The Use of Competence in the Learning and Assessment of the BA Business Studies (BABS) Sandwich Year.

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Abstract

This study examines the use of competence-based learning and assessment in relation to undergraduate programmes in business studies in the UK. It reports work carried out in 1996-7 on a DfEE funded research programme examining the use of occupational standards and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in Management with Sandwich Year students on a BA Business Studies (BABS) Degree course. The main fieldwork was undertaken between February 1996 and January 1997.

The study examined:-

- the way undergraduate students learn from work experience;
- the relationship between competence and academic based programmes of learning and development;
- the relationship between the assessment and accreditation of competence and academic based awards; and,
- the way a BABS Sandwich Year is best organised to support learning.

Much has been written about “academic” learning, work based learning and the development of professionals (in this case initial professional education), however, less is understood about the relationship between the way the Sandwich Year student both uses her academic learning to improve task performance and task performance to improve academic understanding. The two way focus of this learning experience, together with the ‘novice’ status of the learner (in terms of task performance) makes it a distinct area of study.

Much of what has been written, particularly about work based learning, is theoretical exhortation, with relatively little practice being reported in the journals (Brennan & Little 1996). This study is an attempt to rectify, in part at least, that shortfall.
The study found that there were substantial benefits to be gained from using the learning and teaching methods commonly associated with competence based programmes to teach the "skills" and practical knowledge that are becoming increasingly important features of undergraduate programmes (CVCP: 1997). However, the methods of assessment and quality assurance currently associated with NVQs militate against their widespread use in business and management higher education. Interestingly, current experiments with new assessment methodologies such as desk based and panel assessment being carried out by NCVQ, MCI (MCI: 1997) and others may necessitate a review of this position in the near future.

The study indicated that a Sandwich Year scheme that:

- is positioned in the middle of the degree programme, often earlier than has traditionally been the case;
- prepares the student to both learn from experience and demonstrate that experience in assessment through a preparatory programme integrated into the first part of the degree;
- uses learning diaries and journals, and learning contracts as the basis of reflective learning in the placement;
- defines roles and procedures, and trains both University tutors and employer mentors in facilitating the student's learning from the work experience and assessing that learning;
- makes maximum use of existing employer assessments of performance (such as appraisal) in that assessment;
- assesses "skills" through a portfolio and "academic" learning through a project; and
- de-briefs the student through further reflection on experience being integrated into the final part of the degree that follows the Sandwich Year placement;

will provide a better learning experience for most BABS degree students than is currently the case.
Abstract.

The work based learning of the Sandwich Year was so valued by, and so important to the students that they felt it should be recognised by having input in determining their degree classification. Many would also like to see its distinct nature reflected in a skills based award such as the Liscentiateship of the CGLI, or possibly the Modern Apprenticeship in Management. The affect that such recognition would have in terms of the attractiveness of the student to prospective employers and initial job performance should be the subject of further study. Such an award would, however, match several recommendations of the Dearing Report (1997) concerning providing information on student performance to employers.

Analysis of the learning and teaching, and assessment processes of the Sandwich Year suggest that new computer based pedagogic techniques such as Computer Mediated Tutoring (CMT), using the Internet and groupware such as Lotus Notes or First Class, are likely to be a good match with needs of the Sandwich Year learner. Some suggestions are made as to how these might best be used to support the Sandwich Year.
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Chapter 1. Introduction.

This chapter outlines the background to the study. It examines in turn recent developments in the higher education sector, the history and nature of the H.Dip degree, the Sandwich Year, the setting for the research in the University of Greenwich Business School, the DfEE Business Schools Initiative that funded the research, and the author’s background and interests. This provides a context for the more detailed reporting of the study and discussion of findings that follows.

Recent Developments in Higher Education

This study was undertaken following a period of rapid and substantial change in the Higher Education Sector (February 1996 – January 1997). The process of change did not stop with the implementation of the EHEA Directives. Further developments, such as the formation of the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in October 1997 from the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVO) and the School Curriculum Authority (SCA), also emphasize the new Government’s continued commitment to Vocational Qualifications as a key feature of its higher level education and training strategy. Interestingly while NCVO had no brief concerning higher education, the QCA does. There are early indications that it will put some effort into working in this area, particularly with higher level skills (CCLI, 1997).
This chapter outlines the background to the study. It examines in turn recent developments in the higher education sector, the history and nature of the BABS degree, the Sandwich Year, the setting for the research is the University of Greenwich Business School, the DfEE Business Schools Initiative that funded the research, and the author's background and interests. This provides a context for the more detailed reporting of the study and discussion of findings that follows.

Recent Developments in Higher Education

This study was undertaken following a period of rapid and substantial change in the Higher Education Sector (February 1996 – January 1997). The process of change did not cease at the start of the research in 1996, indeed it continues apace today with the recent publication of the Dearing Report (1997) and the current debate concerning its implementation. Five of the main findings of the Dearing report, the;

- perceived importance of the Higher Education system to economic development;
- emphasis on employability of students as a “test” of University courses;
- importance of work experience placements;
- charging of tuition fees and the demise of the grant in favour of increased loans;
- increasing importance of information technology to the effective and efficient delivery of programmes;

are likely to have an effect on work in this area in the future. Another recent development, the formation of the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in October 1997 from the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) and the School Curriculum Authority (SCA), also emphasises the new Government’s continued commitment to Vocational Qualifications as a key feature of its higher level education and training strategy. Interestingly while NCVQ had no brief concerning higher education, the QCA does. There are early indications that it will put some effort into working in this area, particularly with higher level skills (CGLI: 1997).
Looking back to the changes that predated this study, Stephenson and Weill (1992:xiv-xv) in their review of the Royal Society for Arts Higher Education for Capability Initiative observed that;

There have been substantial changes in the administrative, financial and political contexts within which higher education operates ....... Among the more significant changes are:

- the formal linking of annual allocations of central Government funding to assessments of quality;
- the abolition of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) with the loss of its role of monitoring programme and institutional quality;
- the transformation of the polytechnics into self-validating institutions (the post 1992 Universities);
- the introduction of academic audit procedures, focused on quality assurance (and later teaching quality);
- the growing importance of student fees as a major source of institutional income, promoting the status of the student as consumer;
- the substantial expansion of student numbers without commensurate expansion of resources;
- the widening of access into higher education to include groups traditionally under-represented, on the basis of a greater variety of previous educational experience;
- greater interest in partnership between employers and higher education; and
- the introduction of the Department of Employment's Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative.
To this list we might add:

- a consequent reduction in staff student contact time and an increase in staff student ratios;
- modularisation and the consequent advent of credit accumulation and transfer schemes (CATS);
- a planned move to credit based funding systems for the sector as a whole and a consequent de facto move for many Universities to such systems for internal budgeting;
- the advent of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the consequent emphasis on research to the detriment of teaching in promotion and appraisal criteria;
- a continuing worsening in real terms of the economic position of staff in comparison with traditional comparator groups.

**Conclusion**

*The position of the higher education system at the time of the study (1996/7) was that of a system in the middle of substantial change, if not crisis. The way these changes have affected the two main themes of this study - competence based education and the Sandwich Year - is discussed in some detail in the following chapters. The relationship is complex and at times contradictory. For the most part they emphasise the growing importance of both, while at the same time threatening or denying the resources needed for development and implementation. The finding of the Dearing Report in relation to the role of information technology is interesting in that, if not offering a panacea, it does at least point to a way of moderating some of the worst effects of the shortfall in resources.*
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The BA Business Studies (BABS) Degree.

The BABS degree is the most popular single degree in UK Universities today. (HEIST 1997). The increases in BABS student numbers have exceeded the expansion of Higher Education generally over the last decade and look set for a healthy future. In terms of employment the first destination statistics show that students are more likely to find employment than graduates generally, and have a higher starting salary than the average graduate. The popularity of business studies is mirrored worldwide. For example in the USA 35% of all undergraduates are studying for some form of business degree.

The degree itself varies in terms of structure and content between Universities (DfEE 1997 b) although there is currently a DfEE sponsored project being carried out by the Association of Business Schools that is aimed at defining, and possibly imposing, a common curriculum for all programmes. There are, however, two features currently shared by all BABS degrees. First, a concern with business that may be defined either in terms of underpinning disciplines such as economics and the social sciences, or in more practical and obvious modules such as marketing and personnel management. Secondly, the Sandwich Year, a year in which the student is paid to work in a job intended to both allow her to apply her studies to ‘real’ work and, through that work in turn, help her gain greater understanding of her academic studies. Degrees with similar academic content and outcomes to the BABS that do not include the Sandwich Year are generally known as BAs in Business Administration (BABA).

The History of the BABS Degree

The Crick Report

The impetus for the development of the BABS course, as it exists today, is widely recognised to be a report undertaken by The National Advisory Council on Education for Industry and Commerce, known as The Crick Report, (see for example, McFarlane 1994). This report, published in 1964, entitled, ‘A Higher Award in Business Studies’, confirmed the need for exactly that. The report set out guidelines for the development of such an
award, correctly predicting the increase in demand for degree level business qualifications. The higher award was intended to fill the gap for employers wishing to recruit graduates with a more relevant education, and for undergraduates with the mental capacity to undertake a more challenging course than the HND in Business Studies, the only comparable course at the time of the report.

The report defined business studies as, ‘branches of study directed towards careers in business which are not of a technical kind’ (p2), encompassing various activities in business and commerce such as finance, buying and selling, the distribution of goods and so on. In short, the course was to be based on the ethos of sandwich education and be firmly grounded in the disciplines of economics, sociology and mathematics. Students were also to be introduced to the related subjects of law and accounting.

*From Core Disciplines to Functional Areas*

Silver and Brennan (1988) document a change in curriculum emphasis after the first ten years of the degree. They report a ‘search for relevance’ (p149) throughout the seventies, which led to attempts to include teaching in more functional areas such as marketing and human resource management. There was a general movement to make the course more practical, or in today’s terms more vocational.

Quoting from a 1981 CNAA working party report Silver and Brennan state,

> “although the core disciplines outlined in the CRICK report continue to form the academic base for business degrees, changes have taken place in their treatment and location within the curriculum. In very general terms, curricula have come to be organised on the basis of business rather than disciplinary themes and categories. Although most degrees continue to provide a disciplinary foundation in year one, there is an increasing tendency to introduce the study of functional areas of business at a relatively early stage of the course” (p149)
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Today’s Business Studies curricula tend to have vocationally focused aims, preparing graduates for a career in a business environment. The emphasis appears to be on ensuring graduates can perform in a business context rather than merely demonstrating an awareness of a body of academic knowledge concerning business.

The Influence of Government

The inception of the BABS degree roughly coincided with the formation of the Council for National Academic Awards in the mid 1960s. This provided a pressure for the standardisation of programmes in the then Polytechnic sector that largely disappeared with its demise and the creation of the New Universities in 1992. The speed with which BABS degrees have developed and consequently diverged has increased rapidly since that date, in part at least producing the concern that led to the formation of the Association of Business School’s working group on the BABS degree.

These trends, from the academic to the vocational, and from academic disciplines to functional areas of business are likely to continue. The importance placed by the Dearing Report (1997) on higher level skills and preparing students for work, further emphasises the movement of Universities towards industry. In the most authoritative review of work based learning conducted to date, Brennan and Little (1996) found that the Government’s exhortation for co-operation between industry and higher education had, in practice, meant Universities adopting the norms and values of industry with little movement in the opposite direction.

Professional Bodies

This trend to make BABS students “work ready” and thereby shorten the induction period to work has been further developed by the move by some Universities to equate the BABS degree to Initial Professional Education (IPE) (Eraut 1994). In order to increase the attractiveness of their degree to potential students many Universities have sought to gain professional exemptions for students on their programmes. This quest brought ever closer
links during the 1970s and 80s between the then Polytechnics and the, often newly developing, Professional Associations. This in turn led to developments in both curriculum and assessment designed to satisfy, or negotiated with, the Professional Bodies (ibid: Ch1). Thus, for example many degrees designed to secure maximum exemption from the accountancy bodies placed a heavy emphasis on traditional examinations in order to match the philosophy and practice of the relevant Professional Bodies. Content too has had to be changed because as Eraut (ibid: 12) has noted;

*IPE syllabi are notoriously overcrowded because they attempt to include all the knowledge required for a lifetime in the profession, almost regardless of students' ability to digest it and use it.*

The desire to include IPE content has in turn led to the displacement of some of the more traditional material and modules from degree curricula.

In recent years, however, professional bodies have been subject to two major influences that have produced changes in practice in many. The first of these has been the development of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) framework of competence based qualifications, and in particular the development over more recent years of the higher level (levels 4 and 5) NVQs that are relevant to the professions. In several cases professional bodies which had initially resisted the encroachment of NVQs into what they saw as their academic preserve, ultimately accepted the inevitable and co-operated with the development of occupational standards in their areas. Thus, for example the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD) played a major part in the Personnel Lead Body. Many of these bodies now base their professional qualification structure on competence based occupational standards and offer an optional NVQ route to professional status. This in turn has led to very different definitions of the ‘knowledge’ required for entry to the different stages of a profession. The IPD for example now includes a number of “To be able to” statements alongside its “To know that” statements that define the requirements of each level. This change in the definition of ‘knowledge’ has also resulted in a change of
thinking as far as assessment methods are concerned with alternatives to examination being perhaps more acceptable than they were in the past (Institute of Personnel and Development: 1996).

The second major influence has been the increasing emphasis on "lifelong learning" and the consequent need for professional bodies to develop firm policies in regard to Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Some professional bodies, for example the Law Society and many of the Engineering bodies, are further along the road of defining CPD requirements than others, requiring their members to undertake such activities and measuring the outcomes. The extent to which, if at all, this has encouraged a re-examination of the comprehensiveness of IPE has yet to be established, as this is a relatively recent occurrence. More importantly, perhaps, there is an increasing realisation that learning from experience is not something that happens naturally, but must be taught. In this respect the Sandwich student has an ideal opportunity to develop experiential learning skills during her Sandwich year which should stand her in good stead in relation to the CPD activity she will need to undertake for the rest of her professional career.

The influence of Professional Associations on the BABS degree is difficult to summarise. In the past it has been largely restrictive in regard to both curriculum and assessment. However, more recent developments, notably the competence based NVQ framework and the increased emphasis on CPD and lifelong learning have led to considerable changes in curriculum definition and assessment practice by Professional Associations. These are, in turn starting to be adopted by degrees as they seek to preserve their professional accreditation exemptions. These are generally a much more progressive influence.

Learning and Teaching and Assessment

Changes in curriculum definition in terms of learning outcomes and content have not, however, always been matched with a related change in learning and teaching methods (Eraut 1994). Traditional methods of lecture and tutorial still predominate, and indeed appear to have enjoyed a retrenchment brought about by reductions in the unit of funding
over recent years. If this is true of the BABS degree generally, it is particularly noticeable in regard to the BABS Sandwich Year, where all the innovations and developments in work based and experiential learning of recent years appear to have passed largely unnoticed (Lindsay 1997). The Sandwich Year is recognised by all concerned as a valuable experience which students generally learn from and become “better” graduates as a result. The process by which the student learns from that experience is, however, often given little thought, allocated few resources and apparently equated with osmosis - the almost unconscious absorption of knowledge from the placement (HEQC: 1994). Such learning as does take place is, in turn, only very rarely realistically measured or assessed. The inevitable conclusion is that the majority of the problems identified in a 1975 study of the BABS Sandwich Year (Daniel and Pugh: 1975) still persist today.

Modularisation and Academic Credit

The move to modularisation and the introduction of credit accumulation and transfer systems (CATS) in the early 1990s in the vast majority of institutions offering BABS degrees also meant considerable changes. Each academic year had to be split into a number of discrete modules or units - between 6 and 12 depending on whether a term or semester was favoured as the basic time-tabling unit, and the number of units that were to be taken at any one time (generally three or four, but sometimes six). The modules were placed on any one of three levels depending on their content and outcomes, and equating roughly to the year of the degree in which they occurred (Levels 1, 2 and 3) - although some schemes combined the last two years as one level (Level 2/3). Different schemes placed different emphasis on issues of accessibility of modules to as wide a range of students as possible through the absence of prerequisites, as against the needs for cohesion of and progression through a programme of study. The assessment generally had to take place either within the module, or directly after the module had finished.

This process was occurring at the same time, and was to an extent driven by, a rapid increase in student numbers. The end result for the taught part of the degrees was to make them generally more fragmented with a loss of much of the cohesion and progression of
the smaller, pre-modular programmes. The other noticeable effect was the emergence of specialist pathways in particular subject areas to allow students to pursue their interests in, for example, marketing, finance or personnel management. Some of these specialist pathways acquired their own degree titles, thus a student might obtain a BA in marketing by studying a core of BABS Units, notably in the early part of their degree, followed by a concentration on marketing modules in the latter part. The extent to which such specialist pathways within BABS programmes have been identified and “rebadged” varies enormously between Universities, but is a growing phenomena.

The treatment of the Sandwich Year within a CATS system has presented significant problems. Most degrees require the equivalent three years of full time study that is commonly counted as 120 credits each year at levels 1,2 and 3. However, the BABS degree requires four years of learning, producing a problem for a University's generic set of regulations as to how the Sandwich Year is to be “counted”. The alternatives appear to vary between not counting it at all, and giving it full equivalence with a formally taught year (and making the requirement for a BABS degree, unusually 480 credits) dependant to a large degree on the particular University’s policy on work based learning. The majority of Universities have decided not to count it, which in turn avoids the concomitant need for ‘rigorous’ assessment. It does, however, bring problems in relation to the internal allocation of funds within a University operating a credit based funding system. This usually means that a module that does not result in the award of credit does not attract funding. The present moves at a national level to introduce a National Credit Framework, and to make it the basis for institutional funding, are likely to focus the corporate minds of many institutions as to whether or not they can preserve their Sandwich Year’s present status in regard to credit, and consequently learning and teaching, and assessment.
Conclusion

The BABS degree has changed in many Universities over the years since its inception as a degree about business to become, in many cases, a degree that aims to prepare students for business. The Sandwich Year still exhibits many of the problems identified in studies 20 years ago, including lack of integration with the rest of the degree, lack of clarity of purpose, the need for improved support to students through the year and more realistic and rigorous assessment. Several Universities are changing their practice in this area and some interesting new approaches are being developed. If the purpose of the degree is to prepare students for business then it is important that they develop the necessary skills. The Sandwich Year should play a major part in the development of these skills, and while it is clear that students do currently learn and benefit from the Sandwich Year, this could be significantly improved through making changes to incorporate recent developments in experiential learning methodology. Recent changes in the practices of Professional Associations largely support such developments.

The Sandwich Year

There is a presumption by all concerned, Universities, employers and students, that students will learn from their experiences during the Sandwich Year. The exact nature of this learning has received some considerable attention in the literature, although vague terms dominate the discussion. (See for example, Ashworth and Saxton :1992, Smithers 1976, Committee on Research into Sandwich Education:1985). Students have variously been presumed to be able to integrate theory with practice, mature, become more self confident and gain experience of the world of work. For example.

"The main thing though is the improvement in the students when you get them back to university - its incredible. Because of the modular system, some classes contain both post placement and three year course students and the difference between the students is noticeable to say the least. The apathy of second year students can be very frustrating, and when those students return
after placement they have a totally different attitude.” (Placement Manager, University of Westminster, 1997)

"The students felt generally that their spell in professional training was a worthwhile experience and in particular that they had matured more quickly in the working environment than had been the case in their two previous years at college” (Smith, 1985: 74)

Smithers (1976) talks of the period in industry both increasing student motivation, and, fostering “greater understanding of other people and greater skills in human relations” (p21). However, there has been little attempt to more accurately define and rank these learning objectives. Jones (1987: 34) suggests a list of ten learning objectives of placements originally intended for students on a public administration course. Summarised and adapted slightly they can be interpreted as follows:

• to relate knowledge acquired during academic parts of the course to practical aspects;
• to gain general work experience;
• to perform a valuable job of work;
• to gain insight into their own abilities, aptitudes, attitudes and employment potential;
• to enter into valuable professional relationships;
• to develop professional attitudes;
• to gain knowledge of a specific organisation;
• to gain experience within a functional area;
• to relate and apply knowledge gained during the placement period to the subjects studied during the final year of the course;
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- make more informed career choices, based upon experiences, after graduation.

This appears to be an accepted summary of what students can expect to obtain through completion of the Sandwich Year (see for example, Ashworth and Saxton: 1990). In summary, the learning objectives of the placement are primarily concerned with gaining experience of the world of work and through this experience, developing marketable employment skills. The improvement of learning from the academic units taken both before, but particularly after the Sandwich Year is an added bonus. The aims and objectives of the University of Greenwich Sandwich Year, for example, are loosely concerned with providing the student with experience of a business environment, and ensuring the student has the opportunity to place academic work in the context of the real world.

