Welcome to your Mentor Handbook!
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So you are supervising a work experience student? Whether you are excited or daunted by the prospect (or maybe a little bit of both) this handbook is designed to support you in helping a young person have a high quality and productive work experience. There are also many benefits to you the mentor/supervisor and this handbook, in addition to giving tips and advice on the work experience itself, also focuses on your professional development. Take the time to read through the handbook before embarking on the planning process.

You should also read the student handbook thoroughly to ensure that you understand the student expectations. It should be noted that whilst this booklet is designed in line with apprenticeship standards, it can be used by any employee wishing to develop behavioural competencies via supervision of a work experience student.

**CHECKLIST**

### Before Placement
- Ensure regular meetings with your line manager in the lead up to the work experience.
- Review and decide upon the target competencies you - the apprentice - are aiming to develop.
- Plan the structure of the work experience project (if required to)
- Arrange student activities
- Complete induction phone call with student

### During Placement
- Supervise student
- Ensure arrangements are in place
- Complete mentor diary

### After the Placement
- Complete any student follow up activities
- Review competencies developed
Benefits of mentoring a work experience student

There are many advantages to an apprentice mentoring a work experience student for the mentor, the student and the employer:

- As a mentor you can develop leadership and mentoring skills that will help you in your own career.
- You may be a newer employee and may find it easier to relate to entering the workplace for the first time.
- By working closely with newer employees, work experience students can experience first-hand the routes into the science industry - more so than working with a senior member of staff whose job role may be very distant from the entry point.
Mentoring a work experience student is an excellent opportunity to develop your skills and competencies in areas such as leadership, management, communication, teamwork and health and safety, helping you stand out in the workplace.

Initially, it is often useful to reflect on the skills and competencies you have and those you intend to develop, taking ownership of your own progress. You may like to set yourself target competencies to develop. You can do this in discussions with a supervisor or mentor.

A good place to find examples of competencies are the apprenticeship “Behaviours Assessment Criteria,” part of the assessment for the new apprenticeship standards (these can be found in full at http://www.siasuk.com/resources/)
The questions below are prompts to help you think about your skills and competencies.

- What skills and competencies do I currently have?
- What skills and competencies do I use or display at work?
- What skills and competencies could I develop through this project?
- How am I going to develop these skills and competencies?
- Do I need help or support to develop these skills and competencies?
- Where, or to whom, will I go to for support?

Some examples of the behavioural competencies from the science apprenticeship standards are given below.

Highlighted competencies in bold italic are specific to the laboratory scientist apprenticeship standard.

**Safety**
- Always demonstrates personal responsibility toward safety systems and seeks to influence the safety of others.
- Actively monitors the safety of self and others, challenging and making suggestions where appropriate.

**Communication**
- Always comprehends oral and/or written instructions and checks to avoid any misunderstandings.
- Is able to adapt to both verbal and written communication to be understood by different audiences (e.g. peer, supervisor, senior manager and visitor.)
- Listens and questions to enhance own and others understanding.
- *Able to understand and explain complex information in a variety of formats and to a range of technical and non-scientific audiences.*

**Teamwork and Leadership**
- *Mentors colleagues and actively seeks feedback on scientific leadership style.*

**Independence and Responsibility**
- Self-motivated and deals with work/learning balance in a positive way.
- Maintains motivation and encourages others to do the same.

**Impact of Work (on others)**
- Always tactful, considerate and respectful in dealing with others.

**Time Management**
- Encourages others to comply with company timekeeping protocols.
- *Takes responsibility for managing time of others, is able to prioritise and doesn’t over commit.*

**Change Management**
- Capable of supporting others with change in work situations and/ or learning new skills.
There may be an opportunity for you to get involved with the selection and recruitment process for work experience. This may involve going into local schools, running selection competitions or selection days. This is a fantastic opportunity to develop your skills.

Use the table below to record your target competencies, the activities that you have planned that will develop those competencies and any sources of help and support that you will need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Competencies to Develop</th>
<th>Planned Activities</th>
<th>Sources of Support</th>
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</table>
Selection and Recruitment

There may be an opportunity for you to get involved with the selection and recruitment process for work experience. This may involve going into local schools, running selection competitions or selection days. This is a fantastic opportunity to develop your skills.

If you are involved in organising this process, request a copy of the employer work experience handbook where there is more information on selection and recruitment of students and liaise with your Human Resources department.
Advice on Planning Activities

You may have been asked to organise the timetable for the work experience student you are mentoring. Here are a few tips to help you to organise a high quality work experience for your student.

