



Waterford Institute *of* Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

Work Placement

A Best Practice Guide for Students

**HIGHER DIPLOMA IN SCIENCE
IN COMPUTER SCIENCE
(NFQ - LEVEL 8)**

Work Placement Handbook 2017/2018

**School of Lifelong Learning & Education
Waterford Institute *of* Technology**

WELCOME ADDRESS



Dear Student,

The purpose of this student handbook is to provide you with background information about the work placement module on the Higher Diploma in Science in Computer Science. It gives you some guidance on the level of study and study skills required to succeed on the module. In addition, it offers guidance on the academic conventions regarding the assessment of the module.

I would like to thank you for choosing to study at WIT and I wish you every success in your studies in 2017/18. I hope that your learning experience will be rewarding, both professionally and personally.

If you need any assistance, please feel free to contact Martina Mullally, the Placement Coordinator (mmmullally@wit.ie) with any queries you may have throughout the year.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Helen Murphy
Head of School of Lifelong Learning & Education

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WORK PLACEMENT

WHAT IS WORK PLACEMENT?

Work Placement is a planned period of professional learning or experience, where the learning outcomes are part of a Higher Education programme or module. It is a three-way partnership between an employer, a student and a Higher Education Institution (HEI) where a student is given the opportunity to work and learn in a professional environment relevant to their studies in order to achieve set goals.

Work Placement aims to provide participants with opportunities to:

1. Apply knowledge, skills and competencies acquired on the academic front to assist in the analysis and creation of solutions to workplace problems;
2. Contextualise the knowledge gained in the programme in an area relevant to a selected area of interest;
3. Communicate effectively in an appropriate and professional manner and format;
4. Work as a member of a team and have developed appropriate communication and interpersonal skills;
5. Reflect on and analyse the learning experience resulting from the work placement.

WHAT DOES WORK PLACEMENT ENTAIL?

Students on the Higher Diploma in Science in Computer Science are required to undertake work placement over the period of between 4-6 months duration. Work placement will take place in Semester 3 from 15th January 2018 – 29th June 2018. By structuring work placement at the end of the programme enables students to link theory to practice and provide an opportunity for the student to continue working for the employer should there be such an opportunity.

Part of the assessment of work placement will involve the student working on a project. This will be presented for grading by the academic tuition team toward the end of the work experience period. The project itself will be supervised by a member of the academic tuition team at WIT. The WIT academic team will offer the partner companies an opportunity to provide feedback on the placement – but grading responsibilities will rest fully with the academic team. Successful projects will not of course be required to reach commercial grade – but may demonstrate useful prototypes (partially functional). For some partners/students, a research paper, new business process or innovative method may also be appropriate. During placement the student will receive a visit from the Work Placement Coordinator.

REASONS EMPLOYERS RECRUIT STUDENTS

- Organisational need;
- Develop talent and skills for the future;
- Desire to support a local Higher Education Institution (HEI);
- Help to up-skill the next generation.

BENEFITS OF WORK PLACEMENT TO STUDENTS

- Provides you with the opportunity to put course theory into practice;
- You learn new knowledge and skills, course-related and personal;
- Gives an insight into working life, develops self-awareness and supports you in making career decisions;
- Builds your CV, highlighting your new skills and achievements;
- Enhances your employability and job prospects after graduation;
- Creates a network of potential contacts for the future.

WORK PLACEMENT - BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

PRE-PLACEMENT

Prior to the placement, the student should be clear on the expected learning to be achieved as part of the placement process and the reporting and evidence requirement appropriate for that learning. Students should familiarise themselves with the assessment strategy in the assessment guidelines section.

Students should prepare for placement experience by making full use of the supports that WIT has to offer such as the development of a CV, how to complete a successful application, interview training, developing a social media profile and engaging with students who are currently on work placement or returning from placements.

Students will need to comply with WIT and the Employer agreements in the acceptance of job offers and in the majority of cases , WIT requires the student to accept the first job offer they receive and to refrain from pursuing on-going applications in order to manage the placements of the large number of students within computing across the institute. Students should become familiar with particular placement organisations, through performing internet searches, company literature, personal contacts and liaising with past students.

