COLLECTING AND USING EMPLOYER FEEDBACK TO AID LEARNER PROGRESSION

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Collecting employer feedback

Rationale/Outline

A key partner for a learning provider is the employer, without whom learners would not be able to develop their skills in the workplace and make progress towards their main career goals. The quality of the learner's experience in the workplace, and how well they progress, will depend largely on the employer and how the learning provider works with them.

The learning provider must make sure the learner gets a high-quality experience, which can only happen by working closely with the employer and responding to their needs. Getting feedback from the employer will enhance this process and ensure continuous improvement of the learner experience. This resource aims to:

- Help improve learning providers' appreciation of the different reasons for collecting feedback, and how to go about collecting this.
- Ensure learning providers focus on how the learner's journey, and particularly their progress, is improved because of employer feedback.

Suggestions on how to use this resource

This resource is best used with all curriculum staff and those directly responsible for work placement arrangements. The summary of employer feedback highlights reasons for collecting feedback, how to go about this and what use is made of the feedback. Alongside this is a series of questions to consider when collecting feedback, and suggestions to how these questions are answered. There is also a self-assessment resource to highlight the current practice when collecting feedback and what can be done to improve implementation.

- As part of a CPD event or curriculum team meetings, task staff in small mixed groups to think about: i) why they should collect feedback; ii) how it can be done; iii) how the feedback can be used. Ask them to compare their suggestions to the overall summary.
- In groups, get staff to select one of the feedback methodologies and answer the set of corresponding questions. They should then share their thoughts. The facilitator can use the pre-prepared answers to draw out any missed suggestions.
- Staff can use the self-assessment in their curriculum groups to identify actions to be taken, either during the session or to take away with them.

Intended impact

Learning providers use employer feedback to enhance the learner experience. This improves their employability skills, ability to make good progress and to move closer to their chosen career goals.

Improve the partnership between learning provider and employers.

Develop the skills and understanding of staff to collect and utilise useful feedback for the benefit of the learner.

Collecting employer feedback

Why collect employer feedback?
- To gather feedback on learner progress during their work placement.
- In order to find out about the employer's experience of working with the learning provider.
- As it enhances the employer's role in developing the curriculum.
- To maintain or develop new working relationships.

	Gathering feedback on learner progress during their work placement.	Finding out about employer's experience of working with the learning provider.	Enhancing the employer's role in developing the curriculum.	Maintaining or developing new partnerships.
Why do this?	**Getting feedback on a learner's progress from the employer will enable the provider to:** Accurately check and record the progress of learners. Make better arrangements for appropriate learning opportunities with the employer. Make sure the learner knows how they are doing in terms of development of employability skills.	**For those employers offering work placements, the learning provider will better understand**: What they are doing well in their current partnerships. What they need to improve to ensure a continuing partnership. How to ensure learners make good progress in the development of their employability skills.	**By knowing what skills an employer values, and their future business plans, the learning provider can make sure that learners have**: Enough of the right learning opportunities as part of the curriculum so they develop work skills which are in demand. Enrichment opportunities to maximise development and progress towards their career goals.	**By finding out more about employers' values and their current approach towards offering work placements, learning providers will know**: How to approach future employers to build up more partnerships or maintain the current partnerships. What information would be useful to employers to encourage their commitment to partnerships.

Ways to do this?	3-way progress reviews on site. Structured telephone calls. Questionnaire.	Questionnaire (when a placement is offered). Structured phone call.	Questionnaire. Phone call from college contact.	By phone. On site visits. Email, written correspondence.
How would you use the feed-back?	Help learners to accurately self-assess progress, particularly for identified areas of development. Develop the information and advice available to learners for career progression.	Make changes to quality assurance and improvement processes. Inform employers what was said and what has been done.	Set up employer forums. Include employers at curriculum meetings. Employer visits (two-way).	Design information leaflet or handbook for employers. Offer bespoke training or services that will be mutually beneficial. Continue talks to agree a trial work placement.

TELEPHONE CALLS

What to consider:
- Who, from the learning provider, should make the calls?
- How do you get to the right person at the employer's organisation to talk to?
- What would be a good opening to the conversation?
- What feedback do you want to get from the employer?
- What useful information could be included in the conversation?
- How would a record of the conversation be kept?
- What happens next?
- How would learners influence who is contacted?