**Variety**
- It is important that the student gets a well-rounded understanding of the workplace and does not get bored. Quite often the students will be watching somebody completing a task rather than completing it themselves, a good variety of tasks will stop this from becoming dull. Observations with a focus such as identifying risks, completing calculations or understanding the skills in a job role (for later presentation) may be a good way of promoting engagement.

**Remember to include different staff and departments. You don’t have to do it all yourself.**
- Many people will be happy to host a work experience student for a short part of their day. This also helps the student to understand the breadth of the organisation.

**Ownership of a mini project or task.**
- If you can give the student ownership of a mini-project or task throughout the experience, it will help them to develop workplace skills and help to increase engagement and motivation.

**Think about what the student will gain.**
- The student will have shown significant motivation and engagement in securing the work experience. They will have arrived with expectations (often quite high expectations.) The best way to maintain their motivation and enthusiasm is to know what the student will learn and what skills they will develop in each of the tasks you plan and share that with the student. For each activity the student should have some form of task to complete.

**A defined end point.**
- It is recommended to plan in an activity for the student to deliver at the end of their experience, such as a short presentation on their experience and what they have gained from it. You should invite the members of staff who have been involved in the work experience. Delivering a presentation gives the student something to aim for and helps them develop their communication skills.

**Remember the requirements.**
- Remember that your employer will have to carry out DBS checks on some of the adults working with young people, risk assessments specific to young people and inductions will also need to be carried out. Young person’s risk assessments need to be signed by the parent or legal guardian of the young person. This will usually not be the responsibility of the apprentice and more information is provided in the employer handbook.

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**Week 1**
Example Structure

Below is an example structure of a high quality work experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Mentor catch up</td>
<td>Mentor catch up</td>
<td>Mentor catch up</td>
<td>Mentor catch up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>Work shadowing Focus: Maths and analytical skills</td>
<td>Work shadowing Focus: Identifying the skills in a role</td>
<td>Office based mini project continued</td>
<td>Presentation skills session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Tour with observation activity</td>
<td>Work shadowing Focus: Health and Safety</td>
<td>Office based mini project eg. competitor research for a new project</td>
<td>Exploring career: Q&amp;A with a range of staff</td>
<td>Presentation (observed by staff involved)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor session – targets and week outline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CV and application session</td>
<td>Feedback and review with mentor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The example outline could be improved by adding a theme, perhaps focussed around a company product or service.

Work shadowing should always include some form of task, this could take the form of prompt questions, an outline of an investigation with a free form response or you could use examples of existing recording and monitoring paperwork.

The role of the mentor is very important in this structure; with regular checks to ensure that the student is OK and progressing well. On the final day the student should be given the opportunity to reflect on the experience through the presentation and final review of targets with their mentor.

Final presentations are often an effective way getting feedback from the work experience students and understanding how the student perceives their development as result of the work experience. It also gives the students a defined end point and an opportunity to develop their communication skills. In the student materials contained within this package the students have final reflection prompts which could be used as a stimulus for the presentation. It is important when asking a student to complete a presentation that the scope of the presentation is clearly communicated e.g. content, length, company templates, confidentiality etc.

In term time work experience placements, a representative from the school may be required to visit, if so ensure that time for this visit is scheduled into the timetable.
Approaching People for Help

One of the key points made in the previous section is that you don’t have to do everything yourself. It’s important to get people to help you. Here are some hints and tips to make this process easier.

Being pro-active

Once you know you are to be organising a work experience start thinking about whom you will approach and how you will approach them. Don’t forget to think about who will be able to provide an interesting experience for the student.

How to approach people?

Talking to people face to face is often the most successful way of securing a positive outcome. Also remember to think about how the person you are asking for help may benefit from this- it’s often easier to provide an opportunity than ask for a favour.

Doing this in good time

Ensure you give people plenty of time to arrange things. People are often willing to help but other commitments may prevent this. Asking people in plenty of time enables people to schedule and plan.

Following up

People may offer to help but then not get back to you. It is OK to remind and gently ask people how they are getting on or if they are still able to help. Just be prepared that they may no longer be able to help and have a back-up plan.
Working with Young People

Work experience, by its very nature, is often carried out by young people with little or no experience of the workplace. As a result there are a few things you should consider when mentoring a work experience student.

Risk Assessments and Inductions

Ensure that your work experience student has the young person’s risk assessments (to be signed by parents/carers) in good time and that they receive an induction covering safety and expectations of the workplace at the beginning of their work experience. This is particularly important for work experience students as they may have a limited understanding of workplace procedures.