Students will need to ensure they pursue the following guidelines:

- Have a clear understanding of the Placement element of your course and accept its implications in terms of preparation and commitment;
- Attend all relevant information sessions organised by WIT;
- Write a great CV, highlighting your skills and achievements as well as membership of clubs and societies;
- Make full use of the supports available in your Careers / Placement Service i.e. updating your CV, interview practice and attend employer talks;
- Where you are active in seeking Placement beyond WIT, make sure to advise your Placement Coordinator i.e. by forwarding confirmation from the employer of their willingness to provide you with a placement opportunity and a job specification;
- Be proactive in identifying suitable opportunities as ultimately it is your responsibility to succeed in Placement.

DURING PLACEMENT

Students are expected to conform to all the conditions and rules that apply to employees in the appointed work place. It is the responsibility of the host organisation to clearly communicate these norms, responsibilities and expectations at the induction phase of the placement. Also, students should ensure that they are fully informed of their responsibilities in terms of confidentiality, intellectual property rights and data protection. Students should also be made aware of the organisations Health & Safety

guidelines and are responsible for adhering to them. See appendix C for the 'Work Placement Induction Checklist' which should be completed by the student in conjunction with the employer at the beginning of placement. This form will need to be returned to the Placement Coordinator in the initial stages of placement.

Furthermore, the student will take responsibility for managing their own learning experience and professional relationships and it is recommended that they carry out assessment activities and compile evidence of learning through implementing a diary or learning log to track their learning. It is anticipated that the learning that will take place as part of work placement will involve a project and presentation, which will be graded by the WIT academic team.

Many employers see the placement as a recruitment experience so students should ensure that, through their behaviour and professionalism, they maximise their own career opportunities and also develop a good relationship to ensure the potential for repeat placement opportunities for future cohorts of students.

Students should maintain appropriate contact with WIT including feedback on progress to the institution and to the employer. While on placement, students should develop a network of professional contacts to facilitate opportunities for further research or potential work opportunities.

The institute will appoint a WIT supervisor to the student for the duration of their placement. Furthermore, WIT recommends that students arrange for a work place mentor to be assigned to them for the duration of their placement.

The student must adhere to the following:

- Be aware of and comply with all WIT requirements, including assessment;
- Provide WIT with any requested information such as your work contact details and keep in regular contact as required;
- Be professional in the workplace and recognise that you are representing your course and WIT;
- Co-operate with arrangements for your Work Placement Co-ordinator to visit, where required;
- Ideally, and certainly where required for assessment, keep a learning log or journal (see appendix D) evidencing your learning and skills development;
- Most importantly, take every opportunity to make the most of your learning experience.

POST PLACEMENT

Following work placement students should take the opportunity to reflect on the learning achieved and seek to integrate this learning into their

project. Students should also use the opportunity to share their placement experience with peers and students who still have to undergo their placement. A feedback survey is completed with the student to identify their experience of the placement and to identify any suggestions for improvement. Also, this will be an opportunity for the student to reflect on the learning achieved. A further feedback survey is also completed with the employer to identify their experience of the placement and if they have any potential suggestions to improve course design or the placement process.

It is advisable that the student completes the following:

- Update your CV with your Placement learning experience, highlighting skills developed and your achievements;
- Regularly review the WIT Careers website for any graduate opportunities;
- Apply and integrate what you have learned into your academic studies;
- Share your experience with fellow classmates, next year's Placement students and WIT staff;
- Use the experience as a basis for focusing on your career plans;
- Keep in contact with your employer to explore the opportunity for a graduate job or to source a work reference.

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MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR WORK PLACEMENT

- Set yourself goals at the start;
- Be eager and enthusiastic to learn;
- Be positive and proactive;
- Ask questions, be curious;
- Build good relationships;
- Enjoy the experience;
- Request feedback throughout your placement;
- Keep a diary listing new skills, achievements and training.

