



UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Advice and Guidance

Work-based Learning



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Regulatory contexts for the Quality Code

The Quality Code articulates a set of principles that apply across the UK through four Expectations. These Expectations are then explained and contextualised through Core and Common practices in a way that allows institutions to demonstrate them. The Expectations, Core and Common practices are not regulatory requirements in England, but the Practices should be demonstrated by providers operating in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

National regulators and QAA are not bound by the information in this advice and guidance and will not view it as containing indicators of compliance. This guidance does not interpret statutory requirements.

Terminology

Apprenticeships: This Theme is intended to be relevant to all apprenticeships that include higher education irrespective of the nation in which they are delivered. This will include, for example, Degree Apprenticeships, Graduate Apprenticeships and Higher Apprenticeships. Providers will need to make reference to other relevant guidance from QAA and other involved bodies for specific requirements, advice and guidance, relevant to the apprenticeship being delivered.

Student: Where the term ‘student’ is used in this document, it should be used to refer equally to those students who are also ‘apprentices’.

Work-based learning: This involves learning through work, learning for work and/or learning at work. It consists of authentic structured opportunities for learning which are achieved in a workplace setting or are designed to meet an identified workplace need. This type of learning typically has a dual function of being designed to meet the learning needs of the employees, developing their knowledge, skills and professional behaviours, and also meeting the workforce development needs of the organisation.

Work-based learning is, therefore, learning which is distinguished from work-related or simulated learning activity that has not been formulated or commissioned by, or in partnership with, employers to address a current workforce need.

Expectations and Practices

The advice underneath the Expectations and Practices is not mandatory for providers but illustrative of a range of possible approaches.

Work-based learning for higher education courses describes courses that bring together higher education providers and work organisations to create learning opportunities. This Theme needs to be considered in conjunction with other regulatory requirements including providers' academic regulations, funding body requirements and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies' (PSRB) rules and regulations.

The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.

Expectations for standards

The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.

Courses which are solely work-based learning, or include work-based learning elements, align with the relevant national qualifications framework, Characteristics Statements and the application of Subject Benchmark Statements and any other relevant requirements such as those from PSRBs or funding bodies. This may require differentiated work-based learning across different levels of a course.

Education organisations make assessment judgements which are based on objective criteria and are reliable, fair and transparent and in line with sector norms.

Core practices

- **Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.**
In practice, this means that although all work-based learning is delivered in partnership, the UK higher education provider always maintains responsibility for standards and ensures that all students have an equitable opportunity to succeed.
- **The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.**
In practice, this means that students are given the opportunity to demonstrate achievement at both threshold and beyond threshold standards, including the achievement of occupational and/or professional competence in workplace or other settings.

Common practice

- **The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.**
In practice, this means that courses and work-based learning settings are regularly reviewed.

Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.

Expectations for quality

From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

Education organisations, employers and students are clear on the scope of the work-based learning tasks which will be undertaken and the methods of assessment. Where employers are involved in assessment, appropriate training is given, and the usual mechanisms of standardisation, moderation and external examination are used.

Education organisations and employers have formal agreements in place which ensure that the academic experience is high-quality.

Where research degrees are undertaken through work-based learning, education organisations ensure that students have an equitable opportunity to those researching in the education organisation.

Students on courses that include, or are solely based on, work-based learning will have access to all support provided to those on other modes of study. Where relevant, additional support to meet specific needs of work-based learning students will be provided.

Core practices

- **The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.**
In practice, this means that these will take account of special educational needs and disabilities and how they will impact access to work-based learning opportunities.
- **Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.**
- **The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.**
In practice, this means that students are supported by both the education organisation and the employer and understand the different roles of the provider, employer and themselves. Students have an ultimate right of complaint to the education organisation, the employer and, where relevant, other external organisations; guidance is given on when and how the relevant process(es) can be accessed.

Common practices

- **The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.**
In practice, this means that a range of formal and informal methods for collecting evidence can be used to ensure that all stakeholders can contribute. Annual reports and other review points can show how this input has been achieved and what action has been taken as a consequence.
- **The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.**
In practice, this means that students, employers and others involved in the work-based learning can contribute to course design and development, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Guiding principles

The guiding principles given here are not mandatory for any provider. They are a concise expression of the fundamental practices of the higher education sector, based on the experience of a wide range of providers. They are intended as a framework for providers to consider when establishing new or looking at existing higher education provision. They are not exhaustive and there will be other ways for providers to meet their requirements.