Rules of your organisation

Your employer should have a rules and guidelines relating to working with young people (particularly those under the age of 16.) You should familiarise yourself with this information and, if required, check that any additional health and safety requirements have been fulfilled. Remember young people aged under 16 must not work for more than 4 hours without taking a break of at least 1 hour and they cannot undertake night time working.

Safety in the workplace

It is important that the student understands workplace safety. For example, wearing safety glasses might be a new experience for a student; wearing the right protective equipment needs to be clearly explained.

Working as a colleague

As this may be the first time the student has been in the workplace they may not always be sure how to act. You should model good workplace behaviour and attitudes. Introduce them to the workplace culture, including what is expected of employees, the values of the organisation, how the business is organised, what people do in a working day and anything specific to your workplace e.g. the features of a controlled environment, mobile phones, social media. Don’t forget to give practical guidance in areas such as working hours, breaks (including toilet breaks), working conditions and company dress code.

Explaining the “obvious”

After being in the workplace for a while some things start to appear “obvious” however they may not always be obvious to the student you are working with. Explaining why certain processes or procedures are being carried out can be very helpful to the student and maybe even to yourself. Check with the student if they need you to explain anything further and encourage them to ask questions. Try not to use jargon and where necessary, make sure you explain it. Encourage the student to take notes so they can look back and check over things, but remember you may have to explain things more than once- they will be taking on lots of new information. Ensure that the student clearly understands any task you ask them to complete and check back on them if necessary.
An initial phone induction is a good way of ensuring that the student is fully prepared to embark upon work experience. You should arrange a time for the phone call with the student and, if possible, provide details for the student to contact you.

As this is likely to be their first experience of the workplace they may be nervous. Use this opportunity to reassure them and to ensure they are fully prepared. It may be useful to suggest that the students write down the information from the conversation so they can refer to it at a later date.

Remember to be enthusiastic about the project and the experience the student is to undertake.

The following topics should be addressed in the telephone call (in addition to any topics that may be specific to your company or the project):

- Give the student the opportunity to tell them a little bit about themselves.
- Introduce yourself, your role and the company.
- Outline activities in the work experience
- Outline
  - The timings of the working day
  - Dress code
  - Lunch time and break time arrangements
- Ask how the student is getting to the placement. Highlight any details of public transport they need to look up.
- Give them details of any additional items they need to bring with them e.g. photo ID, hair ties, note pads, writing equipment.
- Ensure that they have clear instructions on when and where they are to arrive on their first day.

Following this the student should be given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the project and the company.
What tasks did the student complete today? What do you think they learnt?

What have you learnt by supervising the student today?

What skills have you used? What skills did you develop?

What did you do well today?

Is there anything you will do differently tomorrow?
What tasks did the student complete today? What do you think they learnt?

What have you learnt by supervising the student today?

What skills have you used? What skills did you develop?

What did you do well today?

Is there anything you will do differently tomorrow?
Day Three

Date: 

What tasks did the student complete today? What do you think they learnt?

What have you learnt by supervising the student today?

What skills have you used? What skills did you develop?

What did you do well today?

Is there anything you will do differently tomorrow?
Day Four

What tasks did the student complete today? What do you think they learnt?

What have you learnt by supervising the student today?

What skills have you used? What skills did you develop?

What did you do well today?

Is there anything you will do differently tomorrow?
Day Five

Date: ______________

What tasks did the student complete today? What do you think they learnt?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What have you learnt by supervising the student today?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What skills have you used? What skills did you develop?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What did you do well today?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Is there anything you will do differently tomorrow?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Competency Review

Congratulations. The work experience is now completed and hopefully all of your hard work will have paid off. Whatever the outcome it is useful to reflect on the skills and competencies you have developed.

Below is a table that you can complete either by yourself or as part of a conversation with a supervisor - another perspective can often help you to recognise things you would otherwise miss.

Think about challenges and successes of the experience. What did you do well? What could you improve upon?

Refer back to your table of target competencies. Think about what skills and competencies have you displayed and developed? What skills and competencies do you still need to develop? What transferable skills have you developed? Have you developed skills and competencies other than your target competencies?

In the table below identify the competencies you have developed, the situations where you used these competencies and suggest ways you could apply these skills and competencies in your current job role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies Developed</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>How can I apply this in my job?</th>
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Thank you for taking part in this work experience process. If you have enjoyed working with young people you may also be interested in becoming an ambassador through the Science Industry Partnership.

For more information please contact info@cogentskills.com