

Institution:	University of Wolverhampton
Programmes:	MSc Environmental Science/Technology/Management
Module:	Work practice (and masters seminar)
Activity:	Case study involving environmental work experience and student-led seminar
Level:	4 (postgraduate study)
Learning hours	125

Work-related learning outcome(s)

Upon successful completion of these modules students will have:

- experienced methods in Environmental Science, Environmental Technology or Environmental Management;
- developed capabilities in selected work-related personal skills against recognised benchmarks;
- recorded and evidenced development of selected work-related skills.

The module offers the following general academic outcomes:

- applying advanced management methods to practical problems in the work place;
- gaining critical insight into the usefulness and limitations of environmental science in real-life practical applications.

Description of the teaching activity which achieves the learning outcome(s)

This module gives academic credit for a stated period of negotiated work experience. The programme must be in environmentally related work consistent with the student's award title and must be sufficiently demanding to attain useful postgraduate-level insights into the application of environmental science, technology or management in professional practice. The programme of work must be sufficiently structured to provide for auditable evaluation of outcomes appropriate to Level 4 study.

Before the proposed placement starts, the module leader must approve an outline programme. A detailed programme together with the means for monitoring and assessing the placement must be agreed early in the placement. The placement is normally assessed by the placement supervisor's report and by a final report produced by the student.

Rationale for the selection of the teaching activity

This optional work-placement module enables students to undertake employment relevant to their award, and to build on that employment by reflecting on what they learn in the workplace. It also allows for such learning to be recognised by the University. This employment may take the form of part-time, temporary or holiday work for full-time students and full-time employment for part-time students. To undertake the module the student must be in employment for a minimum of 125 hours during the study period. The employer is required to certify this employment.

Assessment – approach and detail

Work placements will differ, so it is difficult to produce firm guidance on the content of the report. However, students should structure their report so that it contains the following four sections:

- (1) A diary of activities covering their duties and responsibilities from the start of their placement, the context of their work, the reasons for their activities. They will also identify what they have learnt from each experience. (40%)
- (2) A more detailed summary of 2 or 3 selected duties, written in a technical style using references, diagrams, and data they have collected, and any other relevant supporting information. Students will evaluate the methods and techniques they have experienced and explain what they have learned from doing the work. They will demonstrate that they are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of techniques used and of any potential developments. (20%)
- (3) A set of conclusions reflecting on the learning they have achieved during the placement, such as what they did, how and why they did it, and what they learned from doing it. They will also make clear what generic or transferable skills they have acquired from the placement. (40%)
- (4) A short report from the work supervisor – no more than 2 sides of A4 (pass/fail)

Due to the variety of placement types there is no defined word limit to the report although it is not expected that the report should exceed 4000 words.

The Masters Seminar

Following the successful completion of the work placement each student is invited back the following year to give a professional seminar to the following year's cohort. The seminar takes place in the evening allowing both full- and part-time students to attend and is a reflective account of the value gained by the period of employment to the student's subsequent professional development. The purpose of the seminar is to:

- (a) give some knowledge of the environmental workplace to students considering the inclusion of a work placement in their own study programme;
- (b) inform both staff and students about technical and scientific issues in specialised subject areas;
- (c) help the speaker to reflect on the value of their workplace learning;
- (d) provide a focal point for the diverse masters group to meet outside of a formal lecture environment;
- (e) maintain links between the university and students who have gained environmentally related employment.

Each seminar lasts for about one hour. Current students also benefit from meeting and questioning previous graduates from the course. Often these sessions act as inspiration not only for students to undertake workplace learning themselves but also for developing research project ideas.

The seminars have provided a sustainable continuity between past graduates, their employers and the University and have forged productive links with a variety of local employers.

Contact details

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