



LiftOff

A Work Experience Guide
for Schools and Businesses

BUSINESS in the

COMMUNITY

Ireland

A Work Experience Guide for Schools and Businesses

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Introduction



Pauric O'Grady,
Managing Director,
Johnson & Johnson
Medical

Work experience means different things to different people but in essence a period of relevant and well structured work experience provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their own development, to explore career options and to interact with individuals who are engaged in a variety of disciplines in the workplace. Even a relatively short work experience placement provides an insight into what the student will or will not enjoy in the working environment. Down the road, when the student enters the job market, most

employers will ask them about work experience and what they learned from it.

It is self evident therefore that every step should be taken by schools, employers and students to ensure that the potential benefits of a work experience placement are fully harvested. It was for this reason that Business in the Community Ireland teamed up with school leaders to develop Lift Off – a work experience guide for schools and businesses. The objective is to provide a template or framework which will be used by those undertaking and providing work experience to offer high quality, relevant and structured work experience opportunities for the benefit of all participants.

Lift Off has been developed by the BITCI Education Task Force. I would like to thank the Task Force and in particular, Dr. Austen Corcoran for his leadership of the Lift Off project.

The members of the Task Force are:

Dr. Austen Corcoran, Principal, Ballinteer Community School,
Joe Kennedy, School Completion Programme National
Coordination Team,
Deirdre Morrissey, Business Development Manager,
Proctor & Gamble;
Maire O'Higgins, Larkin Community College and
Germaine Noonan, Education Executive, BITCI.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Mary Mulkerrin, Human Resources Director of Johnson & Johnson and Anna Greenhalgh of BITCI.

I want to thank them for their work which I am confident will facilitate better outcomes from all types of formal and informal work experience.

Pauric O'Grady,
Chairman, Education Task Force,
Business in the Community Ireland

What is work experience?

Work experience in post-primary schools is a short-term placement of students by school authorities with local employers during the school year. Students on work experience generally attend a Department of Education and Science (DoES) approved programme such as Transition Year, Leaving Certificate (Applied) or Leaving Certificate (Vocational).

Work experience is organised by the school authorities and is an integral part of the student's educational programme. Its purpose is to introduce the student to the work environment under the remote direction and supervision of the school.

The acquisition of specific vocational skills or accumulation of credits is not a primary aim.

Ideally, placement should introduce the student to quality work experience within a supervised framework that provides learning objectives and assessment as well as realistic and positive feedback.

Work experience requires careful planning and commitment from the schools and businesses involved; this guide is intended as a resource for teachers, employers and work experience coordinators in order to optimise benefits from the experience.



Types of work experience

In the context of post-primary education in Ireland, work experience is not to be confused with other forms of work placement that are available.

See Appendix i.

Leaving Certificate Applied

& Vocational Programmes have work experience as an integral part of their programmes.

Leaving Certificate Applied students are required to do two modules of work experience, each of two weeks duration, over the two-year programme.

Two further modules of two weeks each may be taken within LCA module choices. Two credits are awarded for these modules.

All **Leaving Cert Vocational** students must participate in a Career Investigation. This task includes a summary report of 300 to 600 words in length. Details are available on the website www.lcvp.ie

Students in **Transition Year** have two weeks' work experience. These weeks may not necessarily be consecutive. Generally, the coordinator supervises the selection of work sites. In practice, students endeavour to obtain placement through family connections or otherwise.

Social Placement is another form of work experience. Students are placed for one or two weeks in a nursing home, hostel or care centre. The purpose of the placement is to increase students' social awareness.



The benefits for students

Through work experience the student will learn about

KEY

■ For Students
Blue Text

■ For Businesses
Pink Text

- ⇒ specific careers
- ⇒ the workplace in general
- ⇒ work related issues such as safety, the impact of technology, importance of customers, placing of orders, service and delivery, work place relations, supervision and control, workplace etiquette etc.
- ⇒ developing a sense of responsibility and an appropriate work attitude
- ⇒ their own attributes, strengths and weaknesses.



The benefits for business

Students placed within a business can benefit the business if the experience is planned and managed properly.

