

NCWE

Work Experience Quality Mark



**ENHANCING STUDENT
EMPLOYABILITY**

Your guide to becoming
a leading employer in
developing the future
workforce and enhancing
student employability

Welcome to the NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark

Thank you for your interest in the NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark. By choosing to receive this pack, you as an employer have shown that you care about the quality of work experience that you provide to higher education students.

Your interest in the Quality Mark illustrates your desire to contribute to the development of the future workforce and to offer students an optimum environment to develop employability skills. It also demonstrates that your organisation cares about attracting and retaining the best talent, which may make a real difference to your organisation's bottom line.

You have recognised the potential 'win-win' situation that this can bring about. Students benefit through development and employers benefit by

retaining the best students. The NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark is the route to securing these benefits by reinforcing your reputation as an organisation that champions work experience.

This pack will explain everything you need to know about the Work Experience Quality Mark and provides guidance on how your organisation can achieve accreditation.



"What benefits them will benefit you"

Benefits at a glance

THE NCWE WORK EXPERIENCE QUALITY MARK

- Provides a national framework for improving work experience
- Assists companies to benchmark their existing work placement provision
- Helps employers address issues of recruitment and retention

BEING ACCREDITED MEANS

- External recognition for high standards attained in the placement programme
- Acknowledgement that your placement programme contributes to developing the workforce
- Proof that your organisation adheres to quality standards in a placement programme
- Demonstrating collaboration between yourself and universities
- Adding value to your organisation
- Increasing your competitiveness within the industry and enhancing your CSR in terms of your commitment to student employability

IT WILL ENABLE YOU TO

- Keep up the good reputation of your organisation via student recommendations when they return to university
- Use it as a business improvement tool for work experience
- Enhance productivity by knowledge transfer on specific projects
- Reduce costs in recruitment and training by viewing the placement as a potential hire without commitment
- Increase internal customer satisfaction by bringing in students with new ideas from different perspectives

STUDENTS WILL BENEFIT THROUGH

- Increased job satisfaction
- A good working environment
- Recognition and development
- Good quality training
- Being given responsibility and involvement
- The ability to make an informed choice about their future career
- Gaining real skills, both transferable and practical
- Increased employability skills

What is in this pack?

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Who is this pack for?

Any organisation that provides work experience who want their work experience provision to reach national standards can work towards being accredited with the NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark.

Some organisations may have work experience programmes or work-based learning that already match national standards but haven't been accredited. Others may want to work towards implementing and improving their work experience programmes and processes to a level in accordance with national standards. Whatever situation your organisation is in, this pack is for you.

The length of work experience can vary. Whether you offer short or long-term placements you can still apply for accreditation.

Organisations can be accredited for any work experience they provide so long as the work experience is planned, has learning outcomes and is monitored and assessed.

Some examples of such work experience are:

Sandwich placements – paid work, which is part of a student's course, and assessed in some way by the university. They are usually for 12 months and take place in the third or fourth year of the course. Universities, in collaboration with employers, take an active part in arranging sandwich placements.

Work-based project – a specific piece of assessed work for a course, undertaken at an employer's premises.

Work placement - a period of work experience, which can be paid or unpaid, and is part of or relevant to the student's course of study. This can be arranged through the university with an employer or by the student and is for an agreed period of time.

Internships – a word that is increasingly used by large companies and refers to a placement within their organisation.

“The Quality Mark shows that you recognise the importance and value of quality work experience”

What is the Quality Mark?

The employability of students upon graduation is becoming an increasingly important issue, with employers continuing to say that they expect to recruit graduates with some understanding of the world of work. Consequently, the demand for work experience/placement opportunities is set to rise over the coming years and the relevance of work experience will become ever more important.

It is the view of the NCWE, that in order for both the employer and the student to benefit from a period of work experience, standards should be set in the form of a Quality Mark. Such an opportunity enables the student to make a more informed career choice, whilst providing employers with an excellent recruitment tool.

Created by the National Council for Work Experience, the NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark is a standard, designed to recognise and accredit employers who meet a national standard for work experience provision.

Accredited employers are recognised for their contribution to positive workforce development, student learning and society as a whole, thereby adding to their CSR portfolio.

More information on the work of the NCWE can be found on page 27.

Why a Work Experience Quality Mark?

The Quality Mark has been born out of the need, recognised by the government through the 'Dearing Report', to raise the skills level of the future workforce and prepare students for the world of work.

Employers and work experience providers can take an active role by ensuring that any form of work experience that is carried out is of a standard which benefits the student, the employer and the economy.

In addition, an accredited employer or work experience provider is provided with formal recognition, which allows them to really invest in and attract future talent.

What does the Quality Mark consist of?

The Quality Mark is based around 6 main elements or aims. In order to be accredited the employer must show that they comply with comprehensive criteria within each element. The elements are:-

- Commitment
- Recruitment
- Induction
- Learning, assessment and support
- Partnerships
- Programme evaluation and monitoring

These elements are discussed in more detail in the criteria section (page 12).

What is the process?

- Prepare submission with help from the NCWE Adviser.
- Assessor visit to verify submission and interview key personnel stakeholders (e.g. students, line managers, HR personnel, graduates).
- An external board comprising of Careers Professionals, Placement Advisers and Employers consider the submission and assessor report and make the final decision regarding accreditation.

