



## Unit 18: Work Experience

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### Delivery guidance

In this unit, learners will investigate the benefits of carrying out a work experience placement within a construction organisation. They will gain an understanding of the skills that they could develop during their placement, such as team working, communication and interpersonal skills, and explore the expectations which an employer would have of them.

### Approaching the unit

This unit will also encourage learners to investigate the many different career opportunities available in the construction sector and to consider the nature of the specific roles within the industry. This will allow them to understand the detail and relevance of the tasks they will be carrying out while on their work experience placement.

Building good links and relationships with local businesses and construction firms will be of great benefit to your learners, not only in the work placements, but also in facilitating ongoing mentoring opportunities, arranging site visits and engaging interesting and inspiring guest speakers. You may also gain opportunities to involve local employers in the assessment of project work.

Learners will develop their own plans for their work experience placement, considering their own goals and progression objectives which they wish to achieve; these will include both personal and professional targets. They will then undertake a work experience placement with an appropriate construction organisation. Learners will need to commit the equivalent guided learning hours to cover 10 full working days. This will allow for a range of tasks to be carried out and should also offer scope for learners to shadow experienced members of staff.

Finally, learners will reflect on their placement on completion, considering their own personal and professional development. They will consider the wider impact of continual professional development in their chosen career pathway, whether inclined towards direct employment or onto higher education.

### Delivering the learning aims

#### Learning aim A

To introduce learning aim A, you could initiate a discussion with learners on their perception of the benefits of work experience in developing their own personal skills and attributes. You could then focus on the different types of skills that would be required when working as an employee with a construction organisation. You may find it useful at this point to task learners to conduct a skills audit to determine the personal and professional skills that they feel they already have. Learners could also include information about their weaknesses so they can identify areas to be developed as they progress through their careers in construction.

With an understanding of the personal and professional skills that are needed for working in the construction industry, learners should consider their own expectations for employment in construction. They should consider the expectations of an employer in this sector. There are opportunities to invite visiting speakers to discuss this with learners. Construction professionals would be able to explain to learners how they



should prepare themselves for employment in the construction sector, providing learners with insight into the career opportunities available to them, including the benefits of belonging to professional organisations such as Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and International Construction Project Management Association (ICPMA).

### **Learning aim B**

You will begin to prepare learners for their work experience placement through learning aim B, including the expectations their employer will have of them regarding their conduct in the workplace. This again offers the opportunity to invite a speaker in, or alternatively, to use examples of job descriptions that learners can investigate.

Learners will need to be clear that while their work placement may include some highly technical activities, the tasks allocated to them will be given based on their skills and ability. You could introduce the concept of work shadowing here, explaining that it is likely that learners will shadow staff who carry out more technical and complex activities and in doing so they will gain an understanding of those job roles.

Having completed their skills audit for learning aim A, you should encourage learners to use this to set their own goals for their work experience placement. You should introduce the concept of SMART targets to learners, which they can then use when setting their targets. You should introduce learners to the standards set by professional bodies such as RIBA, CIOB, RICS, ICPMA and ICE, along with their entry requirements for membership. These standards could then be used by learners to inform their own personal and professional development targets.

### **Learning aim C**

Learning aim C will be addressed during the work experience placement. You should encourage learners to participate in a range of tasks and activities during their placement (including non-construction tasks) and develop a wider knowledge of the activities that are carried out by a range of employees. This can be achieved through observing staff carrying out specific activities or procedures, or through shadowing staff members in different functions within the organization. At all times, learners should be encouraged to continue to develop their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and develop their understanding of how these skills impact on working relationships.

You should emphasise to learners the importance of keeping a journal of their activities, so that they can link their practical experiences while on placement with their studies in other units. Learners should also use their journal to reflect on the personal development activities that they have carried out while on placement.

### **Learning aim D**

Finally, learning aim D should be used to draw together the preparation for the work placement along with assessment of the actual activities carried out while on placement. You should encourage learners to consider self-evaluation and reflection as a continuous process that they should carry out throughout their professional lives. You can introduce them to the theories and frameworks to support this process – comparing the approaches as outlined by Klob, Gibbs and Schön – and which learners can in turn apply when completing their reflective journal.