1 Work-based learning courses and opportunities are designed and developed in partnership with employers, students and other stakeholders (where appropriate) and contain learning outcomes that are relevant to work objectives.

Within the context of the Code and the advice and guidance, work-based learning is integral to the course of study and is designed in partnership between the education organisation, employers and students. Other stakeholders may be involved, for instance, care users, professional bodies and regulatory authorities. To ensure integration and an effective experience, course design should include learning outcomes that are directly relevant to work objectives.

2 Work-based learning consists of structured opportunities for learning and is achieved through authentic activity and is supervised in the workplace.

Work-based learning in the context of the advice and guidance is a structured opportunity. It is an integral part of a course that is achieved through authentic activity which is intended to contribute to meeting a genuine workplace need. Arrangements between employer, education organisation and student should be agreed on how the student is supervised within the workplace, and regular contact should be maintained – appropriate to the student, the workplace context and specific work-based learning opportunity.

3 Work-based learning opportunities are underpinned by formal agreements between education organisations, employers and students.

Work-based learning opportunities will be agreed between education organisations, employers and students; they will need to be formally agreed to ensure all understand the respective roles, responsibilities and expectations. The format and detail of the agreement will vary depending on each opportunity and may follow a format specified by another organisation, for example, apprenticeship agreements and commitment statements in England (see also [Partnerships](#) Theme).

4 Education organisations and employers consider any specific issues in relation to the workplace environment and deal with them appropriately, including informal agreements where appropriate.

Education organisations, employers and students have responsibilities to themselves and to others in relation to the workplace environment. These will include, for example, health and safety and safeguarding. Education organisations and employers need to be clear on their respective responsibilities and provide guidance to each other and to students on the specific issues with relevant training, if required. Formal agreements may also need to include details on how specific issues, such as sharing of data, are dealt with.

5 Work-based learning is delivered through a meaningful partnership between students, employers and the education organisation.

Work-based learning covers a range of opportunities which, if well designed and managed, will provide a quality experience for all involved. In order to ensure that the needs of the student, employer and education organisation are fully met, the partnership arrangements should be considered and agreed prior to the work-based learning commencing. These arrangements will vary depending on the nature of the work-based learning, as will the format of the recording of the agreed arrangements.

6

Work-based learning opportunities enable students to apply and integrate areas of subject and professional knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable them to meet course learning outcomes.

The significant potential benefits for work-based learning are best achieved where the opportunity exists to integrate all aspects, that is, subject and professional knowledge, skills and behaviours. Learning outcomes for work-based learning should be written to enable these areas to be fully integrated (see also [Course Design and Development](#), [Learning and Teaching](#) and [Assessment](#) Themes).

7

Parties understand and respect the respective roles, responsibilities and expectations of the education organisation, employer and student, and appropriate training and support is provided where required.

It should be clear what the respective roles, responsibilities and expectations are for the education organisation, the employer and the student. These will vary depending on the type of work-based learning and the relationships between the employer, student and education organisation. They should be clear and transparent and communicated to all involved in the work-based learning provision. Where employers are involved in assessment, their role is clearly defined, appropriate training is given, and, for summative assessment, standard mechanisms of moderation, standardisation and external examination are fully used.

8

Education organisations and employers acknowledge individuals have unique needs within the education organisation and in the workplace, and collaborate to ensure opportunities are inclusive, safe and supported.

Providers, whether the education organisation or the employer, establish the unique learner needs for the learning environments and work in partnership to ensure an inclusive approach to the provision of work-based learning opportunities. This will include through reasonable adjustments to procedures, activities and physical environments (see also [Enabling Student Achievement](#) Theme).

9

Work-based learning opportunities are designed, monitored, evaluated and reviewed in partnership with employers.

Work-based learning consists of authentic structured opportunities for learning which are achieved in a workplace setting or are designed to meet an identified workplace need. In order to meet the respective objectives for employer, student and provider, the design, monitoring and evaluation of the workplace learning opportunities should be carried out in partnership between the employer and the provider, with input from student representatives where possible and relevant. This partnership should include obtaining feedback from employers and students and involving them in the evaluation process.