Business benefits

Recruitment costs

Recruitment and retention can be a significant cost for employers. An employer accredited with the NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark can effectively reduce the costs of recruitment errors and increase retention through the quality of the work experience they provide. Students who benefit from high quality placements are more likely to want to return to that same employer following graduation.

Raising profile, increasing return

Students are the best brand ambassadors and will become the vehicle for promoting your organisation on their return to university, if they have had a good experience. Their benefit will be your benefit.

Adding value

Employers can make a real investment in students by actively showing they are committed to their professional development. They can do this by ensuring that the student undertakes a worthwhile work experience placement that is guaranteed to develop their professional skills. In addition, it can give students the opportunity to see if the career they envisage is suited to them in reality.

The Quality Mark accreditation is a mark of excellence, which confirms that you as an employer are committed to the personal and professional development of your placement students.

Once accredited, organisations can:

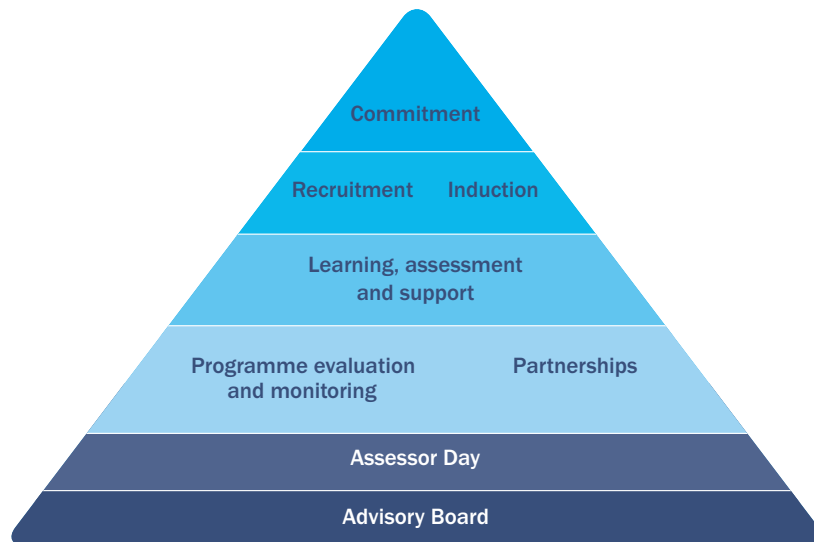
- Display the Quality Mark logo on all corporate literature
- Access ongoing help and advice from the NCWE

Your company will also be:

- Featured on the NCWE website www.work-experience.org
- Profiled on the work experience section of www.prospects.ac.uk
- Listed as an accredited employer in Prospects Work Experience, the official magazine of the NCWE, circulated in print and digitally to over 150,000 students
- Issued with a QM certificate. An optional glass plaque can also be purchased at an extra cost of £135.00
- Issued with Quality Mark work experience certificates for students on work placement in your first year of accreditation
- Sent one complimentary invitation to the NCWE awards held annually in London in your first year of accreditation
- Entitled to one year's free membership of the Higher Education Careers Service Unit (HECSU) www.hecsu.ac.uk



What is Quality Work Experience?



The NCWE Quality Mark consists of 6 elements or aims which together make up the essential ingredients for quality work experience.

Central to quality work experience is **learning and support**, which must be open and accessible to all without bias or exclusion. The **recruitment** must also be fair, thus giving all concerned an equal chance to undertake work experience. For the learning process to be valuable it must be **assessed**. Adequate resources as well as **support** are required for the central elements to flourish.

An optimum learning environment is laid down in the **induction**. A picture of this environment should be given through the induction where objectives and expectations are explained as well as delivering an overview of the organisation and any legal requirements.

Commitment encompasses the whole of work experience and in order to seal the work experience as quality work experience, commitment should stem from senior management.

Where applicable, **partnerships** between employers and Higher Education Institutions are also encouraged.

The whole process should be **monitored and reviewed** and continuously improved.

Hence quality work experience is:

Commitment - The employer is fully committed to developing employable graduates.

Recruitment - The employer complies with fair practices in recruitment, selection and equal opportunities legislation.

Induction - The employer has a clear and defined induction process which covers key areas, is formalised and compulsory.

Learning, assessment and support - The employer provides and fully supports optimum learning in its placement programme and has sound assessment mechanisms and techniques in place.

Partnerships - Between employers and Higher Education Institutions are developed.

Programme evaluation and monitoring - The employer has arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work experience programme.

To be accredited as a provider of quality work experience the criteria laid down within each element needs to be demonstrated.

The criteria

The Quality Mark consists of six elements made up of criteria which are based on professional and academic expertise. To achieve accreditation the employer must show how they comply with the criteria.

This section discusses each element and the criteria in more detail.

Commitment

The employer is fully committed to developing employable graduates.

Criteria

- a) The employer fully understands the value of developing employable graduates through offering work placements/internships.
- b) The development of students is embedded within the culture of the organisation.

For an organisation to provide work placements that produce actual benefits there must be commitment. Commitment from individuals is all well and good, but if they don't have the support of the most senior management the results of their commitment will rapidly disappear.

For commitment to be effective it should be collective i.e. both employees within the organisation and management should be committed and take responsibility for developing employable graduates.

Management commitment formulates the culture of the organisation and people emulate that culture. Therefore, positive commitment to developing work placements will result in a positive work experience culture.

It is not enough for an employer to express their commitment on paper. For commitment to be effective it must be active and reinforced.