The placement can

- ⇒ introduce the company and the brand to students
- ⇒ offer the opportunity to train a potential new recruit to the business with no commitment or risk
- ⇒ generate new ideas, fresh enthusiasm and an extra resource
- ⇒ prompt students into careers
- ⇒ allow the company to evaluate its practices in regard to new employees, enabling the business to be a 'learning organisation'
- ⇒ link business and education in a mutually positive manner
- ⇒ contribute to the general education of young people
- ⇒ create a positive link with the community in which the business operates, thereby enhancing the company's profile.

Students know that a period of quality work experience is important for their CV.

They will want to show that they have made a success of their time, have done a useful job of work and have learnt a lot in the process. Therefore, they should be keen and willing to learn quickly. The more they are pointed in the right direction the more mutual benefit will be gained.



School/student objectives

- ⇒ development of a sense of responsibility in the student, awareness of the value of work and the psychological demands of work
- ⇒ broadening of personal experience
- ⇒ encouragement of punctuality, teamwork, and workplace etiquette
- ⇒ introduction to a range of careers
- ⇒ introduction to concepts and experience of work evaluation.

All stakeholders' expectations

- ⇒ that work experience proves to be a meaningful education experience for students
- ⇒ that employers will obtain some benefit from participation
- ⇒ that students comply with reasonable work requirements
- ⇒ that areas of dead end work are avoided
- ⇒ that evaluation will be positive and meaningful.

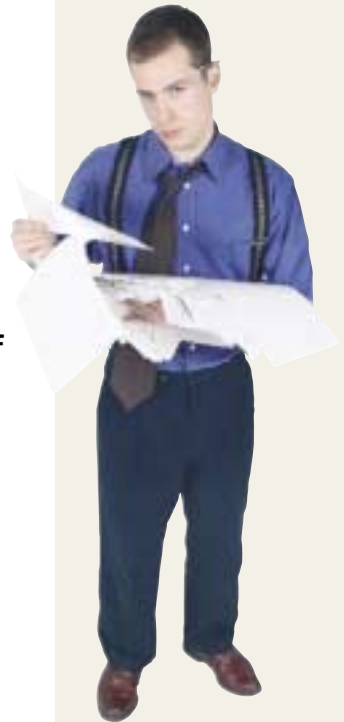
Allocate responsibility for the placement

A coordinator role should be allocated to a particular member of staff in both the school and the company. Enthusiasm and flexibility from the coordinators are essential.

It needs to be decided who will take responsibility for preparing the student, for monitoring during the programme, for assessment and evaluation and administration. *Schools need to determine the roles of work placement coordinator, principal and guidance teacher in these areas. Similarly, companies need to assign these tasks to specific staff members.*

Inform students, parents and school and company staff

- ⇒ **Students** need to know dates of placement well in advance to allow for preparation
- ⇒ **Teachers** need to know times, dates and location of placements to account for absences from class
- ⇒ **Parents** need to know how best to support their children during the work placement
- ⇒ **Employers** need to know the school's expectations of the placement. They need to be aware of any special health needs of students to assess whether they are an appropriate employer for the placement and to prepare appropriate tasks *(See Appendix ii on students with disabilities).* They also need to know the nature of evaluation required
- ⇒ **Employees** especially 'buddies' or mentors need to know the extra responsibilities required in advance of the placement.



Documentation

Required documents are:
Parent consent forms; Insurance;
Student CVs; Employer report forms.

*See Appendix iii
for details of insurance.*

The groundwork

- Enable students to define the purpose of a placement: compare and contrast a work placement and a part-time job; present it as an educational activity – try to minimise expectation of payment; communicate with students who have completed work placements; have students state clearly ‘What I hope to learn from the placement’
- Before placement begins, the student would benefit from an introduction to the following skills:

CV preparation, letter writing	Workplace etiquette including dress code	Communication skills	Interview technique
Telephone skills	Health and safety issues	Role-play of work-related situations	Commuting to the workplace

- The school coordinator will need to liaise with the employer regarding travel arrangements, remuneration (if applicable), length of the working day and contact numbers. *See Appendix iv for information on payment and Appendix vi for employment of young persons legislation.*

- The employer needs to arrange an interview with the student and the work experience coordinator from the school.

