

**THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD**



# **Effective Work Placements: Making them Work**

**Executive Summary**

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## **Effective Work Placements: Making them Work**

### **The Project**

The project is designed to enable an exchange of expertise between local business and the Modern Languages Teaching Centre (MLTC) at the University of Sheffield on work placement principles and procedures.

Gripple Ltd, a local company with a multilingual work-force and expertise in highly successful work placements, has been working with the University on this project.

The Regional Languages Network is acting as a consultant to ensure the applicability of the work to other companies in their region. The University is also seeking input from other local businesses in various sectors, which have language needs and/or who work in an international/intercultural context.

### **The Aim of the Project**

The aim of the project is to establish best practice in post-graduate work placements for both business and the University. The MLTC is developing a suite of taught Masters courses all within an applied language context, and is keen to ensure the relevance of these courses to the workplace.

- **From a University point of view** - it has enabled the staff to become more familiar with the way in which languages are used and the skills required in business, with a view to updating and restructuring their programme of studies.
- **From a Company point of view** - it has allowed local business to have appropriate input into the training given to potential new employees and to benefit in the future from student expertise.

### **What is a Work Placement?**

A work placement involves a student spending a period of time working for a company (for which they will not necessarily be paid in monetary terms) in order to develop practical skills related to their academic studies.

- **From a University point of view** - the University recognises the value of work-based learning. In other words, high level learning that takes place outside the University, but which is recognised as forming part of the University course. It acknowledges that many skills can only be learnt in the work place. Work placements therefore give students the opportunity to be practically trained before seeking employment, both for specialist and for general business-related skills.
- **From a Company point of view** - the Company will benefit from the intellectual capital and skills for the duration of the training period. The students will often bring new ideas and fresh enthusiasm to the

Company. It also provides the Company with the opportunity to identify and train potential future employees at no financial cost, and have access to a custom-skilled workforce.

### **Student Profile**

The MLTC currently has two MA courses in place: the MA in Translation Studies, the MA in Intercultural Communication, and a third under development: the MA in Multilingual Web Content Management.

It is important to remember that students of these courses will have a first degree, and their backgrounds are very varied. For example, many of them will be language graduates but some may already be trained in business and marketing and others may have a degree in a science subject or engineering. All of them, however, will be specialists in at least one foreign language.

### **Company Profile**

This work placement scheme would be of interest to any company working in an international context or those who are interested in developing international business.

Companies with a need for translation and/or translation management and those who would like to develop and/or maintain multilingual websites would specifically be interested.

While it is imperative that any placement involving students from the Masters in Translation and Web Content Management should be entirely centred on them using these skills, the MA in Intercultural Communication will provide students with a broad knowledge base that can be adapted to many different working environments. For example, companies will generally place students of this course in their Sales, Marketing and Export departments, but companies who have subsidiaries abroad may involve the students in dealing with their foreign counterparts in in-company activities like IT and Accounts.

### **How will the Placement Programme work?**

It is our intention to establish a **partnership approach** between the Company, the University and the Student, to ensure that the needs of all parties are met.

The work placement programme is a **customised programme** which intends to provide work placements of high quality and real use; this requires a focused approach which is also flexible to the needs of the University and the Company. For the most part, work placements take place from May to September (3-5 months), although some placements take place over 4 weeks in January.

Students interested in undertaking a placement will complete a student placement assessment form outlining their strengths, weaknesses and previous experience.

The placement programme will be planned by the designated Company Mentor and agreed by the head of the respective MA course at the University. The Company and University will establish together the intended learning outcome and how this will be assessed/measured, in order to meet both the University assessment criteria and the Company's interests in the programme.

The Company and University will draw up a formal **placement agreement**, in which they will establish the specific areas for which each will take responsibility. This agreement will contain information such as the intended learning outcome, hours of work etc.

The **agreement can be terminated** for important reasons such as a breach of discipline or an unsatisfactory placement without prior notice by both the Company and the Student after consultation with the MLTC.

## **Roles and Responsibilities within the Placement Programme**

### **The Student:**

- Must have a strong interest in the Company and be enthusiastic about the prospect of the placement.
- Should undertake a placement relevant to their interests in future employment and which is relevant to their course.
- Must be fully briefed about the placement, carry out the necessary research and have access to all contextual information i.e. Company code of practice, dress code etc.
- Must fully understand the placement work to be undertaken, the context in which they will be working, and consequently the register of language required.
- Must comply with Company rules and practice and must adhere to Company confidentiality and copyright clauses.
- Should be made aware of their rights and responsibilities within the Company. All work must be carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety regulations.
- Where appropriate, should keep a learning log updating their progress.
- Must complete the written work required by the University for assessment e.g. project or dissertation.
- Remains a member of the University. Will be monitored by a member of the MLTC staff and must abide by the University regulations.
- Completes Student Evaluation form, recording learning, development & achievements.

### **The Company:**

- Is responsible for setting up the placement and designating a Mentor (an experienced member of staff) to each placement Student.
- Thinks carefully about the objectives of the placement and what specialist knowledge/skills are required.
- Liases with a member of the MLTC staff and provides the necessary information on the Company and the placement.
- Signs a placement agreement, drawn up by the University, which outlines the placement objectives and the learning outcomes.
- Is responsible for ensuring the Student is covered by the Company's employers liability insurance for the duration of the placement and for any assignment undertaken abroad.
- Ensures that the Student receives the necessary information/input during the placement in order for them to carry out their work successfully (induction is given into the Company).
- Is responsible for supervising the Student's work.
- Monitors the Student's progress on an on-going basis and provides the Student with regular feedback.
- Must provide the Student with the necessary means for them to carry out the placement work i.e. travel expenses, hotel bills, if incurred as part of their work. This excludes the student's personal travel expenses to and from the Company.
- Is financially responsible for any special training required during the placement and any expenses linked to the assignment. Any other remuneration is at the discretion of the Company and will vary across placements.
- Adheres to relevant legislation i.e. Health & Safety at work, equal opportunities.
- Completes Student Evaluation form at end of placement and gives Student an appraisal during which an assessment is made of achievements.

### **The University:**

- Designates a student to a placement, in accordance with the student's skills (the Company may also be able to interview a number of students for a placement, if required).
- Must ensure all parties fully understand the aims and outcomes of the placement.
- Liases with the Company and provides the contextual information for the Student (by completing a student placement form).
- Draws up a placement agreement with the Company and ensures that the placement is in accordance with the University's QAA Code of Practice on Placement Learning.
- Completes the necessary University paperwork on the Code of Practice for Placement Learning i.e. Health and Safety checklist.
- Monitors the progress of the Student – one member of the MLTC staff will be responsible for each Student and will be the point of contact for the Company.

- Maintains regular contact with the Student.
- Provides academic support.
- Ensures that the Student has sufficient information on their rights and responsibilities within the work place.
- Has overall responsibility for assessing the academic work produced during the placement (the Company and University may establish together the assessment criteria in order to meet both the University requirements and the Company's expected outcome of the programme – it is preferable if both can overlap).
- Provides guidance on integrating this learning into longer term career planning.