Ways to demonstrate commitment

Some of the ways that an organisation can implement and achieve commitment are as follows:

- Include commitment to developing students as part of the organisation's business strategy
- Ensure senior managers can state what the goals and objectives for developing employable graduates are

- Disseminate these goals and objectives through a work placement policy, which is available for all employees to read
- Communicate on-going commitment and support to all employees; by regular communications via most appropriate media (e.g. face-to-face, notice board, newsletter, intranet etc.) and the presence of senior staff at student inductions
- Establish a clear work experience framework from which the placements will operate. This will ensure that everyone can understand the scheme and thus reinforce their commitment
- Be clear about the organisation's motivations for the work experience programme, which should demonstrate the benefits both to the business and the student

Evidence may include:

- A work placement policy
- Inclusion of commitment in business strategies, visions and goals
- Communication of commitment to work placement scheme and students through internal communications (e.g. newsletter, intranet)
- Members of senior management welcoming students at induction or being accessible during the placement

Recruitment

The employer complies with fair practices in recruitment, selection and equal opportunities legislation.

Criteria

- a) The selection policies and procedures are transparent, fair, consistent and explicit.
- b) The work placement advert is clear in its content and placed in a location which is accessible to all prospective candidates.
- c) The employer has a pre-selection process, which is fair and unbiased.
- d) There is formal training for HR staff and clear instructions for all line managers involved in assessment and recruitment of placement students.
- e) A procedure is in place that ensures applicants are made aware of the obligations placed on them prior to formally agreeing to accept the position.
- f) The employer's interview process is in no way inferior to, or less stringent than, the interview process for a non-work-experience position.
- g) The job description and contract of employment are issued.
- h) The recruitment policies and procedures are kept under regular review.
- i) There is a mechanism in place to ensure efficient and effective feedback to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

When recruiting a work placement student, the process should be similar to that for any other employee. Just as with regular employees, the appointment of a work placement student can be a costly process. It can be demanding and time-consuming and the method of recruitment therefore requires careful planning and preparation.

A successful work experience appointment is an investment in the present and possibly the future of the organisation. Therefore, it is important to be sure that your selection methods lead to such a result. Inadequate and unfair selection methods can only waste time, money and resources as well as produce a lower level of effectiveness for the employer. It is also good practice to offer feedback to unsuccessful applicants to help enhance their chance of gaining employment with an alternative organisation.

The selection process should ensure that the best student is appointed in the fairest possible way. Therefore those involved in the process of recruitment, selection and appointment of a work experience placement must be aware of relevant legislation and Codes of Practice and ensure that these are not contravened.

Some relevant Acts and Codes are:

- The Sex Discrimination Act (1975/86)
- Sex Discrimination (Indirect Discrimination and Burden of Proof) Regulations 2001
- The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (1999)
- The Race Relations Act (1976)
- The Race Relations Amendment Act (2000)
- The Employment Rights Act (1996)
- The Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
- Codes of Practice issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality
- The Equal Pay Act (1970 as amended)
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (2006)

Recruitment

These Acts aim to promote equal opportunity in employment and should be applied when recruiting for work placements. They make it unlawful to discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of sex, marital status, race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, and since October 2006 - age.

Even though your organisation will already adhere to legislation for non-work-experience employees and have a good recruitment process in place, when recruiting a student for work experience the process should be no different or less stringent.

As well as being aware of relevant legislation and Codes of Practice and ensuring that these are not contravened, a good and fair selection process is achieved by well thought-out planning and consideration of the type of student required for the placement. This would be recorded in the form of a job description and competencies against which the selection can take place.

Evidence may include:-

- A role description and person specification
- A contract of employment
- A list of key competencies required for the post
- Training for those involved in selection and recruitment
- A formal session to review policies and procedures on an annual basis
- A policy statement on equal opportunities and diversity for work experience placements
- A feedback procedure for all applicants
- On-boarding arrangements to keep students engaged between offer and take up



Induction

The employer has a clear and defined induction process which covers regulatory and legal issues, and is formalised and obligatory. It should also address the expected business and academic outcomes of the student, where relevant.

Criteria

- a) The employer ensures that the work placement student understands the induction process and the reasons why it is being carried out.
- b) The student is made aware of his/her business expectations and, where applicable, the employer understands the student's academic obligations and expectations.
- c) The employer has stringent company policies and procedures that ensure adherence to regulatory issues of health, safety and security.
- d) The student is formally made aware of all health, safety and security procedures and company policies.

The purpose of an induction programme is to ensure that the student is effectively integrated into the company. It also serves the purpose of ensuring that the student becomes fully operational quickly and is aware of procedures and practices. The induction should start on day one of the placement and can vary in length depending on the type of work the student will be carrying out.

An effective induction may include:

A pre-induction checklist:

- Ensuring that there is a place for the student to sit, a workstation etc
- Confirming other staff have been informed of the student's intended arrival
- Ensuring all documentation has been prepared
- Engaging and involving the relevant staff in the process, including explanation of the induction process

A timetable of tasks consisting of:

- A tour of the building
- Briefing on security, confidentiality, health and safety
- Overview of the business, organisation chart, products, market, ethics etc
- Introduction to all key company staff
- Discussion of job description
- Discussion and agreement of goals and objectives

Evidence may include:-

- Induction schedule/checklist
- Powerpoint presentations/handouts etc
- Agreed placement goals/objectives
- Relevant policies covering safe working practice and statutory regulations

Learning, assessment and support

The employer provides an optimum learning environment for the student with sufficient resources to fulfil the business objectives of the placement. The employer has sound assessment mechanisms in place to regularly review the learning and development of the student in conjunction with the business objectives of the placement.