The Sandwich Year is usually defined as a year (38 weeks of employment of which 28 must be continuous (CNAA: 1989)) in the middle of a degree programme during which the student is paid by a company or other organisation to work for them. The most usual pattern is for the student to spent her first two years in study at the University, take the third year as the Sandwich Year and return to the University for the final year. There are, however, many variants to this pattern. The University of Greenwich BABS Sandwich Year, for example, runs for a year from the middle of the second year and leaves the student with a year and a half to reflect on their Sandwich Year experience and complete their degree. The Manchester Metropolitan University Sandwich Year on the other hand is split into two six-month sessions. The debate here centres around the balance between the time needed by the University to prepare the student to be “useful” in employment which supports the 2-1-1 model, as against the time needed at the end of the degree for the student to “settle back” into University and reflect properly on and make the most of their learning, which supports the 1.5-1-1.5 model. The 2 x 6months model is more rare but its supporters argue that students learning suffers diminishing returns after six months in a placement, it provides a wider range of experience, and offers students the chance to learn from the first experience and apply that learning to the second. The argument against is
that the year long placement offers employer and student the opportunity to build trust and thereby undertake more responsible tasks and achieve deeper learning. This scheme is also considerably more difficult and costly to administer.

The level of specification of the learning that should result varies significantly between different discipline areas. In some cases, particularly where professional accreditation is involved eg engineering, there can be a high degree of specification of both the outcomes and the means by which they are to be achieved and assessed. In other cases however, including the bulk of the BABS Sandwich Years objectives generally tend to be less clear. Even here, however, the position is far from uniform. Those BABS degrees with a significant Personnel Management content that qualify their graduates for IPD membership, for example, have to use the Sandwich Year to satisfy specific requirements laid down by IPD.

University arrangements for funding the Sandwich Year vary enormously, the size of the provision often being the most important variable. The method of central government funding of the Sandwich Year has varied over the last 20 years. For a large number of years Universities were paid for all four years of the Sandwich Year student’s registration with the University at 0.9 of the rate for a ‘normal’ full time student. Thus, if the University received funding of 3.0x for a normal undergraduate it received 3.6x for a four year Sandwich student effectively funding the student during her Sandwich Year student at 0.6 of the ‘normal’ rate. All Universities operate an internal funding or budgetary mechanism which in turn allocates funds to departments, courses and hence students. These allocative mechanisms do not necessarily mirror the Central Government methodology, thus a Sandwich Year might receive more or less than the 0.6 nominally allocated to it. No reports could be found in the literature as to the way the different Universities have in the past, or currently, fund the Sandwich Year internally.
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The key administrative functions that need to be carried out in relation to Sandwich Year placements are implicitly defined by the British Association for Business Studies Industrial Placements (BABSIP) in their code of practice for Sandwich Year placements as;

- finding and securing sufficient placements for the requisite number of students;
- vetting the placements against learning, health and safety, equal opportunities and other criteria;
- acting as the main link between employer and University, and student and University;
- providing the placement employers with appropriately qualified candidates for interview each year;
- handling any disputes that might arise between employer and student;
- arranging University tutor visits to Sandwich Year students;
- ensuring students and, if applicable, employers complete the appropriate forms that certify the student has had appropriate experience. (BABSIP 1996)

The ‘administrative’ role also extends in some Universities to the preparation and support of students during their placement, although interestingly the BABSIP code of practice makes no mention of supporting “learning”.

Administrative arrangements surrounding the Sandwich Year, however, vary enormously with the number of students going on placement again being one of the key factors in determining the chosen structure. Some Universities have a separate administrative group run by staff on non-academic contracts, while others place academic staff in charge of the unit, providing them with administrative support as necessary. The employment of staff in this position, on non-academic contracts, has been a matter of concern for some years regarding status and career progression. This led in 1997 to BABSIP and EDEXCEL developing proposals for a qualification structure for Sandwich Course Placement Administrators and Tutors. Interestingly the proposed structure included an award that could be obtained by employer mentors. Administrative staff are sometimes, but rarely, involved in visiting students, as this is normally done by academic staff. These staff rarely receive any training in the techniques of facilitating and assessing work based learning as it
usually presumed that they are familiar with, and competent in, the techniques involved. As Brennan and Little (1996) point out, however, work based learning is very different from conventional University based learning, and the HEQC (1994) and other findings would suggest that University staff are in reality far from proficient at facilitating and assessing it.

The employer usually, but not always, agrees to help the student to learn during the year, with the student's University supervisor often also providing some coaching or mentoring. The level of employer involvement varies significantly between placements and Universities. The London Universities are in a particularly weak position regarding the imposition of any requirements on employers by virtue of the excess of demand over supply for placements. London is an attractive location for students throughout Britain and while many students from provincial Universities wish to come to London for their Sandwich Year, few London based students wish to go elsewhere. Other Universities, notably Robert Gordon in Aberdeen, can by virtue of their geographic isolation and consequent lack of competition for placements develop much closer relationships with employers and report a much higher general level of employer involvement. Even within these broad general bandings, however, there is much local variation brought about by differences in mentor skill, knowledge, time and willingness as well as the different requirements of different Sandwich Year schemes.

Despite these problems and variations the Sandwich Year is one of the longest standing and generally well regarded examples of work based learning in higher education. Davies (1990), for example, notes that a CNAA study of nearly 400 first degree courses that included supervised work experience (largely Sandwich Year placements) published in 1984 concluded that;

\[\text{there was a high level of perception that the benefits of SWE (i.e. supervised work experience) are unique, identifiable and not achievable by other means.}\]

\[\text{Course leaders, asked what they considered to be the academic value of}\]
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SWE, and given no prompting, produced a wide variety of positive responses: practical application of knowledge and the development of general work and operational skills; general personal development maturity, professional attitude and communicating ability; intellectual development - greater self awareness by the student, sharpened analytical and critical powers, and others; and specific skills development. (Davies 1984:25-26)

However, while the Sandwich Year, is generally thought to be a “good thing” both the learning and teaching and assessment methods used to support it have come in for considerable criticism. The HEQC in its 1994 review of its previous three years audit visits (mainly to pre 1992 Universities) found in relation to placement and curriculum issues that;

- In some cases, the audit teams observed that student's placements were not integrated with the overall objectives of the programme being studied. For example, it was found in some departments that the academic point of the exercise was unclear, and that the benefits of the placement did not seem to be recognised or valued in the assessment.

- For students studying on placements, whether abroad or in employment, the academic rationale of a placement, its supervision and monitoring are often inadequate. (pp xvi and 20)

The position of the BABS Sandwich Year is no different from the general position outlined above.

Nearly ten years ago the CNAA (Chatterton, 1988) undertook a survey of BABS Sandwich Year assessment practice. The report provides a useful basis for examining current assessment practice and the way in which this has developed since that time. This
is especially interesting as 48% of the respondents in 1988 expressed plans to change, and presumably improve, their Sandwich Year assessment procedures (ibid. Appendix 2b).

Edmunds and Lindsay's 1996 telephone survey of assessment practice found little had changed, and if anything practices had regressed. There are some difficulties in making comparisons mainly due to difference in categorisation between the two surveys. The main one is that the degrees covered by the CNAA survey were different, it classified BA Business Studies and European Business, Business Information Systems, Business Information Technology, Manufacturing and other similar degrees as Business Studies.

Figure 1 attempts to compare results of the 1996 survey of BABS programmes with those of the 1988 report. It is important to remember this approach is used only to make comparisons, nevertheless, the general comparisons remain useful in giving an indication of the ways in which practice had changed over the last eight years, including whether or not any new methods of assessing the Sandwich Year had emerged and whether others had declined in popularity.

The main developments were quite surprising. The overall picture created was that assessment had become less rigorous. Fewer institutions used reports from tutors, employers and students. Fewer used logbooks and a project. Reflective techniques overall had declined in comparison with the CNAA survey. The percentage decline was very small, and the comparison difficult because of the different categorisations. The surprise was, however, that given developments elsewhere in higher education (for example Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE), Higher Education for Capability (HEC), the Learning from Experience Trust (LET), Council for Industry and Education (CIHE) that the percentage had not significantly increased.
Figure 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>CNAA 1988 Survey %</th>
<th>1996 Survey % Use</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Tutor Report</td>
<td>72.34</td>
<td>25.58</td>
<td>-46.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work based Tutor Report</td>
<td>72.34</td>
<td>41.86</td>
<td>-30.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Report</td>
<td>59.57</td>
<td>25.58</td>
<td>-33.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logbook</td>
<td>55.32</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>-36.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>51.06</td>
<td>34.88</td>
<td>-16.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating Scales</td>
<td>17.02</td>
<td>Not Stand Alone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profiles</td>
<td>12.77</td>
<td>Similar to Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Objective Profile</td>
<td>12.77</td>
<td>Similar to learning Contract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIVAs</td>
<td>12.77</td>
<td>Not stand alone, refers to the project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>Similar to Organisational Appraisal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Techniques</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>see commentary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Exams</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19.15</td>
<td>include OA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio Development approach</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>+11.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Contract</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>+11.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The debate surrounding assessment of the Sandwich Year is one that raises heated debate in many institutions, with widely differing views as to best practice. The debate has generally focused around the following dichotomies:

- loose v rigorous assessment;
- pass/fail v percentage or grade;
Chapter 1. Introduction.

- based on "normal" work v specific task;
- should not v should count towards final degree classification:
- part of BABS v separate award.

Loose V Rigorous Assessment.

The debate here centres around the extent to which it is possible or desirable to assess the experiential learning that occurs on the Sandwich Placement when the placements themselves, and consequently the resultant learning is so diverse. Those in favour of loose assessment argue that it is the experience of the placement itself that is important rather than any particular learning, and that the diverse nature of the experience would make tight assessment unfair to those students in 'poor' placements. Those in favour of more rigorous assessment on the other hand argue that the learning is a key part of the BABS degree, and that in order to recognise this it must be assessed in a (sufficiently rigorous) way so that it can at least be recognised as earning 'credit' towards the degree, and possibly influence the classification of the degree.

The mixture of assessments currently used to assess the Sandwich Year is wide and varied. Employer appraisal is included in some form by 42% of institutions. This is usually on a fixed choice basis, completed to a given set of criteria. Tutor assessment is less frequent (26% of institutions), varying from tutors making general judgements about progress, to the tutor following the same format and judging to the same criteria as the manager. Student self appraisal is used on only one in four programmes (26%). Again, the approach to this varies. It may involve the student reflecting upon a "training objective profile", often at set times during the placement, to enable the chronological tracking of development. Alternatively, the student ticks boxes to the same format and criteria as the employer and visiting tutor, enabling the different parties to cross check impressions of progress.

The placement report is a common assessment tool, adopted in 26% of institutions. This report usually involves, as the name would suggest - a report on the placement - in terms
Chapter 1. Introduction.

of what the student has done i.e. tasks, achievements and development. In one institution, a series of placement reports are completed which attempt to relate the placement to topics covered at university. For example, a student may be required to identify the different management styles observed whilst on placement. Usually however, the report is more descriptive than analytical in nature.

Logbooks are used in 19% of institutions. The logbook is basically a diary, completed at various stages of the placement, sometimes as often as weekly. For example at Robert Gordon University students keep a learning log that is used to record learning, achievements and progression. This results in a critical review of the year in which students reflect upon those things that went “wrong” as well as those that went “right”. The University enjoys a high number of repeat placements which have allowed the tutors to develop a good understanding of what a student might reasonably be expected to get out of a particular placement.

Learning contracts negotiated between student and employer are used in only 12% of institutions. Again at Robert Gordon, the student undergoes three reviews based on a learning contract negotiated at the beginning of the placement. Before each meeting student and tutor prepare separate reviews, which includes allocating scores for certain categories. They then compare their conclusions and formulate a development plan for the next review. Those institutions that use learning contracts report an empowerment of the student through the use of the contract as a tool for negotiating particular experiences. The contract also encourages the student to take responsibility for their own learning. Laycock and Stephenson (1993) claim that contracts develop a sense of ownership of their studies amongst students, and encourages them to develop a set of goals. The actual process of formulating and negotiating the contract itself also develops the skills of negotiation, communication and reflection in the students.

Less common practices, adopted at one or two institutions include, academic essays, bi-monthly reports, student presentations, company brochures, and portfolios of work.
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There is nothing inherent in the above practices that makes them unsuitable for tight assessment. All could be used either singly or more likely in combination to provide an assessment of the Sandwich Year in a way that is rigorous enough to count towards the assessment of the degree as a whole.

**Pass/Fail v Percentage Or Grade:**

Arguments here are again connected with the variability of placements and the place of the Sandwich Year in the assessment regime of the degree as a whole. The shortage of placements means that in practice Universities have to accept many placements that are less than ideal. Even if the Universities' power in the placement market were to be increased there would be difficulties involved in assessing placements in advance. In the author's experience good placements have changed to bad in a year because of, amongst other causes, changes in managers and changes in the fortunes of an organisation.

The impossibility of creating a 'standard' set of placements leads many to feel that the fairest judgement to make, given the probable unfairness of the placement opportunities, is that of pass/fail. The fact that assessment is reduced to this simple judgement, often against somewhat loose and vague criteria, sometimes leads in turn to a general lack of rigour in assessment procedures.

The counter argument is that while the 'standard' placement may be an impossibility, it is possible to specify at least a minimal level of achievement, most likely in terms of skills or competences rather than knowledge and understanding e.g. the MCI Personal Competence Model. More ambitiously it may be possible to specify that which can be achieved in a particular placement by a particular student and express this in a learning contract. Both these formats enable a graded or percentage judgement of the students' learning to be made.

This debate has been complicated by the advent of NVQs and the competent/not yet competent judgement that is an essential part of this framework. It is interesting to note, however, that graded judgements are just as much a key part of the General National
Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) framework. Again there is nothing inherent in the use of a competence based approach or occupational standards that prohibits grading. A good example of this is the personnel units in the University of Greenwich undergraduate scheme which have incorporated the occupational standards required for entry to the IPD, and which are assessed with a percentage mark in the normal way.

**Based On “Normal” Work V Specific Task:**

The proponents of the “normal work” philosophy argue that informal assessment allows the student to focus on and consequently become better at their work, as they are free of diversions arising from time consuming academic work and self evaluation. Nottingham Trent University, for example, viewed the placement as concerned with experience, not assessment.

The counter arguments, strongly expressed by the students in the present study, are firstly that learning is impoverished, and secondly that the student has nothing to show for an important part of their degree. The impoverishment of learning occurs because although students learn naturally from experience, they are not necessarily all very good at it. Giving them the opportunity to undertake ‘special’ tasks such as evaluations, appraisals, projects and portfolios allows them to reflect on and better learn from their experience. The recognition of the Sandwich Year learning through some mark, grade or award was felt by the students on the Project to both encourage additional learning and recognise what, for the vast majority of them, had been a significant learning experience.

**Should Not V Should Count Towards Final Degree Classification**

This debate once again centres firstly on the lack of control over and consequent variability of the placement and secondly on the difficulties of measuring the learning. The argument against the Sandwich Year counting towards the degree classification is that it would be unfair as not all students have the same learning opportunity and that, anyway, it
is difficult to accurately measure what learning has gone on on an equitable basis as the learning can be so different for different students.

The counter argument again runs that such an important experience and significant piece of learning for the student should be recognised in the final classification. The feeling of the students in the study was most strongly that it should count towards the classification (although at the time it did not).

There are very few institutions where an assessment of the Sandwich Year does count towards the final degree classification. At one Institution, for example, a placement file, a major report and employer and tutor assessment provides approximately thirty percent of the final mark. The Institution acknowledged the debate surrounding the issue but viewed this approach as providing an added impetus for the student to both find a good placement and do well in it. They strongly held the view that this approach was a success as employers valued the encouragement it provided for students to work hard on placement, and this in turn facilitated the development of good industrial links.

**Part Of BABS V Separate Award**

The debate here is a particularly difficult one. A ‘normal’ University degree consists of 3 years of study equivalent in a credit system to 360 credits. The BABS degree, on the other hand, is 3 years or 360 credits plus the Sandwich Year. The only recognition of the additional learning from the Sandwich Year is in the title of the degree, BABS rather than BABA. This distinction might have been well understood by employers and others in times past. It is doubtful however, whether this understanding has remained so clear or widespread following the rapid expansion of HE over recent years and the consequent proliferation of qualifications.

The argument for a separate award is that there is significant additional learning in the Sandwich Year, over and above that of students on other degrees, that needs to be recognised as a separate qualification. There is then another, separate argument as to whether this award should be one validated by the University, e.g. a “Diploma in Industrial
Studies”, or an outside awarding body e.g. a NVQ or LCGI. It is the feeling of the author that a nationally recognised award validated by a reputable body other than the University, with an expertise and tradition in skills based qualifications, would add more value in the students and employers eyes than a second University award. However, no reported work could be found to substantiate this view.

Edmunds and Lindsay (1997) reported that several Universities offered an additional qualification. Coventry University and the University of Plymouth had adopted a Certificate of Industrial Training. The University of Central England in Birmingham introduced the LCGI in the academic year 1996/7, and Liverpool John Moores had offered the qualification since 1995/6. Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education had introduced NVQ in Management at Level 3 for their 1996/7 cohort.

Whilst there is the possibility of adding value through providing an additional qualification there are also concerns. These focus around increased workloads for students, university staff and employers, the suitability of the qualification and the impact of the qualification on the standing of the degree. For example, while by no means a widely held view, some staff were of the opinion that association with a NVQ might lower the reputation of the degree itself.

Conclusion

The present position is that the Sandwich Year is a valued work based learning provision of long standing whose status has been enhanced by recent developments such as the Dearing Report. It is, however, problematic in that the pedagogy and assessment of the Sandwich Year have undergone relatively little development since its inception in the 1960’s. Much work is needed to bring both the design and delivery of the Sandwich Year to the level required for all student learning experiences by the HEQC.
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The University of Greenwich Business School

History

The University of Greenwich is one of the oldest post 1992 Universities. It was previously Thames Polytechnic and before that Woolwich Polytechnic. The University expanded rapidly from a base of 3,500 students in the mid 1980's to its present (1997) student population of around 18,000 (approx 13,000 full-time). This was achieved both through the expansion of existing provision and merger with other smaller institutions including Teacher Training Colleges, "mixed economy" (HE and FE) Colleges, and Colleges of Health Care. One of the main expansions of the Business School was brought about in 1992 by the merger with part of the higher education section of a largely business based "mixed economy" college, South West London College.

The Business School was, at the time of the study, the smallest of four Faculties in the University having moved from the position of being one of the largest of 17 Schools five years previously. It then had some 2,000 full-time and 500 part time students. The vast bulk of the full time students are UK based undergraduates, whereas the part-time students are largely locally based post-graduates. While the School has expanded significantly over the last ten years it has not done so at anything approaching the rate of the Business Schools of some other post 1992 Universities. Several of these enrolled over half the total students of their University producing absolute numbers in excess of 5,000 full time undergraduates. The School employed approximately 70 permanent Academic Staff and 10 full time equivalents of part-time or fixed term contract staff. The undergraduate programmes were the main source of income for the School and formed the bulk of the work of the staff.

The School operated from two main sites in Woolwich in South East London and Roehampton in South West London. The undergraduate population was split roughly
evenly between the two sites, but the BABS degree was operated exclusively out of the Woolwich site. At the time of the research the BABS degree was enrolling approximately 120 students a year with a total cohort of around 320. The programme was seen as something of a “flagship” programme for the School, with the perception of staff being that it both recruited and produced some of the best undergraduates.

**Occupational Standards and Vocational Qualifications (VQs)**

The School has a long record of using the Management Standards to both develop managers and provide them with Vocational Qualifications. In 1989 it was successful in a bid for funding from the Learning from Experience Trust (LET) to run experimental NVQ Level 4 Management programmes with the Woolwich Building Society, Sainsburys, and the Milk Marketing Board. These pilots led to long running programmes with the Woolwich and in-house programmes with a number of public and private sector organisations.

The School was also amongst the first to integrate the Level 4 and 5 Management Charter Initiative (MCI) Standards into its Certificate in Management (CM) and Diploma in Management Studies (DMS), programmes, respectively, in 1992. Employers welcomed the principle of the linkage but the programme proved problematic to deliver and assess. In relation to the present research, the difficulties included differentiating between knowledge and understanding inputs for the different levels of NVQ, developing staff to work with a competence based approach, changes to the traditional academic curriculum suggested by comparison with the standards, and meeting student expectations on assessment. This was, however, a useful learning process resulting in alterations to the programme the following year from “integration”, to what is locally referred to as “linkage”. This approach involved large sections of common inputs between academic and NVQ programmes and the possibility of much common assessment. The CM is now used to support both the level 4 and 5 NVQs with the DMS running as a separate programme no longer related to the occupational standards. This experience is similar to that of many other Universities (Randall 1995), few however, have as much experience of operating such linked programmes.
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The School also operated a MCI Crediting Competence Centre for a number of years through a self-financing unit, Thames Training. The unit started life as an Accredited Training Centre, offering Management, Supervisory and Training the Trainer programmes. It also had considerable experience of delivering the Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) level 3 and 4 Standards in a variety of forms.

The School ran a pilot project with the 1995/6 Sandwich Students using Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) funding to examine the applicability of Level 3 Customer Care NVQs to the BABS Sandwich Year. The process of working towards a NVQ was generally felt to improve the educational experience of the students. However, the failure of the NVQ to adequately measure all the learning of the students and the perceived low status of the NVQ meant that, while this was a move in an interesting direction, more work was needed to find a lasting satisfactory solution.