WORK PLACEMENT VISITS

REVIEW OF WORK PLACEMENT

In order to review each student's progress and to identify if the learning outcomes are being achieved, each student will receive a placement visit from the Placement Co-ordinator. Furthermore, the purpose of the visit is to give guidance and support to the student and to answer any queries they may have.

The Placement Co-ordinator will also meet with the student's Work Place Mentor. The Placement Co-ordinator will notify the student of the date of visit and the onus is on the student to notify their Work Place Mentor of the scheduled visit. If the Work Place Mentor is unavailable on the day of the visit, students should request if the Mentor is willing to take a follow up call from the WIT Placement Co-ordinator. In addition, the WIT Supervisor may make additional meetings outside of the work place, should that be appropriate to discuss the progress of their project.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

INTRODUCTION

Students are supported throughout the work placement by their WIT Supervisor, Work Place Mentor and Placement Co-ordinator. In parallel with the work placement, students will complete their placement project, which will underpin the learning they have achieved on the course and also in the work place.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

Commitment

Students are expected to:

- Demonstrate the same level of commitment as their colleagues and always fulfilling their professional obligations;
- Follow the normal day of the organisation, arriving punctually and attending to any after hour duties as appropriate;

- Contact their Work Place Mentor or senior staff at the beginning of the day if illness or extenuating circumstances prevent attendance;
- Adhere to the dignity and respect of and other codes of practice of the organisation.

Confidentiality:

As a member of staff, it is likely that students will have access to intellectual property of the host organisation.

Students must:

- Treat this information with care sensitivity and confidentiality;
- Only discuss the information with colleagues within their department function;
- Ensure that you have sought your employer's approval with regard to using sensitive data prior to commencement of your project work. You will need to include a declaration signed by your employer as an indication of their approval;
- Discuss the information privately and not within hearing range of other company members not associated with the department.

Relationships

Good working relationships between the student, their Mentor, and Supervisor are essential for a successful work placement experience. Students must place themselves in the best position to develop their professional values, knowledge and work place skills to enhance their learning experience. Students will require a significant amount of advice, guidance and coaching, especially in the early stages of placement and we ask that students demonstrate:

- Genuine enthusiasm and interest in the organisation;
- Professionalism;
- Responsiveness to advice;
- An open-minded approach.

PROFESSIONAL SENSITIVITY

Throughout the work placement, students will be presented with a variety of ideas from the host organisation. Students will be asked to approach these ideas critically and will be encouraged to link theory to practice where possible.

It is imperative that students implement professional sensitivity when undertaking their project by ensuring all analyses and evaluations are based on evidence. Also, the Work Place Mentor may also need to see the student's project to ensure that they have gained their approval prior to using any sensitive data as part of their project.

ROLE OF THE WIT SUPERVISOR

The WIT Supervisor will take the lead in supporting, assessing and monitoring student's individual progress throughout the work placement. He/she will meet with the student during the work placement to ensure coherence and consistency in training and development and to ensure the learning outcomes of the module are being met.

The Role of the WIT Supervisor is:

- Provide academic support to the student on their project;
- Monitor and provide written feedback to student on their progress;
- Identify strengths and priorities for student's development;
- Provide face-to-face support throughout the duration of the placement;
- Liaise with the Work Placement Co-ordinator and senior staff as appropriate;
- Conduct summative assessment of the student's work-based project.

It is expected that most communication between the supervisor and students will take place via Moodle or Email. It is anticipated that Supervisors will also liaise with the Work Placement Co-ordinator in WIT and discuss the student's performance.

Supervisors in conjunction with the Course Leader will be responsible for grading the student's project work. They will be invited to attend the relevant examination boards held in WIT at the end of the placement if they are free to do so.

ROLE OF THE WORK PLACE MENTOR

Every student undertaking work placement is asked to nominate a Work Place Mentor for the duration of their work placement. This is something, which should be discussed with and agreed with the manager of the host organisation. The Work Place Mentor will play an important role in the work placement experience acting as a guide to the student.