Practical advice

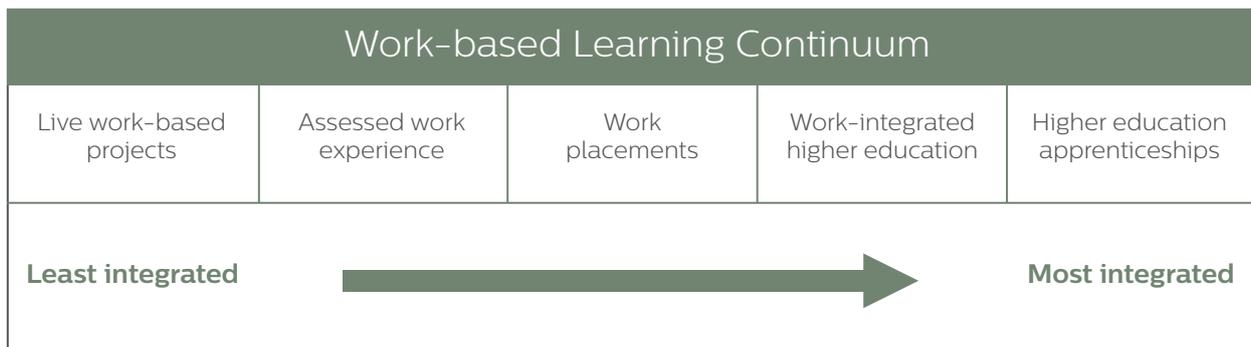
This section provides practical, contextualised advice to providers on work-based learning. Where relevant, we have indicated which guiding principles the advice will help you achieve. Please bear in mind that this guidance is illustrative and intended to inform the approaches you consider and ultimately implement.

In line with the Core practice, ‘The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience’, providers can include student representation within their practices and procedures related to partnerships. Appropriate training and support will need to be given to enable students to fully engage with the activities (see also [Student Engagement](#) Theme).

Work-based learning will take place within education organisations and/or in the workplace on a continuum that includes:

- learning that involves employers in the commissioning of ‘live’ briefs or projects
- structured work placements or internships
- employment situations (paid or unpaid) where the work students undertake will provide a key source for their learning, including remote working and work undertaken in non-employed settings (for example, university clinics or voluntary roles)
- integrated work experience often found within courses that include substantial and sometimes regulated periods of practice-based learning, for example, healthcare
- employer-sponsored courses where employers contract education organisations to develop and deliver bespoke courses which represent a high degree of integration of work and learning – this form of work-based learning may include accredited in-company training
- situations where students are also employees and their course of study is embedded in the workplace
- apprenticeships, which are a job with an accompanying learning development programme where the employment provides students with the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve the professional competence.

Figure 1: Work-based learning continuum.



While work-based learning brings benefit to students, education organisations and employers, it does bring with it challenges, particularly in terms of ensuring quality and standards potentially across a range of different partners with different expectations. Where work-based learning counts towards credit and credit-bearing awards, the education organisation must have the responsibility for setting and maintaining oversight of quality and standards. Therefore, both Expectations for standards and Expectations for quality, within the Quality Code, apply.

Where work-based learning takes place overseas, this advice and guidance will still apply.

Note: All Core and Common practices for standards and for quality apply to work-based learning. Reference should be made to all other Themes, as relevant, for all aspects of courses that include, or are solely based on, work-based learning and for students who undertake those courses.

Formal agreements (Guiding principles 3, 4)

All work-based learning involves partnerships; education providers involved in work-based learning should consult the [Partnerships](#) Theme before entering into formal agreements with other parties. As with all other partnerships, there should be a formal agreement in place, with a risk-based approach adopted for developing the activities required and assigning the areas of responsibility. In general, the greater the level of integration in work-based learning, the more formal any agreement between the stakeholders will be. This can include formal contracts or service-level agreements between education organisations, employers and students; specific requirements may also apply, for example, apprentices. Some courses that integrate work-based learning lead to, result in, or require PSRB recognition, registration or membership. Different PSRBs have variable levels of scrutiny and involvement, and some may require formal approval, accreditation or agreement between the PSRB and the education organisation for the employer to be recognised (where appropriate, for example, Apprenticeships in England).

