

Delivering Work Experience (D36H): Differentiating between Access 3 and Intermediate 1

General Background

Prior to the introduction of Higher Still, Local Authority provision, especially in the school sector, involved the delivery of the National Certificate Module entitled Work Experience 1. This Module was delivered to candidates undertaking their Fourth year in Secondary education and involved a work experience placement lasting one week.

The type of delivery that was associated with this Module is teacher led. Placements are obtained using the Local Authority database of approved placements. These are then advertised within the school, usually in the form of a job shop, and the candidates make an informed choice based on first, second and third categories highlighted as possible placement opportunities. In some circumstances a candidate may seek a work placement independently of the database, but this is usually the exception.

During the implementation of Higher Still the Work Experience 1 Module was levelled at Access 3 (Unit code D36H 09). Some schools have since expressed a reluctance to offer this Unit to Fourth year candidates undertaking a work placement, as they do not feel that Access 3 is the appropriate level for the work produced by such candidates.

The obvious choice of delivery within the new framework for such centres would therefore be Work Experience at Intermediate 1 (Unit code D36H 10). This Unit has been levelled from the old Work Experience 2 Module. This means that centres wishing to deliver Work Experience at Intermediate 1 must adapt their teaching packs to the more rigorous level of demand involved.

Differentiation

Outcome 1 at Access 3 level specifies that the candidate will contribute to the planning and arrangement of a work experience placement with teacher support. The added challenge in this Outcome at Intermediate 1 level is that the candidate is expected to plan and arrange a work experience placement with limited teacher support. The emphasis here is not simply on making a contribution; evidence must clearly show that the candidate has been heavily involved in the planning and negotiation of a work placement.

Outcome 2 at Access 3 level specifies that allocated tasks must be carried out during work experience under supervision. The difference at Intermediate 1 lies in limited supervision and the ability to negotiate tasks effectively. The importance in Outcome 2 at Intermediate 1 level is the candidate's ability to negotiate work placement tasks with limited supervision and to deal effectively with unexpected situations.

Outcome 3 stresses the importance of the analysis, planning and undertaking of a work experience. At Access 3 level the candidate is expected to relate effectively to others whilst undertaking instructions. A high degree of support is offered in the working environment and although advice and assistance may be sought, support will be evident.

At Intermediate 1, the emphasis is placed on working co-operatively with others. This is evidenced in the performance criteria requirements at this level. Support is limited and the candidate is expected to ask questions, seek the opinions of others and show evidence of ideas, information and judgements whilst working co-operatively with others. This is a more independent level of working compared to the high degree of support given at Access level 3.

Outcome 4 might at first glance appear to be very similar at each level. Access 3 identifies the contribution of the knowledge and skills gained through work experience in relation to personal, social and vocational development goals. The importance at that level is to identify the contribution made and to review the progress in terms of positive and constructive evaluation.

Intermediate 1 stresses the importance of reviewing the contribution with the emphasis on critical analysis and justification. Evidence of progress towards defined goals must be reviewed effectively and the value of the learning gained during work placement examined in relation to future targets.

The Historical Rationale

The school sector has delivered and will continue to deliver work experience that is teacher led and involves utilising the Local Authority database for work placements. Teaching packs were therefore devised based on the Work Experience 1 Module, which has since been levelled at Access 3. This Unit will continue to be offered in schools and is appropriate for candidates requiring a high degree of tutor support. If Intermediate 1 is offered then the following information must be taken into consideration.

The Way Forward

The summary note in the Unit specification for Work Experience at Intermediate 1 identifies clearly what has to be achieved in this Unit (emphasis added):

Developing planning, organisational, investigative, interpersonal skills and self awareness through work experience with **limited tutor/trainer support**.

Essentially what this means is that the candidate must take most of the responsibility for the planning and organising of the work placement and that teacher support, although still important, is limited.

The **Guidance on Content and Context** in the Unit descriptor explains fully how the Outcomes must be achieved. Although this guidance is not mandatory, the explanation provided on how the delivery of work experience can be undertaken may prove very useful to centres.

Planning and Negotiating

The delivery of work experience at Intermediate 1 level must give the candidate responsibility to plan and negotiate the work placement. The school sector usually provides work placements from a registered database. This changes the nature of planning and negotiation the candidate is required to carry out at Intermediate 1 level.

