

BTEC Centre Guide to Employer Involvement

2024 - 2025



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Introduction

The DfE requires all Awarding Organisations 'to confirm that providers have secured employer involvement for every learner' taking an approved Technical Level qualification on the 2018 and later lists, and for Technical Certificates on the 2019 and later lists. All students aged 16-19 working towards one of these qualifications must undertake 'meaningful activity' involving employers from a list of eligible activities reproduced below.

Whilst the DfE has allowed for flexibility in the way that providers and employers work together to support students' learning, the contribution that meaningful activities make to the qualification must be significant. Activities and their contribution to the students' learning are set out in each qualification specification. They relate to one or more elements of the mandatory content of the qualification as a minimum.

Meaningful activity involving employers should come from the following list of eligible learner activities:

- undertake structured *work-experience or work-placements* that develop skills and knowledge relevant to the qualification
- undertake *project(s), exercises(s)* and/or *assessments/examination(s)* set with input from industry practitioner(s)
- take one or more *units delivered or co-delivered* by an industry practitioner(s). This could take the form of master classes or guest lectures
- industry practitioners operate as '*expert witnesses*' that contribute to the assessment of a learner's work or practice, operating within a specified assessment framework. This may be a specific project(s), exercise(s) or examination(s), or all assessments for a qualification.

The following activities, though positively regarded, will not be included as meaningful activity:

- employers' or industry practitioners' input to the initial design and content of a qualification
- employers hosting visits, providing premises, facilities or equipment
- employers or industry practitioners providing talks or contributing to delivery on employability, general careers advice such as CV writing, and interview training
- learner attendance at career fairs, events or other networking opportunities
- simulated or provider-based working environments
- employers providing students with job references.

Monitoring of Employer Involvement

Pearson will monitor the contribution of Employer Involvement through Standards Verifier subject specific sampling.

As part of our annual quality assurance process Heads of Centres and Quality Nominees are required to submit the Annual Quality Declaration which requires confirmation that all policies and procedures are in place including those relating to Employer Involvement.

Specifically:

1.2 Have in place policies that are reviewed and evaluated annually for managing:

- Health and Safety (including any arrangements for employer Involvement)

Standards Verification

If you have learners registered on a Technical Programme, your allocated Standards Verifier (SV) will request a copy of your Employer Involvement Plan at the same time as they request the Assessment Plan(s) usually after their initial contact.

You may use your own paperwork for recording Employer Involvement or utilise the paperwork provided for you in this guide.

Involving Employers in Education

Strategic Planning

All centres involved in the teaching of the Technical qualifications will need to prepare an Employer Involvement plan for each Technical Programme offered (as previously identified). The development of this plan will require time and planning, ensuring that employer links are made, relationships established and a clear understanding of expectations for both employers and learners.

There must also be a clear structure in place for the recording of learner involvement in meaningful activities.

Whilst we appreciate that many centres will have experience of employer engagement, we would still encourage you to review this guide.

The Benefits

The desired outcome of a programme of study is to assist a learner to be “work ready” with the addition of sector-focused employer participation that will contribute directly to learning and / or assessment of sector specific skills and knowledge.

The use of employer involvement can really help to bring the understanding of the “world of work” to life for the learner. The DfE employer involvement requirements for the Technical qualifications can be seen as an opportunity to enhance a programme of study and allow the learner to link theory to practice through meaningful activities in their chosen field of study.

From the employer’s perspective, this provides an opportunity to invest in their community and the future workforce and help shape the programme of study in conjunction with centre staff.

Establishing a relationship

Whilst many centres have a good understanding of how to contact employers and establish a good working relationship, here are a few things to remember:

- Consider how you might make the initial contact with an employer to get involved in any activity. You may already have established methods for linking with employers but if you are approaching an employer for the first time you need to consider the best way to engage with them and establish if they are

prepared to get involved. In many instances starting with smaller activities will help the employer to understand the expectations and help them to see the benefit of their involvement.