The School has some considerable experience of successfully operating NVQ style programmes. It has developed a distinctive approach to NVQs (discussed in detail in Chapter 6) that has been received with some interest in a variety of quarters, and resulted in the author being invited to present papers at both the Management Verification Consortium (MVC) external verifier's conferences and the launch, in June 1997, of the "current" Management Standards.

The current Head of School has made a positive policy commitment to NVQs and competence based education and in 1998 the School will be seeking to extent its approvals with MVC to cover NVQs in Personnel and Development, Marketing, Small Firms and other areas. Generally these developments have been restricted to a small group of staff led by the author. The degree to which they have been welcomed by the staff of the School as a whole is at least questionable, the marked absence of staff qualified or attempting to qualify to the TDLB "D" standards being a stark indicator.
Summary

The setting for the research was a mid-size Business School in a large New University in South East London. The School was essentially undergraduate driven with very little research experience or income. It did, on the other hand, have a considerable record of the use of occupational standards and competence based programmes using elements of workplace based learning techniques at masters level. The study involved transferring and developing some of the expertise gained with part-time, employed students to full-time Sandwich Year students.

The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) Business Schools Initiative

The DfEE Business Schools Initiative was launched in Spring 1995 with the intention of encouraging University Business Schools to develop programmes using the Management Charter Initiative (MCI) Management Standards, and possibly leading to joint assessment with NVQs. While the DfEE provided the funding the Association of Business Schools (ABS) administered the bidding process and assessed the bids with MCI and DfEE assistance. Outline proposals were invited initially with selected bidders later being asked to submit detailed proposals. It was indicated that funding would be available in the region of £65,000, and the 12 -14 proposals would be likely to be funded.

The proposal from University of Greenwich for “The Accreditation of Competence for Sandwich Degree Students” was eventually one of thirteen that were funded. It was, however, the only proposal to reach the second stage for the use of occupational standards at undergraduate level. All the other programmes involved the development of Masters programmes mainly based on the then relatively new Senior Management Standards. The funding for the project was confirmed in September 1995 and the Project started immediately. The main work was carried out on the Sandwich Year students during their placement year that ran from February 1996 to January 1997.
A team from the Business School led, for the most part, by the author completed the Project. The work reported in this study was conducted solely by the author. In addition to the work reported here, however, the Project also included a survey of BABS Sandwich Year provision in Business Schools generally which the author carried out in partnership with a research assistant (Edmunds and Lindsay: 1997), and a "Mapping" of the MCI level 4 Standards against the University of Greenwich BABS degree (Carter: 1997).

The Project built upon the School's existing expertise and experience with competence based programmes, occupational standards and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), and previous developments relating to the assessment of the Sandwich Year Placement (see Chapter 6). The funding was the first major research funding to have been won by the School, and it was the first time the School had been involved with a Project of this level of importance.

The terms of the DfEE contract specified that a Steering Committee be formed that met every six months and that there be monthly reporting in writing to the DfEE that was dealt with by a consultant employed on their behalf. The Project resulted in a report (Edmunds, Carter and Lindsay: 1997) that was approved by the University of Greenwich and the Steering Committee and presented to the DfEE on 31st March 1997.

### Conclusion

The DfEE funding, and the School's and University's support of the Project, meant that generally the researcher encountered few access or resource problems in conducting the study. The position during the write up of this thesis largely after the funding had finished was somewhat different.
Chapter 1. Introduction.

The Author

The author is a Principal Lecturer in management development at the University of Greenwich. He has worked there for seven years during which time he has also served as MBA Course Director, Head of Postgraduate Studies and Head of School of Marketing and Management. The last of these positions on a fixed term contract terminated at the demise of the School following a University re-organisation. He was appointed as a 0.5 Research Fellow for the duration of the DfEE Project and give substantial relief from teaching and administrative duties to facilitate the completion of the Project.

He had previously completed a MA in Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) at the University of Greenwich before joining it as an employee. He is a qualified teacher, external verifier and a Fellow of the Institute of Personnel and Development.

His previous research has included the use of portfolios, work based learning and competence in postgraduate management development programmes, work which very much supported this study. He has also had a long professional interest in work based learning serving for a time as Employer Liaison Officer on the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative project at the University of Greenwich.

Summary

This study dealt with an important topic at a crucial time for higher education, in the lead up to the Dearing report (1997). That report was to conclude;

_The strongest single message which we received from employers was the value of work experience. This is particularly emphasised by small and medium sized enterprises by enterprises who need new employees to be able to operate effectively in the workplace from their first day. Further development of work experience opportunities requires action by both employers and institutions. (summary para 39)_: 
Chapter 1. Introduction.

The Association of Business Schools was reviewing the content and structure of the BABS degree, at least in part as a result of concerns over the conduct of the Sandwich Year. The HEQC and others had been critical of the Sandwich Year.

The DIIEE was concerned to implement work based learning into higher education as much of the work it had funded during the previous decade had failed to establish itself and grow in importance. They were also very interested in developing links and translations between occupational standards, the emerging NVQ framework and the traditional “academic” education provided by Universities. Alongside this was running a continuing concern, voiced by employers associations and the Association of Graduate Recruiters amongst others, that graduates were not leaving Universities with the skills necessary for them to perform at an appropriate level on employment.

On the positive side there were developments with both occupational standards and NVQs including the delayed appearance of the new MCI standards (July 1997), the Beaumontisation of occupational standards and developments in NVQ and competence based assessment. There was also a general acceptance that, although it could possibly be improved, the BABS Degree was generally a sound programme that offered a worthwhile educational experience to its graduates.

The significance of the study is perhaps best indicated by the fact that it was mentioned in the Minister for Higher Education in the Lords, Baroness Blackstone’s speech at the launch of the new MCI Standards;

_I was particularly pleased to learn the uses Business Schools have been making of the standards within or alongside their more traditional academic qualifications. A number of Business Schools have developed Masters Degrees based on MCI’s Senior Management Standards; some are offering dual certification enabling students to collect evidence towards an NVQ whilst working towards an academic qualification. Others are using the_
standards to structure and accredit the workplace component of sandwich courses. These are encouraging developments which point the way to how NVQs/SVQs in other professional areas ought to be able to interface with more academically based qualifications. I think they are providing a very good example of how that can work. (MCI 1997:10)
Chapter 2.
Knowledge, Skills, Capabilities and Competences in Business Higher Education.
Chapter 2. Knowledge, Skills, Capabilities and Competences in Business Higher Education.

This Chapter discusses what learning the student might achieve during the Sandwich Year. The definitions of knowledge, skill, capability and competence used in higher education, particularly Business higher education, are reviewed and examples of their practical application to programmes of study discussed. Conclusions are drawn as to the appropriateness of different definitions to the BABS Sandwich Year and the advantages and drawbacks of each outlined.

This Chapter outlines the “what” of might be learnt on the Sandwich Year. The following Chapter, Chapter 3, discusses “how” it might best be learnt.

Introduction

The nature of the knowledge taught, learnt and assessed in Universities has changed over the last decade. At an overt level the post 1992 Universities have promoted the use of ‘learning outcomes’ to a level of general acceptance. There have, however, also been more fundamental changes to the epistemology in some subject areas. In Business education, for example, (as was noted in Chapter 1) there has been a move from ‘academic’, discipline based knowledge to more ‘practical’ functional knowledge. This move has often taken place gradually over time and acquired acceptance, often without any conscious debate. The change offers both opportunities and threats, but needs to be consciously explored in order that the implications for students, pedagogy, assessment, staff (development), and resources are fully understood. There are a number of choices as to the way in which the “To know that”, the knowledge element, of a degree programme, and particularly a Sandwich Year can be defined. The relationship with the “To be able to” or skill element of the degree also needs careful consideration. The difficulty lies not only in making the right choice but also in making it work.

The last decade has also seen Universities put under considerable pressure from employers to improve the ‘skills’ levels of their graduates in all disciplines. This together with the increase in the participation rate of students in higher education has led to a realisation by
some authorities that "more means different" (Ball: 1990). The nature of degrees has had to change to include a greater proportion of skills and 'learning to learn' to equip students for employment in a world where the half-life of their subject knowledge is frequently as short as three to four years (HEQC: 1996). Many bodies, including for example NCVQ, EDEXCEL, the Association of Graduate Recruiters and the CBI, have offered definitions of the skills that graduates should have. However, less has been written about how these should be delivered and assessed in a cost-effective way in a University environment. The EHE initiative (1988-1996) funded more than 60 Higher Education Institutions to the level of £1,000,000 each over 5 years to develop 'enterprise skills' in their graduates, with the promise that each University would continue the development work from its own resources after the funding ceased. This proved to be a very effective way of promoting learning and teaching and assessment development in many Universities, and frequently started a debate concerning the balance and links between the academic and the skills elements of degree programmes (Hawkins and Winter: 1997).

The position has been further complicated by the advent of 'capability' and the ever-increasing importance of 'competence' as the NVQ framework grows in coverage and strength. The extent to which the skill element of a degree should be defined and assessed in these terms is still a matter of considerable debate in regard to many programmes. Much interesting work has also been carried out in the area of capability, promoted in many cases by the RSA initiative "Higher Education for Capability" (HEC). The notion of 'competence' and its delivery and assessment has, however, come in for a good deal of criticism in recent years particularly at the higher levels (Smithers: 1995) although much interesting developmental work has taken place (see for example the DfEE 'Competence and Assessment' series). There has been a difficulty, acknowledged by the main funder of much of the work, the DfEE, that too much has been 'lost' through lack of publication and poor dissemination, although some attempts are currently being made to rectify this situation. The debate as to the role of capability and competence in higher education is currently an extremely vibrant one, although there are significant signs of the growing acceptance of the inclusion of skills, capability and even competence in Universities.
Chapter 2. Knowledge, Skills, Capabilities and Competences in Business Higher Education.

(HEQC: 1996, Dearing: 1997). At the other end of the scale, however, the very acceptance of the degree as a preparation for employment is still a matter of debate and concern in some institutions.

The final pressure to change derives from the exponential growth in the everyday capability of "information technology" and its potential to change learning and teaching methods, the place in which learning takes place, the relationship and balance of power between student and lecturer, and consequently the role of the teacher. However, modernisation of delivery methods does not necessarily lead to modernisation of the curriculum, with innovative delivery often used to offer conservatively structured courses (Brennan and Little 1996:30). The nature of the changes currently occurring and about to take place are, however, likely to offer significant new opportunities and be so radical as to require an in depth examination of curriculum content.

This Chapter discusses the issues outlined above in some depth and makes some recommendations as to the way in which the learning of the BABS Sandwich Year might be most profitably defined.

The Epistemology of Business Education

Academic and Practical Knowledge

Knowledge in higher education is usually defined in terms of a systematic body of theories and concepts, which combine to make the body of an academic discipline. Degree study, consequently, is seen as being essentially about two things: (i) induction into a discipline leading to (ii) development of the mind. Thus;

students learn to conceptualise, structure, analyse and synthesise particular dimensions of human experience; they learn principles which they can develop through specialisation. (Henkel 1998:178)
This traditional conception of a degree has come under increasing threat in a number of areas.

The main change has been to conceive of the degree as equivalent to at least initial professional education (IPE), and in some cases as a quite deliberate preparation for work. Concern has moved from how the student thinks and what she “knows” to what she can do. Eraut (1994:9) points out that this move to regarding the degree as a qualification for work is a relatively recent one. A degree, for example, only became an essential entry qualification for Barristers in 1975, although 70% were graduates in 1875. Even today solicitors do not have to have a degree although 90% of the 1985 entry were so qualified. The de facto position is, however, very different. The first graduates of the huge early 1990s expansion of higher education are currently coming onto the job market, making a degree a virtually essential entry qualification for all professional, managerial and administrative jobs. Many employers require upper second class honours or better, and some recruit only from selected Universities perceived as producing higher quality graduates. Pressure from Government and employers over the last decade to adapt to the needs of industry has been unremitting and has affected the programmes taken by the majority of graduates in general, and in particular (as noted in Chapter 1) the vast majority of business studies graduates. Thus Henkel (ibid) concludes of business courses;

the principles and concepts are grounded in the activities of the business world, not in theories formulated in academe; and they are intended for practical mastery of contextualised skills.

Several authors have commented on this distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ knowledge or theory and practice. Scott and others distinguish between mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge production (Gibbons et al: 1994, Scott: 1995), and Eraut (1994) between ‘propositional’ and ‘process’ knowledge.
In Scott's typology Mode 1 knowledge is:
- linear, causal and cumulative;
- regarded as a closed system with scientists determining priorities and only scientist produced knowledge valued;
- rooted in disciplinary authority and therefore reductionist;
- publicly organised and funded;
- concerned primarily with theoretical rather than practical problems.  
  (Scott 1995:142-3)

Mode 2 knowledge on the other hand is;
- multi-variant, unsystematic and even anti-coherent;
- not necessarily sourced from within Universities but sometimes having its origins in the wider society;
- an open system where users are 'creative agents' not 'passive beneficiaries', and where users determine problems and the acceptability of solutions;
- multidisciplinary and problem focused;
- is produced in the 'wider arena' of everyday life rather than through protected funding.  (Scott 1995:142-5)

Scott was describing the process of knowledge production rather than knowledge transmission, however, his categorisation does appear to be relevant to business studies degrees and their Sandwich Years, particularly if the categories are regarded as the ends of a continuum rather than discrete types. In this case the early BABS degrees have much in common with Mode 1 knowledge, whereas current degrees have moved much further, but not totally, towards Mode 2. The Sandwich Year is the part of the BABS degree that has probably moved furthest towards Mode 2, and is also the part which has the need to move most towards accepting and valuing that Mode of knowledge if it is to fully realise its potential for learning. The knowledge likely to be learnt through the work based learning that is the core of the Sandwich Year matches very closely with Mode 2.
Eraut’s distinction between ‘propositional’ and ‘process’ knowledge is in many ways similar to that between Scott’s Mode 1 and Mode 2. Eraut’s concern, however, is with the way professionals work and think and draws critically on the work, amongst others, of Schon (1984). He distinguishes three forms of propositional knowledge;

- discipline based theories and concepts, derived from bodies of coherent, systematic knowledge;
- generalisations and practical principles in the applied field of professional action;
- particular propositions about particular cases, decisions and actions. (Eraut 1994:103)

Propositional knowledge is publicly available, codified, suitable for teaching at Universities and is the essence of many Professional Courses leading to entry by examination to professional bodies. As many Universities have sought exemption from professional examinations for their graduates it also became the core of many University degrees.

Process knowledge is “knowing how to conduct the various processes that contribute to professional action” (ibid: 107). There are five of these processes: acquiring information, skilled behaviour, deliberative processes (eg planning and decision making) giving information, and meta-processes for directing and controlling ones own behaviour. For Eraut as for Schon there is a significant difference between “knowing that” and “knowing how” with this gap being best made up through work based learning or in Schon’s case the “practicum”, the work based tutorial. Indeed, a period of successful work experience is an essential prerequisite for entry to membership of most professional bodies. As Barnett (1994) points out, however, while Universities have traditionally taught the “knowing that”, government and industry want the “knowing how”.

In addition to “academic” and “practical” knowledge there are also other types of knowledge acquired by individuals and utilised in their performance of day to day tasks. Schon (1983) argues for the widest possible interpretation of knowledge to include in addition personal knowledge and tacit knowledge. Personal knowledge in this context is the knowledge;
All people acquire ... through experiences the purposes of which have little overt connection with learning, through social interaction and trying to get things done. Such knowledge covers people and situations encountered, communications received and events and activities experienced through participation or observation. While some of this knowledge is sufficiently processed to be classified as prepositional knowledge or process knowledge, much will remain at the level of simple impressions. Nevertheless, impressions gained from experience contribute to professional action in ways that are still only partially understood. (Eraut 1994:104)

It is the "baggage" we take with us into every situation we work in.

The advocates of APEL, led notably by Norman Evans (1989) at the Learning from Experience Trust (LET), have strongly argued that the aim of accreditation must be to recognise the widest possible range of learning (knowledge). They see it as the duty of Universities as the main instruments of accreditation in higher education to accept this range of learning as valid for the purposes of higher education. Brennan and Little (1996:35) on the other hand argue that the extremes of practical knowledge have little to do with Universities as currently conceived, while agreeing that much work based learning is suitable for accreditation. The debate has moved hugely towards accepting the APEL point of view in recent years, but it remains interesting to see just how far it will go in the light of present concerns about graduateness (Harvey: 1996, CVCP: 1997) and standards (Harris: 1996).

This dichotomy of knowledge between the traditional theoretical, discipline based, University controlled knowledge and the practical, problem centred, multidisciplinary knowledge with significant amounts of practitioner origination and control, poses considerable dilemmas for Universities. These are perhaps most apparent in the way they define the learning of the Sandwich Year. If the potential of the Sandwich Year is to be fully realised then Universities will need to accept definitions of knowledge that they are
unfamiliar with, that are outside their ‘control’, and that threaten their authority. Several appear to currently resolve this dilemma by awarding a second qualification specifically accrediting the Sandwich Year (eg Liscentiateship of the CGLI), often under the authority of another awarding body more familiar with this type of knowledge. It is an interesting question for the coming years as to whether or not this will remain an acceptable solution to students who perceive the knowledge gained in the Sandwich Year to be at least as ‘valuable’ as that gained in other parts of the degree. This pressure is likely to mount as pressure from HEQC and elsewhere mounts for the systematisation and regularisation of both the learning and assessment of the Sandwich Year.

**Professional Knowledge**

The contrast between “academic” and “practical” knowledge is not, however, the only way in which the debate about knowledge has been conceptualised. Eraut, in particular, has noted that in the 1980’s the;

*Recruitment of professionals rather than academics into Business Schools produced struggles over the nature of knowledge* (Eraut 1994:10)

and whilst arguing that the norms of higher education tend to favour scientific knowledge rather than professional knowledge suggests that these new recruits had considerable influence in changing the nature of many degrees. He defines professional knowledge as “wise judgement under conditions of considerable uncertainty” (ibid:9), and takes issue with authors who seek to define it in terms of a “reliable, quasi scientific knowledge base” (ibid:17). In his view it is the unique way in which each professional selects from, and interprets, the publicly available knowledge base that constitutes that individuals personal, professional knowledge base. The extent to which this leads to “wise” judgements depends at least as much on the selection and interpretation by the individual, and its application in a particular circumstance as on the efficacy and validity of the knowledge base itself. Professional knowledge is a combination of academic and practical knowledge.
Although Eraut is largely critical of the work of Schon and Agyris, his writings have much in common with, and may even be seen as a development of, theirs. The key feature of the work of professional is that it involves more than the “off-the-job” learning of “knowing that”. All are agreed that work based learning in some form is essential to its acquisition, and that “knowing how” is a key element of the definition.

Eraut (ibid) offers yet another categorisation of knowledge. He argues that knowledge cannot be defined independently of the context in which it is learnt and applied. He suggests that knowledge should be defined in terms of the way it is learnt - writing, talking, doing - and the way it is validated - expertise, stakeholder support, personal judgement, and peers. In this typology the main differences between the BABS and its Sandwich Year would lie in the means of acquisition – writing and talking rather than doing. In future, however, we might also see changes in the validatory authority from “expertise” in the Universities to “expertise” in the workplace.

Skills

Skills in higher education have traditionally been presented as at the opposite end of a continuum from “academic” knowledge, in terms of both desirability and difficulty. A dictionary definition of skill, however, lists it as;

the familiar knowledge of any art or science united with readiness and dexterity in the practical application of it; (The New Gresham English Dictionary)

which would indicate skill to be a higher order ability than mere knowledge. Eraut, for example, defines skilled behaviour as,

a complex of actions that has become so routinised through practice and experience that it is performed almost automatically(1994:111).
In this view skill is the unthinking action of the experienced professional, built up over an extended period of time through the conscious application of knowledge and deliberation to a range of situations. The novice has to consciously go through processes that come naturally for the experienced. The implication of this view is that higher education should not regard all skill as something that falls outside its practice but as a valued goal. In many cases it will only be possible to learn the skill after the knowledge has been learned. This transfer or application of knowledge to situations and its development into skill is not a simple or easily accomplished process, indeed several authors have suggested that the process of transfer itself needs to be taught, and accorded a high priority in courses. (ibid). The traditional view of skill as artisan derived and ‘below’ higher education only hinders the development of appropriate programmes.

The move to increase the importance attached to skills in Higher Education can be traced back to the early 1980s with the CNAA Report on Transferable Skills (1984). It has subsequently been supported by a variety of influential organisations including Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI 1989), the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) and the Scottish Vocational Educational Council (SCOTVEC). Other organisations such as the Universities Council for Adult and Continuing Education (UCACE), the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE), the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative, Higher Education for Capability (HEC), the Pegasus Trust, the Learning from Experience Trust, the Council for Industry and Higher Education, the Shell Technology Enterprise Programme (STEP) and others have also played their part.