The role of the Work Place Mentor is to act as a critical friend to the student by providing advice, constructive feedback, and encouragement throughout the placement. The Work Place Mentor is not involved in the formal assessment of the student however they will have the opportunity to meet with the Placement Co-ordinator to discuss the student's progress. The Work Place Mentor will typically be an experienced colleague who has agreed to meet the student on a regular basis and discuss their progress throughout the placement and address any learning issues.

The Role of the Work Place Mentor:

- Assign work duties to the student throughout the programme;
- Meet with the student on a regular basis to discuss their progress and provide constructive feedback;

- Provide guidance and advice on work tasks and preparation for the work- based project;
- Support the student to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to become a more employable graduate in the work place;
- Meet with the WIT Placement Co-ordinator on site to discuss the student progress and development.

ROLE OF THE WORK PLACEMENT CO-ORDINATOR

The Work Placement Co-ordinator is based in WIT and is responsible for managing the student's placement experience. The Work Placement Co-ordinator has a broader role in ensuring the quality assurance processes set out in this document and adhere to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and WIT quality assurance guidelines.

The role of the Work Placement Co-ordinator is to:

- Develop partnerships with companies and organisations on a regional and national level;
- Liaise with organisations to include advice and support on partnership aspects of the programme;
- Organise company site visit to assess student progress;
- Refer issues of student progress to the student supervisor and course leader and intervene as appropriate;
- Responsible for all quality assurance issues linked to the partnership.

The Work Placement Co-ordinator is responsible for establishing links with employers on a regional and national scale. The employer will submit a job specification (see appendix A) to the Work Placement Co-ordinator who will advertise the opportunity to the students. The Placement Co-ordinator will meet with each of the students to discuss the opportunities and to assist in identifying suitable opportunities for each student.

The student will submit an expression of interest and CV to the WIT Placement Co-ordinator. The Placement Co-ordinator will review CV's and forward relevant and suitable CV's to employers. The Placement Co-ordinator contacts students and arranges interviews. All offers are made via the Placement Co-ordinator.

The employer will offer the student a fixed term contract with workplace practices/policies. A tri-party learning agreement will be signed by the student, employer and WIT Supervisor (see appendix B) and submitted to the Placement Co-ordinator by the student. The Placement Co-ordinator will provide students with an overview of placement and the role of the student.

Students can also negotiate access to placement opportunities for themselves by contacting the management of likely partner organisations or submitting an application and CV to the organisation. The student will need to notify the Placement Co-ordinator and forward confirmation details of the potential interested company together with a job specification to the Placement Co-ordinator for their approval prior to accepting a position with the company.

ROLE OF THE EMPLOYER

WIT and students acknowledge the role and co-operation of employers and Work Place Mentors in facilitating the student work placement experience. Students who have the experience of working closely with experienced staff will benefit from enhanced learning opportunities and the importance of employers involvement in guiding and supporting students when on work placement.

The Role of the Employer:

- The placement provider is invited to engage with WIT over the course of the programme through participation at networking events, as guest speakers or through course development and enhancements;
- Meet with prospective students and where possible provide access to work placement opportunities;
- Provide written confirmation that the student will have access to the required work placement hours and provide verification at the end of the placement that the hours were completed;
- To support the student to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to become a highly skilled member of the work force;
- Facilitate the appointment of a Work Place Mentor to support the student in his/her placement and integration into the work place

setting. Facilitate visits by the Work Placement Co-ordinator to meet with Work Place Mentor;

- Where possible allow the nominated Work Place Mentor to attend networking events at WIT;
- Meet with the Work Place Co-ordinator when possible;
- Provide induction (see Appendix C) to the student and information on existing practices and policies of the work place;
- Notify the Work Placement Co-ordinator of any problems encountered immediately.

ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

MODULE DESCRIPTOR: ICT SKILLS PLACEMENT

Description of Module

Students will spend a period of not less than four months in a work experience position in an ICT and Software Development workplace. The placement allows the student to gain a structured introduction to the work practices, requirements and procedures of the industry.