The employer also needs to plan meaningful and appropriate activities for the student. *(See Appendix viii).*



Induction

- ⇒ The employer should acquaint the student with the culture and etiquette of the company. The procedure for lockers, personal possessions, tea and lunch breaks etc. should be explained.
- ⇒ Also instructions on health and safety issues and restricted areas and equipment should be described at the outset. *See Appendix vii.*

Schedule

- ⇒ It is important that suitable tasks for the student are identified before the placement begins and that these are worked into a timetable.
- ⇒ A tour of the workplace is highly valuable. It shows students the manufacturing cycle of the company's products (if appropriate) so that they can understand the different elements of the business and can quickly apply this knowledge to their work.

- ⇒ Even more beneficial is the scheduling of a number of induction sessions with various departments in the business.
See Appendix viii for an example of a comprehensive work placement schedule for a large business.

Mentor

- ⇒ From both a student and business perspective, meaningful results will be gained by giving early support. A mentor (that is someone experienced whom they can turn to for advice and support) has the added advantage of developing company staff at the same time.

The mentor's role encompasses answering students' questions, being their first "friend" within the company and generally easing the transition to the working world. He/she should be good with people and not too senior in the business.



Beneficial responsibilities and tasks

Industries unsuitable for work placements are listed in Appendix v

- ⇒ Students are often assigned menial tasks such as filing and are understandably excluded from strategic meetings. However, students will respond favourably if they are also given tasks that instil a sense of responsibility. For example, in administrative roles students can be given the responsibility of letter-writing, answering the phones and using the switch-board. Care should be taken to ensure that students are not placed in situations where they feel themselves to be redundant.

Support and monitoring

- ⇒ **Coordinators** – monitoring of the student's progress on the placement through short phone calls and visits to the work place is valuable. It allows students to be seen by teachers in a new light; it helps coordinators to pinpoint problems before they become crises; it gives a deeper understanding of the employer's report, and it can strengthen relationships between schools and businesses for future links.

- ⇒ **Employers** – Regular review of the student's performance helps to focus on the attainment of objectives. This in turn helps the student reflect on their performance (such as handling equipment and carrying out processes) and personal attributes (such as time management and ability to work with others).



Exit meeting

- ⇒ At the end of the work experience the student and company assessor should have an exit meeting, including questions such as:
- What was liked/ disliked most about the work
 - What improvements would they suggest for next time
 - How well objectives and targets were met and why
 - Whether they have been encouraged by the experience to pursue a career in that particular industry

This will assist in creating better outcomes from future work experiences.

Assessment of student performance

- ⇒ Intrinsic to the work experience is a written report or evaluation form, assessing the student's performance. This should include self-assessment by the student and assessment by the employer. Points to be included:
- How well the student **got on with others** in the company
 - How far the student feels they have **progressed and developed**
 - What they **learned** from their time with the company
 - What they **achieved** in their time with the company.



Non-achievement

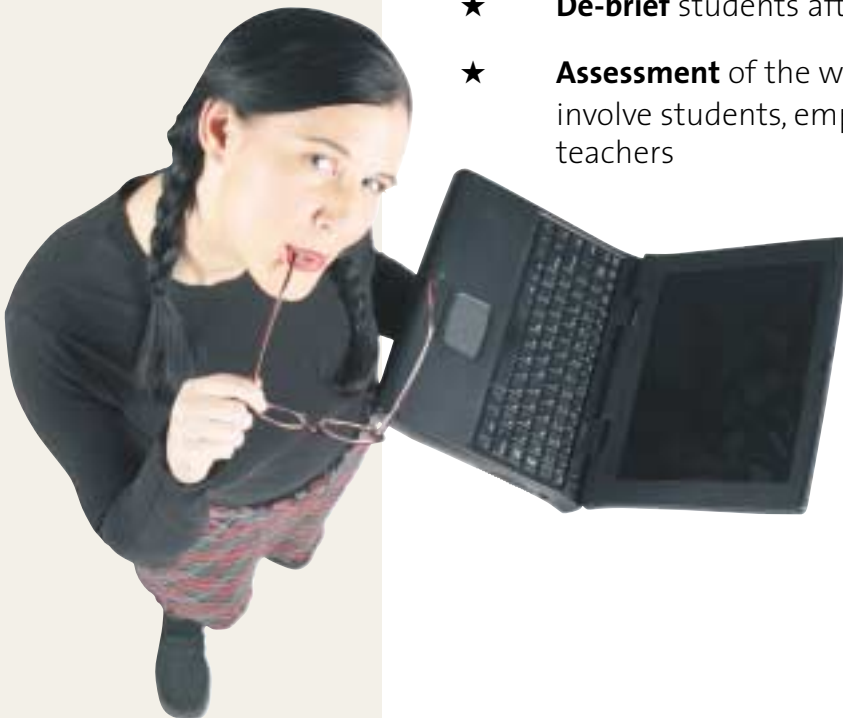
If the student does not achieve some of the objectives set, it is important to understand why. It is possible that the objectives were not realistic at the time they were set. The outcomes should be discussed so that any problems encountered can be avoided in the future and the student does not leave the organisation feeling disillusioned and unfulfilled. Try to turn any negative experiences into positive ones for the student and the business. It may also be helpful to try to highlight any objectives they may have met which were not originally set.