Where a student is tasked with finding a work-based experience, for example, as part of a credit-bearing placement or module, the education organisation will need to ensure that the proposed workplace will allow the intended learning outcomes to be achieved and to check the suitability of the workplace in terms of legislative requirements, for example, health and safety, employment law, student preparation and support. An agreement, setting out the nature of the work-based learning and respective roles and responsibilities, should be agreed and signed by the student, employer and education organisation.

Reflective questions

- What measures do you take to adequately assess the risks associated with work-based learning activities?
- What types of work-based learning do your students engage with and do you have a range of agreement templates to guide discussions with students and employers?
- Have you considered the relevance of the advice and guidance in the [Partnerships](#) Theme to establishing work-based learning activities?

At the design stage (Guiding principles 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

Education organisations accept and recognise the value of work-based learning to employability and educational outcomes. Work-based learning is:

- strategic, with work-based learning integrated in courses
- purposeful, with defined and relevant learning outcomes identified during course design
- designed in partnership with employers, taking into account sector-specific workload patterns when planning education delivery and assessments
- flexible and enables all students to benefit from work-based learning opportunities, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

Apprenticeships are designed and delivered in partnership with employers where the primary relationship is between the employer and the employee. Accordingly, the relationship between the student and education organisation flows from the employment situation, with the course of study directly linked to the apprentice's work. In this context, course aims are designed to meet the learning needs of the student as an employee, and the aims of the employer organisation. The partnership role between employer and education organisation is generally developmental, helping with the focus on the content and delivery of the work-based modules, and in designing the work-based assessments. Where there are learning events timetabled at another venue or for online delivery (for example, off-the-job learning, assessment), there will need to be agreement on the balance of the blended learning, flexibility and scheduling of these sessions to take into account employer priorities and commitments.

Learning at work, especially for apprenticeships, should be designed with milestones in place to enable progress to be monitored, particularly with skills and behaviour learning and development.

Education organisations should consider the staff development requirements of mentors and supervisors within the workplace, particularly where work-based learning is part of a validated award. Therefore, the education organisations must ensure the signature pedagogies and context of work-based learning and industry links are robust and relate theory to practice.

Reflective questions

- How have you integrated work-based learning into the curriculum and how is it assessed?
- How do you ensure that work-based learning is inclusive (ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made for those with disabilities)?
- Work-based learning can involve learning through work, learning for work and learning at work. How does your course align with these three ways of considering work-based learning? How does your assessment strategy relate to this?
- How do you ensure that the work-based learning is in line with PSRB regulations to ensure that any required accreditation can be successfully granted?

Information, advice and guidance (Guiding principles 1, 4, 7)

The education provider should ensure that clear information is available for candidates and students to understand the obligations of work-based learning requirements, such as travel to different work settings and mandatory hours, so they can make an informed decision about their choice of course and/or work-based learning opportunity.

Reflective questions

- How do you ensure that students and employers understand their own, and others', roles and responsibilities for the different aspects of the work-based learning and assessment that is required?
- What are your procedures for publishing information about courses and how do you ensure students, or applicants, have access to the relevant and accurate information?

Preparation of the student for learning in the workplace (Guiding principles 1, 2, 6, 7)

Students have both entitlements and responsibilities during their work-based learning, and the guidance from the education provider and the employer may include:

- entitlements that the education provider takes into consideration personal learning needs, and makes the student aware of health and safety, and other requirements within the workplace
- responsibilities towards the awarding provider and employer, and to third parties such as customers, clients, service users, other employees and the general public.

Students who are registered on a course which involves work-based learning may require preparatory sessions in advance on how learning will be delivered and expectations for their attitude, behaviour and presentation, for example, external bodies' codes of professional conduct. In cases where students are also employees, such norms, expectations and responsibilities will generally be covered in an employment contract. Nonetheless, students may benefit from a range of information, irrespective of the work-based learning context, including:

- entitlements and responsibilities
- level of student autonomy
- nature and scope of learning support available from the education provider and its partner(s) at different times before, during and after the work-based learning opportunity.

