aims amongst other things to align all parties' expectations.”

(David Clegg, insert job title from directory)

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Will you be developing this? Why? How? Or scaling up the approach? (100 words)

The HDA Apprenticeship employer feedback form embodies a similar three-way 'adult-adult' engagement process in an accessible format, with an opportunity to engage all parties in honest, mature conversation about the HDA dynamic. This is one the tangible element of the learning agreement (or commitment statement) required to be in place with all HDAs according to Skills Funding Agency compliance requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO OTHER STAFF

(100 words)

Consider the order of student visits from a 'risk mitigation' mind-set – as far as is possible and practicable, prioritise less mature and more needy learners for initial visits.

Consider the work-plan and resourcing implications of wide ranging student visits, particularly if elsewhere in the country and beyond.

FURTHER & RELATED INFORMATION

Useful links or references to help people who are thinking about following your lead.

PROFILE

Tutor name(s): Susan O'Brien | David Clegg **[include headshots of both from SHU central database?]**

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Faculty: D&S, Teacher Education Department | ACES, Mechanical, Materials and Design

Size of cohort: Large | Large

Key themes: pastoral support, work-based learning, Apprenticeships employer feedback, three-way relationship, issue mitigation, longitudinal tracking, employer relationship development