- Within the DfE definition of “meaningful activity” it states, “*the contribution that meaningful activities make to the qualification must be significant and relate to the qualification as a minimum.*” Therefore, think clearly about the possible activities you may want to arrange and how they relate specifically to the programme of study.
- Keep it jargon free! Education has its own language, so it is important when engaging with employers that you ensure they understand the programme of study, the timescales, expectations and proposed outcomes.
- Go with a plan! Make sure you know exactly what you want the employer to input into the programme and when.
- Remember that an employer is offering their time over and above their normal workload, so try to ensure you give them adequate lead in times and can work around their commitments.
- Ensure clarity in all communications. Make sure the employer is well briefed and is supported to undertake the agreed activity.
- Set agreed goals.
- Developing a solid platform for the relationship with the employer can provide long term benefits for the programme and the learners involved.

An Agreed Framework

It is important to have an agreed framework or plan of action with the employers involved in the programme. This includes a clearly defined working model that has input from both the centre and the employers with clear milestones and opportunities for continuous dialogue and feedback.

Teaching staff must be well briefed in terms of the proposed employer input so that there is a clear understanding of where responsibilities lie and to ensure a seamless and worthwhile experience for the learners involved.

Be Prepared

- Internally all staff involved in the teaching of the programme need to be fully briefed and aware of the proposed employer involvement and ready to respond to employer needs.
- The learners need to be advised as to what is expected of them and what to expect in terms of their involvement in “meaningful activities” with employers.
- The employer needs to know what their role is, what to expect and to be supported.

- Establish and maintain clear communication channels between the centre and the employer.
- Implement key milestones to ensure that timeframes and targets are met by all.
- Establish and implement a review and evaluation process. Lessons can always be learnt as to how to improve the learner experience the following year.

Management of “Meaningful Activities”

Every centre involved in employer-based activities would benefit from designating a manager or lead who will have responsibility and oversee the on-going relationship with the employer(s) involved in the programme. This individual can act as a single point of contact for the employer and liaise with centre staff.

Through sound planning and regular monitoring of the agreed framework / plan this will ensure that employers and learners gain the maximum benefit out of their involvement. The better briefed all parties are the more likely there will be a positive outcome. The centre must always remain sympathetic to the needs of the employer and the demands on their time.

Review and Evaluation

Once the programme has been through an academic year, it would be useful to take time to reflect on all aspects of the course, the employer involvement that has taken place, the view of participants and to ensure that the correct evidence was captured. This could include reviewing:

- The goals agreed and set – did they meet and fulfil expectations of all parties?
- Reviewing progress made – were milestones met, was communication effective, was the outcome as expected?
- Review and evaluate all aspects of employer involvement as part of the programme of study ensuring that you gain the views of all parties involved against a defined set of criteria.
- Ensure you maintain evidence of this evaluation to meet the needs of annual Pearson quality assurance activity for BTEC qualifications, including the effective recording of activities undertaken by learners.

Employer Involvement

Once clear links have been established, centre communication with the employer in reference to the expectations of the types of “meaningful activities” that are required from employer involvement is key.

- What the employer is expected to undertake.

Outline in your employer engagement plan what is expected of them in the short, medium and long term. Liaise regularly with the employer making sure they do understand what is required and what counts as “meaningful activities”. In the long term ask established employers to act as mentors to new employers participating in the scheme.

- How do we do it?

The employer will want to understand the benefits of the time they will be investing in “meaningful activities” alongside running their own business. Empower your employers to be Expert Witnesses for students in their establishment.

The documentation that is required to be filled in by employers should be easy to follow and relevant. Spend time with the employers at the beginning explaining the audit trail and why it is important to make the experience both count for the learner and contribute towards the overall qualification.

- What is expected of the centre?

Expectations should be the first thing to establish once you have engaged with any employer. Be honest and tell them how much time will need to be spent by them engaging with students and what additional work will need to be completed.