Criteria

- a) From the outset of the placement, both the employer and student are clear about what is expected of them, in terms of the academic objectives of the student and the business objectives of the employer (this may be covered during induction).
- b) The employer will have planned and defined how each employability skill or competency may be developed throughout the placement (teamwork, problem solving, communication etc).
- c) The employer will have formal and continuous mechanisms for assessment and evaluation of the work undertaken by students, including feedback.
- d) The employer ensures that there is the opportunity for re-assessment in the case of failure or non-completion.
- e) Managers are effective in supporting the development of the work placement student and they understand the objectives, benefits and learning outcomes of work experience.
- f) Support and guidance is provided to integrate the student's learning into long-term career plans, where appropriate and to ensure that such learning is articulated and recorded by the student.
- g) Where required, training and necessary preparation is available for any task or activity carried out by the student.
- h) Where necessary, access to a visit from the Higher Education Institution (HEI) to the workplace is made possible and these occur at an agreed frequency.

The student will come to the placement wanting to learn and develop skills that employers will look for when they graduate. The employer will expect the student to develop business and occupational skills which will enable them to perform better when they progress to full-time employment either with another employer or with the placement provider.

Therefore, students will expect to develop skills and competencies such as:

- Business awareness
- Professionalism
- Communication
- Teamwork

- Problem solving
- Leadership
- Initiative
- Confidence
- Flexibility
- Self-awareness

A quality work placement means that both sides benefit. Thus, it is important that the employer understands that there should be learning outcomes from the placement which benefit all. Objectives and learning outcomes should be agreed and defined prior to the student beginning the placement.

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Learning, assessment and support

Defining goals, objectives and assessment

Goals and objectives can be used to guide the student in terms of work and career progression during their time on placement.

Objectives and goals, which are learning outcomes, can enable the student to plan and prioritise their work. They can also identify what needs to be done and how they are going to achieve it. Creating a professional development plan is a recommended way of setting out goals and objectives.

Work experience is all about development and the student cannot develop if they are not given feedback. If the student doesn't know how they are progressing and what is expected of them, they will not know where their strengths lie and where they need to improve.

Assessment, therefore, is crucial. There should be regular reviews of performance, which should openly and honestly assess achievements to date. The assessment should be a two-way process which is objective in nature, with input and feedback from both the employer and student.

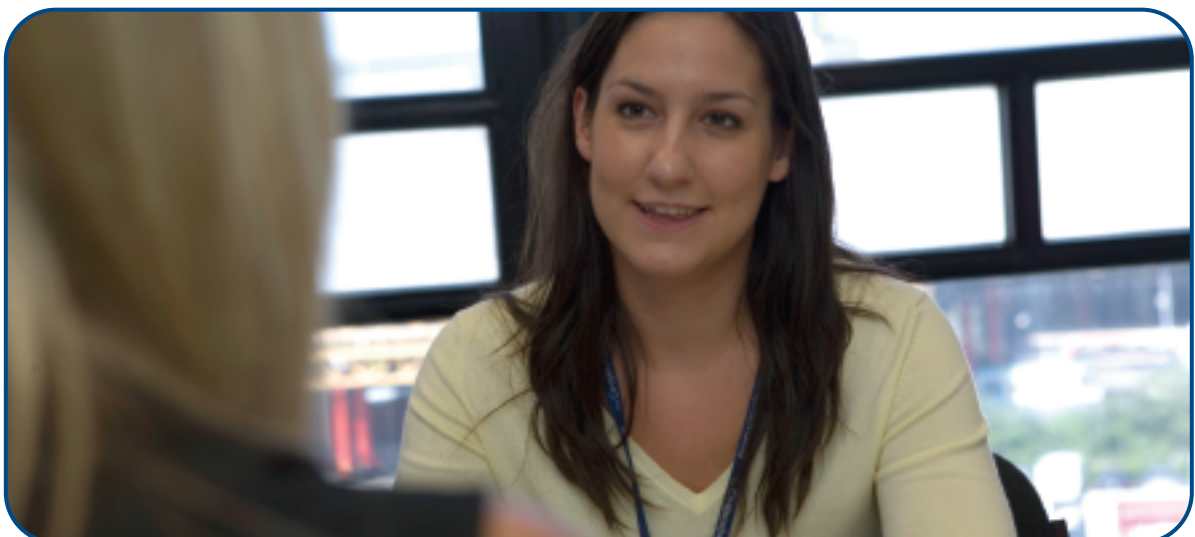
The assessment and evaluation should give the student the opportunity to learn, develop and reflect. Work experience or work based learning should be concerned with giving the student opportunities to develop employability skills so they can reflect and articulate their skills and experiences.

Goals and objectives should be:

- Clear and concise with specific results and standards
- Measurable, to enable progress towards the achievement of milestones which can be carefully monitored
- Mutually agreed to ensure commitment from both parties toward achieving the goals
- Realistic
- Time-bound with clear deadlines, interim milestones and review points

Assessment mechanisms should include:

- An open and honest review of achievements substantiated with concrete examples
- Appraisal of progress on key job or project tasks
- The opportunity for two-way feedback
- Identification of training needs
- Agreement or amendments of future objectives
- The opportunity for the student to self-appraise



Learning, assessment and support

The placement programme should have adequate resources and support mechanisms for the students and, equally importantly, for employers involved with the students.

