



An Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath  
City of Dublin Education and Training Board

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# Work Based Learning in CDET B: Developing Learner Soft Skills

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## Booklet 3

June 2016

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Erasmus+

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- CDET
- Further Education Support Service (FESS)
- Finglas Training Centre
- Coláiste Dhúlaigh College of Further Education
- Ballsbridge College of Further Education
- St Kevins College
- Cabra Community College

**Work Based Learning in CDET**B -Titles in series:

- Booklet 1: Employer Engagement
- Booklet 2: Roles and Responsibilities
- Booklet 3: Developing Learner Soft Skills
- Booklet 4: Completing the Work Experience Supervisors Report
- Booklet 5: Externships for Teachers and Trainers

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## **Work Based Learning in CDET B: Developing Learner Soft Skills**

### **Pilot Work Experience / Work Placement Model**

As part of the Erasmus+ Skills4Work project CDET B is piloting a Work Based Learning (WBL) Model of Continuing Professional Development with CDET B teachers, tutors and trainers from January 2016.

The key purpose of the model is to develop the knowledge, skills and experience of CDET B teachers, tutors and trainers in the field of work-based learning in order to enhance and support the application of programmes and the relevance of what they do in the classroom with their learners in preparation for the workplace.

One important element of this model is supporting learners to develop their knowledge, skills and experience in the field of work-based learning and to enhance and improve their *soft skills* with relevance to their vocational area of study.

### **Soft Skills and Work Experience / Work Placement**

Work experience / work placements provide learners with first hand experiential learning and is typically a period of time spent in an organisation with the objective of learning and developing from the experience.

The learner develops an understanding of workplace practices, and connects these practices with what they do in the classroom so that they are better prepared for current, emerging and future career opportunities and meeting employer / industry needs.

Work Experience / Work placements are important because they help learners to see the value that employers place on different types of skills sets. Employment skills are usually divided into two groups of skills; hard skills and soft skills.

Hard skills are the technical abilities that apply directly to a specific role e.g. using a computer programme, proficiency in a foreign language, data analysis etc. Employers want

to hire professionals who have technical skill sets, but they also place high importance on employing people who are a good fit for a team and the company.

Soft Skills help to build positive working interactions with others and can influence perceptions of each other. They include: good personal qualities and attributes; work ethic and habits; attitudes and social manners.

People with good soft skills can for example, engage in effective communication and listening skills, they have the ability to make decisions and solve problems, they provide good customer service, collaborate well in teams and they can plan, organize, and prioritize work.

Soft Skills are an important part of what learners develop during their course and while on work experience / work placement.

### **Purpose of Soft Skills**

Soft Skills help learners to get on with or adapt to work or personal life situations. At work soft skills can influence and impact on interactions with supervisors, co-workers, customers and clients.

Soft Skills can always be developed or improved and learners need to be aware of and reminded that they are responsible for how they behave, their actions, and attitudes etc. during work experience / work placements.

### **What Employers have to say about Soft Skills**

A small group of CDET B teachers and trainers participated in an externship programme with a company / organisation in early 2016 as part of the Skills4Work project.

During the externship each asked the following question:

*Does your company / organisation expect young people to possess soft skills and if so, what skills are they expected to have?*

The soft skills identified below give an insight into two companies and the wide ranging soft skills identified as important by them.

### **Soft Skills Case Study 1 – Financial Services**

Soft skills identifies by different departments:-

#### **Asset Administration:**

Time management, organisational skills, outgoing personality, proactivity, confident telephone manner, willingness to ask questions

#### **Client Management:**

Persistence, self-management, flexibility, innovativeness, initiative, assertiveness, excellent people skills

#### **Reporting:**

Outgoing team player, ability to work with others, willingness to ask a lot of questions, initiative, ability to give own opinion

#### **Investment:**

Strong work ethic, ability to work as part of a team, common sense

#### **Marketing:**

Communication skills critical, excellent document composition / editing skills

#### **Property:**

Ability to communicate clearly: correctly (spelling & grammar) and professionally, persuasive manner

### **Soft Skills Case Study 2 – Construction**

No room for messing and all students / employees have to follow instructions and take personal responsibility for themselves as a construction site is a very dangerous place.

