

5.7 Work-based Learning Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all work-based learning elements of programmes provide learners with:

- A valid, authentic learning experience that enables learners to achieve the respective programme and module learning outcomes
- A supportive and protective work-based learning setting where the learner is protected from all risks
- A rigorous assessment of achievement of learning outcomes specifically to be demonstrated by the learner as part of, and as a result of, the work-based learning

All work-based learning (WBL) modules or components of modules or programmes must have a dedicated module coordinator who is an ICD member of staff that will ensure the Principles of Work Based Learning are followed. Academic Council is responsible for continuously enhancing policies and supports for all WBL at ICD.

Principles of Work Based Learning (PWBL) at ICD

PWBL1 Assessing evidence of learning outcome accomplishment for the programme's work placement is approached with the same rigour as any other module. Multi-modal assessment should be used to ensure comprehensive evidence of achievement of work-based learning outcomes by the learner. Example assessments to be considered include (but are not limited to):

- a series of structured seminars for both formative and summative feedback/grading,
- essays,
- a reflective placement journal
- e-portfolio assessment –which ensures demonstration and assessment of academic and practical learning,

PWBL2 Reflective and feedback oriented approaches to learning and assessment should be used.

This requires:

- Learning and assessment activities which encourage students to reflect on their own experience, decisions and actions within their respective placement and engage in critical self-appraisal. Learners must be provided with formative and summative feedback
- Employer and learner dialogue and feedback: 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 generally.

PWBL3 Technology should be used to enhance learning, assessment, and support for the learner:

This requires:

- Using Moodle to continuously generate interaction between learners on placement and their lecturer (module coordinator). Given the 'distance' created between learners and between the learner and their lecturer (module coordinator), the Moodle VLE should be used to create a continuous communication mechanism:
 - between learners to ensure peer learning where they can share reflections on their experiences
 - between each learner and their lecturer/module coordinator to ensure the learner is supported and given regular feedback on their progress in their placement and their progress towards completing the WBL assignments/assessments to ensure evidence is provided to satisfactorily demonstrate achievement of WBL learning outcomes
 - between the learner and the module coordinator to ensure the learner is fully supported during periods not attending the college
- Using the Moodle VLE for assessments in order to streamline submissions of assessments regularly across the period of WBL to ensure timely feedback is provided to the learner. A further potential benefit will be an enhancement of learners' digital literacy skills.

PWBL4 All prospective employers must be rigorously assessed before being approved

PWBL5 Students must be prepared for work placement through a formal work placement preparation course/module

PWBL6 Students must be made aware of ICD's expectations of learners and employers

PWBL7 Students on placement must be in regular communication with the module coordinator to ensure learner protection and to ensure sufficient progress toward achieving and demonstrating WBL learning outcomes

Rationale for the inclusion of Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning (WBL) is sometimes described as an essential component of the undergraduate student learning experience. WBL can benefit students provided it is designed in programme and module descriptors, and implemented/delivered on programmes, in a manner which ensures that 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.
- **Enhances employability:** 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.
- **Provides authentic learning experiences and assessments:** 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.
- **Enhances problem solving skills:** 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:

All work experience or work-based learning components or modules on programmes must:

- Be overseen by an ICD work experience coordinator who will maintain regular contact with each learner on WBL placement
- Incorporate self-directed continuous assessment methodologies to be submitted over the course of work placement to ensure formative feedback and summative feedback opportunities for learners
- Ensure learners are fully informed: learners must be provided with a module descriptor, assessment briefs, and a clear outline of criteria for assessment. Learners must 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 must be provided via Moodle.
- Incorporate a structured and formal preparation course for learners who are tasked with engaging in WBL as part of their learning on the programme. The preparatory WBL courses must be mandatory for all learners preparing for WBL. Such a preparatory course must:
 - 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.
 - Ensure 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

Securing Placements

The WBL module coordinator/lecturer will be responsible for:

- Assisting students in communicating with potential employers and securing placements.
- Ensuring learners have an up-to-date and 'employer ready' CV,
- Providing a full class briefing on the placement process
- Preparing learners for interview through providing interview skills training workshops
- Approving or rejecting all prospective employers as a result of a desk review followed by a site visit to the employer before approval is provided

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.

ICD will use the services of a professional recruitment agency where beneficial to locate suitable employers and to provide their expertise and experience in matching a learner's desired type of work placement, the learner's CV and skills, with a suitable employer. While this is beneficial in sourcing *possible* work placement opportunities, all work placement employers must be assessed by ICD staff before a student is put in contact with that prospective employer.

Learners are to be encouraged to source their own placements wherever possible, but, all employers must be approved by ICD before the learner undertakes placement work. Approval will only be provided for specific placement as a result of:

1. An initial rigorous desk review of the details provided by/about the employer, including the job description for the role
2. A site visit from the module coordinator to the premises where work placement will occur to ensure the environment is suitable and to provide the module coordinator with an opportunity to meet the designated employer/supervisor (who will supervise the learner) to ensure the module coordinator can assess the suitability of the work placement location, job role, and supervisor for an ICD learner. See later in the present section (protecting students) for more detail on the requirements for approval of an employer

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.

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. This ensures the learner is provided with regular contact with the module coordinator so that they can report any difficulties with the placement to receive feedback and also so that the learner can receive feedback on their progress towards completing the continuous assessments (formative feedback) to ensure the learner makes adequate progress in providing evidence to demonstrate WBL learning outcome achievement.

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

To protect students during work placement

- 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.
 - Employers must agree to ICD's expectations regarding the protection of learners on WBL placements and also regarding the key role that employers will play in providing feedback to learners on placement (formative feedback) and feedback to ICD both during and at the end of placement to ensure learners are achieving the WBL learning outcomes effectively, and that remedial action can be taken by the module coordinator, the employer, and the learner where necessary
 - 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/module 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 facilitates 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.

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

Health and Safety

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.