Managers and those closely involved with the student

How well the student benefits from the placement depends a great deal on the managers to whom they are reporting to during the placement. Therefore, it is very important that these managers are adequately trained and supported in their role. Line managers and supervisors need to be fully aware of the placement and what is required of them.

The manager and anyone directly associated with the student should be made aware of, or provided with support for, the following:

- The recruitment process, including on-boarding
- Purpose of the placement – objectives, benefits to the organisation, manager and student
- Preparation for the student - how to get facilities arranged e.g. e-mail account, security pass, etc
- Policies – company policies relevant to the placement e.g. holiday, sick leave, etc

- Mentoring or buddying
- Whom the student can go to for further guidance and support
- Managing performance – clear definition of the placement tasks and learning outcomes, schedule of appraisal and assessment
- The essence of a quality placement is support. It is difficult for any employee, let alone a student, to flourish in an unsupportive atmosphere. Providing support is crucial to the student's learning and development.

Evidence may include:-

- Personal development plan (PDP)
- List of available training
- Regular one-to-one reviews
- Reflection log
- Final assessment including HEI assessment if relevant
- Assistance with accommodation, if appropriate
- Sound reporting arrangements
- Peer support networks
- Mentor and buddy arrangements
- Ongoing career development support

“students will benefit through the opportunity to develop their potential”

Partnerships

Where applicable, the employer strives to build and maintain relationships with Higher Education Institutions.

Criteria

- a) For sandwich placement students or work placements related to the student's course of study, the employer understands the role of Higher Education Institutions and is actively involved in creating and maintaining relationships with Higher Education Institutions.
- b) The employer can describe the reasons they enter partnerships with or have arrangements with certain institutions.
- c) Employers collaborate with universities to share and exchange knowledge and skill requirements within the industry and subject area.

The Higher Education Institution will provide input to a work placement when it forms part of a sandwich degree. Even if students have gained a placement independently of their university (e.g. they may have secured a placement during the summer holidays) because the student is still in Higher Education, it is just as important that the employer recognises the academic link and the importance of encouraging the student to apply their academic knowledge with practical knowledge.

The level and degree of interaction with Higher Education Institutions depends on the nature of the placement programme. Whether this interaction is minimal or considerable, the employer is expected to build and maintain relationships with Higher Education Institutions. Just as important, however, is the employer's awareness and recognition of the reciprocal relationship between themselves, the Higher Education Institution and the student.

Understanding the role of the Higher Education Institutions

The Higher Education Institution's role in work placements is to secure learning for students. The higher education code of practice, written by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), defines placement learning as:

'The learning achieved during an agreed and negotiated period of learning that takes place outside the institution at which the full-time or part-time student is enrolled or engaged in learning'

Even though the QAA's code does not cover learning outside an institution, unless it is a planned part of a programme of study, the code is nevertheless useful in helping the employer understand the student's unique position of one

foot in the academic world and one foot in the business world.

The QAA also states that:

'where placement learning is part of a programme of study, awarding institutions ensure that its learning outcomes are:

- clearly defined
- contribute to the overall and coherent aims of the programme
- assessed appropriately'

Depending on the length and type of placement the employer provides it may be necessary for the employer to consider the relationship that is to be formed with the universities.

Advantages of forming links with Higher Education Institutions

- Higher Education Institutions provide careers advice
- Higher Education Institutions act as an information exchange between students and students, and also students and employers
- Employers can contribute to the curriculum and indirectly help students prepare for the world of work
- Higher Education Institutions can provide students with specific skills required by industry

Evidence may include:-

- List of partner universities
- List of partnerships with other relevant organisations e.g. Sector Skills Councils
- List of any degree the placement contributes to
- Presentations for recruitment drives

Programme evaluation and monitoring

The employer has arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work experience placement or programme.

Criteria

- a) The placement programme is regularly monitored, evaluated and quality assured.
- b) Mechanisms are in place to provide continuous improvement.

Continuous improvement is key to keeping the placement programme relevant and effective to the business. For businesses to remain competitive and retain the talent that has already participated in the placement programme, as well as attract new talent, the employer should not be complacent.

It is essential that the work placement remains of a high quality through feedback, monitoring and improvement and can be justified as an important part of the employer's business strategy.

"Accreditation provides assurance to students that the work experience undertaken at your organisation is of a high quality"

Consider the following when reviewing the programme:

- How well have objectives been achieved?
- How has the project benefited the business?
- How will the programme be built upon by the organisation? Was there a handover of the project by the student?
- Have line managers, buddies and mentors been asked for feedback on a regular basis?
- Have students been asked for feedback in a way which is anonymous and uncompromising (e.g. on-line questionnaire)?
- Have you had any external endorsements?

Possible evidence may include:-

- Student/line manager feedback
- Annual reviews with all relevant staff
- Any new elements that have been included into the placement scheme as a result of feedback

The adviser and assessment

What's the deal?

The NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark standard package includes:

- Initial consultation, set up etc
- Up to six adviser sessions*
- An assessor visit which is included in the fee. The external assessor will interview a selection of students, graduates, line managers, HR personnel and senior management
- The Assessor report and Quality Mark submission are considered for accreditation by the Advisory Board
- Annual monitoring during the three-year duration of accreditation. Two monitoring sessions are required, charged at £200 a session. This will be invoiced on an annual basis.
- Membership of NCWE for the three-year duration providing ongoing help and advice

The standard package costs £3,500 including the assessor visit. Travel expenses of the NCWE adviser are additional.

What does the adviser do?

The role of the adviser is to work with you to gather evidence and to collate it in a format that is appropriate for submission to the assessor and Board. This will involve reviewing the processes and procedures you have in place already and how well they work. The adviser will also highlight areas that need to be improved upon.

The adviser will work with you to benchmark what you already have and what you need to have in place against the criteria for the Quality Mark. They will also advise you on forming a steering group; a representative cross section of all those key players involved in the placements e.g. HR, programme managers, line managers, supervisors, mentors etc.

The aim of working towards the Work Experience Quality Mark is to assess and reinforce processes already in place, to improve existing processes and to develop new ones. Active participation is therefore expected from you the employer in reinforcing knowledge, implementing new processes and disseminating information.

During the initial consultation the adviser will discuss with you timescale and possible Boards you could attend. Once the number of adviser days is established, both you and the adviser will mutually agree a critical path, for accreditation. A schedule of activity will be created to highlight tasks that need to be completed in order to meet the desired accreditation date.

By working with the adviser in implementing your action plan you will complete the application and attach all necessary appendices. Once the application form is complete and the adviser is happy with the contents, it is then forwarded to the assessor.

*Adviser visits can be carried out face-to-face or virtually. Please note that personal visits accrue travel expenses. The number of adviser sessions needed vary depending on the size and complexity of your organisation and how developed your placement scheme is.

The adviser and assessment

The assessment

The assessor visit will be arranged between you, the adviser and the assessor prior to the completion of the application. Once a date has been agreed, you will be required to put together a list of possible interviewees which the assessor will select from.

When a list of interviewees has been finalised, you will be required to arrange a schedule for the day and send this to the assessor. There should be approximately 11 interviews, with a selection of students, graduates, HR representatives, line managers, mentors and senior management. Approximately 45 minutes should be allowed for each interview (30 minutes interview and 15 minutes to make notes).

The assessor can use a variety of methods to assess the employer; face-to-face interviews, group discussions, telephone interviews, observations etc. However face-to-face interviews will take priority.

An assessment report will be written summarising the outcome from the interviews, including any recommendations. The assessor report and the completed application will be reviewed by the external Quality Mark Committee at the proposed Board. The Committee members will make the final decisions as to whether your company will be accredited with the Quality Mark for work experience.

The adviser will not recommend that the Board should review the Quality Mark application until they believe the submission is up to accreditation standard. In the unlikely event that the Board does not recommend a company for accreditation, further evidence may be required. The applicant has the right to appeal against the Advisory Board decision at any time.



After accreditation

Monitoring

The NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark is awarded for three years, after which the employer should apply for re-accreditation.

Throughout the three-year period the employer will be monitored annually to ensure their programme is of the required standard. Monitoring will involve a visit from an NCWE representative with the key person responsible for the Quality Mark submission. The visit will review any benefits that you have gained from accreditation and discuss the implementation of any of the recommendations sent to you in the final Assessor and Board report.

“The Quality Mark is a vehicle with which to promote your placement activities”

NCWE has the right to remove Quality Mark accreditation status from an employer who has failed to maintain satisfactory standards in placement provision or who has failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the Quality Mark scheme.

Annual Monitoring is charged at £200 per year for the two years prior to re-accreditation.

Re-accreditation

When the accreditation period is coming close to expiry we will write to you to ask if you would like to be considered for re-accreditation. Re-accreditation involves reviewing the process similar to when you first applied. The cost for re-submission and new assessment is in the region of £2,000 (including the assessor visit).

Frequently asked questions

Q. What is the NCWE?

A. The National Council for Work Experience is a 'not-for-profit' organisation. NCWE promotes, supports and develops quality work experience and work-related learning for the benefit of students in higher education, organisations and the economy.

Q. How do I know if we are eligible to apply?

A. Any organisation that provides work experience in one form or another and who wants to reach a level whereby their work experience provision matches national standards, can work towards being accredited for the NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark.

Q. How long does the Work Experience Quality Mark last for?

A. Once accredited the Quality Mark is valid for three years providing the employer meets the Quality Mark terms and conditions.

Q. How long will it take to get accredited?

A. This depends on the organisation but you will have up to one year in which to submit your application; most companies take approximately six months. After submission of your application you will be assessed and if successful, accredited. Assessment and accreditation should be completed within four to eight weeks based on the assessor or the Board asking for no further evidence from you.

Q. What happens after I have sent in my declaration of intention?

A. We will send you a certificate of intention which you can display internally to communicate to all what your organisation is doing. The adviser will also be in contact with you to decide a critical path and action plan.

Q. Is there a time limit from receiving the certificate of intention to submission of my application?

A. Yes. You should have submitted your application within one year from the date of receipt of the certificate of intention.

Q. How much does it cost to work towards accreditation and be accredited?

A. The basic package begins at £3,500 plus travel; this includes adviser time, assessment and accreditation. Annual monitoring is £200 per visit. A total of two visits are required during accreditation.

Q. When do I pay?

A. We will ask for an initial payment with your declaration of intention and the balance payment when you submit your application. The full amount can be paid at the beginning of application if preferred. Monitoring is charged annually but can also be included in initial payment.