Planning should normally involve contacting potential placements by various methods, possibly by visiting, telephoning or writing to employers. A placement is then selected and planned on the basis of the candidate's vocational interests, qualifications and aptitudes.

If a placement is achieved using the database then the candidate must be able to show planning and negotiation skills by another means. When the placement is chosen via the database it is simply a matching exercise, so the candidate must otherwise demonstrate that they have the necessary skills to plan and undertake a work placement. The following information provides some useful approaches on how to evidence this.

Candidates who undertake a work placement usually set targets. A pre-placement visit confirms the contract of the work experience and ensures that development targets and other arrangements are agreed. This is a valuable tool for negotiation and one which must be explored and evidenced at this level.

In order to show planning, one of the targets could be for the candidate to find out about the employer's application process and to simulate this process, receiving feedback from the work experience employer on the approaches used. Evidence could be generated in terms of signed witness testimonies, completed application forms, letters written, analysis of the work placement in terms of individual aptitudes, prior knowledge, job description and the ability to carry out the work experience itself.

Alternatively, planning and negotiation might be achieved in an entirely different context, using simulation, role play, telephoning and writing for a longer term work placement as part of voluntary work, temporary or permanent work, or potentially exploring the possibility of weekend work. This process would involve the transferable skills of planning and negotiation, utilising the most appropriate context in relation to the candidate's individual needs.

Whatever approach is adopted it is important that the candidate has evidenced (prior to the commencement of a work experience placement) the ability to plan and describe the steps involved when making contact with potential employers. Further evidence of the extensive range of resources available and how these are accessed in order to acquire work placement information should be recorded.

Responsibility and Supervision

Whilst the contexts for work experience are wide ranging, it is important that candidates take responsibility undertaking tasks and seeking advice and information. Given that placement supervisors play a hugely significant role in the work experience context it is important that contact has been made by the school and that the supervisor is fully briefed. This will enable the candidate to build on development targets with confidence and to further explore dealing with any unexpected situations that may arise.

Working With Others

Work Experience at Intermediate 1 includes automatic certification of Core Skill Working With Others. Whilst it is important that work practices are observed the emphasis is that these skills are further developed.

The ability of the candidate to seek advice and assistance, developing towards volunteering opinions in the form of ideas, information and judgements, is crucial to the learning process in the work experience. This means that the whole concept of delivery and certification must evidence the ability to work with others. It is not enough to consider work from an observation point of view and to simply undertake instructions. The candidate at Intermediate 1 must be able to engage with other workers, think for themselves and, when faced with the unexpected, formulate a possible course of action (perhaps seeking advice) and respond in a positive manner.

Evidence should demonstrate the candidate's ability to undertake tasks in a routine manner without the need to have extensive supervision. Evidence should also be provided of non-routine tasks where the candidate might be expected to use their own ideas, information and judgements.

Reviewing the Work Experience

Reviewing the work experience involves assessing personal strengths and weaknesses, expressing personal feelings and evaluating the work experience in terms of the knowledge and skills gained. The importance at Intermediate 1 is to review the learning gained with a view to how this will impact on future personal, social and vocational goals.

Summary

The previous Work Experience 1 Module has now been catalogued as a National Unit levelled at Access 3. If the school sector wishes to consider the delivery of Work Experience at Intermediate 1 then the following information must be considered carefully:

- ◆ Ideally the candidate should plan and negotiate a work placement. If the Local Authority database is used then evidence must be achieved by utilising alternative approaches. These may involve the use of simulation, role play exercises, contact with employers and possibly witness testimony.
- ◆ Teaching packs must be modified to encourage teaching approaches that enable the candidate to take more responsibility for planning and negotiation. This may take the form of organising a pre-placement visit involving the negotiation of the work placement contract, job remit and any other issues relating to the work placement.
- ◆ The work experience diary should encourage the candidate to work on targets and to develop strengths and weaknesses. Evidence should encourage candidates to work on their own initiative, describing the tasks undertaken and the problems encountered, and especially detailing any advice sought on problems experienced, with conclusions recorded.

- ◆ Work Experience at Intermediate 1 must produce evidence of Working With Others. The candidate should be involved in routine and non-routine tasks where appropriate. The supervisor role is vitally important. Following the pre-placement visit, if ongoing contact can be maintained by the school then this would be highly desirable and will reinforce the vital role of the supervisor in the learning process.

- ◆ Intermediate 1 candidates must review the learning gained in a critical analysis, showing what this actually means in setting future personal, social and vocational targets.