Learners should be encouraged to refer to their SMART targets when reflecting on their personal development, and as they consider their future career pathways and goals.



This could include highlighting those areas where they need to improve their skills and devising an action plan which can be followed for developmental purposes.

## Assessment model

Learning aim	Key content areas	Assessment approach
<b>A</b> Examine the benefits of work experience in construction for own learning and development	<b>A1</b> Developing skills and attributes <b>A2</b> Clarifying expectations for employment in construction <b>A3</b> Exploring career options	A report evaluating the benefits of work experience in the construction sector and the importance of preparing for placement. The report must include a plan to meet personal and professional goals.
<b>B</b> Develop a work experience plan to support own learning and development	<b>B1</b> Preparing for work experience <b>B2</b> Setting goals and learning objectives	
<b>C</b> Carry out work experience to meet set objectives	<b>C1</b> Work experience tasks <b>C2</b> Work shadowing and observation	Observation of learners on work placements in the construction sector, carrying out tasks and activities and interacting with customers and staff, evidenced by observation report signed by assessor.  Reflective log evaluating learners' own development on work placement.
<b>D</b> Reflect on the development of own personal and professional skills and practices	<b>D1</b> Reviewing personal and professional development <b>D2</b> Using feedback and action planning	

## Assessment guidance

There is a maximum number of two summative assignments, one for learning aims A and B, the second for learning aims C and D.

For learning aims A and B, learner evidence would normally be presented in the form of a portfolio that includes a justification of their selection of placement for work experience. It is likely that the portfolio will consist of a written report that provides the background to the placement and an action plan to be followed during the placement.

For learning aims C and D, learners will present a reflective log that evaluates their performance on their work experience placement, including lessons learnt from work shadowing and observations. This should be accompanied by observation records detailing the tasks and activities that the learner has carried out during their placement.



## Getting started

This provides you with a starting place for one way of delivering the unit, based around the recommended assessment approach in the specification.

### Unit 18: Work Experience

#### Introduction

This unit enables learners to gain first-hand experience of the professional and technical skills that are likely to be needed for a range of job roles within a construction organisation. There are opportunities for visiting speakers to explain to learners the skills that they would need to gain employment in the construction sector, while visits to a range of construction sites could widen the career aspirations of learners.

You should give learners the background knowledge, which they will need to be able to audit their own skills and to set themselves SMART targets for their placement. On completion of their placements, learners will need to reflect on their experiences, taking into account the personal and professional skills that they have developed in order to plan their future career development.

#### Learning aim A - Examine the benefits of work experience in construction for own learning and development

The purpose of learning aim A is to give learners a broad understanding and appreciation of their options for carrying out a work experience placement, and the opportunities that it will provide them.

You could introduce the unit through a class activity to discuss and identify job roles from a range of sectors, for example, building services or civil engineering. This could lead into a discussion of the potential job opportunities and career options for those sectors as learners progress into employment. You could then ask learners to discuss in small groups what they hope to gain from a work placement, such as whether they already have thoughts for their career or if they want to find out more about a certain sector or job role.

#### Learning aim A1

You could task learners to consider the reasons why work experience can be used to develop the range of professional and personal skills that are necessary for job roles in the construction sector. Working in small groups, learners could identify the skills they think could be developed during a placement, and to suggest whether these are personal or professional skills. Learners could then complete a skills audit on themselves, identifying the skills that they feel are strong and those skills that they need to develop.

You should emphasise to learners that the work experience placement will allow them to put into practice some of the theory that they have learned in other units, and that this is an opportunity to develop technical skills that may increase their employability within their chosen construction pathway. This could be reinforced through the use of visiting speakers from construction organisations, who would explain to learners the skills and qualities they look for in prospective employees.

You could give learners examples of person specifications and job descriptions for a range of apprentice or technician-level roles within construction organisations, such as assistant site engineer or architectural technician. Individually, or in pairs, learners could then identify the qualities and skills that an employer would be looking for in new members of staff. Learners could then feedback their thoughts to a class discussion, with attention paid to significant similarities or differences in the attributes identified.