Q. When should we apply for assessment?

A. The adviser will be able to inform you on this.

Q. What happens after we have sent in our application?

A. An assessor visit will take place and the assessor report and application will be reviewed by the external Quality Mark Board.

Q. What is the role of the assessor?

A. They will read your written application with the accompanying evidence and visit you to interview key staff.

Q. What if the assessor is not happy with any part of our application?

A. They may ask questions in relation to this or ask to see certain things during the assessor visit.

Q. How long will it take for the Board to reach a decision?

A. The Quality Mark Boards take place every two months. You will know which Board your submission will go to when you begin completing the QM application. You will be informed of the Board's final recommendation immediately. Board recommendations, the assessor report and certificate will follow within two weeks.

Q. Do I need to be present when the NCWE Board consider my recommendation for accreditation?

A. No, we do not ask you to attend.

Frequently asked questions

Q. What if the NCWE Board reject the recommendation for accreditation?

A. We will advise you of the decision and the necessary recommended action.

Q. What if I don't agree with the Assessor or NCWE Board's decision?

A. You have the right to appeal.

Q. If the Board recommends I resubmit my application with minor or major changes, will I be charged for resubmission?

A. No. You can submit your application up to three times to the Board at no extra charge.

Q. How will I know I have been successfully accredited?

A. The NCWE representative will email you with the decision which will be followed up with written confirmation and issue of the Work Experience Quality Mark Certificate and logo.

Q. Where can I display the NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark?

A. Basically on all relevant corporate documentation. When you are successfully accredited we will provide you with full terms and conditions of use.

Q. What else am I entitled to after accreditation?

A. You will also be:

- Able to access ongoing help and advice from NCWE
- Featured on www.work-experience.org and www.prospects.ac.uk
- Listed in Prospects Work Experience magazine
- Issued with student certificates for all placement students in first year of accreditation
- Entitled to 12 months HECSU membership www.hecsu.ac.uk
- Sent one invitation to the NCWE annual awards

Q. How do I find out who else has been accredited?

A. All accredited employers will be listed in Prospects Work Experience magazine and on our website at www.work-experience.org/qualitymark

Q. What happens during the accreditation period?

A. Throughout the three-year period the employer will be monitored annually to ensure their programme is of the required standard. Monitoring involves a visit from an NCWE representative to ensure that the conditions of the Work Experience Quality Mark are being followed.

Q. Do I have to pay for being monitored?

A. Yes, this is charged at £200 per visit. A total of two visits are required during accreditation.

Q. What happens when the three-year accreditation period has finished?

A. When the accreditation period is coming close to expiry we will write to you to ask if you would like to be considered for re-accreditation.

Q. How much does it cost for re-accreditation?

A. Re-accreditation involves reviewing the process in a similar way to when you first applied but the cost for re-accreditation is in the region of £2,000 (including assessor visit).

Q. What if I am interested in the NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark but need more information that isn't covered here?

A. Contact us on 0161 277 5215 or email qualityadviser@prospects.ac.uk and we can advise you.

Q. I want to go for it. How do I get started?

A. Give us a call on 0161 277 5215 or email qualityadviser@prospects.ac.uk and we will set you on the process.

About NCWE

The National Council for Work Experience is a 'not-for-profit' organisation. NCWE promotes, supports and develops quality work experience and work related learning for the benefit of students in higher education, organisations and the economy.

NCWEs priorities are:

- To disseminate information and best practice.
- To encourage and support the development of quality and standards across all forms of work experience.
- To encourage more employers to provide placement opportunities.

The NCWE seeks to work in partnership with all those organisations that are concerned with these issues in order to add practical value to the work experience cause. By doing so, it is hoped that its work will lead to influencing and changing attitudes and thus make a contribution to preparing students for the world of work.



NCWE's activities include:

- Red Hot Talent, a toolkit for SMEs, which offers practical advice and guidance on how to manage work experience students more effectively.
- NCWE Awards, an annual awards event that recognises and rewards employers that display good practice in work experience.
- Certification Service for companies who have placement programmes and would like their students to have a certificate as a record of their experience.
- Tutors' Resource Pack to help students plan for and reflect upon work placement opportunities.
- Prospects Work Experience Magazine, the official magazine of the NCWE for first and second year Higher Education Students.
- NCWE also runs seminars and workshops on relevant topics and has produced materials for use by work experience and work based learning practitioners.
- Visit our website www.work-experience.org to see a wealth of work experience related information for students, employers and advisers.





Appendices

Appendix A - NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark application form

To be completed by the employer and sent to the assessor upon completion.

Appendices

NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark Application Form

Name of organisation/division applying for accreditation:

Address:

.....

.....

Postcode:

Tel number: Web address:

Name of contact person:

Contact person job title:

Contact person Tel: Contact person e-mail:

Nature of the business: Turnover (most recent year):

No. of employees including part-time: No. of placement students (most recent year):

Length of placement(s):

Organisational structure chart (please attach):

Your NCWE unique ref. number:

CEO Declaration and Authorisation:

I, the undersigned hereby confirm that I have read the enclosed application and to the best of my knowledge all information given is correct and is an accurate reflection of our placement programme(s).

Signed:

Print name:Date:

Please post this form to NCWE, Prospects House, Booth Street East, Manchester M13 9EP

Official Use Only:

Date received:

Received by:

Actioned by:

Summary/statistic sheet

How long has the company been employing placement students for?

