



EUROPEAN WEEK OF HEALTH AND SAFETY 2006: YOUNG PEOPLE AT WORK

MANAGING HEALTH AND SAFETY ON WORK EXPERIENCE: NUT CHECKLIST

Work experience is widely considered to form an important part of a young person's education, offering many benefits and learning opportunities. It is essential that work experience placements are organised with health and safety as the priority. Young people, who find themselves in a very different setting to the school environment, may be more at risk of accidents because of lack of awareness of risk and because of physical and psychological immaturity.

This document is not intended to constitute a definitive guide on the subject. It highlights some of the key issues and directs members, for whom work experience management is part of their job description, towards other sources of advice. Teachers in this position must obtain proper training to be competent to assess risk and manage the processes. The guidance may also be of general interest to teachers whose form groups are about to begin work experience placements.

Some schools may use the services of an agency to organise and assess work placements while others may do this themselves. Whatever the arrangement, local authorities and schools have a common law duty of care to the students they educate that cannot be passed to an agency.

Work experience requires senior management team support to be effective. Work experience and work-related learning should be part of every School Development Plan.

The Government's 14-19 Policy: Work-Related Learning

The Government's 14-19 policy has placed additional demands on institutions such as Further Education (FE) colleges, particularly regarding provision for young learners aged 14-16. Whilst the majority of colleges have some experience of providing link or similar courses for local schools, the increasing volume of young learners in colleges has led to a need for more formal arrangements.

With the introduction of the 14-19 Specialist Diplomas and Applied GCSEs, students will be required to undertake more work-related learning and, in the case of diploma students, ten days' work experience. As a result of this initiative, up to 120,000 14-16 year olds currently attend FE colleges for at least a day a week with the DfES predicting that 350,000 14-16 year olds will be enrolled on Specialist Diplomas.

Understanding the potential of work-related developments on the post-14 curriculum has management implications across a range of institutions/agencies with opportunities for collaborative partnerships.

FE colleges must negotiate with schools, on the basis of the FE college's and school's risk assessments, the level of supervision required and put in place the agreed level of supervision both in class and on the premises prior to and between lessons and at lunch time.

Schools have a legal requirement to keep a check on the attendance of young learners of compulsory school age. Procedures must be agreed between schools and colleges for the reporting of absences.

Whilst a young learner is on the FE college's premises, s/he is in the care of the FE college which, therefore, has a duty of care towards that young learner.

Assessing the Suitability of the Work Experience Placement: Teachers' Responsibilities

Work experience co-ordinators are expected, on behalf of their employer, to set up systems to decide on the suitability of work experience placements from a health and safety perspective. They need to be reasonably satisfied that the placement provider can ensure the health, safety and welfare of the student. Health and safety law treats work experience students as employees.

In order to be able to evaluate the suitability of placements from a health and safety perspective, schools must ensure that teachers organising placements are competent to assess the risks to the student, or interpret the assessment carried out by a competent outside consultant. Teachers cannot be expected to evaluate a potential workplace unless they know what to look for. Training, including a basic grounding in health and safety law, should be provided for those new to the role. Work experience co-ordinators are not, however, expected to be experts in health and safety matters. They should simply be able to recognise when a workplace is unsuitable. It is important to remember also that employers bear overall legal responsibility for the health and safety of both students and employees such as teachers. The checklist set out below includes important points which need to be considered before a placement is agreed.

Questions to Ask Before Agreeing a Placement

- Is there a policy on health and safety at work and suitable safety?
- Has the provider assessed the risks associated with the student undertaking the work, taking into account his/her inexperience?
- Has information been provided on precautions that will be put in place to control the risks? If there are specific risks associated with a particular student undertaking certain tasks, for example because of medical reasons such as skin allergies, colour blindness, epilepsy or because of a learning disability, it is the responsibility of the teacher organising the placement, or the outside consultant where appropriate, to discuss these with the employer and, if necessary, seek an alternative, more suitable placement for that student.
- Who will be responsible for supervising the student? Has that person been fully briefed on his/her responsibilities? If the placement is either long term or involves one-to-one supervision a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check will be necessary.
- How will students be briefed on the hazards of the particular workplace and the control measures in place to reduce risk to a minimum?
- How many hours will the student be expected to work? Students must not be asked to work excessively long or unsocial hours. The DfES recommends no longer than an eight hour day.
- How would the pupil or employer contact the school outside school office hours when the pupil may still be on placement?
- Is the employer aware that students must not operate dangerous machinery, carry out manual handling tasks or handle dangerous substances?

- Are suitable insurance agreements in place? Students must be covered for the period of work experience by their employer's Employers' Liability, Public Liability and motor vehicle (where appropriate) insurance. This means that they will be covered if they injure themselves, an employee or a member of the public or if they damage the employer's property or property belonging to someone else.
- Are suitable fire, first aid and accident reporting procedures in place? Guidance must also be given on security arrangements. Schools should be informed immediately if students suffer an accident during the placement period.
- Has parental consent been given for each student before the placement begins?

Sources of Further Information

Teachers should always follow their own employer's guidelines on work experience.

In addition, the following documents provide useful sources of advice:

Work Experience and the Law: A Guide for Work Experience Organisers by Anthony Johns. Available from the Centre for Education and Industry Publications, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL Tel: 01203 523 948

Work Experience: A Guide for Secondary Schools – DfES 2002. Available from DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham, NG15 0DJ
Tel: 0845 603 3360

Work Experience: A Guide for Employers – DfES 2002. Details as above.

Health and Safety in European Work Experience: A Teacher's Guide. Available from Centre for Education and Industry Publications, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL
Tel: 01203 523 948

Managing Health and Safety on Work Experience: A Guide for Organisers, HSE.
Available from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6FS

'AoC Model Partnership Agreement' between Colleges and Schools/Local Authorities.
www.s4s.org.uk/qualitypacks