ON SITE VISIT

What to consider:
- Has an appointment been made for the visit?
- Is the time/date and location suitable for the employer? (e.g. will they have time to talk to you?)
- What is the structure and length of the visit? Has it been pre-agreed?
- What topics would be covered in a structured phone call to find out more about the experience of the employer as a partner with the learning provider?
- How would you record the feedback?
- How would you ensure the feedback can be used to focus on the learner's development and progress?

QUESTIONNAIRES

What to consider:
- How do you decide what questions to ask? Who will decide?
- What format will the questions take? (e.g. sliding scale, multiple choice, room for free writing)
- How long should the questionnaire take to complete?
- How will you prepare a questionnaire that is easy to analyse?
- What input will the learner have to the questionnaire?

TELEPHONE CALLS & ON SITE VISITS

How do you ensure effective work-based progress reviews to focus on the learner's development and progress?

The progress review in the workplace should gather feedback that will ultimately help the learner in as many ways as possible to get the best opportunities for their development. It's an opportunity to check development of employability skills, and for the learner to hear how the employer feels they are doing. This can be done by asking questions about:

- How learning opportunities have been used to develop skills.
- What the employer and the learner need to do to ensure further progress.
- How learning is being captured and recorded.
- How well targets have been met.
- How the work placement is impacting on future goals and any career advice.

How would you structure a constructive call or visit for general feedback about work placement opportunities?

- Be clear about what you want from the feedback.
- Think about a logical flow to the questions being asked.
- Devise short simple questions that are unambiguous.
- Allow for a wide range of responses that do not necessarily fit into a few restrictive options.
- Be prepared to re-phrase questions.

How would you record the feedback?

- A pre-prepared template would allow the caller to record feedback as it is given, and this could be done in electronic format or hand written.

Who would make these calls or visits?

- For progress reviews, will this be a curriculum-based tutor or specialist work placement co-ordinator?
- Whoever completes this task should receive full training to make sure they can get the most from the calls.

QUESTIONNAIRES

How do you decide what questions to ask? Who will decide?

– Very simply, it is important from the start to be clear about what you want to know, and to make sure the learner, as well as their progress and development, is at the centre of thinking.

– It is good practice to involve all those who will benefit from the feedback including learners and staff.

What format will the questions take?

– The main thing to remember is the format must sense to the recipient and be easy to follow.

– If specific detail is required there needs to be an option for free writing.

– You can put forward multiple choice options to answer if you know the main answers to expect.

How long should the questionnaire take to answer?

– Employers will be more likely to answer if the questionnaire is not too long or overly complicated.

– Give an indication to the employer as to how long it will take to complete.

How will you prepare a questionnaire that is easy to analyse?

– Always think about how it can be easily analysed before putting a questionnaire together. Consider how it can be compared with other points in time to show patterns and trends.

– A questionnaire with lots of free writing will provide qualitative feedback to analyse and build a full picture to draw out themes.

– Electronic based questionnaires can be analysed automatically.

– If a question uses a scale as a response tool, then the scale needs to be broad enough to capture a range of responses that can also show movement over time.

What input will the learner have to the questionnaire?

– The learner can be involved in designing a questionnaire by asking them what they would like to know about the employer's perspective.

– Task the learner to gather feedback from the employer at the end of their work experience, as part of their role, to record progress made.

How well are you collecting and using employer feedback?

Consider the following questions, either in terms of what is known about current practice or if the feedback you currently have can help you answer these questions.

- Do employers get involved with planning the learning, and the monitoring and assessment of learners' progress in the workplace?

- Do you know how many employers your learning provider works with? Who is responsible for collecting feedback from them?

- How do you collect employer feedback?

- Do you know if there are any shortages of types of employers who can offer learning experiences currently not available to some learners?

- Are there any employers you would like to work with but have not been able to engage?

- Has feedback from previously engaged employers informed your leafleting and communication with all employers?

- Has feedback informed the services offered to the business community?

- Are employers happy with how you work with them? Is it improving year on year?

- Do employers appreciate what progress learners make and gain from work experience?

- Do employers always do their best for learners and record evidence?

- Are the employers thoroughly checked regarding how they work with learners, including checking their progress?

- Are the partnerships with employers improving?

- Do employers contribute to the development of the curriculum?

- Are employers used sufficiently to develop enrichment activities?

In answering these questions, what has it told you about how well you collect and use employer feedback?

What key actions do you need to take to improve the use of employer feedback to enhance and record the learner's progress?