The growing acceptance of this view was expressed by the CVCP Employment Skills Group in their 1996 overview “Planning for the 21st Century”;

*Core skills are described as generic skills abilities and characteristics which are widely held to be important for effective working, training and learning.*
The latest work in this area is contained in the HEQC 1997 “Graduate Standards Programmes” which has published a provisional list of what might be termed the dimensions of “graduateness”. These are:

**A grounding in a discipline, disciplines or other coherent programme of study.** This would include such things as: an acquisition of the conceptual paradigms and frameworks relevant to the matter studied; an understanding of the major relevant theories; an ability to practice the appropriate methods and practical techniques/activities; and a suitable knowledge of the subject content.

**The possession of general academic skills and attributes appropriate to, and primarily derived from, the study of the subject matter above.** This would include such things as critical reasoning, conceptualisation, analysis, synthesis, creativity, evaluation, the identification of problems and their solution, and the handling of evidence.

**An awareness of the contexts and boundaries of the subject matter studied.** This would include such things as an appreciation of the limitations and provisional nature of the knowledge acquired, in understanding of, of its relationship to other fields, a recognition of its ethical implications and constraints, and an awareness of its social and environmental implications.

**The possession of self-motivated study skills and a readiness for lifelong learning.** This would include such things as the ability to study independently, to find information needed from relevant sources independently and to select appropriate ways of analysing and structuring it, persistence, to recognise one's own ignorance or incapacity, the possession of an 'enquiring mind' and the recognition of the need to learn throughout one's life (together with a willingness to do so).
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An understanding of, and ability to undertake one's own personal development. This would include such things as self-reflection, self-criticism, intellectual maturity and judgement, autonomy, an appreciation of the values pertinent to the matter studied, a readiness to understand and respond appropriately to change, a capacity to challenge received wisdom and the ability to instigate change as needed.

The possession of interpersonal skills and awareness. This would include such things as competent group working, sensitivity to the views of others, an awareness of how others interpret one's own behaviour, negotiation, relationship to clients (where appropriate), networking, micro-politics, the recognition or support of leadership, giving leadership and an appreciation of the influence of cultural differences on personal interactions.

Communication and presentation. This would include such things as being able to communicate competently in all the modes appropriate to the matter studied, being able to engage in debate in a professional manner, and being able to communicate one's own technical knowledge to relevant lay audiences.

Information technology. This would include such things as knowledge of, and ability to use, the information technology relevant to the matter studied, and the understanding and competent use of more general aspects of IT including information search and retrieval, communications, word-processing and the role of IT in the communication and presentation of what has been studied to a lay audience.

The possession of general employment-related skills. This would include such things as an understanding of the constraints under which employers operate,
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self-reliance, reflection on and learning from practical experience, and the development of practical skills such as a foreign language for business.

The possession of specific vocational skills (only likely to be relevant to degrees of specific relevance to vocational and/or professional practice). This would include the acquisition of the skills and attributes specific to the particular form of vocational and/or professional practice for which a degree programme was designed to prepare its graduates.

These dimensions are not all meant to be to be present or equally important in all degree programmes. However, it is interesting that the last seven of these ten characteristics are what might be termed “skills” in one form or another.

This increasing acceptance of skills in higher education has developed gradually over the last 15 years. There are, however, many skills models that have been developed often with common threads, but also with interesting differences. It is an impossible task to catalogue and discuss the numerous models, it is however, possible to point out several key initiatives which have been influential in developing and promoting the position of skills. Any such list must include at least;

- BTEC Common Skills;
- Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative;
- the Royal Society for Arts Higher Education for Capability Initiative;
- Association of Graduate Recruiters;
- NCVQ Key Skills;
- MCI Integrated Personal Competency Model.

**BTEC Common Skills**

BTEC launched its “Common Skills” in 1982. The idea underpinning the Common Skills, that there were a range of skills needed by students that could be developed and assessed in programmes across a range of discipline areas, was greeted with a mixture of derision
and doubt at the time (the author well remembers attending the "launch" meeting and the hostile questioning that followed the announcement and explanation). The initial set of Common Skills was;

- Managing and developing self;
- Working with and relating to others;
- Communicating;
- Managing tasks and solving problems;
- Applying numeracy;
- Applying technology;
- Applying design and creativity.

Common Skills were only exceptionally taught in their own right. They were generally developed and assessed through the mainstream programme, with students being assessed as to their level of skills performance through their subject based assessments. In order to ensure that all the skills were covered in the course of a programme each course had to be "mapped" against the skills, and the appropriate opportunities identified. Students then, generally, had the responsibility for claiming the requisite skills grades for a “portfolio” of their work. Practice over time in regard to grading varied between a pass/fail and distinction/merit/pass/fail scale of grading. The skills were an integral part of the award, and while separately assessed were never the subject of a separate award.

The approaches to the delivery and assessment of Common Skills developed over the years across both the Further and Higher Education sectors, the Universities becoming involved through their association with BTEC Higher National Diplomas and Certificates. It is probably safe to say that the practice and experience of skills delivery was usually more advanced in the Further Education sector for a variety of reasons, including familiarity and philosophical compatibility. However, the practice that was developed in Higher Education, and transferred in from Further Education via staff recruitment and franchise arrangements, did provide a useful basis for later expansion and development in this field.
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**Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative**

The Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative was launched in 1988. It funded each participant Higher Education Institution with up to £1 million over five years to introduce “Enterprise” skills to all its programmes. The funding model required the University to find matching funds over the five-year period with its contribution becoming an increasing proportion of the total funding until, at the end, the University would guarantee the continuing funding of the Initiative. This is generally acknowledged to be one of the DfEE’s more successful schemes in this area, with a substantial measure of continuing success. The scheme eventually covered more than 60 Higher Education Institutions (Hawkins and Winter: 1997).

The key to the Scheme’s success lay in the fact it allowed each Institution to define the “Enterprise” skills in their own way. Thus, despite being launched at the height of “Thatcherism” the Universities concerned all managed to adopt definitions of skills that were in general sympathy with their existing cultures. Thus, for example, the University of Greenwich listing of Enterprise Skills was;

- interpersonal skills – getting on with other people, sharing work tasks with them, communicating well in all sorts of organisations;
- skills of work organisation – best use of ones own time and resources, and those of others;
- problem structuring and solving.

(Chadwick 1996:vii)

**Association Of Graduate Recruiters.**

The Association of Graduate Recruiters became concerned at the relatively small proportion of undergraduates that had benefited from the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative (Skills and Enterprise Network 3/96) and so set up its own project “Skills for Graduates in the 21st Century” (Hawkins and Winter 1995). They saw the key changes in the graduate recruitment market as being,
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- Career transitions will become more frequent.
- Graduates will need to manage uncertainty and change.
- Knowledge will rapidly become obsolete.
- Supporting structures will disappear.
- Staff-student ratios in higher education will continue to increase.
- Graduates will need to be flexible and adaptable.
  (Skills and Enterprise Network 3/96)

This led to them placing a particular emphasis on the skills likely to be needed in the future when most traditional large organisation, stable career type graduate jobs had disappeared to be replaced with SME jobs or self employment.

The key skills that they viewed graduates as needing are based in a cluster around the notion of “self-reliance”;

*The self-reliant Graduate is aware of the changing world of work, takes responsibility for his or her own career and personal development and is able to manage the relationship with work and with learning throughout all stages of life.* (ibid)

This means that the Graduate must develop the skills of;

- *Self-awareness*
- *Self-promotion*
- *Exploring and creating opportunities*
- *Action planning*
- *Networking*
- *Matching and decision making*
- *Negotiation*
- *Political awareness*
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- Coping with uncertainty
- Development focus
- Transfer skills
- Self-confidence

( ibid )

Their view is that it is quite possible for the Universities to develop these skills in graduates, but that they should be encouraged to do so through the funding mechanism. They also feel that graduate recruiters need to look more closely at their future skills needs and feature these in their recruitment literature and practices.

**NCVQ Key Skills.**

NCVQ Higher level Key Skills were released in 1996. They consist of five levels of skill in each of five areas;
- application of number;
- communication;
- information technology;
- improving own learning and performance;
- working with others.

The increasing importance of skills in recent years is demonstrated by the fact that a number of awarding bodies, including for example EDEXCEL, RSA and the City and Guilds, have all launched separate awards based on these skills and are seeking to promote those at the higher levels to Universities amongst others. The current extent of the take up is uncertain as the development is relatively recent, however EDEXCEL point out in "Key Skills in Higher Education - Potential and Practice";

*Many existing degree programmes, either as a whole or in particular modules or units, are likely to contain actual or potential opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate these Key Skills as an integral part of*
receiving a higher education. Such opportunities may, however, be 'hidden' in the ways in which syllabuses are interpreted or 'lost' in the way assessable activities are briefed and conducted. Although Key Skills are sometimes thought of as the province of training, they do relate directly to the whole intellectual and vocational development of each student. For instance, as part of their undergraduate experience, most students are required to:

- assess information;
- reflect on and synthesise data;
- present coherent and convincing argument
- work collaboratively.

In addition, a great deal of the maturing process that characterises undergraduate education provides a basis for collecting evidence that can be used to recognise attainment of the national standards for Key Skills. Further, there are many relevant opportunities to demonstrate Key Skills outside the taught component (or prescribed learning experience) of an HE programme: they include work experience, job selection and assessment, voluntary work and structured leisure activity.

As an assessment framework, the national standards:

- allow adapted or additional learning activities to be designed to underpin the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and understanding; and
- provide opportunities to assess and certificate skills, knowledge and understanding that students already possess or develop as part of their programme of studies.

Thus - with no necessity for major modification or revalidation - many higher education programmes may be enhanced by the development and assessment of Key Skills through minor modifications to existing programmes, perhaps through the kinds of change that result from on-going monitoring and
evaluation. Although formal certification of Key Skills in accordance with 
the national standards may, in some circumstances, require changes to 
assessment infrastructures, such changes in themselves have the potential to 
add value and maximise the use of resources. Some universities are, for 
example, making such changes (allied to the introduction of Key Skills) to 
facilitate rapid expansion into opportunities offered by higher level NVQs 
and other advanced qualifications within the scope of the national framework 
and its standards.

The potential for the use of the higher level Key Skills is clearly there, however, there are 
many imponderables such as the way feeder institutions to Universities use the Key Skills; 
the likely (acceptable) levels of attainment of Universities’ students on the Key Skills; 
funding; employer acceptability and demand; and the relationship with “in-house” and 
other models of skills that Universities might choose to use. Factors other than the validity 
of the definitions of the skills are likely to prove crucial to their eventual level of adoption 
into University programmes.

**MCI Integrated Personal Competency Model.**

The Management Charter Initiative (MCI) Occupational Standards for Management at 
Levels 3, 4 and 5 of the NCVQ Framework were launched in their current form on 6th July 
1997. The Original Standards were first announced in 1991 and were subject to a lengthy 
and thorough revision. Both sets of Standards contained a Personal Competence model.

Personal Competencies are defined as;

*the skills and attitudes (necessary in order that managers) can apply*

... knowledge and understanding in different situations at work. The extent to 
which managers possess these personal competencies can be measured by 
observing their behaviour at work. Each competency is described by a series 
of behavioural indicators. These show how a manager who possesses this 
competency at this level would be expected to behave. Within each
competency, the behavioural indicators become progressively more demanding.

Managers can use the personal competencies to assess their own behaviour, and hence their skills and attitudes underpinning this behaviour. They can identify any areas where they need to develop their skills and attitudes, and plan activities to do so.

Management trainers and educators can use the personal competencies to describe the outcomes of development programmes. They can prepare activities to develop the skills and encourage the attitudes required. (MCI 1997)

Each NVQ requires different combinations and levels of Personal Competencies. However, in summary the current Personal Competence Model consists of:

- **Acting assertively** - Managers who act assertively show resilience and determination to succeed in the face of pressure and difficulties.

- **Acting strategically** - This competency is important for those managers carrying out a specialist role, managing energy, quality or projects, where their work can have an impact on the strategies of the organisation.

- **Behaving ethically** - Managers who behave ethically identify concerns and resolve complex dilemmas in an open, reasoned manner.

- **Building teams** - Managers who build effective teams encourage team effort, build cohesion and maintain motivation.

- **Communicating** - Managers who communicate effectively are able to share information, ideas and arguments with a variety of audiences.

- **Focusing on results** - Managers who focus on results are proactive and take responsibility for getting things done.
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- **Influencing others** - Managers who influence the behaviour of others plan their approaches and communicate clearly, using a variety of techniques.

- **Managing self** - Managers skilled in managing themselves show adaptability to the changing world, taking advantage of new ways of doing things.

- **Searching for information** - Managers with information search skills gather many different kinds of information by a variety of means.

- **Thinking and taking decisions** - Managers displaying thinking and decision-making skills analyse and make deductions from information in order to form judgements and take decisions.

The original Personal Competence model was the subject of some variability in use in that different Awarding Bodies and different Centres placed very different emphasis on its importance, with some awarding bodies effectively ignoring it as a requirement for achieving qualification. The new Model has only been available for a very short time and appears to have been well received. MCI’s current emphasis on the role of the Management Standards as the basis of development programmes, as against NVQs, might well mean an increasingly important role and profile for the current model.

**Conclusion**

Recent developments have meant that skills have been increasingly recognised as having a key role to play in the undergraduate curriculum. There is as yet, however, no agreement as to the definitions or models of skills that should be adopted for incorporation into degrees in general or the BABS degree in particular. In general the models have more similarities than differences, and in the current situation the focus is on the role of skills generally rather than the merits or drawbacks of any particular model. This is not least because the success or failure of any programme is far more dependent on the design of the particular scheme and the skill of the tutors involved than the choice of model. Recent developments have focused on approaches that integrate the
learning and teaching, and assessment of skills into undergraduate programmes, as
against teaching them in separate units. This has generally been to the benefit of
programmes overall. Currently there are ranges of issues connected with the learning
and teaching, assessment and accreditation of skills that are still in search of generally
accepted solutions. These include the extent to which separate accreditation through an
independent award is both practicable and desirable.

Capability.

In 1979, the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and
Commerce (RSA) issued the Education for Capability Manifesto.

EDUCATION FOR CAPABILITY

There is a serious imbalance in Britain today in the full process which is
described by the two words 'education' and 'training'. The idea of the,
educated person is that of a scholarly individual who has been neither
educated nor trained to exercise useful skills; who is able to understand but
not to act. Young people in secondary or higher education increasingly
specialise, and do so too often in ways which mean that they are taught to
practise only the skills of scholarship and science. They acquire knowledge
of particular subjects, but are not equipped to use knowledge in ways which
are relevant to the world outside the education system.

This imbalance is harmful to individuals, to industry and to society. A well-
balanced education should, of course, embrace analysis and the acquisition
of knowledge. But it must also include the exercise of creative skills, the
competence to undertake and complete tasks and the ability to cope with
everyday life; and also doing all these things in co-operation with others.
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There exists in its own right a culture which is concerned with doing, making and organising and the creative arts. This culture emphasises the day-to-day management of affairs, the formulation and solution of problems and the design, manufacture and marketing of goods and services.

Educators should spend more time preparing people in this way for a life outside the education system. The country would benefit significantly in economic terms from what is here described as Education for Capability. (Stephenson 1992:1-2)

Capability has been a difficult concept to define, but has generally been viewed as "skill" plus something extra. The nature of that "extra" has however not been easy to define. John Stephenson, the long time Director of HEC writing in 1992 offered the following definition;

Capability does not easily lend itself to detailed definition. It is easier to recognise it than to measure it with any precision. It is an integration of confidence in one's knowledge, skills, self-esteem and values. We have found widespread support for our resistance to the temptation to define capability in reductionist terms, seeking ever more separately measurable competences. Capability depends much more on our confidence that we can effectively use and develop our skills in complex and changing circumstances than on our mere possession of those skills.

The following definition of capability, however, has been useful in exploring the essence of capability with academics:

Capable people have confidence in their ability to (1) take effective and appropriate action, (2) explain what they are about, (3) live and work effectively with others and (4) continue to learn from their experiences, both
as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society.

Capability is a necessary part of specialist expertise, not separate from it. Capable people not only know about their specialisms, they also have the confidence to apply their knowledge and skills within varied and changing situations and to continue to develop their specialist knowledge and skills long after they have left formal education.

Capability is not just about skills and knowledge. Taking effective and appropriate action within unfamiliar and changing circumstances involves judgements, values, the self-confidence to take risks, and a commitment to learn from the experience. Involving students in the decisions which directly affect what they learn, and how they learn it, develops a sense of ownership and a high level of motivation.

The ability to deal with uncertainty and take responsibility for managing own affairs also appear to play a key role. This in turn leads to another key difference between skill and capability and indeed competence. Skill and competence definitions usually appear as a list of the requisite skills, thoroughly researched, that are needed by a particular group at a particular time. The proponents of capability argue that it is the very “fixedness” of these definitions that produce problems as the needs of groups become ever more prone to rapid change. Capability on the other hand through its emphasis on the independence of the learner uses the learner to define the relevant capabilities and their methods of achievement and assessment themselves. This they argue is the strength of the capability approach.
Competence, like capability, is a term that has proved difficult to define. The early American literature defined the scope of the term as;

'The individual's demonstrated capacity to perform, ie. the possession of knowledge, skills and personal characteristics needed to satisfy the special demands or requirements of a particular situation.' (Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) Thesaurus: 1984)

In print the words 'competence' 'competency' 'competences' and 'competencies' are often used without discrimination of meaning, usually as a synonym for "skill". There is usually a work element in many definitions;

[It is useful to make] a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic education, education for personal growth as over and against professional and skilled and content education, ie. education for competence. (Maslow, 1970)

which puts competence based programmes firmly in the "training for work" rather than "personal development" category in so far as these represent distinct classifications.

The NCVQ defines competence as 'the ability to perform activities within an occupation to the standards expected in employment.' However, the direct equation of competence with performance has long been questioned in the UK:

"...a manager could be successful in one set of circumstances but not in another. Company culture, relationships with superiors, the particular management style demanded by the stage of business development, and the special nature of individual industries could all determine the effectiveness of a manager. (Brown and McCarthy, 1989)"
and the USA where Stedman (1985) in a study of the Professions associated with medicine found that;

_The lack of good performance was... related to environmental and situational factors rather than to a lack of knowledge or skills_”.

Beaumont in his review of the 100 most popular NVQs in the United Kingdom (1996) defined competence as;

_"The ability, knowledge, understanding and skills in performing to the standards required in employment including solving problems and meeting changing demands”_.

It would appear therefor, that current British practice is to equate competence with performance.

Competence has been the basis of the British training system for nearly a decade. A system of qualifications has been developed by NCVQ based on occupational standards – statements of competence.

_National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and their equivalents in Scotland, Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), show that the people holding these certificates are competent at their jobs. They are available for virtually all occupations in the United Kingdom, including engineers, care workers, sales people, gardeners, legal executives, administrators and, of course, managers._

_They are based on nationally recognised occupational standards which clearly describe what is expected of people working in various occupations. They provide criteria to assess whether someone is performing competently,_
and they specify the underpinning knowledge, understanding and skills which are essential for competent performance.

NVQs and SVQs are awarded at one of five levels, reflecting the level of complexity, responsibility and autonomy of the job. Level 1 is the simplest and Level 5 is the most complex and demanding.

In order to obtain an NVQ or SVQ, you must provide evidence to prove that you consistently perform your job to these standards. You must also show that you have the knowledge, understanding and skills to be able to perform if a range of other contexts should the situation arise.

In what ways are these qualifications different?

Academic qualifications - GCSEs, A Levels, diplomas, degrees and the like - show that those holding these qualifications possess certain knowledge and have particular qualities, such as a capacity for rational thought, and the ability to seek out, remember and use information effectively. Academic students are required to study a defined body of knowledge over an agreed period of time and they are often assessed by means of examination, dissertation or continuous assessment of specified pieces of work.

Vocational qualifications, on the other hand, focus on your performance at work and how you use your skills and apply your knowledge and the resources available to achieve results. There are no examinations or dissertations. You simply have to provide evidence to convince your assessor that you consistently meet the performance criteria in the standards. (MCI 1997a:1)

The early emphasis in this system was heavily on NVQs. National Training Targets were specified in terms of the number of candidates that achieved qualification at each level,
TECs only financially supported programmes leading to qualification, and a succession of Competitiveness White Papers viewed their achievement as central to the economic well being of the country. Lately, however, particularly in the management area there have been moves by the DfEE to give increasing emphasis to the “distilled wisdom” contained in the occupational standards as the basis of training and development programmes that do not necessarily lead to NVQs.

In part, at least, this is due to the fact that the terms NVQ, competence and portfolio have acquired the status of a derogatory term with many staff in Business Schools over the last decade since the launch of the Management Standards and their accompanying NVQs. This is unfortunate as both were re-launched in the summer of 1997, and received Government endorsement both as part of an overall National Training Strategy and as a basis for management development. Given this level of Government support they are likely to be important features of the training system at all levels for some years to come. The emphasis on occupational standards rather than NVQs may, however, provide an acceptable compromise by which the Management Standards can have greater influence in the University sector.