Students will have the opportunity to consolidate, develop and enhance their learning experience through the practical application knowledge, skills and competencies acquired on the academic to the analysis and creation of solutions to workplace problems through a structured programme of work agreed during the studio phase. This will ensure students have a clear focus and their supervision has a specific context. As the project will be graded, students will have access to an academic project supervisor during the placement period.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module the student should be able to:

1. Apply knowledge, skills and competencies acquired on the academic to the analysis and creation of solutions to workplace problems;
2. Contextualise the knowledge gained in the programme in an area relevant to a selected area of interest;
3. Communicate effectively in an appropriate and professional manner and format;
4. Work as a member of a team and have developed appropriate communication and interpersonal skills;
5. Reflect on and analyse the learning experience resulting from the work placement.

Syllabus Content

Completion of agreed, supervised project.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

100% continuous assessment

Industry placement will conclude with final project submission, presentation and grading by the academic tuition team. The team will offer the partner companies and opportunity to provide feedback on the placement – but grading responsibilities will rest fully with the academic team. Successful projects will not of course be required to reach commercial grade – but may demonstrate useful prototypes (partially functional). For some partners/students, a research paper, new business process or innovative method may also be appropriate.

The programme is offered in close collaboration with partners from the ICT and Software Development employers. In semester 3 all students will then have the opportunity to apply these skills and gain invaluable experience through a six-month work placement. The work placement element is designed to maximise industry – relevance and employability of the graduates.

This is a student placement undertaken conventionally in the location of the industrial partner. Before commencing placement, students will already have devised a project proposal, under supervision from a member of the tuition team. It is envisaged that a substantial portion of their placement will involve the implementation of this project. Contact will be maintained with a project supervisor during this phase, which will conclude with a formal project presentation and grading event. The Programme Placement Co-ordinator will be responsible for managing the quality of the learning offered on placements.

Students will commence placement with clearly defined objectives and work programme. Central to this work programme will be bringing to fruition a project, defined and to a certain extent specified during the studio. This will ensure students have a clear focus and their supervision has a specific context.

APPENDICES

STUDENT PLACEMENT PACK/CHECKLIST

- Appendix A: Job Specification
- Appendix B: Learning Agreement
- Appendix C: Workplace Induction Checklist
- Appendix D: Workplace Learning Journal Guide

APPENDIX A: JOB SPECIFICATION

To be completed by the employer prior to commencement of placement

Outline Job Specification	
Company Name	
Job Title	Pay Rate if Paid
Work location	
Description of work to be undertaken by student	
Key skills and aptitudes required	
Key responsibilities	
Main learning opportunities	
Hours and Days of attendance weekly	
Level of Supervision	
Line Manager's title and name	Phone Email

APPENDIX B: LEARNING AGREEMENT

To be completed prior to commencement of placement and copy to be retained by each of the three signatories.

Employer Details		
Organisation Name		
Address		
Workplace Mentor or Supervisor Name		Title
Department		
Address		
Phone		Email

Student Details		
Course Title		Stage
Department Address		
Student Name		Student No.
Address while on placement		
Phone		Email

Academic Contact Details		
Waterford Institute of Technology		
Contact Name		Title
Department		
Address		
Phone		Email
Alternate contact name		Title
Phone		Email

Signatures	
Employer Representative	Date
Higher Education Institution Representative	Date
Student	Date

APPENDIX C: WORKPLACE INDUCTION CHECKLIST

To be completed by the student in cooperation with the employer at the beginning of placement

Induction Information		
Item	Completed	To be completed
Access and security arrangements		
Confidentiality, intellectual property and non-disclosure policies		
Codes of conduct, housekeeping, dress codes		
Computer Usage Policies		
Workplace hazards and safe working practices		
Working hours, refreshment facilities and holidays		
Arrangements for sick leave		
Payroll arrangements		
Organisational reporting structures and procedures		

APPENDIX D: WORKPLACE LEARNING JOURNAL

To be completed by the student with cooperation from the work place mentor.

Student name	
Organisation name	
Job Title	Start Date
	End Date
Work location	

Week	Task/Activity	Skills required	Supervisor Initials

Learning Event	What did you learn?	Evidence
Reflections on the learning event:		
Reflections on the learning event:		