Length of placements being assessed for the QM submission

Number of students/placements per year

What is the diversity mix of the placement students? (i.e. ethnicity, age, disability etc.)

.....

Approximate number of applications for placements per year

Do you have a graduate placement scheme?

Approximate number of placements converted into graduates/permanent positions per year

.....

What are the retention rates of graduates who carried out a work placement?

.....

What are the retention rates of the graduates who did not carry out a work placement?

.....

Number of placements on this site per year

Number of placements on different sites within the UK per year

Other programmes offered (e. g. summer, 3-6 months, 12-month industrial placement, flexible)

.....

Types of placements (e. g. IT, Marketing, Engineering)

Any other comments

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Your application will be assessed for accreditation against the criteria listed in the following sections.

Therefore please provide comprehensive answers to the following statements with all supporting evidence numbered and included in the appendix.

Section 1. Commitment

Aim: The employer is fully committed to developing employable graduates.

Please state appendices code if supporting evidence is enclosed

For official use only – please do not write in this section

- a) The employer fully understands the value of developing employable graduates through offering work placements/internships.
- b) The development of students is embedded within the culture of the organisation.

(Please continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Section 2. Recruitment

Aim: The employer complies with fair practices in recruitment, selection and equal opportunities legislation.

Please state appendices code if supporting evidence is enclosed

For official use only – please do not write in this section

- a) The selection policies and procedures are transparent, fair, consistent and explicit.
- b) The work placement advert is clear in its content and placed in a location, which is accessible to all prospective candidates.
- c) The employer has a pre-selection process which is fair and unbiased.
- d) There is formal training for HR staff and clear instructions for line managers involved in assessment and recruitment of placement students.
- e) A procedure is in place that ensures applicants are made aware of the obligations placed on them prior to formally agreeing to accept the position.
- f) The employer's interview process is in no way inferior to or less stringent than the interview process for a non-work-experience position.
- g) The job description and the contract of employment is issued.
- h) The recruitment policies and procedures are kept under regular review.
- i) There is a mechanism in place to ensure efficient and effective feedback about application is provided to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

(Please continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Section 3. Induction

Aim: The employer has a clear and defined induction process which covers regulatory and legal issues, and is formalised and obligatory. It should also address the expected business and academic outcomes of the student where relevant.

Please state
appendices
code if supporting
evidence
is enclosed

For official
use only –
please do not
write in this
section

- a) The employer ensures that the work placement student understands the induction process and the reasons why it is being carried out.
- b) The student is made aware of his/her business expectations and, where applicable, the employer understands the student's academic obligations and expectations.
- c) The employer has stringent company policies and procedures that ensure adherence to regulatory issues of health, safety and security.
- d) The student is formally made aware of all health, safety and security procedures and company policies.

(Please continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Section 4. Learning, assessment and support

Aim: The employer provides an optimum learning environment for the student with sufficient resources to fulfil the business objectives of the placement. The employer has sound assessment mechanisms in place to regularly review the learning and development of the student in conjunction with the business objectives of the placement.

Please state
appendices
code if supporting
evidence
is enclosed

For official
use only –
please do not
write in this
section

- a) From the outset of the placement, both the employer and student are clear about what is expected of them, in terms of the academic objectives of the student and the business objectives of the employer (this may be covered during induction).
 - b) The employer will have planned and defined how each employability skill or competency may be developed throughout the placement (teamwork, problem solving, communication etc).
 - c) The employer will have formal and continuous mechanisms for assessment and evaluation of the work undertaken by students, including feedback.
 - d) The employer ensures that there is the opportunity for re-assessment in the case of failure or non-completion.
 - e) Managers are effective in supporting the development of the work placement student and they understand the objectives, benefits and learning outcomes of work experience.
 - f) Support and guidance is provided to integrate the student's learning into long-term career plans where appropriate and to ensure that such learning is articulated and recorded by the student.
 - g) Where required, training and necessary preparation is available for any task or activity carried out by the student.
 - h) Where necessary, access to a visit from the Higher Education Institution (HEI) to the workplace is made possible and that these occur at an agreed frequency.
- (Please continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Section 5. Partnerships

Aim: Where applicable the employer strives to build and maintain relationships with HEIs.

Please state
appendices
code if supporting
evidence
is enclosed

For official
use only –
please do not
write in this
section

a) For sandwich placement students or work placements related to the student's course of study, the employer understands the role of HEIs and is actively involved in creating and maintaining relationships with HEIs.

b) The employer can describe the reasons they enter partnerships with or have arrangements with certain institutions.

c) Employers collaborate with universities to share and exchange knowledge and skill requirements within the industry and subject area.

(Please continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Section 6. Programme Evaluation and Monitoring

Aim: The employer has arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work experience placement or programme.

Please state
appendices
code if supporting
evidence
is enclosed

For official
use only –
please do not
write in this
section

- a) The placement programme is regularly monitored, evaluated and quality assured.
 - b) Mechanisms are in place to provide continuous improvement.
- (Please continue on separate sheet if necessary)

List of all appendices with application

Appendix	Description	

For more information on the NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark, please contact:

NCWE

**Prospects House
Booth Street East
Manchester
M13 9EP**

Tel: (0161) 277 5215

Email: qualityadviser@prospects.ac.uk

www.work-experience.org



work-experience.org