Where appropriate, a learning contract/agreement signed by the student sets out what's expected of them and adds credence to the expectations for their part in work-based learning. These agreements, which are developed prior to the work-based learning opportunity, are supportive so that all stakeholders are aware of their own and others' roles and responsibilities.

A comprehensive induction programme delivered at the employer's location is essential for student orientation around the workplace. These sessions may include information on the:

- layout of the work environment
- different areas of activity for learning
- health and safety/safeguarding issues
- introductions to mentors/tutors and supervisors
- expectations for interactions with clients of the employer, for example, need for client or patient confidentiality, intellectual property rights and data protection.

Students will also benefit from information regarding the management of learning, professional relationships, and for the tracking and recording of progress and achievements. Where the education organisation and employer have different expectations or standards, the student should be made aware of this. Initially, students may feel somewhat disorientated and unsure as to how to learn in a workplace setting. Therefore, support for more independent and self-directed learning may be facilitated by having personal development planning, logbook or learning portfolios which, ideally, would have commenced under guidance in the education provider. It is important that employer partners and education organisations have agreed in advance the protocol for sharing information about students, such as an early warning of potential problems that may prevent student progress or satisfactory achievement of learning outcomes. Likewise, students should also be informed of the procedures to be followed and whom they should contact if problems occur.

Health and safety, and safeguarding are statutory requirements and, as such, require consideration within work-based learning courses, and will routinely be included within the formal agreements and highlighted during the induction sessions. As a general rule, workplace settings should have well-constructed arrangements around health and safety risk assessments. Even so, education organisations have a duty of care to ensure such procedures are in place, and that students are aware of their existence, entitlements and responsibilities; this information can be included as part of their professional development. Other areas for consideration are the sharing of expectations regarding ethical and commercial confidentiality, and data protection issues, which should occur at all stages of the partnership, that is, the planning, delivery and assessment stages.

Reflective questions

- How have you prepared the student for learning in the workplace?
- What advice and guidance is available for students who are going to be involved in work-based learning?
- What measures do you take when negotiating with employers to ensure that the student will be supported in the workplace?

Preparation for assessment in the workplace (Guiding principles 2, 6, 7)

There may be a requirement for the development of pedagogic skills of employers who will be responsible for the students - this is an area for sensitive management, especially where the student is an employee, for instance, in apprenticeships. This can be seen, and used, as an opportunity for staff development within the employer organisation.

If summative assessments are delivered and/or marked in the workplace, then quality assurance through training in assessment and feedback is essential for their reliability, validity and equivalence to assessments at other employers involved in the delivery of the same award and comparable awards delivered in the education organisation without a work-based learning element. This may require second markers employed by the education organisation and, depending on the academic regulations of the provider validating the award, it may be necessary for work-based assessors to have honorary academic status, or similar (see also [Assessment](#) Theme).

Reflective questions

- What are your arrangements for both summative and formative assessment and how is this monitored?
- What level of qualification/external expertise do employers need in order to undertake summative assessment of work-based learning?
- Where is your course on the work-based learning continuum and how does that relate to your assessment strategy?

During the work-based learning (Guiding principles 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

During the delivery stage, employers, students and educational organisations should have understood their responsibilities and expectations. Where employers are involved in summative assessment, their role is defined and appropriate training is given and the education organisation's standard mechanisms of moderation, standardisation and external examiner scrutiny are used. Meaningful interactions beyond the traditional provider/student relationship are necessary for success, whereby learning is facilitated via the guidance provided to all parties and in the planning and management of learning opportunities. Work-based learning should ensure that students have opportunities to apply and integrate areas of professional knowledge, skills and professional behaviours to meet course learning outcomes for an identified job role and/or broader employment.

A full cohort of students on a work-based learning course are unlikely to be assigned to the same employer. However, students on the same course need to have an equitable opportunity to succeed. Therefore, as part of the monitoring of work-based learning, education organisations ensure there is an equivalent experience across a cohort of students. Equity may be achieved, at least in part, by the support of a named mentor or supervisor with a clear remit and educational organisation's support for workplace mentoring as appropriate, for example, by providing personal development, guidance and training, and maintaining lines of communication between the mentor or supervisor and the education organisation's placement lead.

