

2010

# Psychology Apprenticeship Scheme re-titled Pilot Mini-placement scheme in Psychology

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University of Plymouth

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Teaching Fellowship Award Scheme  
Final report

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*Mandy Burns, University Careers Service: 587713, [mandy.burns@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:mandy.burns@plymouth.ac.uk)*

*Kassandra Clemens on workshop support and delivery*

**Title of project** *Psychology Apprenticeship Scheme – re-titled Pilot Mini-placement scheme in Psychology*

**Type of project** *Development*

**Aims of project**

- *The aim of this project was to design and trial a model of short work based experience that can be adapted for use in other academic schools*
- *To develop materials to recruit students and employers for mini-placements scheme*
- *To design and run training programmes for students who wish to take part in mini-placement scheme. The training program will be designed specifically to encourage deeper understanding of competences and deeper learning reflection.*
- *To create on line materials that support students on mini-placement*
- *To contact and visit local employers to introduce scheme*
- *To liaise with internal and external staff who are already running WBL schemes in order to share best practice.*

**Background to project (or context)**

Context

Work based experience is important for personal development, employability, and enterprise activity; and goes beyond the acquisition of 'just more skills'. Studies have typically found that work placement opportunities can improve students self efficacy, sector specific knowledge, and give them the opportunity to develop important networks and contacts. It can also help them to learn how to change themselves into the sort of person who is likely to be employed in a particular occupation, HEA (2008). Barnett and Coat {2005} suggest that what really matters is an individual's will and motivation, to have the confidence to do something useful with their knowledge and skills. To interact with the world effectively and make informed choices student need the opportunity to enhance self awareness and self efficacy in relation to external reference points {e.g. academic demands, employer expectations}. Graduate employers also recognise the importance of work based experience, typically rating it higher than class of degree and degree subject. A recent study by the DFES (2008) showed that organisations prefer graduates who have gained employment experience during their course. One of the key findings of the

CBI/Edexcel Education and Skills survey (2008) was that 86% of CEO's regard wider employability skills as graduate's most valuable asset.

Psychology at undergraduate level is a non-vocational subject and according to the British Psychological Society only 20% of all Psychology students in the UK will end up with a career in Psychology. Throughout their degree programme psychology students are given the opportunity to develop an range of skills that are central to enterprise and employability, however, when faced with having to evidence such skills in employment interviews and on application forms, psychology students appear to struggle, HEN(2008). First destination data for the School of Psychology indicate that while over 70% of psychology graduates are employed within six months of graduation, many of these are engaged in non-graduate work. In the last 12 months the School of Psychology, in collaboration with the university careers service, has introduced a new integrated careers programme for students that has encouraged them to explore both careers in psychology and a range of careers that use psychological knowledge, and has initiated a student log book aimed at supporting students in their careers planning and exploration and personal development. The Psychology student apprenticeship scheme builds on existing contacts with local organisations and the voluntary sector developed through this programme and will enhance current career development practice, student enterprise activity and employability.

## Methods and Milestones

- Preliminary research was conducted with the universities of Bath, Cardiff, Surrey and Aston Careers Services and Psychology departments, July & August 2009.
- Student recruitment material completed October 2009 and amended Jan 2010. Preliminary employer recruitment material and folders produced September 2009. April 2010: meeting with faculty marketing staff to design recruitment flyer for potential placement providers.
- September 2009 - agreement from Psychology HOS to meet the costs of CRB checks for students on mini-placement scheme.
- September/October 2009 Meeting with Faculty of Science and Technology staff who deal with placements to learn about legal and health and safety requirements of setting up an off campus placements scheme for students.
- Oct 2009 – Feb 2010 Design and uploading of support and information material into mini-placement folder on the student portal. To support and integrate the program adapted online materials for careers support were made available via module and main Psychology portal.
- In collaboration with faculty placement and learning support staff - design and implementation of 3 hour training sessions for mini-placements;
- Training sessions were held in Oct 2009 attended by 26 students, and Jan 2010 attended by a further 28 students.
- In total 15 students in total went on placements e.g. In local primary schools, Paignton Zoo and Plymouth Aquarium – however a further 28 students were unable to arrange a placement during the current academic year so have been given permission to try in the next academic year.
- March 2010, meeting with CEPPL staff to take part in WBL network for Faculty of Science and Technology and to share good practice.
- Project evaluation began in June 2010 and was completed in July 2011. Interviews and or written correspondence were held with employers and students.

