



HOW TO DELIVER MEANINGFUL, IMPACTFUL, AND WORTHWHILE WORK PLACEMENTS

a white paper

The Institute of Hospitality Round Tables are designed to bring Institute members and the wider hospitality community together to discuss regional challenges and produce a white paper on a specific topic that presents a problem and provides a solution.

The Continuing Professional Development Round Tables are held nationally, outside London, allowing our members to participate in critical discussions.

WITH FUNDING FROM



A PLACE OF LEARNING

Student work placements give students essential hospitality experience to complement academic learning. The IoH looks at how they should work.

The importance of placements during a degree is unassailable; they give students hands-on know-how in a variety of disciplines, teach them how to interact with customers, improve their network in hospitality, and potentially lead to work when they graduate. In a difficult labour market, they are vital.

They are, however, a tripartite arrangement. They require a strong relationship between employers and universities so that businesses know how to give students a valuable experience, moving them between departments, assigning mentors or buddies, and giving and receiving constant feedback. Most importantly, they must see them as an employee, not as a bolt-on student; it is a relationship to be nurtured and maintained.

In addition, universities ideally have a structured programme that makes placements an integral part of a degree, whether for six months or a year, with training for students on what it means to be employed and what targets they should achieve. If employers can be included in that framework, better still.

However, to reduce the fees students pay, some universities have cut out their workplace options. Although understandable, it has a detrimental effect long term.



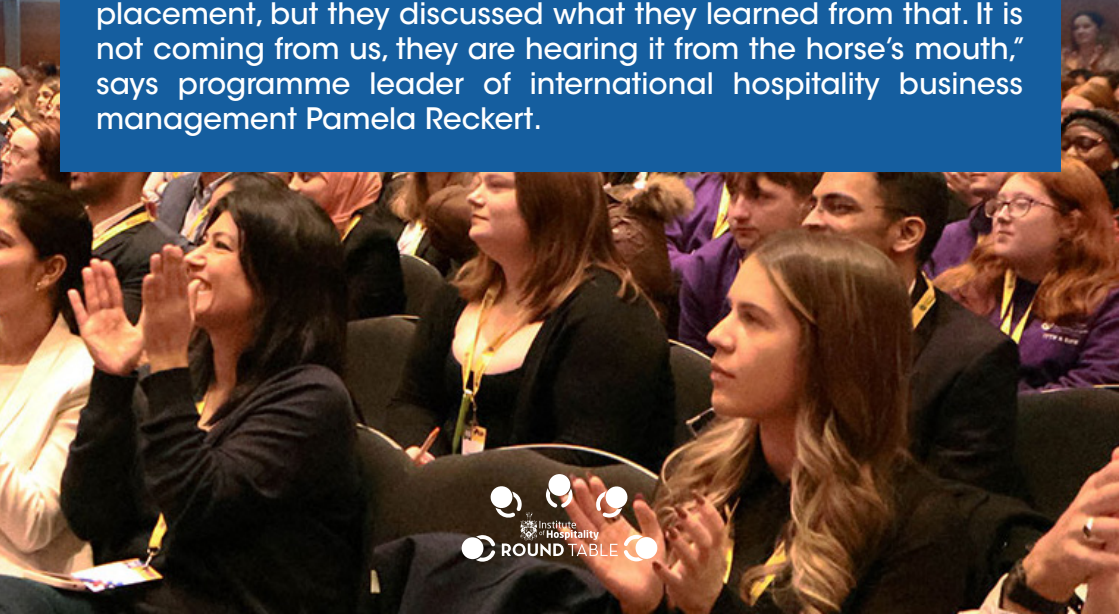
A PLACE OF LEARNING

It is also important that students understand that at first, they will be trained in the basics. "If they haven't got that experience, how would they know how to lead and motivate other team members?" says talent acquisition partner for De Vere Hotels Donna Shepherd. "They start by learning the fundamentals of each department; we are clear about that."

So, it is essential that first, students do not expect to sail into a leadership position, and secondly, that they do not see their role as part of their university project but as making a valuable contribution to the company that is employing them.

The process is ongoing for all parties and university placement teams should keep track of students' progress both via their employer and direct. Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) for example, goes to the workplace for this and asks students to write an article on what they have learned, which they then present to incoming students during induction week.

MMU alumni also come back to talk to students during induction week about their placement and how it benefitted them. "Students can relate to that - 'they were where I am now and look where they are'. Not all had a constructive time on their placement, but they discussed what they learned from that. It is not coming from us, they are hearing it from the horse's mouth," says programme leader of international hospitality business management Pamela Reckert.