The Management Charter Initiative (MCI) is the Lead Body for Management and as such the operating arm of the National Federation for Management Education and Development (NFMED). It was formed in the late 1980s in response to several highly critical studies of management education and development in the United Kingdom, notably the Handy (1988), Constable and McCormick (1987) and Training Agency (1989) reports. It produced a set of occupational standards for management using the factor analysis approach required by NCVQ. These were based on four “Work Roles”:

- managing operations;
- managing finance;
- managing people;
- managing information.
These were divided into a number of "Units" of competence (9 at level 4): were then further defined in terms of "Elements" of competence (26 at level 4): and ultimately defined as "Performance Criteria" (over 150 at level 4). There was an additional "Personal Competence Model" (see Chapter 2) model that while not directly assessed was supposed to permeate all the roles. The extent to which this was generally used is, however, questionable. These were the standards used for this study as the "current" standards did not become available until after the completion of the fieldwork.

The levels of all NVQs are defined as;

**Level 1** Competence in the performance of work activities which are in the main routine and predictable or provide a broad foundation, primarily as a basis for progression.

**Level 2** Competence in a broader and more demanding range of work activities involving greater individual responsibility and autonomy than at level 1.

**Level 3** Competence in skilled areas that involve performance of a broad range of work activities, including many that are complex and non-routine. In some areas, supervisory competence may be a requirement at this level.

**Level 4** Competence in a broad range of complex, technical or professional work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts and with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Responsibility for the work of others and the allocation of resources is often present.

**Level 5** Competence which involves the application of a significant range of fundamental principles and complex techniques across a wide range of contexts. Very substantial personal autonomy and often significant responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of substantial
Chapter 2. Knowledge, Skills, Capabilities and Competences in Business Higher Education.

resources feature strongly, as do personal accountabilities for the analysis and diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation.

The Management Standards, unsurprisingly, are only formulated for levels 3-5. These represent the highest levels of the NCVQ Framework. MCI has lobbied NCVQ informally for the creation of levels higher than level 5, however, NCVQ currently remains adamant that level 5 will remain the highest level in the framework. This produced a problem for MCI as it had no separate level for its Senior Management (M3) Standards. In the early years of the NVQ Framework MCI was the only Lead Body operating at Levels 4 and 5 and even today has far more registrations and far more experience of standards at this level than other Lead Bodies.

The “current” MCI standards are generally held to represent a significant improvement on the old in terms of both definition and layout. The core structure of “original” standards has been kept in that the same four work roles (albeit with one renamed) are still at the centre of awards at all three levels. However, the competences have been redefined to take account of changes in practice, notably in equal opportunities and health and safety. Options have been included to cover areas such as energy and quality management, and a much-improved Personal Competence Model included. There is little doubt that, had these been available at the time the study was carried out they would have been of considerable assistance, not least because they would have been much more easily understood by the students.

Up to twenty Awarding Bodies have been authorised to offer the Management NVQs. This in turn has led to a diversity of practice that has caused some confusion over the exact nature of the Awards, and the quality assurance procedures that surround them. The quality assurance of NVQs is governed by the “Common Accord” (QCA: 1997) and the “D” Standards. The Common Accord is an agreement covering all the Awarding Bodies covering issues concerning assessment and quality assurance. The “D” Standards define roles and levels of competence for those involved in advising, assessing and internally and externally verifying NVQs. Although these specifications are laid out in considerable detail
there is still a large area of procedural discretion open to Awarding Bodies. This leads to the candidates being presented with different requirements by different Awarding Bodies. Those Bodies that have the bulk of their candidates registered at Levels 1-3, where the requirements for assessment are more mechanistic, sometimes apply their procedures, forms, training and verifiers in an unmodified and inappropriate form to the higher level NVQs, producing much criticism from Universities in particular. Others, with the support of QCA and MCI, have developed approaches and procedures that are designed to support and match the requirements of NVQs at this higher level. MCI’s experiments with alternative forms of assessment (MCI 1997) would very much fit into this category.

The debate over the role of and approach to NVQs has been polarised between the “hard-line” advocates of competency as an assessment only approach, and the “wets” who view development as the key issue. The “hard liners” argue that the main role of Vocational Qualifications is to recognise competency already developed in the workplace: they believe that underpinning knowledge and understanding can be inferred from a demonstration of competence across a “Range” of situations and should not be assessed directly: and that only minimal “storyboarding” should be required to contextualise and explain the evidence presented to support the claim to competence.

The “wets” on the other hand view development rather than assessment as the key issue: use the Standards as a starting point for the development of a programme or plan: believe that knowledge and understanding should be directly addressed in assessment: and that a written reflective report that contextualises, considers and reviews the evidence and its underlying performance is the key to learning. Perhaps unsurprisingly many of the “wets” are established providers of courses while many of the “hard-liners” are relative newcomers to the scene.

In the early days of NVQs the “hard-liners” very much held sway, with NVQs often being presented as the antidote to irrelevant University courses. More recently, however, the “wets” have moved into the ascendancy with, for example, Baroness Blackstone assuring
her audience at the launch of the current MCI Standards that “accreditation without development” was a sterile option that should not be pursued (MCI: 1997).

The emerging divorce in the DfEE’s mind between occupational standards and NVQs is an important one for the Business Schools. It is likely to mean the encouragement, through access to TEC and other funding, for programmes that are based in occupational standards but can lead to University Awards rather than NVQs. This neatly side steps the Universities’ main objection to NVQ modes of assessment and quality assurance, and should ensure greater spread of the use of the current standards.

There has been some effort in recent years to develop a “tariff” between competence and academic awards that would increase the marketability of NVQs by enabling their translation into CATS points that could then count towards University based awards. This in turn would help with the problem that higher level NVQs currently have little currency in the job market. This movement has, however, been generally resisted by the Universities because of concerns over the consistency of standards of NVQs and the Universities’ desire to directly assess knowledge and understanding. Some attempts have been made on an individual institution basis, generally with CM programmes and Level 4 NVQs (Randall 1995) to develop equivalencies, but these have generally been very limited in scope.

CATS Levels and Definitions

The advent of CATS in undergraduate programmes meant that Universities had to consider, perhaps more carefully than ever before what knowledge and skills were worthy of a degree. More particularly they had to define the knowledge and skills that constituted each of four levels. Levels I, 2 and 3 are equivalent to each of the three years of study on a normal undergraduate programme and M level that of a Masters award. Each University has its own definitions. Those used at the University of Greenwich for example are;
Each unit must be assigned Level 0, 1, 2, 3 or M depending on the level of achievement and outcomes expected of students, defined in the University's Academic Handbook as follows:

**Level 0**  Access to Higher Education

**Level 1**  Provides basic knowledge, skills and competence

**Level 2**  Involves an extension and reinforcement of theoretical and/or practical aspects of knowledge.

**Level 3**  Reflects the synthesis of basic knowledge, skills and competence and equips students with tools of analysis and evaluation. Contributes to the individual's professional development, where appropriate.

**Level M**  Provides an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to reflect on the significance and inter-relationships of knowledge acquired from a variety of sources; the ability on the basis of such reflection to formulate original ideas and innovative proposals; and the ability to carry out these activities with a fair degree of autonomy.

*Learning experience at Level 0 is characterised by meeting required levels of literacy and numeracy and acquiring understanding in core areas of the curriculum allowing access to defined programmes of study in post school education.*

*Learning experience at Level 1 involves the acquisition of basic knowledge, skills and competence, and is characterised by:*

- raising awareness of
- introducing to
- beginning to develop
- exploring
- describing
- beginning to recognise
Level 2 builds on level 1 and involves an extension and reinforcement of those experiences ie

- increasing awareness of
- developing greater/deeper understanding
- observing and reflecting on
- beginning to analyse (formally)
- beginning to recognise (and classify)
- exploring and reflecting on

Level 3 reflects the synthesis of knowledge, skills and competence and equips students with tools of analysis and evaluation, characterised by:

- investigating, critically appraising
- monitoring, reviewing and evaluating
- using relevant material to show awareness of different perspectives through reflection
- critically examining and reflecting on theoretical perspectives and their relevance to practice.

Level M provides opportunities to:

- reflect on the significance and inter-relationship of knowledge acquired from a variety of sources;
- to use such sources, with critical insight, to evaluate findings of a small scale enquiry or other activity;
- to provide explanations within identified frameworks and/or general theory;
- formulate innovative proposals;
- achieve all outcomes with a large degree of autonomy.
This has many features in common with those of other Universities. In their review of work based learning, Brennan and Little (1996) identified the University of Portsmouth partnership Programme as having what they considered to be exemplary definitions.

**COGNITIVE ATTAINMENT BY LEVEL OF STUDY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Field</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>Descriptions of facts; criteria; definitions; classifications; data organisation; principles; theories.</td>
<td>Emphasis on &quot;facts&quot;, terminology, the nature of the field of study. Tutor-presented material little questioned.</td>
<td>Widening appreciation of the scope of the field of study. Beginnings of understanding of the limited nature of the known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. INTERPRETATION</td>
<td>Understanding of knowledge in the categories in 1 above.</td>
<td>Knowledge understood, but without integration into a generative framework.</td>
<td>Beginnings of a 'mapping' of knowledge into an overview of the canon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. APPLICATION</td>
<td>Use of knowledge in the categories of 1 above in real situations.</td>
<td>Rote application of principles. Reliance on guidance by tutor.</td>
<td>Understanding of the need to select principles and facts appropriate to the problem in hand. Applies principles under guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ANALYSIS</td>
<td>Breaking down of knowledge into its constituent in a variety of ways for various purposes.</td>
<td>Acceptance of classifications presented by tutor. Some ability to analyse with guidance.</td>
<td>Ability to recognise familiar ideas or principles in texts or situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. SYNTHESIS</td>
<td>Bringing together different</td>
<td>Absent or imitative.</td>
<td>Understands the need for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2. Knowledge, Skills, Capabilities and Competences in Business Higher Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Grouping</th>
<th>Level 1 (Unwitting incompetence)</th>
<th>Level 2 (Conscious incompetence)</th>
<th>Level 3 (Conscious competence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REFLECTION &amp; APPRAISAL</td>
<td>Beginning self-reflection on strengths and weaknesses; developing consciousness of own levels of competence and incompetence.</td>
<td>Awareness of the scope of tasks. Beginning to use tools of self-reflection and appraisal of self and others.</td>
<td>Ability to reflect on strengths and weaknesses and to assess own work with acceptable accuracy against published criteria. Ability to make formative self assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING &amp; PROCESS MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>Developing: new approaches to work &amp; study; group working skills; independent enquiry; ability to justify, reason and argue rationally and persuasively about the study area.</td>
<td>Some support from tutor still needed in management of learning, but responsibility taken for most decisions, Clear understanding of the nature of study and work.</td>
<td>Ability to manage own leaning with minimal guidance, both in independent and group study. Ability to justify current and future personal academic and practical goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS | Developing awareness of the need for a flexible approach to problem solving, design tasks, evaluation and views of the world. Beginnings of group working skills. | Able to question value of new approaches Viewpoint can oscillate between enthusiastic adoption of new methods and a pervading emphasis on their drawbacks. Used to group working. | Confident knowledge of appropriate general and technical subject-specific skills. Ability to articulate own viewpoint and use as a basis for questioning, discussion and debate. Clear understanding of group processes. |
| APPLICATION | Recognition of the necessity for study skills appropriate to the subject (library, laboratory, computer literacy, articulate and accurate written and oral presentation). Development of a questioning attitude. | Exploration of an expanding range of skills and techniques. Valuing of study and transferable skills, both in the group and as an individual. | Confident and flexible application of subject-specific skills in evaluation, problem-solving, design and analysis of real-world issues. |


The BABS Sandwich Year is generally accepted as fitting in somewhere between Level 2 and 3, to some degree dependant on the position of the Sandwich Year in the course (see Chapter 1). Indeed, in many ways the role of the Sandwich Year can be viewed as that of moving the student from Level 2 to Level 3.

Following on from the above debate concerning the nature of the knowledge that constitutes a degree it is essential that CATS definitions are wide enough to allow easy incorporation of the work based learning of the Sandwich Year. The example from Portsmouth appears to do this well.
Summary

Competence based programmes have become a permanent and significant feature of the training and development scene. There are many concerns and criticisms relating both to the approach to occupational standards and NVQs. Some of these have been addressed in relation to Management through, for example the Beaumontisation of the Standards and the experimental assessment trials. These developments offer some interesting developmental opportunities to University Business Schools, particularly in using the occupational standards as a basis for new awards, and the Personal Competence Model for "skills" development. Developments in these areas might well pave the way for the eventual development of links and even a tariff between competence and academic based awards at some time in the future. The only certainty is, given the present political situation and the extension of the QCA mandate to HE, that competence based awards are going to continue to increase both in importance generally and their impact on HE in particular.

Conclusion

The nature of degrees is changing as the role of HE in society changes and the franchise expands towards 35% of the eligible population. The definitions of knowledge, of what is valued by Universities, needs to be reviewed to take account of the role of Universities in preparing students for employment. This should include more "practical" forms of knowledge either as well as, or in replacement of, the traditional discipline based "academic" knowledge. This is particularly the case with BABS degrees which are largely run in the post-1992 Universities, and are generally focused on providing a training for employment, in many cases satisfying the initial professional education requirements of professional bodies.

The increasing acceptance of the perceived needs of industry as a criteria for judging University output must produce a move towards the inclusion of more mode 2 or process knowledge and away from academic, discipline based knowledge. There is also a need
for more “practical” knowledge to be included. This “practical” knowledge can be defined in several ways as a skill, capability or competence. There is a considerable degree of overlap in practice between the definitions used, and each has its own merits and drawbacks. The use of one type of definition need not exclude the others. Whichever is used, however, the learning and teaching and assessment methods need to match.

Traditional lectures and seminars are unlikely to be able to deliver a programme defined in these terms. The medium is the message. Those methods most likely to be successful are those which either provide simulation or actually use the workplace. Simulations are becoming more and more realistic, with advances in technology providing many opportunities to both increase the realism of the simulation and through playback techniques improve the possibilities for reflective learning. Work based learning is the subject of the following chapter. Whichever methods are used, however, it is essential that the teaching of the “practical” knowledge is integral to the learning and teaching and assessment of the course as a whole and not separated in a “bolt-on” programme.
Chapter 3. Work Based Learning in Business Higher Education.
This Chapter describes the methods by which the students learn on their Sandwich Year. If the previous Chapter described the “what” of the Sandwich Year learning, this discusses the “how” it is learnt. The historical and theoretical underpinnings of work based learning are first outlined to set the background for the following discussion. The position of work based learning in higher education generally is then reviewed; some of the problems that have arisen when work based learning has been incorporated into higher education programmes discussed; and the different factors that have made for success or difficulty analysed. Theoretical approaches to work based learning and approaches to supporting learning and teaching are reviewed together with their implications for pedagogy, assessment and quality assurance. Finally models of good practice for the learning and teaching and assessment of the Sandwich Year are proposed.

**Introduction**

Work based learning is simply learning which has as its main focus and facility the workplace. It is experiential and student focused rather than classroom based and tutor defined. Beyond these simple basic characteristics there exist many refinements of design and provision which are generally included in what it must be acknowledged is a loose and movable definition. Universities are relatively recent converts to work based learning, however, its popularity in higher education is increasing rapidly. This increase is likely to continue as the student cohort changes to include more part-time and mature students. Government pressure is also supporting this increase through, for example, the Dearing report’s exhortation that every student should have a work experience placement.

The history of work based learning can be traced back to Dewey (1938) and his work on learning from experience. This was then developed by Lewin (1951) and popularised by Kolb (1984) as the “Reflective Learning Cycle”. This has probably been the major influence on work based learning in the United Kingdom over the last ten years being popularised by NCVQ and the MCI amongst others. Other authors have suggested
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modifications to the idea (see for example Honey and Mumford 1995) but the popularity of the original model has endured. The other main theoretical idea in this area has also come from the USA in the writings of Donald Schon on his concept of the "Reflective Practitioner" (1986). Others, such as Eraut (1994), have criticised his work, however the general notion of the Reflective Practitioner nevertheless appears to maintain its appeal.

The theoretical development of work based learning has not, however, always been matched by developments in practice, either in learning and teaching or assessment. (Brennan and Little 1996:v). In order to discuss both the theory and practice of work based learning in more detail the divergent characteristics of different forms of work based learning need to be identified. This is particularly important in the case of the Sandwich Year as it has significant differences from the model of work based learning presumed in a majority of the literature.

While practice might be lagging behind theory a significant amount of research on the development of work based learning has been carried out in the United Kingdom Universities in recent years, much of it funded by the DfEE and the EHE Initiative. Much, however, has gone unreported in that it has not been published in the normal journals or in books. Instead it has quite frequently remained in the form of internal reports, EHE reports or project reports to the DfEE.

However, despite these developments significant problems remain with work based learning practice in higher education connected with its pedagogy, assessment and resourcing (HEQC 1994, Brennan and Little 1996, Dearing 1997). Individual lecturers can address some of these, but many require action at University or Governmental level.
Chapter 3. Work Based Learning in Business Higher Education.

Experiential Learning

The main theme of this chapter is work based learning. Work based learning is, however, merely the form of experiential learning that takes place in the workplace. It is interesting to briefly review some of the features of experiential learning generally before moving on to consider work based learning in particular.

Weil and McGill (1989) in their review of experiential learning found that the term referred;

to a spectrum of meanings policies and ideologies which emerge out of the work and commitments of policy makers, educators, trainers and change agents all over the world. They see experiential learning - with different meanings - as relevant to the challenges they currently face in their personal lives, in education, in institutions in commerce and industry, in communities and in society as a whole. Across such diversity, however, we discern four emphasis for experiential learning.(page 3)

They conceptualised these four emphasis or views as “villages”, and defined them as;

- **Village one is particularly concerned with assessing and accrediting learning from life and work experience as the basis of creating new routes into higher education, employment and training opportunities and professional bodies. (APEL)**
- **Village two focuses on experiential learning as the basis for bringing about change in the structure, purposes and curricula of post-school education. (curriculum change)**
- **Village three emphasises learning as the basis for group conscious raising, community action and social change (social change).**
Chapter 3. Work Based Learning in Business Higher Education.

- Village four is concerned with personal growth and development and experiential learning approaches that increase self awareness and group effectiveness. (personal growth) (ibid)

They emphasise the importance of not getting “locked in” to any one village, and the usefulness of taking a variety of perspectives when looking at any particular situation.

Work based learning in Universities has, at different times, addressed all of these perspectives. The most common one currently, is the APEL (Village one) perspective with Universities working hard to improve access by developing methods to capture “unconventional” learning. In relation to the BABS degree this would currently include efforts to capture the learning of students through part-time and vacation work experience.

As outlined in the previous Chapters, however, work based learning is also being used to bring about curriculum change (Village two), making degrees a more thorough preparation for work. This is certainly high on Government’s agenda and has been supported through the funding of a number of Initiatives, notably the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative. It is only one of a number of factors working towards making the BABS curriculum more practical in orientation with a larger “skills” element, but has had a significant impact in this area none the less.

The increasing emphasis on skills such as self-reliance outlined in Chapter two is also bringing a greater element of personal growth (Village four) into the BABS degree. Thus, for example, the University of Greenwich BABS degree has a skills thread running through the first four Semesters aimed very much at improving performance in this area. The ultimate aim is to develop in students the reflective learning skills needed for lifelong learning and to launch them on that road.
Chapter 3. Work Based Learning in Business Higher Education.

The notion of using work based learning on a BABS degree to bring about social change (Village three) is perhaps an anathema to a majority of Business Schools. Not surprisingly, therefore, this emphasis has received little coverage in such Schools.

The following section moves on to review the current provision of work based learning in Business Schools in order to provide some insight into Business School practices in this area and the way they might impact on the work based learning of the BABS Sandwich Year.

The Extent of Work Based Learning in HE

The occurrence of work based learning in higher education has increased dramatically over recent years. In so far as undergraduate programs are concerned the expansion of numbers in the post 1992 Universities alone has meant a substantial increase in the number of students on sandwich degrees (HESA 1995). The success of initiatives such as Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) (Hawkins & Winter 1997) has led to an increase in modules based on work shadowing, unpaid work experience, paid work experience and APEL (see various issues of Competence and Assessment). The DfEE has funded many projects in this area and in its current round of funding (DfEEb1997) has invited bids that will take forward the implementation of work experience modules. This includes developing ways in which the learning from the part-time work that has become such a feature of modern student life, might be incorporated into degrees. Increasing efforts, often as a result of Governmental exhortation, to increase the number of part-time students have also led many Universities to introduce Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) procedures which are, in theory at least, available to all their students. A few Universities, for example Middlesex, have taken the exceptional step of making all their modules available through a work based learning route. No reliable figure is currently available for the number of Undergraduates who participate in some form of experiential learning, however, the weight of evidence above,
together with the exhortation of the Dearing Report (1977) that all undergraduate students should have work experience,

*The strongest single message which we received from employers was the value of work experience. This is particularly emphasized by small and medium sized enterprises by enterprises who need new employees to be able to operate effectively in the workplace from their first day. Further development of work experience opportunities requires action by both employers and institutions. (summary para 39)*

suggests that it is and will remain a significant proportion of undergraduate students.

