

5.7 Work-based Learning

ICD currently offers a work experience module as part of its BA (Hons) in Business Studies. Assessing evidence of learning outcome accomplishment for the programme's work placement is approached with the same rigour as any other module. To this end, the college has developed a work-based learning (WBL) strategy - comprising a series of structured seminars, an essay, and a reflective placement journal and e-portfolio assessment –which ensures that academic learning and practical, work-based learning are properly integrated and assessed. This strategy emphasises learning activities which encourage students to reflect on their own experience, decisions and actions within their respective placement and engage in critical self-appraisal. As effective WBL requires good partnerships between all stakeholders, employers are also invited to complete a report on individual placement, 'sign off' on learners' learning through interim and summative review (the 'exit interview'), and provide feedback to ICD on the placement process more generally.

ICD is currently in the process of replacing the traditional journal with an e-portfolio system which will require students to provide evidence of their reflections in a more timely way, using Moodle. This approach will allow for greater rigour in assessing WBL, and will facilitate more continuous formal and informal technology-enhanced peer and instructor feedback. It is hoped that the e-portfolio will also provide a more efficient means for assessing learner progress against assessment criteria, and will benefit students by furnishing them with more meaningful opportunities for formative assessment and 'feedforward'. A further potential benefit will be an enhancement of learners' digital literacy skills. The development of the college's WBL forms part of its overall strategic approach to assessment and is the responsibility of the Academic Council.

Rationale for the inclusion of Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning (WBL) is an essential component of the undergraduate student learning experience. It provides students with an opportunity to engage in experiential learning through problem-solving in real-world settings, and allows them to connect theory with practice by applying learning in practical settings. Contextual learning from real work-based experiences can also enhance employability and personal development, help learners to sharpen and clarify their career plans, and develop their capacity for life-long learning. Pedagogically, engagement in real-life, work-based scenarios – and the problem-solving and interpersonal skills these entail – can provide

authentic experiences that support student learning. In particular, the completion by students of a reflective learning journal throughout the duration of their placement facilitates assessment *as* and *for* learning, whereby ongoing self-assessment by students engages their metacognitive faculties and their awareness and understanding of their own learning styles and requirements. It is also hoped that through gaining practical experience in a real-world business setting, students will develop their ability to solve problems collaboratively, identify information needs, balance and prioritise their work, share and communicate information, and work confidently and ethically within complex and internally diverse groups.

Preparing Students for Work Experience:

ICD has developed a specific preparatory module to prepare all students for work placement. 'Work-based learning' has been developed as a placement preparation module and a mandatory pre-requisite for 'Work experience' (BS18) in stage three of the BA Hons in Business Studies. Overseen by the college's work experience coordinator, the module will be flexibly provided using a mix of traditional classroom and self-directed learning over the course of the first academic semester of stage 3 of the programme. The aims of the module are to:

- Prepare students for placement by familiarising them with the college's work-based learning policies, procedures, and assessment methods.
- Introduce learners to a range of theoretical perspectives on work-based learning, knowledge and skill development, and lifelong learning.
- Facilitate student engagement in reflective learning activities in preparation for placement.
- Make learners' conversant with a range of core skills and competencies required for successful engagement in the contemporary workplace.
- Enable learners to undertake a personal skills and competencies audit, and prepare a high-quality curriculum vitae.

In addition to what is learned in the Work Based Learning module, stage 3 semester one will continue to prepare students for their work placements through the Work Experience module. The work experience module aims to provide students with an opportunity to engage in a structured and

rigorously assessed year-long work placement. Work-based learning (WBL) is an integral part of the BA in Business Studies, offering students a unique opportunity to benefit from authentic, contextual learning from real-world, work-based experiences. In addition to enhancing student employability, and helping them to sharpen and clarify their future career paths, experiential work-based learning can also facilitate metacognition, help students to recognise and learn from knowledge and experience encountered in the workplace, understand their own learning processes, self-evaluate, and set goals with respect to their education, and personal and professional development.

Learners will be provided with a module descriptor, assessment briefs, and a clear outline of criteria for assessment. They will also be furnished with details of ICD's and employers' expectations with respect to their conduct while in placement. This includes information about what learners should do in case of illness, absence, injury, or unfair treatment while on work experience. Prescribed readings and learning activity briefs are provided via Moodle.

Securing Placements

The module coordinator/lecturer is responsible for assisting students in communicating with potential employers and securing placements. Learners will be expected to have an up-to-date CV, and will have been given an opportunity to develop this in the stage two module 'professional development'. A class briefing on the placement process will be given in semester two of stage two, and students will be expected to attend ICD over the summer period to make formal work experience arrangements and - if necessary – to develop their CVs and prepare for interview.

In some cases, students may be permitted to undertake their work experience in an existing place of employment, but only if the following conditions are met:

- Their role at the existing place of employment is relevant to their studies and future career plans.
- The role can support meaningful engagement in the self-assessment activities required for students to meet module learning outcomes.
- If necessary, their employer is willing to expand their existing role so that it allows learners to deploy - and reflect on - the kinds of key competencies outlined in the work experience journal.

- The employer agrees to formally engage with ICD Business School, accommodate staff monitoring visits, and carry out the interim review and exit interview assessments.