### Learning aim A3

- In order to consider the various career options available to learners, you could encourage them to work in small groups to investigate the different career pathways available to them in the construction sector. They could think about the information available from professional organisations, including RICS, CIOB, ICE, ICPMA and RIBA, alongside specific construction organisations (whether local, national or international). You should encourage learners to access a wide range of resources in order to find appropriate information. A tutor-led discussion could reinforce the importance of work experience as a means to informing their decisions regarding career progression. Learners could be encouraged to share what they have found interesting, or surprising, about the various pathways they could follow. Discuss with learners if the results of their investigations have changed their decisions regarding potential placements.
- Learners would then set tasks in which they need to prioritise actions and manage their time; this could be a desk-based activity to produce an outline design for a building. Learners will need to identify the tasks to be completed, indicating which activities should take priority and suggesting time scales for each.

### Learning aim A2

- You could conclude by considering the rights of employees within the workplace. You should make learners aware of the need to respect diversity, equality and dignity within the workplace, and the consequences of failing to do so. This could be linked to discussions relating to confidentiality and how employers will require learners to maintain confidentiality related to their placement. You could reinforce understanding with a Q&A session using typical situations where learners need to identify whether information is confidential or not.

## Learning aim B - Develop a work experience plan to support own learning and development

Learning aim B should give learners the background knowledge and understanding needed to effectively complete their work experience placement. Again, there is an opportunity for you to invite a guest speaker from an appropriate construction organisation to explain the expectations that they have of new employees joining their organisation.

### Learning aim B1

You should give learners sufficient guidance to allow them to independently research a range of potential work experience placements within an appropriate construction organisation. This should take into account the suitability of different roles, along with possible alternative organisations with placements available. Learners need to understand that restrictions may be in place due to their relative lack of experience and training. Therefore, it will not always be possible for them to carry out all the tasks related to their chosen job role. However, they may be able to shadow a more experienced employee observing them carrying out specific duties.

You should also make learners aware of the role that their mentors will play in the workplace, including the production of observation records that will form part of the learners' submission of evidence for the second assignment.

### Learning aim B2

Once learners have a secure understanding of the roles that could be available to them for their work experience placement, you should introduce them to the idea of setting personal goals and SMART targets to achieve while on placement. Learners could use the initial





results of their skills audit as a starting point and then consider where the gaps are. You should emphasise to learners that these gaps are the areas that they should aim to develop during their work experience placement. A group discussion to debate methods to develop such skills can generate some interesting ideas for learners to take away with them.

You could refer to information available to learners from professional organisations, and encourage learners to investigate the entry requirements for membership of professional bodies such as RIBA, CIOB, RICS, ICPMA and ICE. The focus should be on the skills and qualities that these bodies would expect a construction professional to possess. This research could be used to inform the setting of SMART targets by learners. You should discuss targets with learners to make sure that they are realistic for their work experience placement, and that they address personal and professional developmental goals. Learners will need to demonstrate their understanding of how to measure against these targets.

Learners should collate their evidence for the first assignment, which should clearly set out the importance of work experience to their professional development. Learners should be encouraged to identify how they could use their work experience placement as a method of informing their future career choices. Furthermore, you should ensure that learners provide a comprehensive development plan that they can follow while on their placement; this should consider the expectations that the employer will have of them, a reflection of the learners' existing skills and their targeted areas for development. Learners should make sure that they consider the SMART targets they have set for themselves related to various activities that reflect their personal and professional development needs.

### **Learning aim C – Carry out work experience to meet set objectives**

Learning aim C is about the actual work placement. Though there will be no formal teaching prior to the start of the placement, you should prepare learners for the ongoing training opportunities that may be open to them.

#### **Learning aim C1**

You should make sure that learners have knowledge of their roles and responsibilities within the workplace. Learners should understand that these extend beyond pure construction tasks to the wider range of activities that take place within the organisation. You should encourage learners to have as broad an experience as possible (including involvement with non-core activities) that may be office-based or involve attending meetings as an observer. This wider understanding of the different functions within the organisation should therefore allow the learner to reflect on their experience at a deeper level.

