



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Enhancing employability through assessed work placements.

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition to employment, but additionally transition within HE in terms of progression to Honours study.

Abstract:

The third year of BA Rural Business Management includes a core module, *Industrial Management Placement*. This provides real-life work experience consistent with degree level study, and the placement is structured to aid development of a wide range of skills that enhance employability. It also develops an understanding of the issues facing businesses within the rural sector and complements the taught aspects of the course. Students often have a career route in mind by this stage in the programme and seek a placement within an appropriate rural sector. As well as enhancing employability, the skills that students develop while on placement better enable progression to the Honours year and, for some students, transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study.

Description:

The *Industrial Management Placement* module provides students with relevant work experience in the agribusiness or food sectors, and enables them to complete a project of commercial relevance and potential benefit to the company providing the placement. The placement is generally of 2 months duration and undertaken during July-September i.e. between years 3 and 4 of the BA/BA (Hons) Rural Business Management programme.

It is expected that the student will research the relevant industries and find appropriate work experience. The placement identified must allow the student to carry out a project related to the business activities of the company or organisation. In undertaking this project, the student will be required to:

1. Formulate a project brief (by defining problems or opportunities to be examined and setting project objectives).
2. Evaluate a business's situation within the industry which it operates (by collecting, organising and evaluating relevant information – in particular how the company or organisation operates in its relevant areas of activity, and identifying the exact nature of the problem or opportunity and relevant related issues).



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3. Formulate alternative strategies (by developing alternative approaches for tackling the problem or developing the opportunity).
4. Critically evaluate alternatives and recommend change (by the evaluation of alternatives using economic and financial information; appropriate forms of qualitative and quantitative techniques of analysis; sensitivity analysis; and resource and organisational implications of change).

The students complete a written report on their project, give a verbal presentation to their peers and the tutor, and attend an interview with the module tutors.

Examples of the types of placement undertaken by students in recent years include working as:

- Trainee grain merchant
- Grain sampler / quality control lab operative
- Trainee poultry unit manager
- SAC trainee agribusiness consultant
- Potato trials officer with a national potato company
- Harvest assistant
- SAC assistant field trials officer
- Lab assistant
- Administrator with Ringlink Labour Agency
- Equine worker
- Pea and Beans harvest quality operative
- Auction Mart Office trainee
- SAC Food and drink trainee consultant

There are many benefits to the students of undertaking these placements, including the development of interpersonal and communication skills and other graduate attributes that will enhance employability and aid transition to further study at Honours or postgraduate level. Many of the students continue to Honours year and complete dissertations on similar topics to those investigated whilst on placement. This work experience also provides a useful insight to career opportunities, and some graduates then gain employment with the company or organisation that provided the placement.

BA/BA (Hons) Rural Business Management students have the opportunity to enter for the Pinnacle Business Awards, and recently an SRUC student won second prize (£1000) for a report entitled 'Development of Egg Production Business' following a work placement with Farmlay Eggs.

Contact details:

George W. Robertson, Programme Leader (Rural Business Management)
SRUC, Ferguson Building, Craibstone Campus, Aberdeen, AB21 9YA
+44(0)1224 711043

George.Robertson@sruc.ac.uk

www.sruc.ac.uk