The college is also presently exploring the possibility of incorporating a company whose purpose would be to provide recruitment services to all ICD students and alumni. It is envisaged that, when operational, this company could become formally responsible for making work placement arrangements for future learners on this module.

All employers must be approved by ICD before the learner undertakes placement work.

As part of the work experience module, all learners are engaged in topics that will help them prepare for, and to engage in, work placement in a safe and effective manner including:

- How they organise safe transportation to work
- Who they should contact about any problems they are having with placement (ICD and/or the employer)
- The importance of punctuality but what to do if they are late
- Who to contact if they cannot attend work
- What to do if they are injured in work
- Occupational health and safety and legislation: What to do if they do not feel safe or comfortable at work and who to contact if their welfare or well-being are negatively impacted by work
- Fair and unfair expectations of employers and how to report the latter to ICD
- Giving and receiving feedback in work environments

Supporting Students and Ensuring Learning Outcome Achievement During Placement

During placement, learners will receive at least two site visits per semester from ICD's academic and administrative staff for the purpose of monitoring. Further to this, one-to-one discussions will take place between employers and learners in the context of an interim, mid-placement feedback

dialogue, and an exit interview. These discussions will be documented in the learner's logbook and shared with the module coordinator. Several mandatory seminars will be held each semester, with students also required to complete a number of low-stakes formative online learning activities as part of their assessment.

Throughout the course of their placement, students will be asked to undertake a number of online learning activities which will require them, firstly, to record observations and reflections in their journals, before inputting their findings using a variety of tools on the Moodle LMS (such as Wikis, Discussion boards, questionnaires, and assignments). The learning journal itself will also have to be submitted via Moodle, with instructor feedback received primarily online.

Protecting Students: ICD's Expectations of Work-placement Employers:

ICD rigorously reviews all prospective work placement employers before approval is provided. This includes making employers aware of ICD's requirements regarding the role and responsibilities of employers taking ICD students, both from the perspective of student learning and student welfare.

All employers must nominate an allocated workplace supervisor to the student on placement. The primary role of the workplace supervisor is to agree and monitor learning plans with students and to provide the conditions in which effective work-based learning can take place. The workplace supervisor – typically the student's line manager or a member of human resources department – takes responsibility for building development activities into day-to-day work by structuring tasks to challenge learners, create the conditions for the acquisition of new knowledge or skills, and provide opportunities for self-reflection and evaluation.

ICD provides a training workshop for workplace supervisors, delivered by the 'Work Experience' academic coordinator.

On commencement of placement, it is also expected that learners' workplace supervisor(s) will provide a briefing during which employers provide students with:

- A position description or outline of the student's expected duties
- General information about daily work routines
- Details about pay, expenses, and leave/holiday arrangements (if applicable).
- Policies with respect to attendance, punctuality, and sick leave.
- The history of the organisation, the nature of its business/products and services, its culture and mission statement
- Important workplace policies and regulations (i.e. health and safety, ICT usage, mutual respect, code of conduct, disciplinary policies etc.)
- Key people within the organisation or students' department/ supervisors and reporting relationships
- Any other important information typically provided to employees during induction.

In addition to providing general support to placement students, workplace supervisors also have a crucial role to play in evaluating learner progress and reporting to the academic coordinator. The main methods used for evaluating students' performance and progress are the interim review and exit interview. Both of these reviews take place at specific junctures in the placement process, though the exact date and time are to be agreed between the workplace supervisor and placement student.

In addition to their responsibility for evaluating student performance and liaising with the academic coordinator, the workplace supervisor will take on a pastoral role in their interactions with learners. Though learners are encouraged to take a proactive approach in seeking support from placement supervisors, supervisors are equally expected - where possible – to:

- Oversee the student's day-to-day work and provide regular informal feedback and consultation

- Assign work to the student that facilitate quality learning opportunities
- Keep track of issues with student attendance, punctuality, motivation, and discipline
- Make appropriate time available to the student for effective supervision
- Monitor their completion of the placement journal and progress in achieving agreed improvement goals
- Act as an advocate who will ensure that the learner's interests and concerns are appropriately addressed
- Meet with the student periodically to discuss their experiences and sound out their concerns
- Liaise proactively with the academic coordinator in relation to any problems that may emerge in the course of the student's placement

The Academic coordinator has a liaison and support role throughout the duration of placement and functions as the first point-of-contact at ICD for the workplace supervisor and the student. In addition to sharing milestone reports (e.g. the interim review, exit interview) with the academic coordinator, the workplace supervisor is encouraged to contact them about any questions or concerns that they may have about the placement process or individual student.

During the course of placement, students will attend several evening workshops at ICD and complete a number of online learning activities, both of which will be overseen by the academic coordinator.

In emergencies, or when the academic coordinator is not available, employers and students are advised to contact the college's registrar.

Employers maintain overall responsibility for the health and safety of learners while they attend placement at their premises and are responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace and providing information, training and instruction to employees. For the purposes of

placement, ICD expects employers to treat students with the same duty of care as any other employee. However, as learners remain registered ICD students during the course of their placement, we require employers and appointed workplace supervisors to contact the college about any matter related to a learner's health or wellbeing. The first point of contact for such communication is the academic coordinator, followed by the college registrar.