Student engagement in the work-based learning opportunity is dependent upon their understanding of why they are there and what they can achieve. Ordinarily, students will be given clear directives as to these. Students need to be encouraged to participate in communities of practice relevant to their role within the work-based learning environment. Moreover, when students can work beyond a chosen course and outwith a specific school or faculty, it can help to broaden and enrich the student experience. Hence, the involvement in multi or transdisciplinary collaboration around live projects may help in academic rigour and stretch, and in the application of their knowledge and skills in team work.

Providers work with students to develop their confidence in critical reflection, to challenge policy and workplace practice, and support employers where relevant, for example, where students are also employees. All students should be able to benefit from an authentic and learning-rich environment and be allowed to complete relevant tasks (sometimes under supervision) that support the achievement of learning outcomes. However, some students may need guidance on how to achieve this, therefore, student-centred approaches should be directive to enable students to take responsibility and benefit from opportunities which are aligned to the employment. This approach can be transformational, providing choice and enabling student influence on how and what they might learn from, thereby developing their own personalised strategies for learning in a workplace.

Education organisations and employers should discuss how to ensure that opportunities are inclusive, safe and supported, including through reasonable adjustments to procedures, activities and physical environments.

The student, employer and education organisation should know the procedures for raising complaints about any aspect of the work-based learning, the workplace, the academic experience and about individuals involved in supporting, or working alongside, the student (see also [Concerns, Complaints and Appeals](#) Theme).

The education provider should consider contingency procedures to deal with premature termination of work-based learning and ensure the student is aware of options to continue studying, either at the same or an alternative provider. Procedures, such as Student Protection Plans, are valuable for mitigating such incidents which may be unavoidable and outside the control of one or more stakeholders (employer, student, education organisation). Arrangements for return to study are clear and transparent.

Reflective questions

- How do you maintain contact with the student in the workplace and how do you ensure that the student is fully supported in accordance with your agreement with the employer?
- What are your procedures for visiting the student in the workplace and how is this communicated to the student and the employer?
- What measures are in place for the student, the employer or the education organisation to raise complaints or concerns? How is this communicated?
- What safeguards do you have in place for the student should the work-based learning agreement not be fulfilled?

After the work-based learning (Guiding principle 9)

At the end of the work-based learning, education organisations will usually review the individual experiences from each stakeholder involved, including the student, employer and education organisation(s), which may cover, for example, the following.

1. The quality of the work-based learning opportunity:
 - Was the education and training at an appropriate level?
 - Were appropriate learning opportunities available?
 - Has the learning met the needs of the employer and has it had an impact on business performance?
2. The quality of employer and support provided:
 - Did the employer adhere to the expectations for learning as agreed in the service-level agreement with the education organisation?
3. The education organisation's support:
 - Did the named individuals provide prompt and constructive support to students on work-based learning or placement?
4. The communication between the parties and the opportunities to provide feedback:
 - Were appropriate and sufficient opportunities available to all for formal and informal communication and feedback?
 - Was there appropriate and timely response to such communication and feedback?
5. Student engagement with the learning opportunities:
 - The achievement of outcomes, including educational, personal and professional as well as funding body requirements.
 - Behaviours, for example, professional attitude and conduct to clients.
 - Learner insight.

Reflective questions

- What measures do you have in place for seeking feedback on work-based learning?
- How do you include employers and other stakeholders in the feedback that you collect?
- How do you use feedback, both qualitative and quantitative, to evaluate work-based learning and how do you action any relevant points that arise?
- What measures do you take to communicate your actions to those involved in work-based learning?

Monitoring and evaluation (Guiding principles 5, 7, 9)

Monitoring and evaluation are regular, systematic processes which take a holistic view of the work-based learning provision. Education providers should check requirements for timescales for reviews. For example, apprenticeship funding organisations may specify maximum periods for regular monitoring and evaluation activities.

The [Monitoring and Evaluation](#) Theme provides overarching advice and guidance for monitoring and evaluation. Matters which are particularly pertinent to work-based learning are covered in this Theme.

Within a work-based learning course, the monitoring and evaluation processes will go beyond the standard mechanisms applied within the education organisation and will include monitoring and evaluation of the employment environment and the employer views. Where there are services users (for example, in healthcare), their views should also be captured systematically and, where relevant, acted upon.

