

Work Placement, a Real Asset.

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Research in Britain has indicated that students exposed to at least four interactions with employers whilst still at school are five times more likely to be in education, employment or training at age 19 to 24 than not.

Work placement is a mandatory part of many industry-based Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses that high school students can choose as part of their Higher School Certificate and provides a general introduction into the working environment. There are a range of courses such as Business Services, IT, Construction, Retail, Hospitality, etc. which usually require a week of unpaid employment in the relevant industry somewhere during years 11 and 12.

In the workplace the students are preferred to be treated as a colleague, not just another student. They are given certain responsibilities and are expected to behave and dress appropriately. As part of a team they are given the opportunity to practise what they have studied in the classroom by undertaking supervised tasks appropriate to their skill level. They will be working on projects with real clients and will be expected to produce results which have consequences. Many students will not understand how important proper documentation can be to the success of a project.

By taking part in work placement students can compare the processes used in businesses to those taught in the classroom. Being involved in a professional working environment will help them to understand what will be required of them when they begin full-time work. Taking part in work placement provides experience which is unable to be gained in the classroom and can benefit the students in ways that may not be apparent prior to undertaking the placement, and will enable them to gain confidence in their own abilities. They generally achieve a genuine sense of reality and purpose.

By participating in the work placement initiative businesses can take part in the education and career development of young people in their community. They will be introduced to potential future employees and have the opportunity to raise the quality of those coming into their industry.

There are many local organisations that are funded to coordinate VET work placements. They should be courted with open arms and the opportunity to host should be snapped up as the genuine benefits that flow back to the employer will far outweigh the effort of sponsoring the student.