The position is even more pronounced in respect of postgraduate students. The numbers of both full and part-time students have again expanded rapidly over recent years (HEIST 1997). Full time programs frequently include a work placement of some sort that in many ways is similar to the work experience of undergraduate students. Perhaps more significant, however, has been the expansion of part-time Masters programs and the development of what is known in some Universities as the "Professional Masters". These programmes are often heavily influenced by the requirements of the relevant Professional Body; may offer academic credit to those students who have achieved Professional Membership; will be comprised of Modules that are frequently assessed through a work related task or project; and are likely to include a work based dissertation.

As indicated in Chapter 2 another factor that is starting to have some influence on both post and undergraduate programmes are National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). The Management Standards (MCI 1997) have been available for longer than any other Level 4/5 Standards, and are the most heavily used Standards at these levels. Their influence on Business Schools might therefor be seen as an indicator of what might happen in other areas. This has been significant in the case of postgraduate Certificate in Management (CM) and Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) where several Universities have altered
their curriculum to match the Standards and offer opportunities for joint or related assessment (Randall 1995). Generally, however, despite Baroness Blackstone's welcoming of the progress Business Schools have made in their use of the management standards noted in Chapter 1 (MCI 1997), there has generally been marked resistance of staff to their take-up and the required acquisition of the "D" Standards.

The Government, largely through the DfEE, has attempted to directly promote the greater use of work based learning in Universities. This is one of a number of initiatives designed to get employers interested in training and thereby promoting the concept of "lifelong" learning it sees as crucial to the international competitiveness of the United Kingdom. The Universities have an important part to play in this scheme in two ways. First they can use their expertise to train people in employment. Secondly, and more directly relevant to this study, their graduates must be capable of learning from experience from the moment they leave University. They must have both the habit and the skills of learning from experience in order to maintain their continuing professional development. It has financed a number of "Initiatives" the most notable of which was Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE) (see Chapter 2). While not always directly or solely concerned with work based learning, these initiatives have often had a work based learning "theme" or promoted learning and teaching and assessment methods that are compatible with it. The expansion of the higher education participation rate to 35% announced at the 1997 Labour Party conference, and the likely adoption of many of the Dearing proposals are likely to lead to more rather than less Government support.

An independent group of what might best be described as "Lobby Organisations" has been influential in promoting work based learning in higher education. This includes bodies such as the Learning from Experience Trust (LET), the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE), the RSA founded Higher Education for Capability (HEC), the Shell Technology Enterprise Programme (STEP) and the Pegasus Trust. All have a focus clearly on promoting the part played by "skills" in higher education and the use, amongst other methods, of work based learning to acquire those skills. The extent of their influence can
be seen from the list of the publications they have sponsored contained in the bibliography of this study, and the amounts of government and other money they have acquired to promote developments in line with their objectives.

**Conclusion.**

The overall view of work based learning in Universities is of an increasing amount of provision, at a variety of levels, and of an increasingly diverse nature. This provision is subject to a variety of influences including Government, QCA, professional bodies and lobby groups, some of which are more welcomed than others by the staff concerned. The continued increase of importance of work based learning would, however, appear inevitable as governments throughout Europe see the closer integration of learning and work as being a key strategy for economic success (Sommerlad 1996).

**The Theory of Experiential Learning**

There are many theories as to how people learn. The main areas that appear relevant to the Sandwich Year and work based learning are experiential learning, reflective learning, personal development and andragogy.

**Experiential Learning**

Probably the most influential development in this area has been what has come to be known as the Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle (1984:20)
Kolb refers to it as the experiential learning cycle for two reasons. Firstly to acknowledge its roots in the work of Dewey, Lewin and Piaget. Secondly;

\textit{to emphasise the central role that experience plays in the learning process. This differentiates experiential learning theory from rationalist and other cognitive theories of learning that tend to give primary emphasis to acquisition, manipulation, and recall of abstract symbols, and from behavioural learning theories that deny any role for consciousness and subjective experience in the learning process. (1984:19)}

According to the Kolb cycle, an individual learns from concrete experiences (CE) by reflecting on those experiences from different perspectives (RO), re-forming his or her learning on the basis of that reflection (AC), then testing out and applying that learning in discussion and problem solving (AE). In practice learners often repeat the circle in the same area of learning, learning a little more each time. The learning thus becomes 'helical' rather than cyclical (Brown, 1995).

In order that effective learning take place, all four stages of the learning cycle must be completed. Any one individual, however, may not feel comfortable with all four of the different modes of learning implied by the stages (CE, RO, AC, AE). She might tend towards one of the following learning styles (reflecting her own dominant learning modes):

- \textbf{converger}, whose strength lies in practical application of ideas (dominant ability abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation: AC/AE);

- \textbf{diverger}, whose strength lies in imaginative ability and generation of ideas (dominant ability - concrete experience and reflective observation: CE/RO);
assimilator, whose strength lies in creating theoretical models and assimilating and integrating disparate observations (dominant ability - abstract conceptualisation and reflective observation: AC/RO);

accommodator, whose strength lies in carrying out plans and experiments that involve them in new experiences (dominant ability - concrete experience and active experimentation: CE/AE).

(Wolf and Kolb, 1984)

The role of the tutor is to first help the learner identify their preferred learning style and seek out learning opportunities suited to that style. (Long, 1990: 88). In the longer term, however, the learner must become familiar with all the styles in order to make the most of opportunities available and complete the cycle. Research demonstrates that the people who cope most effectively and gain from the greatest variety of learning opportunities are those who can operate to some extent in all styles, but who are clear when facing a problem which is the most effective style for them (Thompson, 1996).

Beecher (1989: 12) draws on the work on Biglan (1973) and Kolb (1981) to classify disciplinary frameworks according to their most likely learning styles. Business studies fits best into the accommodator CE/AE category, interestingly emphasising action and experimentation rather than reflection.

Reflective Learning

The notion of reflection is central to the experiential learning cycle, but has also been developed by other writers. Brennan and Little (1996: 44-45) offer the following definition of reflection based on the work of Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985);

Reflection is a form of response of the learner to experience....experience consists of the total response of a person to a situation or event: what he or she thinks, feels, does and concludes at the time and immediately
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thereafter...Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. ...Reflection in the context of learning is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations.

This definition emphasises the affective aspects of reflective learning. The most influential text in this area in recent times has, however, been Schon’s (1983) Reflective Practitioner. In Eraut’s words;

It combines a devastating critique of the dominant “technical rationality” model of professional knowledge based on positivist epistemology with a celebration of the artistry of professional practitioners who have avoided being seduced by it or simply found it inapplicable to their normal work.

Schon’s argument is that the positivist model can only cope with relatively simple, stable problems. In practice, however, the problems professionals have to deal with are characterised by complexity, instability and change. He acknowledges that everyday problems are dealt with through “knowledge-in-action” where the professional almost subconsciously applies existing knowledge to routine tasks. Occasionally, however, there is some “trigger” that alerts the professional to the fact that a problem is not ‘ordinary’. When this takes place the professional moves away from his normal practice and goes through a process of “reflection-in-action”.

Reflection-in-action has a critical function, questioning the assumptional structure of knowing-in-action. We think critically about the thinking that got us into this fix or this opportunity; and we may, in the process, restructure strategies of action, understandings of phenomena, or ways of framing problems.
Reflection gives rise to on-the-spot experiment. We think up and try out new actions intended to explore the newly observed phenomena, test our tentative understandings of them, or affirm the moves we have invented to change things for the better ... What distinguishes reflection-in-action from other kinds of reflection is its immediate significance for action. (Schon 1986:28-9)

Reflection-in-action can be seen as a process that’s sits between the rapid, intuitive, tacit actions of everyday practice and the slow deliberative post-event reflection recognised by Dewey and Kolb, and indeed by Schon as reflection-on-action. This three phase model has some support from Hammond’s Cognitive Continuum Theory.

In Cognitive Continuum Theory, tasks are considered to occupy a position on a task continuum, ranging from analysis-inducing to intuition-inducing, indicated by task features that influence the model of cognition that the thinker will adopt. These features include the complexity of the task, the ambiguity of the content of the task, and the form of task presentation. (Hammond, 1980)

Eraut, reviewing the work of both Hammond and Schon, also suggests a three phase model when he presents the following model demonstrating the relationship between speed and mode of cognition. (1994:149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instant recognition</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decision</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instant response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Routine unreflective action</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Kolb suggests one additional dimension that may be considered in the latter part of his analysis of reflective learning (1984). This is the level of abstraction achieved in the learning. His analysis is complex, but for the purpose of the present study it is proposed to split the “deliberative reflection” dimension into two. The first is where a relatively low level of abstraction is achieved. That is, actions are reflected on and new theories and ideas formulated, but these are more or less directly related to, and limited to the events and actions concerned. The second is where a much higher level of abstraction is achieved that affects the learners whole view of a subject or life view. It is thought that the speed reflection-in-action is unlikely to allow for the development of learning at the higher level of abstraction, although it is debatable as to how soon after the event that this may occur. Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action are better conceived of as the ends of a continuum rather than discrete categories, as any notion of them as discrete categories inevitably leads to the distinction between them being an arbitrary one with a substantial “grey” area at the margin.

Getting learners to reflect has generally proved problematic (Brennan and Little: 1996). Jarvis (1994) points out that learners can reject or ignore the opportunity to learn from experience, a “non-learning” response. He also points out that all learning is not reflective, and that much learning is through imitation and memorisation.

A scheme is thus proposed for use in this study that provides for the analysis of the BABS students Sandwich Year actions and learning into five types;

- Type 1 – routinised action based on tacit knowledge – non-learning or reinforcement of existing ideas.
- Type 2 – non-reflective learning through imitation and memorisation.
- Type 3 – unusual situations where reflection-in-action is required and new theories and ideas developed during the action.
• Type 4 – deliberative reflection where the new theories and ideas developed are limited to the type of events concerned.

• Type 5 – deliberative reflection where the new theories and ideas developed change the learner’s view of the subject and/or their world view.

All the types of learning, even the Type 1 reinforcement, are valuable parts of the Sandwich Year experience, and it is important that the student exploit all. It is, however, the Types 3, 4 and 5 that encourage “deep” learning (Sajo 1984, Gibbs 1992) in which students attempt to understand the underlying ideas, principles and concepts and to interpret them in personally meaningful ways. This contrasts with “surface” learning which is characterised by rote learning and regurgitation, unfortunately still a substantial component of many degrees.

**Espoused Theory.**

In the early part of their degree students develop a body of “personal knowledge” as they absorb the concepts and theory from their course, mix them in their own unique way with their experience and prior knowledge. Reflective learning is particularly crucial to these students because it is essential for them to see how their classroom, conceptual learning can be applied in practice. Eraut (1994:80) when discussing Headteacher training noted that;

(A) ...problem occurs with concepts learned in academic contexts. These concepts are more under critical control, but rather less likely to be put to practical use.

Two important reasons for this were discussed in earlier chapters. First, there is what I like to call 'the iceberg principle'. Most learning of a new idea does not take place when it is first introduced and 'understood'; that is, only the part 'above the surface'. The real work of learning comes when you try to use the idea. It is during the struggle 'below the surface' that you take ownership of the idea, link it to other ideas and acquire the capacity to use it
for your own particular purpose. Second, and as a direct consequence of this learning during use, ideas become linked to particular contexts of use. Hence they are learned differently in each separate context, and have to be partly relearned when transferred to a new situation, for example, from INSET course to departmental meeting, or from curriculum guidelines to classroom practice. Such transfer of ideas is often difficult and requires much further thought and effort.

Whether concepts are already embedded in practice or deliberately introduced to help understand or rethink practice, they seldom achieve the ideal state of being both in practical use and under critical control. Hence the current interest in developments such as job-related inquiry, action research, school-based evaluation and reflective professional discussion. These show some potential for helping to solve the problems of using conceptual knowledge.

The difficulty of applying theory to practice was also noted by Agyris and Schon (1974) in the difference between “espoused theory” and “theory in practice”. “Espoused theory” is the explanation publicly provided by a professional for his actions, whereas “theory in practice” is the set of rules and ideas that are actually followed. As they point out there is often considerable difference between the two. The aim of training programmes such as the BABS Sandwich Year is to both get students to relate theory to the widest range of practice and minimise the distance between their “espoused theory” and “theory in practice”. Boud and Walker (1993) in reviewing their own experiences of learning from reflection observe that they learnt as often from having to confront and resolve discrepancies and dilemmas as they did from systematic reflection. Perhaps the role of the tutor and employer mentor should include pointing out the discrepancies between “espoused theory” and “theory in practice” as a prompt to learning.
The proponents of andragogy (eg Knowles 1975) place the student rather than the tutor at the centre of the learning process. This change in the relationship between teacher and taught has also been written about as student centred learning and learner autonomy. The key element, amongst much disagreement, is that the learner should have a much greater, possibly overriding, say in both what is learnt and how it is learnt. Andragogy is traditionally discussed in terms of adult learning, it would appear however to have application to the Sandwich Year. The undergraduate on a large, modern, modular BABS degree spends the bulk of their time on a tutor defined and assessed programme. The sandwich Year is a unique opportunity within most degrees for students to “break free” of this relatively restrictive regime and exercise some control over their own learning.

The very variety and lack of standardisation that are seen as problematic by so many authors in the Sandwich Year make andragogy an appropriate strategy. The student herself is best placed to define the learning possibilities of the placement, and the methods and support best needed to exploit them.

If andragogy is to be a key feature of the Sandwich Year then;
- the curriculum design for the Sandwich Year must allow the student sufficient freedom of method, outcomes and assessment;
- tutors must be capable of undertaking an appropriate “support” role. Interestingly the NVQ tutor is known as the Advisor/Assessor rather than the tutor.

The freedom of the Sandwich Year can appear as a stark contrast to the more tightly controlled taught part of the degree. The freedom is at the same time necessary to encourage deep learning and dangerous because of its lack of structure. Brown (1995:96) points out that too much freedom too early on can cause anxiety and distress and inhibit learning. Getting the balance right is difficult for any programme, but particularly so for a Sandwich Year because of the mix and general inexperience of the students, and the relatively infrequent tutor contact.
Conclusion

The theory of work based learning is based in the reflective learning cycle (Kolb: 1984). However, while providing basic insight into the process, neither this model nor the more complex spiral and double loop variants give a full description of the process. The most powerful and "deep" learning that takes place is reflective in origin, and can be developed at a variety of levels of abstraction producing at its highest level a kind of "meta-cognition" or "meta-learning" affecting the world view of the learner. Other valuable learning of more routinised skills and "professional" behaviour also takes place in the workplace, indeed can only take place in the workplace. Reflective learning is not an easy process for either the learner or tutors attempting to facilitate it. The first step in trying to develop both learner and tutor skills is to try and develop an understanding of the processes involved. This understanding can then be used as a basis for developing appropriate learning and teaching methods. The work that has been carried out in this area indicates that it is essential to make the learner the focus of the learning, empower the learner and adopt a form of "andragogy". The following section reviews the methods of learning and teaching currently most commonly used to support the Sandwich Year.

Learning and Teaching

There are many different techniques used to facilitate work based learning, many of which do not fit within the definition of andragogy. Most indeed are more, or less thoughtful, adaptations of pedagogies used for classroom based learning.

It is helpful when discussing these methods to do so against a set of criteria that might apply to any learning and teaching methods. Learning and teaching methods should, based on the author's experience, be:-

- effective - students achieve their intended learning aims or outcomes;
- efficient - these outcomes are achieved with the minimal amount of effort and use of resources by both student and tutor;
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- **resourcable** - the resource demands can be met from the resources provided by the current funding regime;
- **realistic** - staff are capable and willing to use the technique, students will accept it, and Universities support it;
- **“enjoyable”** - for both staff and students.

The techniques of learning and teaching associated with work based learning can be divided into two categories, those that have been used for some time - the *traditional* techniques, and those have been developed more recently - the *modern* techniques.

**Traditional techniques**

There are five main types of traditional learning and teaching techniques commonly associated with work based learning. In the authors view these may be classified as:-

- preparatory workshops
- regular reports
- projects
- university tutor (visit)
- employer mentoring

**Preparatory Workshops**

Preparatory workshops are a common method used on a number of programmes. Their content can, however, vary enormously. At the simplest level they comprise of instruction in the procedures and forms necessary to maintain contact with the University and ‘register’ the experience. In the case of work experience this might also include lessons in “organisational etiquette” and health and safety. At a more complex level they will include learning and teaching in methods of learning from experience. The author and colleagues have, for example, been particularly concerned over recent years to develop workshops that help students learn reflectively and write reflective reports. A variety of techniques have been developed that have proved successful, however, the universal trend across all types of programme has been that ever increasing amounts of time have felt to be needed
to be spent on this area. On one postgraduate programme, for example, what started out as two one-hour sessions is now three half day workshops. This experience has mirrored that of other colleagues in other institutions working in this field.

Preparatory workshops can meet many of the criteria outlined above for pedagogic methods. If well run they can be effective, efficient and enjoyable. They are resourcable if they are delivered either as part of the experiential learning itself, or as a “learning to learn” unit in their own right. They are realistic in that they are in a form and use techniques familiar to most staff.

**Regular Reports**

The BABS Sandwich Year study (Edmunds and Lindsay: 1997) recorded a variety of different types of reports used to record students’ progress at a variety of intervals ranging from monthly to quarterly. The form of the report varied from checklist to free response, the content from factual description of the tasks undertaken to reflection on the learning achieved, with the reports sometimes being confidential to the tutor and other times being shown to or approved by the employer.

Regular reports can be effective and efficient if properly designed and administered. The way they are resourced varies from University to University and in many cases is the key to their success. To be effective they need to be the basis of a (written) dialogue between student and tutor. Unfortunately the tutor sometimes has neither the time nor the skill to provide effective (written) feedback. This in turn produces a certain sense of pointlessness in the student making the task of completion a sometimes-ignored chore that contributes little to learning.

**Projects**

Projects are perhaps the most traditional mechanism of all used to develop and assess experiential learning. A task is set or agreed by tutor and student which usually involves
the student applying the propositional knowledge gained from teaching at the University to a problem or issue at work or elsewhere. The project may involve description and analysis and/or the achievement of a particular objective and is usually written up in a report.

Projects if properly agreed and supported can meet all the criteria set out for a learning and teaching method. The main concerns, where there are any, usually spring from the extent of the match between the learning achieved through the project and the aims of the particular programme.

**University Tutor (Visit)**

The majority of longer placements and the more work based APEL programmes will often involve a visit or visits by a University tutor to the student in their workplace. The frequency, length and purpose of these visits varies greatly and has been the subject of much debate in the literature. The OU together with the QSC (1995) produced a long list of functions under the headings of providing support for the host organisation, and acting as an assessor, innovator and collaborator. Different Universities organise the resourcing of the Tutors role differently, some spreading the role across a large number of staff while others use smaller specialised teams, Some offer guidance in the form of notes or a checklist to the tutor, but few offer staff development. There has, thus far, been little use of, and much resistance to the use of the Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) standards and awards for advisors, assessors and verifiers (the ‘D’ awards) and several authors have reported resistance of staff generally to development in this area. It is impossible, therefore, to describe any consistent role that might be undertaken by tutors in their relations with students on placement or their employers. The University Tutor is generally expected to both know what is required of them when visiting a work based learner and be capable of delivering this.

Much has been written in the literature concerning tutor visits. The general theme is that visits could be improved in a substantial proportion of cases by providing a better
definition of the purpose of the visit and staff development for the tutor who is carrying it out. University tutors, it would appear, do not always possess the necessary skills to carry out successful visits.

**Employer Mentoring**

If the role of the University Tutor is difficult to describe the role of the employer mentor is even more so. The Sandwich Year study found employers playing a variety of roles from helpful active coach to offering virtually no support at all. Once again there was no evidence that the ‘D’ standards, or indeed any other form of development of managers as coaches/mentors, were being used by the organisations concerned. Experience of post-graduate programmes has produced much the same result. Some Universities, particularly those that have been able to maintain a consistent group of employer placement providers have managed to provide some joint development for University tutors and employer mentors. Others, however, particularly where competition for placements is strong have not managed to do so.

Employer mentoring can again meet all the criteria. It is particularly “resourcable” from the Universities’ point of view in that, other than liaison with the employer and possibly some training, it has no cost to them. The same is obviously not true of the employer who will face costs in terms of both staff time and development. The potential increase in the learning of the student, and the overall performance of the mentor, should in most cases provide an adequate return.

**Modern Techniques**

In recent years a number of Universities, some with the help of funding Initiatives from the DfEE such as EHE, have developed new methods of facilitating experiential learning. In the main these can be summarised as:-

- APEL Units and Work Based Learning modules
- integrated preparation
- de-briefing
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- learning contracts
- learning logs, diaries and journals
- portfolios
- peer tutoring and support
- computer mediated tutoring (CMT)

APEL and Work Based Learning Modules

These are modules where the learner is taught the techniques of experiential learning and assessed on her ability to undertake it. This is treated as a new skill and accredited separately from the work based learning itself. There is a wide range of definitions as to what is required in order that the student be able to learn successfully from experience, and consequently some variations in the level and amount of credit awarded.