10 key features of successful work experience

- ★ Articulate the **purpose** of work experience
- ★ Clearly **allocate responsibility** for organising it to an individual in the company
- ★ Ensure that staff, students, parents, employers are accurately **informed**
- ★ Keep **documentation** clear, coherent, consistent
- ★ **Prepare** students and staff prior to placement
- ★ Effectively **monitor** students when they are on placement
- ★ **De-brief** students after the placement
- ★ **Assessment** of the work experience should involve students, employers, staff and teachers

- ★ **Evaluation** should be carried out throughout the work experience

- ★ **Acknowledge** the assistance of the employer and ensure that they receive feedback from the school when the placement concludes.



Appendix i

Types of work placements

Sandwich placement: An assessed and remunerated work placement that is part of a student's course. It is often of one year's duration.

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 a course of study. This is arranged by university or college with an employer or by student and is for an agreed period of time.

Voluntary work: Any type of work undertaken for no payment, usually outside of a college/school course and in one's spare time for a charitable or not-for-profit organisation.

Part-time work: paid work undertaken during term-time

Work shadowing: Where a student observes a member of staff working in an organisation and so gains an understanding of what a particular job entails.

Internship: A form of work that is increasingly used by large companies and refers to a placement within their organisation.

Appendix ii

Students with disabilities

Schools are obliged to provide work experience to students with disabilities. The school will have guidelines for placement of students with various disabilities. Placement will depend on the nature and degree of disability as well as the availability, access and safety of a suitable work site.

Discussions will have taken place between the school coordinator, parent/guardian and the student regarding expectations and difficulties. The employer/supervisor will be adequately briefed on the nature of the disability and the specific needs of the student. The normal sensitivity regarding confidentiality will apply.

Appendix iii

Insurance

Students are insured by their schools' insurers. Each child generally has a personal accident insurance organised by the school. Community and Comprehensive Schools have a State Indemnity for all school activities. Check for exclusions for certain types of work.

Appendix iv

Payment

There is an argument that when pay is removed an essential stimulus for work is also removed. This is based on a common perception that remunerated part time work is more meaningful. However, in general, schools do not favour payment as it cannot be made universally. If payment is made it should be agreed with the school coordinator and should accord with statutory regulations and company policy on casual payment.

Appendix v

Businesses and industries that may be unsuitable

Some industries would be deemed to pose a higher than average risk of danger to the student. These include

- Farming and agricultural services
- Fishing
- Forestry
- Construction
- Engineering and plant hire
- Car repairs
- Electrical

Some activities are specifically excluded by insurance companies. Many of the professions are also unsuitable.

Appendix vi

Legislation

Students participating in work experience will be approximately sixteen years of age. Their employment will be governed by the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996. Employers, schools and students must comply with all employment legislation.

The following information and further details on employment legislation are found on the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment website www.entemp.ie

Children over the age of 14 may only be employed in light work, that is, non-industrial work where there is no risk to the health and safety of the child, and which is not harmful to their attendance at school.

They must be given a 30 minutes break if working more than 4 hours and must get 2 days off in every week which shall, as far as is practicable, be consecutive.