It is also important that everyone that is permitted on site follows Health & Safety, including wearing the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Employees need to be keen to learn and ready to pick up brand new information, be able to communicate and share their knowledge with others around them and be a good team player.

They need to be interested in innovation.

## Supporting Soft Skill Development

Teachers, tutors and trainers can support learners to develop or improve their soft skills before, during and after work experience / work placements.

Below are some examples of activities to support each stage.

### Before Work Experience / Work Placement

Examples of activities:

- The teacher, tutor, trainer identifies with learners a wide range of soft skill types and explanations / descriptions prior to going out on work experience / work placement. See Appendix 1 – Work Experience / Work Placement Assessment Criteria. This is an extract from the CDET B booklet No 4 entitled ‘Work Based Learning in CDET B: Completing the Work Experience Supervisors’ Report. This resource provides the criteria that supervisors use when rating learners. The resource provide a useful summary of many of the essential soft skills that learners need
- The teacher, tutor, trainer invites learners to keep a soft skill journal where learners keep a note of soft skills and situations where they use soft skills both effectively and ineffectively. See Appendix 2 - Learner Soft Skills Journal
- The teacher, tutor, trainer invites learners to identify the soft skills they aspire to develop or improve while on work experience / work placement. See Appendix 3 - Learner Soft Skills Action Plan.

### During Work Experience / Placement

Examples of activities:

- The completed Learner Soft Skills Action Plan (Appendix 3) is shared with the work experience / work placement supervisor / mentor at the start of the work placement. Supervisors / mentors are invited to support learners with the development of some or all of the soft skills as appropriate but are also invited to provide feedback on progress
- During the work experience / work placement learners are invited to keep a log / diary to record their soft skill experiences etc. See Appendix 4 – Learner Soft Skills Reflective Log

This reflective log can be used as an aid to compliment any work experience log / diary that needs to be maintained as part of a course e.g. CDET B Programme Module Leading to QQI Level 5 Work Experience (5N1356).

### **After Work Experience / Placement**

Examples of activities:

- When learners return from their work experience / work placements they are invited to reflect on the overall experience and identify how their soft skills have improved / developed from the beginning of the placement through to completion of the placement. See Appendix 5 – Learner Soft Skills - Evaluation.

## Work Experience / Work Placement Assessment Criteria

### Appendix 1

The Criteria listed below cover many of the personal skills that learners should be able to demonstrate when on work experience / work placement.

They are taken from the SKILLS4Work /CDETБ resource (Booklet 4) entitled:

*Work Based Learning in CDETБ: Completing the Work Experience Supervisor's Report*

*The main headings for the CDETБ Programme Module Leading to QQI*

*Level 5 Work Experience (5N1356): A Resource to Support Employers when Assessing Learners in the Workplace.*

Workplace supervisors when completing their reports rate learners on each of the eight key criteria highlighted below. Each criterion has examples of practice listed below it to help to provide clarity on the possible meaning of each..

<b>1. Observation of good timekeeping</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrives on time for work placement</li> <li>• Resumes work promptly when returning from lunch and coffee breaks</li> <li>• Completes the required number of hours per working day, as agreed</li> <li>• Gets promptly down to task when arrive at the placement</li> <li>• Carries out tasks in time efficient manner</li> <li>• Notifies the site if you need to be absent</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2. Working independently while under general direction</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listens to and carefully follows directions regarding tasks to be completed</li> <li>• Seeks clarity appropriately when needed e.g. ask relevant questions</li> <li>• Adheres to instructions while completing tasks</li> <li>• Completes the tasks assigned</li> <li>• Proactive – seeks new/additional work once assigned tasks are completed</li> <li>• Seeks help from appropriate person/s when needed</li> <li>• Seeks feedback</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3. Meeting deadlines</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agrees manageable deadlines</li> <li>• Maintains the agreed upon work schedule</li> <li>• Seeks clarity on what needs to be achieved and by when</li> <li>• Seeks extensions on deadlines, if legitimately required</li> <li>• Stays on task</li> <li>• Puts in extra time/effort to complete task/s, if needed</li> <li>• Flexible approach to work tasks</li> <li>• Ability to multi-task</li> <li>• Ability to adapt to changing needs and demands</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>