These modules can again meet the learning and teaching criteria, particularly as within a credit based funding regime they offer credit for learning and teaching that would not otherwise be recognised.

Integrated Preparation

Integration refers to the extent to which the preparation for experiential learning is integrated with other parts of a course. This is obviously not possible if the course is totally based in work based learning, but with other programmes, such as for example Sandwich courses, there may be opportunities to develop the skills and familiarise the learner with the techniques of work based learning in the earlier taught parts of the programme. This study, for example, has recently led to the introduction of reflective learning and portfolio assessment to the early part of the University of Greenwich BABS degree. This was specifically in response to the difficulties students were experiencing in writing reflectively and building portfolios for assessment.
This technique, at least as much as any other, meets the learning and teaching criteria as it combines the preparation for experiential learning with other ‘normal’ learning.

**De-Briefing**

De-briefing refers to the integration of a period of work based learning into a course after the period of work based learning has been completed. Typically while on placement students might be set a task to accomplish, some observations to make, or some data to gather which is then used in one or more of the taught modules taken on return to the University. This deliberate definition of task is not always necessary, however, and some authors (for example Stone 1997) have reported success with later analysis of past experiences using new conceptual frameworks based on the memory of the experience rather than any specific data gathering.

This technique meets the learning and teaching criteria in much the same way as the previous example.

**Learning Contracts**

These are agreements between the learner, the University, and sometimes an employer as to what the student will achieve and how it will be assessed. They are usually written as learning outcomes but might also be written as statements of competence, skill or capability. The great benefit they offer over predefined units is the ability to exploit and capture all the experiential learning opportunities open to the student, whereas predefined units have been shown to often miss some important aspects of the learning. The downsides of this flexibility are the uncertainties caused by this adaptability, and the difficulties of supporting a number of learners each on a unique path.

This technique can be effective, efficient and enjoyable if properly run. Unfortunately, in practice it often fails to realise its potential due to problems caused by lack of resource and staff expertise (Robertson 1990).
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**Learning Logs, Diaries And Journals**

These are contemporaneous records of activity kept by the student. The Learning Logs and Diaries are usually daily or weekly records of events. The Learning Log generally concentrates more on recording learning whilst the diary concentrates on actual events, often in preparation for later analysis. The Journal, on the other hand, is usually a record of reflections of groups of events or learning in particular areas.

These techniques again can meet all the pedagogic criteria if properly run. The problems once again come in regard to the 'realistic' criteria. A large number of University staff are not fully aware of the potential of these techniques or the most appropriate methods of 'teaching' them. All the findings of this study indicate that, at anything higher than a basic factual level, students find it very difficult to devise appropriate formats for recording and analysing their experience, and need to be 'taught' this at some length. One MBA module taught by the author, for example, has consistently built up the proportion of time devoted to learning these techniques to approximately 20% of the total module time. From a resource point of view it is important to note that not all advice has to be tutor given or tutor centred. Peer tutoring and peer marking offer considerable benefits to the students taking all the roles involved.

**Portfolios**

These are simply a collection of examples of the work of the student. They are well accepted in some areas of work, for example no architect or designer would dream of attending a job interview without a portfolio of their work, and the interview would be likely to include a lengthy discussion of that work. At the other end of scale the type of portfolio prepared to meet the requirements of higher level NVQs, perhaps most notably the Management NVQs, has attracted much criticism. The idea of the portfolio in itself is essential to the assessment and accreditation of much experiential learning, caution must however be exercised when specifying the nature of the portfolio to make it a positive
learning exercise rather than one of sterile recording. This is assisted if the emphasis is on reflection based on the ‘evidence’ collected rather than on the evidence itself.

Portfolios, if properly designed and implemented, can satisfy all the learning and teaching criteria. In practice, however, they often fail against the resourcable and realistic criteria. In the same way as the techniques immediately above the student has to be ‘taught’ the portfolio method at some length. The author has experience of portfolios of both NVQ and other types over more than seven years. In that time both the absolute amount and proportion of time spent on ‘teaching’ portfolio learning methodology has consistently increased on all the modules with which he is involved. From a resourcing point of view it is important to note that, as with learning logs, diaries and journals considerable success has been achieved with peer tutoring and assessment.

Peer Tutoring and Support

These are techniques that have become more frequently used in higher education over recent years thanks to initiatives such as Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative. Despite this, they are still relatively rare. The geographical separation and infrequent meeting of many experiential learners means that they are likely to be used even more infrequently with this group. Practice at the University of Greenwich with part-time students noted above has indicated that this method can be used successfully.

Computer Mediated Tutoring (CMT)

CMT is akin to an advanced form of e-mail in which tutors and students are able to communicate electronically and asynchronously with one another in a variety of one-to-one, one-to-group and group-to-group format in “virtual” tutorials, classrooms and coffee-shops. The most popular software packages currently in use are Lotus Notes and First Class, although some tutors have built their own systems in HTML. It has been developing over a period of ten years or so, however, the increasing power of Personal Computers, increasing speed of data transmission over telephone lines, arrival of the
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internet and development of groupware have led to a rapid expansion of its use over the past two or three years. There is little reported research concerning the use of CMT to support the work based learner, however, its innate characteristics would suggest it to be ideally suited for this purpose.
Conclusion

There are many learning and teaching methods currently used to support work based learning. Many of these are adaptations of traditional learning and teaching methods used in classroom based learning, and as such not always best suited to their new purpose. There are, however, many interesting developments of practice, not least brought about by developments in IT. The knowledge and practice of these has been limited to a relatively small group of “interested” tutors, despite the best efforts of Government funding Initiatives such as the Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative. University tutors have generally been slow to embrace and develop competence in the new learning and teaching methods that more overtly acknowledge the student and experiential focus of work based learning. In consequence there is probably a lot that could be done to improve practice in supporting work based learning both in terms of the design of practice and the development and competence of staff. Ultimately, as Gibbs (1992) points out whatever the methods used they should;

- encourage independent learning (involving greater control over subject matter choice, learning methods, the pace of study and the assessment of learning outcomes);

- support personal development (involving the encouragement of learner motivation, recognising that individuals learn through feelings as well as through intellect),

- present problems (with learning being focused upon the tackling of relevant ‘real world’ problems, leading to appropriate action and involving the synthesis of relevant knowledge from different subject sources),

- encourage reflection (methods promoting reflection on learning include: learning diaries; reflective journals; participant observation; use of videos);
• learn by doing (emphasising the learners' active involvement through such stratagems as role-play, simulations, use of games, workplace visits);

• work in groups (involving interactive project-based work, peer tutoring and assessment of performance);

• develop learning skills (providing students with a sense of purpose and an awareness of task demands and feasibility). Above all, study skills need to be developed in an integrated and holistic way, through relevant and motivating learning tasks and activities;

• set projects (involving the application of knowledge to new situations). These can be highly engaging and motivating.

• (adapted from Gibbs, 1992, as quoted in Brennan and Little 1996:47)

Assessment

Learning and teaching is the first part of the work based learning process. If the whole process is to be successful the assessment of the learning requires as much careful thought as the process of learning itself. Indeed, in the ideal circumstance the process of assessment is integral to and integrated with the learning and teaching method.

A joint CNAA/BTEC report in 1990 on “The Assessment of Management Competences” suggested that any method of assessing learning should meet the following criteria:-

• reliability - are the assessments repeatable - implying consistency in methods and judgement;

• validity - does the assessment fulfil its purpose - implying appropriate assessment and relevant evidence;
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- **credibility** - is the assessment acceptable and of value - implying confidence in the assessment from all parties;
- **authority** - is the assessment conducted with integrity, competence and sensitivity.
- **feasibility** - is the assessment possible - implying that the assessment is practicable - manageable and cost effective.
- **enabling** - does the assessment assist towards the development of good practice;
- **transparency** - is assessment comprehensible, with a shared understanding between all parties, the candidate, the provider and the assessor, and those who help in preparation for the assessment.

**What Is Assessed**

Universities choose to define the learning of their students in different ways. The main definitional forms evident from their regulations, guidance notes and documents are:-

- aims
- learning outcomes
- skills
- capabilities
- competences
  - NCVQ
  - other

The majority of post 1992 Universities now describe their courses in terms of learning outcomes. These, in common with definitions of skill, competence and capability are more easily assessable definitions than many “aims”. Some methods will, however, obviously be more appropriate than others for the assessment of particular types of definition. For example, observation may be appropriate for the assessment of a skill but is less likely to be so for an aim or learning outcome. The key point in this regard is that if work based learning is to be fully accredited then it is likely to require definition using a number of the above forms, and the subsequent use of appropriately matched assessment techniques.
The forms of assessment most commonly used for the Sandwich Year can be divided into three categories according to the learning they assess and the way they assess it:

- performance of specific task(s),
- review of performance,
- reflective review of the experience.

**Performance of Specific Task(s)**

This type of assessment is based on the performance of a specific task that is unlikely to reflect the learners total experience, but may, for example, be indicative of his experiential learning in relation to a particular programme or set of objectives. This comes in two common forms:

- project report
- object

**Project Report**

This is an extremely popular method of assessment across a wide variety of programmes. It typically involves student and tutor agreeing that a particular project is suitable for an assessment, the student carrying out the project and writing a report based on the work and outcomes. In some cases a report that is prepared for the student’s employer or commissioning organisation will also serve as the basis for assessment. In other cases the student might be required to submit some additional material, typically for example, a reflective report on their learning from the project, and/or a second report that makes explicit the links between theory and practice that would have been only briefly dealt with in the organisational report. These additional reports are commonly presented in a written form although some take the form of interview. The need for, and nature of, these additional reports will obviously be determined by the type of learning being assessed.

Perhaps because Universities are familiar with this form of assessment (or possibly vice versa) it commonly fulfils all the criteria for an assessment method laid out above.
Object

In an art programme an assessed object might be a sculpture or a painting, or in an architecture course the design for a building. These might also be supplemented by an interview to review the processes that led to the creation of the eventual object. This approach is less common in many disciplines, for example, in management it would be rare to base an assessment solely on a procedure or agreement. Far greater emphasis is placed on the conscious processes that produce the end result or object. The concern is always that it might be the result of luck or chance rather than “conscious competence”.

It is interesting to note that in those disciplines where it is a common form of assessment it would be held to meet the criteria for assessment listed above, whereas in those where it is less common it would be questioned on virtually every criteria.

Review of Performance

The key difference between this and the previous category lies in the width of work based learning being assessed. In the previous case the focus was relatively narrow, whereas here it is much wider at least cutting across a broad spectrum of experience.

The same techniques as described above may also be used in this way, but in combination with other methods rather than on their own. Other techniques that may be used either in combination or alone are:-

- observation
- performance evidence
- portfolio
- peer review
- appraisal
- interview
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Observation
This would appear to be an obvious and relatively simple technique. However, a brief survey of the literature on observational research methods will reveal the difficulties that may be encountered in determining what is to be observed, and how it is to be categorised, recorded and analysed. Again, in the disciplines where this is an accepted form of assessment it is commonly held to satisfy most of the criteria for assessment, whereas in other disciplines it will fail most. In some cases, particularly where its acceptability is questionable, attempts have been made to improve its reliability and transparency through the use of audio and video recording.

Performance Evidence
This is a term that has come into common use with NVQs and refers to the products of experience. In the case of a management learner these might range from short memoranda to lengthy reports. The usual concerns with this form of assessment centre around the accessibility (indexing) of the evidence and the extent to which the learning implicitly evidenced is made explicit through a written reflective account or interview. Again the acceptability of this form of assessment varies between disciplines.

Portfolio
This again is a term that has come into common parlance in association with NVQs. In this connection it has also attracted much derision as it has been seen as a sterile recording of experience rather than a facilitation of learning (Blackstone 1997). This has frequently been, but need not necessarily be the case. The key factors are the way the criteria set out for the portfolio (the design of the portfolio) and the way the learner is ‘taught’ to complete it. Once again different practitioners and different students have very differing views as to whether or not this method meets the criteria for assessment depending upon the way their particular portfolio assessment is organised.
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Appraisal

Most reviews of student work based learning are carried out by academics who have only a perfunctory or second hand knowledge of the student’s performance. Many organisations, however, have their own appraisal schemes used to manage the performance of their staff. These usually rely on the manager agreeing an assessment of the employee’s work with her. These schemes vary hugely in design with many experiencing problems of both structure and implementation. They are, however, a valuable source of information, gathered at the cost of some expense and effort, on the employee’s (students’) learning.

The main way this information is utilised at present is through inclusion and subsequent reflection in a portfolio. The challenge for Universities lies in incorporating the information more directly into the assessment to make it both a more efficient and valid judgement. The crucial difference between this and all the other methods discussed in this section is however, that this is employer led and as such poses issues of control and quality assurance for Universities. The DfEE and CIHE are currently promoting research in this area and it is one in which developments are likely to be forthcoming in the near future. Whatever methods are eventually developed they will have to be well designed and implemented to overcome criticisms as to their reliability, transparency and credibility.

Interview

The interview has been eschewed by Universities as a relatively inefficient method (large quantities of staff time for each student - feasibility) that also lacks transparency, reliability and credibility. The MCI (1997) have however been experimenting over the last year with different formats of panel interview in the workplace and recording methods in an attempt to provide an efficient, “user friendly” method of assessment. The response to the initial trials has been positive and with certain groups who both prefer the methodology and have the ability to pay eg mature managers, this might prove to be a way forward. The fact that many of the interviews reported involved two staff for a full day of interviewing, in
addition to preparation time, is likely to take the method out of reach of large undergraduate programmes on resource grounds.

The interview in this form usually concentrates on establishing what the student does, and how often and how well they do it. It is sometimes referred to as the “paperless portfolio” and may involve “testimony” from colleagues.

**Peer Review**

Peer reviews are as cheap as interviews are expensive. Race (1995) has demonstrated that peer review is a reliable form of assessment with the judgements of peers usually mirroring those of tutors. A well developed system of peer assessment also has the advantage that it assists not only the learning of the learner being assessed but also the learning of the peer assessor (ibid). Unfortunately, despite the research findings, peer assessment generally lacks credibility within the University system with only few examples existing where it plays a significant part in the assessment of Modules that count towards degree classification.

**Reflective Review Of The Experience**

In many ways this category can be regarded as a development of the previous one in that it is again the full width of experience that is being reviewed. The emphasis here, however, shifts from the demonstration of competence through performance to an assessment of the learning that results from reflection on performance. To express this in the terms used earlier in this chapter to describe learning theory this is moving one step up the level of abstraction. Reviews of specific tasks and performance asses Types 1 and 2, and to a limited extent, indirectly, Type 3 learning. Reflective reviews of experience assess Type 4 and 5 learning.

**Diaries, Learning Logs and Journals**

Diaries, learning logs and journals are all means by which a student keeps a record of their work for later analysis and reflection. Diaries come in various forms that can be tailored to
meet the needs of an individual and job (Stewart 1988). They do however generally focus on the description of the activities involved for use in later analysis and reflection. Journals on the other hand are generally contemporaneous reflective accounts of feelings and learning often combining several events for one analysis or journal entry (Pedler et al: 1986). Learning logs normally fit between these two categories containing elements of both, the regularity of the diary combined usual with some fairly low-level reflection.

Depending on their actual design diaries, learning logs and journals generally meet the criteria for assessment procedures. Such debate as has taken place has focussed on the extent to which the record itself or the reflections on it are the key elements of the assessment, with the emphasis generally agreed to be increasingly focussed on the reflection as programmes move up the academic scale.

**Portfolios**

Portfolios are simply collections of work from a variety of sources, collected and organised against some criteria, indexed against those criteria and usually with some overarching commentary. Their most notorious use currently is as the predominant form of assessment for NVQs, where, due to a generally reductionist approach they have acquired a reputation as a laborious, sterile exercise (Smithers: 1993). They have, however, been used to good effect in other forms elsewhere in the Higher Education system. The University of Teeside for example has used them successfully as the basis of an Undergraduate Skills Programme for some time (Thatcher: 1996). The portfolio in this case consists of examples of the student’s University work throughout the year brought together and analysed o demonstrate learning strengths and learning needs.

The portfolio can, if properly designed and used, meet all the assessment procedure requirements. However, as currently used on NVQ programmes such as that at the centre of this study it is generally held to lack both credibility and reliability.

**CMT Transcript**
CMT provides an easily accessible electronic record of communications between the learner and peers and tutors which can be used as the basis of assessment. Again, although this is a relatively new and therefore little used form as yet, many of the same arguments as for diaries, learning logs, journals and portfolios apply. These centre around the extent to which the student should organise, index, summarise and reflect on the 'raw' information provided. Again with a well designed scheme there is no reason why this method should not meet the criteria for assessment procedures.

**Interview**

Interviews were discussed in the section above, and the comments made there apply again. Here however, as the interview concentrates on reflections on performance rather than on the performance itself replicability becomes an even greater problem. One of the key questions is whether the interview is used to provoke reflection or assess prior reflection.

**Conclusion**

If the pedagogy of experiential learning is problematic then its assessment is even more so. Approaches tried over the years have varied between making the student sit the same assessment as a "conventional" candidate to agreeing a unique assessment using a learning contract. The forms of assessment used have included direct observation; learning logs, diaries, and portfolios; interviewing the learner and possibly his supervisor; and written tests. Developments generally in assessment, particularly in the post-1992 Universities where there has been a significant movement away from examinations over the last ten years, have supported moves towards the more 'adventurous' forms of assessment. However, it is still difficult to find examples of schemes where the primary component is employer or peer based eg appraisal. Universities still largely expect to use the devices they have developed over the years to assess the forms of knowledge they have traditionally taught. The current concerns about quality, graduateness and the nature of post graduate education are all likely to reinforce this conservative tendency. In some cases concerns over the variability of the experience opportunities available to candidates and/or uncertainty about the rigour of the assessment mechanism have led to a reluctance to include assessment results from
experiential learning in the final classification of awards. The Sandwich Year study (Edmunds and Lindsay 1997) for example found only two cases where the Sandwich Year assessment counted towards the final classification of the BABS degree even though many students thought it to be one of the most significant learning experiences of the degree program.

Experiences, and therefore probably work based learning, takes place all the time, whether or not (and in some case in spite of the fact that) a tutor, in a University organised programme, supports the learner. The problem for Universities is what of that work based learning they wish to recognise as higher education. This, in turn, is complicated by the debates mentioned earlier concerning, amongst other things, quality, graduateness and the nature of postgraduate awards (Chapter 2). Over the last ten years there has been what Scott (1996:5) calls "the unravelling of epistemological security" as, for example, skills and professional knowledge have become more important in many, particularly post 1992 Universities, to the detriment of disciplinary and other forms of propositional knowledge. A move from what Scott terms mode 1 to mode 2 knowledge or Eraut (1994:103) similarly describes as a move from propositional to process knowledge. While this movement takes the kind of learning most likely to result from work based learning closer to the learning commonly recognised by Universities it is questionable whether the movement has been great enough. The majority of Universities currently expect work based learning to be displayed in forms familiar to them before they will recognise it as higher education. Thus features such as a written account referenced to a body of accepted knowledge are generally required. This in turn leads to the frustration of many experienced candidates applying to have their work based learning recognised as they usually not only have to have the knowledge, but know who wrote about it and when and where their work was published. Not all Universities, for example, would accredit, through direct observation or from assessment of its product, the sort of meta-learning described by Schon (1984) when discussing his reflective practitioners. There is a need to define and measure work based learning in rigorous ways that relate more clearly to and derive directly from the experience, rather than as currently relying on
adaptations of techniques based in more traditional definitions. One of the benefits of such assessment devices is that they would almost certainly assess and encourage deep as against surface learning (Gibbs 1992).

This lack of knowledge and understanding of work based learning in the parties involved may well be the cause of another trend noticeable in the literature. Until relatively recently (for example Noble 1990) experience has often been equated with learning. The second was presumed to follow automatically from the first, and the main determinant of the quality of learning deemed to be the quality of the experience. The APEL movement and its proponents frequently emphasised that it was the learning rather than the experience that was being accredited, but the question of how learning is best distilled from experience IN PRACTICE (as against in theory) has rarely been addressed in the literature (Brennan and Little: 1996).

Work based learning is assessed in many ways, many of which while being accepted in their “home” disciplines as meeting the criteria for assessment suggested by CNAA/BTEC are not found to be as acceptable in Business Schools. If work based learning is to realise its potential then there must be a greater acceptance of both assessment methods proven in other disciplines and those newly developed. Developments in IT also mean that some completely new forms of assessment will become increasingly prevalent in the near future. Maximum use should also be made of employer assessments the learning carried out for their own purposes. Ultimately, however, it would appear that the design of the individual assessment, its relationship to the learning being assessed and the circumstances in which the learning occurred, and the practice of the assessor are the crucially important variables. The lack of awareness of the principles and practice of work based learning amongst University staff is currently therefore one of the main factors inhibiting development.
Quality assurance has received a great deal of attention in Universities over recent years. Work based learning is in many ways similar to most other forms of learning when it comes to quality assurance. There are however, some significant differences based around:

- the individuality and consequent lack of uniformity of student experience and learning,
- the loss of University control over the process which takes place outside University premises and gives large elements of authority traditionally held by staff to students, and employers,
- the fact that it develops and recognises forms of learning not traditionally acknowledged by Universities,
- the majority of staff not being familiar with the techniques of learning and teaching and assessment involved,
- can involve assessors who are not academics and may not be employed by the Universities.