Summary of Provisions in Relation to Employment of Young People (aged 16 and 17)			
Age	Maximum hours per day	Maximum hours per week	Permitted hours of work
16 and 17	8	40	6am – 10pm

16 and 17 year olds must receive a 30 minutes break if working for more than a 4.5 hour period. They must receive 2 days off in every 7, which shall, as far as is practicable, be consecutive.

Regulations have been made which permit young persons (i.e. 16 and 17 year olds) employed on general duties or as apprentices in licensed premises to work beyond 10pm in certain circumstances and subject to specific requirements. There is also a Code of Practice Concerning the Employment of Young Persons in Licensed Premises. Further information on the Regulations and the Code of Practice is available from Employment Rights Information Unit.

Summary of Provisions in Relation to Employment of Children aged 14 and 15				
Age	Max hours per week/day during school term	Max hours per week/day outside school term	Permitted hours of work	Maximum work experience per week/day **
14	Nil	35/7	8am – 8pm	40 hours/ 8 hours
15	8	35/7	8am – 8pm	40 hours/ 8 hours
**The reference to "work experience" in the table above is to training or work experience programmes approved by the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Employment or FÁS.				

Appendix vii

Health and safety

The health and safety of the student should govern all policies and procedures on work experience. Schools should categorise businesses involved with their work experience programmes and, in consultation with the employers, should draw up an inventory of hazards related to the particular businesses. Students should be briefed on these by coordinators and supervisors prior to placement.

Appendix viii

Sample work experience schedule Week 1

DAY	MORNING		AFTERNOON	
MONDAY	9:30am	Induction – Welcome to Company	2:00pm-2:45pm	Dublin operations – an overview – Ms B
		– Issue of ID Badges – Ms A	2:45pm – 3:30pm	Corporate video
		– Overview of the Business – Ms A	3:30 – 4:15pm	Questions and answers
	11:15am-12:00am	Business – Experiences of a marketing graduate		
	12:00am-12:45pm	Business – Experiences of a business graduate		
TUESDAY	9:30am-11:30am	Marketing – Mr C and his team	2:00pm-4:30pm	Sales – Mr D and his team
	11:30am-11:45am	Break		
	11:45am-12:45pm	Marketing – Mr C and his team		
WEDNESDAY	9:30am-11:30am	Finance – Ms E and her team	2:00pm-4:30pm	Supply chain – Mr F and his team
	11:30am-11:45am	Break		
	11:45am-12:45pm	Finance – Ms E and her team		
THURSDAY	9:30am-11:30am	Information management – Mr G and his team	2:00pm-4:30pm	Human resources – Ms H
	11:30am-11:45am	Break		
	11:45am-12:45pm	Information management – Mr G and his team		
FRIDAY	9:30am-11:30am	Pharmacy sales – Ms J and her team	2:00pm-4:30pm	Closing meeting
	11:30am-11:45am	Break		
	11:45am-12:45pm	Pharmacy sales – Ms J and her team		

References

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About Business in the Community Ireland

The mission of Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) is to harness the power of Irish business to maximise its positive impact on all its stakeholders.

Founded in January 2000, BITCI is a non-profit organisation specialising in advisory support and guidance on Corporate Responsibility Integration and Corporate Community Involvement.

It is a unique movement of companies within Ireland committed to continually improving their positive impact on all their stakeholders.

As the only business-driven network of its kind in Ireland, membership is drawn from top companies across a range of sectors including financial, manufacturing, pharmaceutical, semi-state, technology, retail and food.

Members are supported to measure, improve and report their impact in the areas of the Workplace, Marketplace, Community and the Environment.

BITCI also supports companies to strategise their Corporate Community Involvement linked to core business competencies.

BITCI is the national partner in Ireland for CSR Europe, the co-ordinating body on Corporate Responsibility at European level.

In addition, BITCI has developed specific programmes in conjunction with business to ensure social inclusion through The Linkage Programme, Ready for Work and The Schools' Business Partnership.



Lift Off is sponsored by the family of Johnson & Johnson companies in Ireland

Johnson & Johnson established its first operating company in Ireland in 1935. Today more than 70 years later there are eight Johnson & Johnson affiliate companies here.

Johnson & Johnson believes that the ethical principles expressed in 'Our Credo' along with its overall mission of improving the quality of life for people everywhere enables the company to have a positive impact on the communities in which it operates while continuing to be a profitable leader in the health care industry.



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