The essential elements of monitoring activities are that they are timely and focused and that evidence arising is used and shared, and feedback loops are closed. Moreover, monitoring must be demonstrably ethical, with specific considerations given to how and when monitoring takes place in the work-based environment. For example, the impact it might have on students who are also current employees, and on service users, where sensitivity is needed in certain contexts, such as health and social care.

Education organisations will use a range of mechanisms to obtain information for monitoring and evaluation, which will include engaging students, employers and service users individually and collectively, including from:

- education provider staff, including through link tutors and direct observation of work-based learning
- employers, through formal and informal feedback mechanisms and contractual reviews
- students, through feedback, evaluation and reflection
- annual monitoring and periodic review
- external examiner reports
- PSRB reports
- reports prepared for others, for example, end-point assessment organisations in apprenticeships in England.

Within a work-based course, a range of areas will need to be monitored and evaluated, including the following:

- The effectiveness of the integration between the on and off-the-job learning aspects of the course (principally through the views of students, but the employer and service user voice may also provide valuable insight). Education organisations will be able to monitor and evaluate this directly, but the views of the employers can be valuable here regarding curriculum developments and the timetabling of the work placements in relation to the rest of the course.
- The relationship between the education organisation and the employer. This is a sensitive area which requires monitoring and evaluation of the day-to-day relationship from course teams and should include proportionate checks that scrutinise from the central quality assurance and enhancement perspective and through the continuing validity of contractual arrangements to prevent unintended changes to the curriculum, for example, scope creep.
- Accessibility of the course. Equality and diversity and reasonable adjustments need to be monitored routinely for work-based learning, at a course level and evaluated at the institutional level.
- Fitness to practice, which may include formal fitness to practice in regulated environments, for example, healthcare. This may also include explicit monitoring and evaluation of relevant areas of knowledge, skills and behaviours in other contexts as required by a PSRB or funding body.
- Data protection. Gaining permission from the different stakeholders regarding the flow of information between the parties and compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Supervision arrangements. That supervisors have received confirmation of the number of students to be supported, their names and their year of study, where appropriate, thereby providing evidence of the levels of competence expected of them in the work-based learning environment.

- Student preparation and support. That students received the necessary information, advice and guidance in advance of taking up the work-based learning opportunity, for example, address of the employer and a named contact with overall responsibility for their studies and welfare, a timetable of activities which covers the work-based and campus-based learning, and access to the internet for learning materials and communication.
- Complaints and informal feedback, both from employers and students. Complaints may be very informal and emerge from conversations but can be hugely important.

Education providers will have standard mechanisms to evaluate work-based learning provision and they may choose to consider identifying trends in relation to:

- the comparable achievement of students on the same course in different work-based learning environments and monitor the reasons behind this
- the comparable achievement of students on work-based learning courses versus other comparable courses which do not include work-based learning
- the performance of students within a specific work-based learning context over time
- the number of withdrawals and transfers from work-based learning courses and whether they are related to specific work-based learning environments, the cohort and other comparable courses which do not include work-based learning
- progression into permanent employment, career progression and salary prospects.

Education organisations should monitor matters of equality and diversity in work-based learning courses (as in all other modes of study).

Providers are mindful of protecting the privacy of individual students, and their responsibilities under relevant data protection, and other legislation, particularly when there are few students at a named work-based learning environment or on a work-based learning course. Since individuals may be identified easily based on disclosures, providers may choose to aggregate data and evaluate performance by protected characteristics at a course, school or faculty level.

Employers are partners in the delivery of work-based learning courses. For curriculum planning, development and evaluation, capturing their feedback is a valuable resource. Employers are likely to provide results of monitoring and evaluation which are relevant to education delivery in their workplace and upskilling of the future workforce. By having labour market intelligence for planning a curriculum that meets the current and future needs of the local economy, the validating provider will need to consider the implications of curriculum drift in relation to academic regulations and whether there needs to be an amendment to the documentation of the award.

Reflective questions

- How do you effectively monitor and evaluate your approach to work-based learning throughout the duration of the course?
- What do you do to communicate the outcomes from your monitoring and evaluation to all those involved in work-based learning?

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