### **Outcomes and Evaluation**

- *Students and employers were enthusiastic about a mini-placement scheme in principle. Four of the employers we approached for feedback said that they will be happy to continue with the scheme in the next academic year. A number of students who were unable to access suitable employers during the pilot phase of scheme have expressed an interest in a work placement in the academic year 2010/11.*
- *However, both students and employers have identified problems with the scheme in its current form. Employers wish the scheme to be extended in length so that students could develop skills and expertise in order to be of greater assistance to employers. However, this would mean building WBL into the student curriculum and timetabled as an activity by the school. Some students felt that they needed a greater level of support in gaining a placement and wanted an identified supervisor at the university for on-going support during the placement. Both of these issues involve the allocation of greater resources in a placement scheme in the future and will need to be discussed in the School of Psychology.*
- *The training materials and portal material were designed to encourage students to have a deeper understanding of competences and deeper learning reflections of their experiences – feedback from students suggest that this aim was achieved. The materials designed for this study have now been placed on the Faculty of Science and Technology portal pages and are accessible to the whole faculty. **See appendix 1:** for an example of an action plan produced by one of the students this year.*
- *A spinoff from the training material was the internal dissemination of related materials for three workshops to second year students led by postgraduate researchers in the school of Psychology. This allowed better integration of the new mini-placement into the school curriculum and supported student's personal development.*
- *Students who attended the training session and those who undertook placement claimed they benefited in terms of professional skills development and employability. The placement gave students the opportunity to better integrate their specialist knowledge and skills into the world of work. In addition students became ambassadors for the university in the local community*

Associated publications: Jacobs, P.A. & Burns, M (2010) Mini Work Placements In Psychology: Poster presented to the Vice-chancellors teaching and learning conference 2010.

Website (if directly connected to the project)

Keywords: placements, work based learning, employers, experiential learning, reflective learning, Psychology

**Faculty of Science and Technology**  
**University of Plymouth School of Psychology Mini-placements**  
**Action Plan/Learning Agreement**

2009-10

*The University is very appreciative of organisations that offer placement opportunities to students. This agreement between the student and host organisation is to ensure clarity about responsibilities and expectations to help ensure a positive outcome.*

Student's Name:	Registration No. 10120747  Programme: Psychology and Criminology and CJS
Name of Academic Coordinator Pamela Jacobs School of Psychology	Tel: No. 01752 847322  Email: pjacobs@plymouth.ac.uk
Name of Placement Provider/ Employer:  Named Supervisor:	Tel. No: 01752 567660

  

- 1. Agreed Tasks/Projects to be carried out by the student during their placement to be completed jointly by the student and placement**

  - Focus on child's (MD) reading.
  - Try to assess level of ability using standard tests.
  - Research suitable support available for use in the classroom.
  - Make resources if suitable to support MD in classroom setting.

Duration: From 13.01.10 To 24.03.10

Days / Hours of work / attendance: Wednesday Mornings
- 2. Learning Outcomes - Student's personal and course related goals**

  - Link uses of psychology to applications in education.
  - Experience in a school setting.
- 3. A summary of the skills and personal development of student during the placement. ( to be completed by the student)**

  - I am much more confident and authoritative when talking to children so that they know when work needs to be done.
  - I have been able to work with MD and achieve improvements in his reading, spelling and multiplication skills in the classroom.
  - Being able to research more around classroom challenges and SEN issues.

- Reacting appropriately to novel and challenging behaviour from the pupils.
- Installing confidence in MD so that they can reflect on their own mistakes and behaviour with the happiness that their issues can be resolved and that there is much more that they are really good at.
- I have gained invaluable experience in the school, which has developed teaching skills and creating tasks for the pupils.

**4. Resources required for project – an application can be made to the School of Psychology for up to £50 to the assist student to carry out a project. A application/ justification for funds must be made in writing by the student to the Academic Coordinator and approved by the placement provider.**

A voucher for £50 was sent to the school and receipt acknowledged 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

**5. Students may apply for travel expenses of up to £20 via an application to the Academic Coordinator. This must be approved by the placement provider.**

**£20 voucher given June 2010.**

**5. Tasks to be completed during and at the end of the placement.**

**Student needs to keep a reflective record of their placement activities**

**Placement provider to sign off student's record of activities**

**On successful completion of the placement, student will send a copy of poster or PowerPoint presentation to the placement provider.**

## Responsibilities

The student is responsible for:

- confirming their volunteer status and ensuring that they are covered by the placement provider's insurance, during the placement
- completing an induction into their placement organisation and completing a Health and Safety Checklist
- familiarizing themselves with the organisation's Health and Safety Policy and taking all reasonable measures to ensure their own health and safety and that of others
- conducting themselves in a manner appropriate to a representative of the University and their placement provider
- informing the placement coordinator of any major problems that may arise during the work experience
- seeking feedback from the placement provider on their performance and the organisation of the work experience

**The Placement Coordinator and Placement Officer are responsible for:**

- preparing the student for any placement so that they are aware of their responsibilities
- ensuring that the student has checked the suitability of the placement opportunity
- providing reasonable support to the students, including dealing with any major problems which may arise during the work experience.
- evaluating the effectiveness of the placement opportunity in the light of feedback from the student and the employer

**The employer / placement provider is responsible for:**

- confirming the student's status as a volunteer and ensuring that they are covered by the organisation's insurance
- nominating an individual who will supervise and act as a mentor to the student
- addressing any additionally identified needs of students with a declared disability
- ensuring the student is inducted into the organisation and is fully aware of the relevant Health and Safety and insurance requirements
- providing the student with helpful feedback on their progress and performance
- participating in the evaluation of the work experience

*We have discussed the nature of the placement and are clear about our respective responsibilities*

Student's signature Date. 26/05/10

Workplace Supervisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Placement Coordinator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_