Centres will need to be mindful that whether engaging with a large established blue-chip company which has a designated training centre, or SMEs local to your centre, all could play a part and may be able to provide young people with opportunities such as, structured work experience or work placements. Employers have been key for many years in building the foundations of different qualifications and have identified that they need young people in their businesses to fulfil the skills gap that would otherwise fall short without such opportunities.

The required employer involvement will need to be outlined and detailed in any centre devised employer guide you may wish to prepare for their specific programme of study. The objectives for how this can be undertaken need to be very specific to the industry.

Regular meetings should be held and triangulated between you, the employer and learner to ensure full commitment and understanding by all parties and to confirm that all key milestones are adhered to and met.

Teaching Staff

Teaching staff and the employer should both be aware of what tasks are being undertaken by the learner and when. If the learner is covering a topic in the

classroom, then the opportunity to put this into practice in the workplace should be discussed and implemented. A good learning plan will aid in this process.

Employer relationships may take a long time to establish and build upon, and establishing what is required, by when and by whom will not happen overnight – be patient. Invite employers into your centre to view facilities, offer CPD opportunities to their staff members, look at other opportunities such as facilitating a stand at a careers fair, or talking to students about the industry. Whilst these activities are not deemed to be “meaningful activities” all are essential to building key contacts in industry whilst providing learners with a more comprehensive programme of engagement.

All activities should be planned with employers and a meeting schedule to review student progress should be in place.

Learner Engagement/Participation

The key to success is engagement; every learner needs to feel engaged with their own learning and be able to recognise the worth of their own participation.

- All learners should follow a centre induction onto their qualification where the expectations of the course and the support the centre can provide the student should be discussed.
- With the qualification offering both “on the job” and classroom-based activities, a clear understanding as to how these activities link together and the expectations of both components would need to be set out and discussed.
- A list of what is classed as “meaningful activities” should be made available to the learner and employer, so they are able to plan appropriate activities that count towards their overall final portfolio submission.
- The centre should assign an assessor/centre contact to the student and the employer, who would undertake regular assessments, reviews and carry out assessments of evidence where appropriate.

The ultimate goal is for learners to gain and demonstrate new skills through active participation in activities with and alongside employers.

Examples of Documents

Pearson provides a range of Employer Involvement templates which are available for you to use. These are discussed below and can be accessed [here](#) on our BTEC forms and guides webpage.

1. Compulsory documentation

BTEC Employer Involvement Plan

This template is to be filled in by the centre when engaging with employers. Evidence of individual learner employer engagement will need to be provided by the centre to confirm that the activity took place. This can be achieved either through a centre based ILR or the Engagement Initial Plan.

Whilst the BTEC Employer Involvement Plan is deemed compulsory, you may choose to use your own centre devised form rather than the Pearson version. This is fine to do, however please ensure that any centre-devised templates include the information identified in the Pearson devised form.

2. Optional Documentation

Many centres have established templates for the purpose of evidencing employer involvement. You may find some or all of the documentation below useful for recording evidence of Employer Involvement as required.

Learner Journal

A journal style document to capture work undertaken during work experience or other meaningful activities.

A Witness Statement

From an Expert Witness/Industry Practitioners. An expert is defined as “An individual who offers special expertise in a particular field”.

Assessment Activity Record

A template that can be used by the centre representative with the learner to capture a one-to-one activity such as observation, testimony, discussion or other relevant activities. A continuation page may be added to the end of the document.

Assessment Question and Answer

A document which can be used to capture:

- either a verbal question and answer session with a learner alongside an observation
- preparation for a recorded professional discussion to expand on an activity undertaken or that has been written up in the learner journal
- to capture missing required evidence.

Engagement Initial Plan

The plan is a key part of making sure all parties understand who is responsible for doing what and by when. It is a plan, and any plan is subject to change if circumstances change, but having a plan is key.

If you have a question, please contact BTEC Assessment or your Vocational Quality Assurance Manager via [The Pearson Contact Portal](#).

In addition, you will find further information on our [Quality Assurance webpages](#).