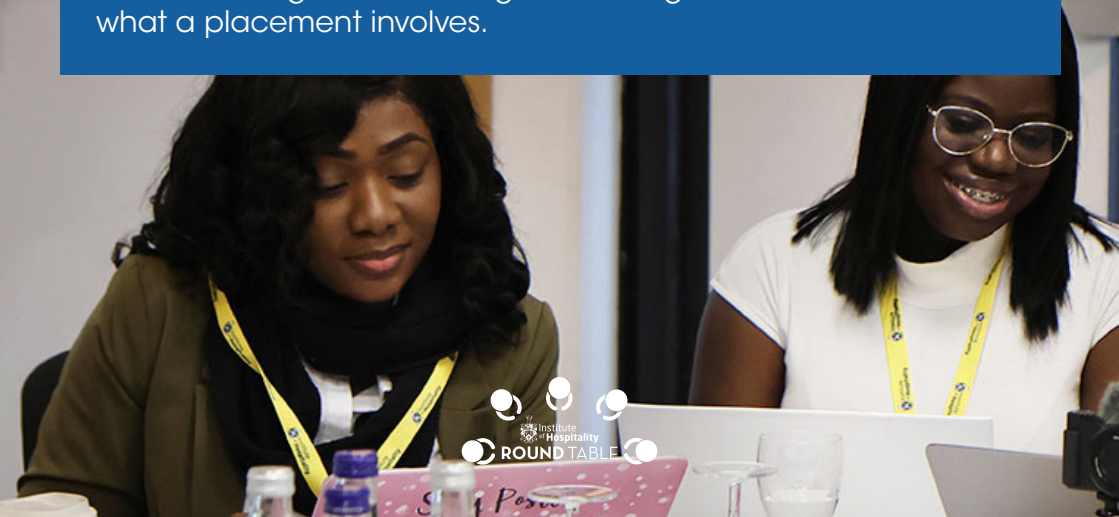
PLACE OF LEARNING

Apart from informing their postgraduate employment, the proficiency students gain on work placements could and should be put to good use to benefit those that come after, and other establishments are also following this trajectory. University of Wales Trinity St. David (UWTSD) is a case in point.

"Graduates regularly come in and share their experiences with students," says program director of international travel, tourism, events, festivals & leisure resort management Jacqui Jones. "Students see what grads are doing, how quickly they have moved into a management position and how they have returned to their placement employer. That's important and hearing it from students rather than from us has great impact."

Some of UNWTSD's employers are ex-students and the university has been working with them for decades; and when a departmental manager moves into another area of the company, they take the institution with them. Long-standing relationships pay dividends.

The converse also applies: "De Vere's successful student and graduate programmes are massively helped by strong relationships with universities; we want that and anything we can do to work face to face with students as well," says Donna Shepherd. To that end, De Vere and the University of Wolverhampton run an employability award ceremony, where Shepherd meets students at various stages of their degree, leading to conversations about what a placement involves.



PLACE OF LEARNING

Some universities regret the loss of opportunities to send students on placements in Europe but the £100 million Turing Scheme has replaced Erasmus, and where the latter was EU-focused, Turing is global. Eligible establishments include universities, further education colleges and other providers of vocational education and training.

And there are difficulties in hosting international students, particularly if they arrive with a three-year visa and decide they would like to stay a fourth year to do a work placement. To get around this, the University of Derby devised a development training plan, including placements while studying, starting with operational experience in the first year, and during the second and third years, students start shadowing, documenting procedures, etc. in HR, finance, and other areas a hotel might offer.

If businesses could deliver 20 hours' of experience over 10 to 12 weeks, giving guidance on critical thinking and commercial know-how, international students would benefit from essential empirical experience and organisations from a more diverse outlook.

Either way, when students are on work experience, they are relocating to unfamiliar territory and support and guidance from their employer should be a given.



PLACE OF LEARNING

As part of their networking activity, students would benefit from membership in the Institute of Hospitality, which comes free through the IoH Education Membership Scheme (EMS). This allows the hospitality, leisure and tourism departments of universities to sponsor individual student membership through one annual fee. Plus it allows for lecturers to join under the set fee.

Industry forums, resources, careers fairs, networking, webinars and Youth Council events are just some of the ways the Institute's EMS brings together students and educators. Bridging the gap between education and work is vital to ensure a smooth and effective transition for both sides. It's never too early to get involved with the Institute's EMS. It has proved to be an invaluable gateway into a professional career in the industry for many.



QUALITY CHECK

The main drawback with placements is less availability than quality, and research is thin on the ground. The IoH plans to partner with a university to poll students, employers and Institute members to get a clear idea of who is offering employment, who is benefitting from it, and how.

Accreditation of hospitality placements is also lacking. Leeds Beckett University has a well-structured placement programme with a dedicated team, a handbook for employers and students, and tutors checking up on students, who have professional roles in their placements. The university has good relationships with employers and runs recruitment events for employers and students, from which many full-time jobs transpire. The university is to accredit its placement year.

Accreditation is potentially a task for the Institute so that those providing excellent employment for students can be recognised for their efforts and high standards, and students can choose accredited programmes and emerge from them confident of what they have achieved. The accolade would define the minimum standard of work placement in hospitality, and include a certificate for safeguarding, risk assessment and employment benchmarks, all of which would be clarified in an information pack.

Accreditation would ratify relationships between academia and employers and boost the CVs of students to deliver an all-around aspirational accomplishment.

In short, placements are the physical incarnation of the excellent academic education universities and colleges are giving students; they not only provide a stimulating and compelling insight into the real hospitality world but in many cases lead to an individual's first job. They are a cultural and commercial imperative.

REFERENCES & FURTHER RESOURCES

- The Turing Scheme
- Institute of Hospitality Educational Membership Scheme (EMS)
- The industry's future skills needs White Paper – Why skills are so important to the future of the industry - eHotelier
- Hospitality Hiring Insider – Caterer.com
- Attitude - I'm In - The Institute of Hospitality's Official Podcast - Live from Passion4Hospitality Student Conference & Career Fair Panel Recording 2022





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