4. Personal presentation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriately dressed for work e.g. uniform, protective clothing &amp; shoes, clean &amp; professional clothes, skirt, suit</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meets relevant hygiene standards e.g. cleanliness, tidy hair, clean hand and nails, fresh breath</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate posture for work, where relevant</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No chewing gum or eating during work tasks</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Adherence to health, safety and other relevant regulations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of relevant regulations</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of reporting requirements</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate reporting where needed</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dresses appropriately e.g. non-slip soles, hard-hat, low heels, etc.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe &amp; hygienic practices and routines e.g. handwashing</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe operating of machinery and equipment</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Demonstrate effective personal communication skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enthusiasm</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive attitude</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates initiative</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of roles</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polite, mannerly &amp; pleasant communication</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organises thoughts appropriately</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willing to relate to others differently</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to and respectful of others</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to deal with conflict</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to take personal responsibility</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Communication               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Speaks appropriately for different audiences e.g. formal, informal, appropriate topic</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Uses appropriate voice quality and tone</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Uses appropriate and relevant language</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clear and concise when speaking</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Takes initiative when speaking</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Effective participation in discussions in different situations e.g. meetings, break-times</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Learner Soft Skills – Journal

### Appendix 2

<b>Learners Name:</b>		<b>College, Centre Name:</b>	
<b>Name of Organisation / Company:</b>		<b>Workplace Supervisors Name:</b>	

*To be completed by the Learner:*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Identify a situation where you used a soft skill either effectively or ineffectively.</b>	<b>What led to this and what happened after?</b>

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<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b><i>Identify a situation where you used a soft skill either effectively or ineffectively.</i></b>	<b><i>What led to this and what happened after?</i></b>

Learner's signature:

Date:

Tutors signature:

Date:

<b>Learner Soft Skills - Action Plan</b>			
<i>Appendix 3</i>			
<b>Learners Name:</b>		<b>College, Centre Name:</b>	
<b>Name of Organisation / Company:</b>		<b>Workplace Supervisors Name:</b>	
<b>To be completed by the Learner</b>			
<b>Identify the soft skills you hope to improve / develop during your work experience / work placement</b>		<b>Give reasons for selecting each soft skill improvement / development</b>	
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Learner's signature:

Date:

Tutors signature:

Date:

Work place supervisor's signature:

Date:

**Learner Soft Skills - Reflective Log**  
*Appendix 4*

During the work experience / work placement learners are invited to keep a log / diary to record their soft skill experiences etc. This reflective log can be used as an aid to compliment any other work experience log / diary that needs to be maintained as part of a course or the CDET B Programme Module Leading to QQI Level 5 Work Experience (5N1356)

<b>Learners Name:</b>		<b>College, Centre Name:</b>	
<b>Name of Organisation / Company</b>		<b>Workplace Supervisors Name</b>	

**Date:**

<i>Soft Skill</i>	<i>Reflection</i>

**Date:**

<i>Soft Skill</i>	<i>Reflection</i>

Date:

<i>Soft Skill</i>	<i>Reflection</i>

Date:

<i>Soft Skill</i>	<i>Reflection</i>

Learner's signature:

Date:

Tutors signature:

Date:

Work place supervisor's signature:

Date:

**Learner Soft Skills - Evaluation****Appendix 5**

When learners return from their work experience / work placements they can reflect on the overall experience and identify how their soft skills have improved / developed from the beginning of the placement through to completion of the placement.

<b>Learners Name:</b>		<b>College, Centre Name:</b>	
<b>Name of Organisation / Company</b>		<b>Workplace Supervisors Name</b>	

**Describe how your soft skills have developed while on your work experience / work placement**

Learner's signature:

Date:

Tutors signature:

Date:

For learners working towards the CDET B Programme Module Leading to QQI Level 5 Work Experience (5N1356), the work experience / work placement supervisor can give the learner feedback on their soft skills on the Supervisors Report form.



## Notes