You should make sure that learners are aware of the importance of their reflective journal, as this can be used when considering future career pathways. Observation records and notes concerning tasks and activities carried out could be recorded in this document on a regular basis. Learners should be encouraged to note where links between classroom theory and workplace practice can be made, in relation to all their topics across the qualification as appropriate.

#### **Learning aim C2**

Prior to placements, you should also guide learners in the development of the intrapersonal skills that will be necessary for working in a construction workplace. They should be encouraged to develop their working relationships with colleagues while on their placements. You could direct learners towards online assessment tools that can be used to check their ability, personality type and judgement skills.

Learners will need to be proactive while on their placement in order to gain experience of processes and activities that they are not able to carry out themselves. This experience could



be in the form of work shadowing or observations and will need to be recorded appropriately in their journal. You should encourage learners to reflect on their experiences on a regular basis, as these could influence their developmental needs for the remainder of the placement.

### **Learning aim D – Reflect on the development of own personal and professional skills and practices**

Many of the activities associated with learning aim D will be carried out alongside those for learning aim C due to the cyclical nature of professional development. You will need to make sure that learners are aware that it is important to reflect on their development on an ongoing basis and provide them with the appropriate frameworks to achieve this.

#### **Learning aim D1**

You should encourage learners to reflect on their experiences at the earliest opportunity as this is most likely to result in them identifying further training or developmental needs that can be achieved while on placement. Learners should use the theories from Schon, Gibbs and Kolb for their reflective practice.

It is important that learners understand that their reflective journal is also a record of the training and opportunities that they have had while on placement.

#### **Learning aim D2**

You should highlight to learners the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) during their professional life, and that they should view all feedback as developmental. Learners should be made aware that feedback, which is constructive, may also identify areas that require further development in the future. Feedback can also highlight where skills need to be honed and enhanced and such comments can be used to generate an action plan to achieve this. Future job roles can also be considered so that a career pathway can be mapped, and future goals identified.

The evidence submitted by learners to address learning aims C and D is likely to consist of two aspects. Firstly, it should contain detailed and personalised witness statements or observation records that describe, in detail, the activities that the learner has carried out and how these enabled them to meet their targets. Alongside this, learners will need to produce a comprehensive reflective log that evaluates their performance in the workplace. This should consider three tasks in which they have participated while on placement, three activities that they have observed through work shadowing and also a personal development plan based on their reflective log that sets future targets and goals.





## Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit links to all the other units in the qualification.

### Resources

In addition to the resources listed below, publishers are likely to produce Pearson-endorsed textbooks that support this unit of the BTEC Internationals in Construction. Check the Pearson website at <http://qualifications.pearson.com/endorsed-resources> for more information as titles achieve endorsement.

### Textbooks

Cottrell S, *Skills for Success: Personal Development and Employability* (Third Edition), Palgrave Macmillan, 2015 ISBN 9781137426536 – this book covers a wide range of aspects, including personal development planning.

Moon J, *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning: Theory and Practice*, Routledge, 2004 ISBN 9780415335164 – this book covers a range of reflective practices, including Kolb experiential learning.

Schön D, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Basic Books, 2008 ISBN 9780786725366 – this book covers Schön reflective practice.

### Websites

Visit the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) website for career progression and opportunities for prospective architects.

Visit the Barclays Skills for Life website which allows learners to practice online assessment tests and includes advice for interview technique.

Visit the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) website for career progression and information about the construction sector.

Visit the Institute of Civil Engineers website for career information, professional standards and information about the civil engineering sector.

Go to the [infed.org](http://infed.org) website and search “Donald Schon (Schön): learning, reflection and change”, for more on Schön reflective practice.

Go to the MindTools website and search “Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle” for more guidance on how to use the Gibbs reflective cycle.

Visit the National Careers Service’s Skills website and go to the “Health Check” page for careers related resources and tools.

Visit the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS website) for useful information on career progression and surveying within construction.

Search [igl Installing Your Supply Pipe in Thames Waters' Area](#) for more information on water supply pipe installation

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