

Work Based Learning Policy

Definition, focus and scope

Learning through working means learning that normally has been achieved by learners in and through paid or unpaid work, which can be assessed as being at HE level, and can be recognised in terms of standard UWE academic credit.

It is underpinned by a belief that higher level knowledge and skills are not just acquired through academic study within institutions of higher education but may also be gained outside them through experiential learning within work or similar contexts. It recognises the principles of work based learning described by Boud and Solomon (2001)¹

Its focus is on learning in and from workplaces, critical reflection in and on this learning, and its relevance to learners in terms of enhanced skills, knowledge and understanding and increased critical self-awareness and personal potential. Work based learning is also highly relevant for employers in terms of enhanced employee and organisational performance, increased innovative capacity, employee contribution and output.

The scope of work-based learning encompasses individuals undertaking units of study for which credit is awarded, through work placements to whole programmes negotiated with employers for corporate cohorts of learners and which 'create new learning opportunities in workplaces.' (Boud and Solomon 2001.4).

Who are work-based learners?

- WBL is aimed at learners who are employed or in a recognised relationship with an external organisation/employer;
- Work-based learners may be undertaking paid or unpaid work in various forms including traditional employment, part-time or self employment, entrepreneurial activity or voluntary forms of engagement;
- WBL is primarily concerned with learning opportunities that are not contrived for study purposes but occur in the workplace or its contemporary equivalents, and arise from working. Thus work is the vehicle through which the curriculum is critically explored.

UWE programmes incorporating work-based learning will display some or all of the following characteristics:

- Facilitate the development of a learner centred curriculum within the context of award programme requirements and encourage learner negotiated elements within programmes of study;
- Be flexible in terms of access, delivery and curriculum, feedback and assessment;
- Promote active partnerships with employers/external organisations via employer negotiated programmes;
- Promote innovative teaching, learning, support and assessment strategies applicable to the workplace and encourage flexible, distributed or distance learning methods;
- Facilitate the effective utilisation of A(E)L processes.

¹ Boud, D. Solomon, N. (eds), (2001), *Work-based Learning- A New Higher Education?* OUP pages 4-7

Work-based learning and the individual

WBL at UWE will:

- Contribute to the future employability of the learner;
- Promote the professional and personal development of the learner;
- Value the learner's previous and concurrent experience as important aspects of their learning journey;
- Encourage and facilitate learner responsibility in decisions about the focus and management of their own learning, and start from an evaluation of the individual learner's current competencies, their learning needs and their aspirations;
- Foster learner autonomy and self-appraisal, and enable the learner to synthesise theory with practice by developing skills of critical reflection;
- Allow the learner to develop specialist knowledge, theory and skills by using the workplace as a context for project-based or practice evidenced learning;
- Engender ethical understanding and promote ethically aware practice at individual and corporate levels.

Implementing the policy

In implementing the University's work-based learning policy faculties/departments must have due regard for the following procedures which are designed to underpin the quality of work based learning provision at UWE.

Faculties/departments are required to:

- i. Ensure that all work-based learning is assessed in accordance with the University's Academic Regulations;
- ii. Monitor and review their policies and procedures for securing and allocating effective work-based learning opportunities to students as part of the process for Academic Review;
- iii. Meet any requirements and standards set out by professional bodies;
- iv. Provide clear information regarding the responsibilities of each party to the learning contract or other agreement e.g. learner, university, and employer;
- v. Ensure students are adequately prepared for work based learning;
- vi. Ensure support for the development of the learners in the workplace;
- vii. Ensure that the learning is documented in a form that clearly identifies how it contributes to the overall aims and learning outcomes of the programme;
- viii. Regularly assess/audit the contribution of partner organisations' abilities to meet the needs of the student and programme;
- ix. Demonstrate that learning contracts or agreements are in place with their work-based partners;
- x. Ensure that clear strategies are in place to support the identification, negotiation and organisation of work based activities for students, commensurate with the student's learning needs and the significance of this learning to the programmes of which it forms a part;
- xi. Ensure that all arrangements for work-based learning take full account of the requirements of equal opportunities, and health and safety legislation and University policies for the same.