These problems are not insurmountable, but usually require some adaptations to existing procedures, and some foresight and goodwill on the part of those in control of the process. It is relatively easy to use concerns over quality assurance to place heavy burdens on a work based learning system which in turn can lead to its demise.

One common adaptation is the formation of an APEL committee as a sub-committee of the main quality assurance committee. This provides the opportunity to draft in staff with expertise in this area to the panel, and provides time for full consideration of what are often relatively unique cases.

Another interesting matter of concern is the extent to which expertise is available and traceable to provide external examiners as programmes in this area grow. The ABS register is currently the only record available of such people outside that established through publication. In practice, however, this is of limited usefulness.
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The key problem for work based learning in relation to Higher Education is the ignorance of the majority of staff of its theoretical principals, practice and assessment. Reluctance has been noted on the part of staff in many institutions to embrace the principles necessary for successful work based learning, due in part at least no doubt to the "threat" that work based learning poses to traditional academic norms. Also relatively little work been carried out to determine the best way in which staff development can help University tutors adjust from their traditional role as a disseminator of knowledge to that required by work based learning of a facilitator of learning. (Brennan and Little 1996).

A survey of BABS Sandwich Year provision (Edmunds and Lindsay 1997) found that little progress had been made in the pedagogy or assessment of the Sandwich Year since a previous CNAA study in 1998 or indeed a PEP report in 1967 (see chapter 1). A good deal of interesting work has been done by small teams of interested people in different Universities but they had met reluctance and resistance when it had come to spreading this expertise to a larger body of staff. This is hardly surprising considering the pressures on University staff in recent years brought about by increased student numbers, a reduced unit of funding and the Research Assessment Exercise. This has meant that developing pedagogic practice has generally been accorded a relatively low priority by most staff, a situation that the Dearing recommendations on Lecturer training aim to alter. It will, however, be interesting to observe what priority is given to experiential learning in the training and qualification framework that is to be developed.

As noted earlier, the Kolb reflective learning cycle (Kolb 1984) and its clones are now relatively well known in higher education and generally accepted as a (if not THE) proven pedagogic method of developing experiential learning (see above). Brennan and Little (1996) however, note that many studies report that students have great difficulty with reflective learning. They also observe that while much theorising has been done concerning work based learning only very little practical work has been carried out as to
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how it can be “taught” or students otherwise helped to acquire this skill (ibid page v). This certainly accords with the author’s work with both post and under-graduates, and some earlier unpublished research by him on work based learning at Masters level. In this case ever expanding amounts of class time and exercises have had to be devoted to the process of work based learning in order that students become successful practitioners. Interestingly, learning to learn from experience was also a major theme in many of the platform papers and presentations at the Universities Association for Continuing Education (UACE) conference in 1997 (UACE forthcoming).

The QSC (1995) recently noted that there was little agreement in the literature as to what constitutes an appropriate role for a work based learning tutor, although it did produce a long list of tasks a tutor might undertake in support of a work placement. Fortunately, much of what has been written concerns the Sandwich Year “visiting tutor”. It is more difficult to discover authoritative work as to an appropriate role for the tutor acting in support of the part-time work based experiential learner who is negotiating her own programme. Generally, however, the “visiting tutor” role involves many skills not otherwise required of the University tutor. These include negotiating with employers, adapting the student’s learning goals to the particular situation and facilitating that learning at a pace and in an order controlled by the placement and the student rather than the tutor. The role of supporting a part time student on a work based learning (APEL) programme is even more unusual in that the tutor has even less control of the aims and learning outcomes, which will be heavily influenced by the situation, the learner and probably the employer. Different Universities have different approaches in coming to terms with these problems. Some expect all their tutors to develop the necessary expertise, others develop specialist teams, and some use a combination of the two approaches. Whatever approach is used it is certain that the tutoring skills required to support experiential learning are different from those normally exercised by and not automatically possessed by a University tutor.
If the role of work based learning tutor is problematic for the University tutor then the role of work based learning mentor is even more so for the chosen representative of the employer. The reality in most cases is that the University is relatively powerless in the choice of mentor or her training. The likelihood, therefore, of the mentor having a comprehensive understanding of the requirements of supporting an work based learner is, in reality, fairly small. The work carried out by the author with Sandwich Year placements in fact found that none of the employer mentors had any specialist mentoring training, and that none chose to provide substantive mentoring support.

A final set of problems that confronts work based learning in higher education is its level and method of resourcing. The resourcing models used within Universities are usually based on a lecture and tutorial system, and by and large accommodate developments such as open and distance learning, and computer based training by drawing equivalencies to these norms. Thus, typically, the supervision of four open learning students might be regarded as equivalent to 1 hour a week of "class contact". Certain expectations have also grown up around various forms of work based learning, for example the two visits a year received by most Sandwich Year students. These norms and expectations are likely to come under further pressure as the general resource levels in higher education further reduce in real terms. The problem for work based learning is that as there is little agreement over its pedagogy or assessment there can hardly be agreement over resourcing levels. In the past work based learning has sometimes been viewed as a "cheap" form of learning, and in many Universities is having to work "up" in resource terms from a low base. Improving the quality of work based learning might well depend on the extent to which resources are made available to support learners, which to some degree must also depend on the extent to which the learners themselves value and are willing to pay for that support.
Two further developments should also be noted in this area. The first is the likely advent of credit based funding for Universities by HEFC and the corresponding development of credit based mechanisms for the internal distribution of funds within Universities. At the simplest level this means that work based learning provision must be credit rated to attract funding at both the external and internal level. Undergraduate Sandwich Year provision is perhaps the most significant provision that is having to come to terms with acquiring a credit rating in many Universities. This accreditation in turn has often forced an examination of the pedagogy and assessment of Sandwich Years in order to justify the levels and amount of credit allocated.

A final difficulty is the opportunity for improving the efficiency and quality of support offered to the experiential learner through the use of groupware such as Lotus Notes or First Class. Computer Mediated Tutoring (CMT) using both tutors and peers has become much more practicable over the last 18 months as student access to personal computers, modems and the Internet has increased alongside widening access to suitable hardware. This again poses funding problems as it is another movement away from traditional classroom based pedagogy.

**Conclusion.**

The need is for the development of internal and external funding models that facilitate rather than hinder the development of work based learning.
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Summary.

Work based learning is becoming an increasingly important form of learning in Higher Education. It is being recognised both when it happens independently of the Universities through APEL, and being designed into programmes to be delivered through the Universities. The Government, the funder of Higher Education, is encouraging it both as a methodology in itself and as a 'Trojan Horse' aimed at creating curriculum change towards an increased emphasis on employability. Despite these developments it is still a relatively little used methodology, incorporated into a minority of programmes and properly understood and practised by very few staff. The methods used to support work based learning generally acknowledge its theoretical roots such as the Reflective Learning Cycle (Kolb1984) and the Reflective Practitioner (Schon 1987) but are often inappropriate adaptations of traditional techniques used for supporting classroom based learning. Assessment and quality assurance practice are similarly limited. Much development needs to take place in the design of programmes and increasing staff understanding, exploiting in particular the opportunities offered by new technology to develop new forms of both learning and teaching and assessment. It is interesting to ponder as to the extent to which University staff might learn about work based learning through work based learning.
Chapter 4.
Research Methodology.
Chapter 4. Research Methodology.

Introduction

This study involved the researcher working with 22 students on Sandwich placement throughout the year of their placements. The students were visited on an average of five occasions with their employers being typically interviewed on two of these, usually the first and last visits. The interviews averaged approximately 1.5 hours and were tape recorded for later analysis along with contemporaneous and reflective notes. Unsuccessful attempts were made to develop contemporaneous and historical control groups. Data analysis was an ongoing activity throughout the study with the researcher providing the DfEE Project Steering group with regular reflective reports. The acts of preparing and presenting these reports produced preliminary findings that were, in-turn, fed back into the study.

It is a basic principle of research methodology that the methods chosen should match and be capable of delivering the aims of the study. This chapter outlines the reasons for methodological approach and the choice of research design. It then moves on to discuss some of the main considerations taken into account in the conduct of the study, including detailed discussion of the different facets of the approach. It discusses the validity, reliability and generalisability of the findings and some of the reservations that must be attached to them.

Throughout the chapter the author attempts to reflect on his role and development as a researcher. The reader might care to note that he has developed a professional interest in research methodology as a result, at least in part, of conducting this study and now spends a substantial proportion of his professional time teaching research methods to post and under-graduate students.
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The Research Design

The development of a research design involves a series of choices being made by the researcher as to both approach and methods. Easterby Smith et al (1991:33) define these choices as;

- **Researcher is independent** vs **Researcher is involved**
- **Large samples** vs **Small numbers**
- **Testing theories** vs **Generating theories**
- **Experimental design** vs **Fieldwork methods**
- **Verification** vs **Falsification**

The nature and detail of the choices made in any study reflect both the purposes of the study and the preferences of the researcher.

The purpose of this study was to develop an in depth understanding what students learned, could have learned and failed to learn on their BABS Sandwich year. This in turn was intended to lead to improvements in the design of the programme, the support provided for the learning, and its assessment and accreditation. The ultimate aim was to improve the experience of the students. The DfEE funding for the Project meant that the practical outcomes, the mechanisms that facilitated these improvements, were of prime importance.

The funding of the study was also to some degree dependant on the students at least being given the opportunity to obtain NVQ accreditation. This meant that the “interview” process with the students had to, at a minimum, take the form of the NVQ advising/assessing process. The researcher is an experienced NVQ Advisor/Assessor and so was well versed in this process. It is essentially one where Advisor/Assessor (researcher) and student (and if possible the manager/employer) explore the possibilities for development and assessment in the student’s work placement and agree a “contract” for both learning and assessment. In practice the researcher generally followed the
advising/assessing process for the first part of each meeting with the student, and then moved to a discussion designed to determine in some depth the underlying processes that were facilitating or hindering the student’s learning, and their reaction to the programme overall.

The study took place largely in the University of Greenwich where the author is a Principal Lecturer in the Business School. He has 15 years experience as a teacher and has frequently worked on programmes involving work-based learning. In recent years he has been researching portfolio-based learning and assessment, reflective learning, work-based learning and the relationship of competence to academic programmes. His pedagogic and research interests have focused on understanding and thereby improving these processes, although this was largely at postgraduate rather than undergraduate level.

The purposes of the study and the experience and preferences of the researcher both therefore supported the adoption of a phenomenological rather than positivist approach. The interest was in understanding rather than description. This in turn was likely to be best served by qualitative rather than quantitative information with the analysis based in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss: 1967) rather than predetermined categories. This data was best gathered through a relatively loosely structured research interview that prompted and helped the respondents to explore areas they defined as relevant. The end result of the study was an immediate and ongoing improvement in the practice of the researcher and others.

Robson (1993) lists the three traditional research strategies as experiment, survey and case study. Gill and Johnson (1997) add quasi-experiments and action research to this list. These strategies are easily described as ideal types, however, the divisions between them are often somewhat fudged at the margin. The discussion above shows clearly that an “action research” approach was the most appropriate for this study.
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The five "choices" listed above are discussed below in order to explain in more detail the reasons for the adoption of this approach to the study.

**Researcher Is Independent Vs Researcher Is Involved**

There were two possible ways in which the 22 students and employers who participated in the study could be viewed. The first is as objects of study who hold the knowledge necessary to the solution of the study. The researcher's role in that scenario would have been to develop tools that captured this knowledge, devices that analysed and displayed it and made it available to colleagues in order that they may clearly follow the connection between the data and the proposed solution. The subjects would have been passive and "knowledgeable" in that they possessed and were willing to divulge the information necessary to answer the researcher's questions. The researcher would have been neutral in that he took all feasible precautions to prevent his researches interfering with the data and thereby attempted to remain neutral.

The approach adopted was essentially the opposite of that described above. The researcher became deliberately involved with the respondents in an attempt to work with them to discover exactly what was going on in each of the placements. The model followed owed much to the work of Reason (1988) on co-operative enquiry. The students and their employers and managers obviously held the key information, but were not presumed to be consciously aware of it. The role of the researcher was to work with them to help them "uncover" the essential nature of the processes involved. (Schein: 1987). Although the main area of research was defined in advance of the start of the study many of the detailed questions were only determined through work with the respondents.

The researcher attempted to remain constantly aware of the extent to which his role both as "researcher" and "lecturer" at the University could affect the interaction with the students. Both gave him the status of "expert" which could easily have allowed him to impose his "understanding" of the situation on the other participants. This was controlled by the researcher restricting himself to short, open questions during the interviews.
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**Large Samples Vs Small Numbers**

It would have been possible to conduct a census of all the University of Greenwich students, and possibly a sample survey of the Sandwich Year students on some other BABS Degrees. These students and employers might have been able to answer in limited way questions about the experiences they had had and the learning that had occurred. There is little probability, however, that they would have provided any meaningful information on experiences they might have had, but had missed. Their own understanding of, and ability to describe the processes going on in their work based learning was likely to be limited. The probability of them producing lengthy answers to the written questionnaires that would have been an essential feature of any such large-scale study was also limited.

A more limited face to face or telephone interview study would have been another possibility that would have secured more detailed information. The geographical spread of likely respondents would have limited any face to face study to a relatively small number of interviews and certainly allowed only single interviews with each respondent. Any benefits gained from the increase in the size of the study sample were felt to be more than offset by the loss of opportunity to build confidence and trust in the researcher respondent relationship through multiple meetings over an extended period of time. The use of telephone interviews would have made more interviews possible, however, the lack of face to face contact would also have inhibited the building of trust necessary for the successful completion of this study.

The “one-shot” approach of a large study also, of necessity, produces a cross-section or snapshot of the data concerned. This is an economic means of describing the features of a large population – the “what” of any study. However, as Pettigrew (1985) points out, it is extremely limited in the insights it can provide into the factors that could have caused the features so described – the “why” of the study. This is much more likely to be discovered through a longitudinal design where several observations are made over an extended
period of time. This design was obviously the one most likely to facilitate the achievement of the study objectives.

To use a metaphor, work based learning is currently at the stage the petrol engine was in the 1920s. It is known to work and make students learn in the same way as early engines propelled cars, slowly and relatively inefficiently. The problem is how we move from an "engine" that has a maximum speed of 30mph and fuel economy of 10 mpg to one capable of 120mph and 40 mpg. The way these improvements have been brought about in the case of the petrol engine has not been to survey the performance of all engines, but to look in detail at the way different engines work, develop an understanding of what is going on, and on the basis of that understanding produce an improved design. Similarly the way forward with work based learning is not to catalogue the nature of a large number of examples, but to examine in detail a relatively small number of examples in order to better understand the processes involved, and consequently develop improved practice.

**Testing Theories Vs Generating Theories**

The issue here is the starting point for the research – the data or the theory. Scientific research traditionally starts with theory, which is used to generate hypotheses, which in turn are then tested generally through experiments. This process offers clarity concerning the subject of the investigation, the data to be collected and the method of collection. Replication is also generally relatively easy and hence any claims arising from the research can be subjected to public scrutiny. The disadvantages are that the results can be quite trivial, confirming what is already known (Easterby Smith et al 1991:36).

Work based learning theory is in a relatively primitive state of development. Ideas such as the “reflective learning cycle”, as discussed in Chapter 3, are well known and influential. However, the way they operate in different circumstances and the detail of their operation is not well understood. This limitation, together with the study’s declared objective of achieving greater understanding led to a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss: 1967). Easterby-Smith et al (1991:35-36) describe the grounded theory approach thus;
Glaser and Strauss see the key task of the researcher as being to develop theory through 'comparative method'. This means looking at the same event or process in different settings or situations. For example, the researcher might be interested in the workings of appraisal interviews and would therefore study a number of appraisal interviews handled by different managers, in different departments, or in different organisations. As a result of the studies it might be noticed that most appraisal interviews either focus on reviewing performance and whether or not last year's objectives have been achieved, or focus on future goals and how the subordinate may be helped to achieve them. They might then be labelled as 'judgmental' or 'developmental' interviews, and the distinction would represent a substantive theory about appraisal interviews.

However, the theorising could be taken further. For example, it might be observed that neither form of interview has much effect on the individual's performance or on the relationships between the managers and their subordinates. Thus one might conclude that both forms of interview are simply organisational rituals which have the function of demonstrating and reinforcing hierarchical power relations. This would be the beginning of a more generalised formal theory about power and organisational rituals. Glaser and Strauss consider both kinds of theory to be valuable, and they propose two main criteria for evaluating the quality of a theory. Firstly it should be sufficiently analytic to enable some generalisation to take place, but at the same time it should be possible for people to relate the theory to their own experiences, thus sensitising their own perceptions.

The parallels between this description and the present study are obvious. The research aimed to look at the learning of different Sandwich Year students in a variety of situations and to develop, through reflection on the data, at least some substantive theory to assist with understanding and explanation. The results of that process are shown from chapter 7
onwards. The researcher was concerned to “find the truth” and as such was willing to accept the lack of clarity and standardisation of methods that went with this approach (ibid:37). The reader will be able to judge as to whether or not the “theory” generated is “analytical” and “sensitising”, however, much of the discussion contained later in this report is based on presentations to the Steering Group and conferences of early and partial findings. The researcher was generally given much comfort and encouragement by the reception given to these presentations and the subsequent reaction to a further bid for £200,000 of funding for related work under the 1997/8 DfEE Prospectus. This bid drew heavily on the current study and was discussed with the MCI, STEP, CIHE, MVC, ABS, BABSIP and two Universities all of whom were complimentary about it and agreed to support and participate in it. Although the bid was ultimately unsuccessful this external reaction would suggest that the suggested criteria above have been met.

Experimental Design Vs Fieldwork Methods

The traditional scientific method relies on the testing of theories through experiments. Theories are never proved, only found to fail in limiting cases. The more a theory is tested and found to offer valid explanations of events, in the greater range of circumstances, the more credibility it acquires. The classic experiment involves isolating the experimental population from all influences apart from the experimental variable, applying that variable, and measuring the result. Any changes are ascribed to the experimental variable and a causal relationship inferred. While this is a feasible and productive method for the physical sciences it has proved difficult to transport to the social sciences and humanities. These disciplines have, however, developed the “quasi-experiment” as an adaptation of the classical experiment to their particular circumstances.

The quasi-experimental method accepts that while working on an experimental population of people living in the real world it is impossible in virtually all cases to “control” by isolation all influences other than the experimental variable. It attempts to substitute a “matching” process, attempting to control non-experimental influences by having them affect two groups equally – the “experimental” and “control” groups. The only difference
between the experience of the two groups in the experimental period is the experimental variable. Any difference measured in the “performance” of the two groups over this period must therefore, according to this view, be due to the experimental variable.

This approach was considered and attempted in this study. Once the experimental group had been identified it was attempted to match the group on a variety of characteristics against two “control” groups. The first of these was a group of Sandwich Year students from the same year and with similar characteristics to experimental group. The second was to identify those students who had been in the same placements as the “experimental” group the year before. The literature (for example Brennan and Little: 1996, Eraut 1994) indicated that the relevant factors for the matching of the two groups were likely to include:

- age;
- gender;
- ethnicity;
- previous educational background;
- employment experience;
- achievement in early part of degree;
- “quality” of placement.

Even working with this relatively simple list of criteria matching proved to be impossible in any meaningful form for the first “contemporaneous control” group. “Matches” could only be found for five of the experimental group.

The second “historical control” group also proved surprisingly difficult to assemble. Only 14 of the 23 placements in the study were repeated from the previous year and five of these 14 students either proved to be impossible to contact or unwilling to participate (5 broken appointments in one case). Despite the fact that control groups had proved impossible to form in any meaningful sense the “matched” students were interviewed, where possible, and the data gathered fed into Chapter 5 – the description of the status
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quo. Little useful information, other than this general background information, resulted from the matching exercise.

The idea of the comparison between “experimental” and “control” groups, whilst being interesting exercise, had never been at the core of the study. This had always been intended to be “fieldwork” with the group of students that agreed to participate in the experimental programme. Fieldwork classically involves the study of “real” people in “real” social situations, in which the social and organisational context is regarded as a matter for exploration in the search for understanding, rather than an interference that needs to be controlled. This phenomenological or social constructionist view is often juxta-positioned against the positivist view prevalent in the physical sciences.

The problem for this study such was the extent to which an ethnographic approach could be adopted. Traditional ethnography involves the researcher immersing himself in the society he wishes to study in order that he be able to understand the meanings of events in the same way as the members of that society. In this case this would have meant working as a Sandwich Year student, or alongside a Sandwich Year student for the period of their Traineeship. Even if this were done, however, it is doubtful if the experience and understanding of the researcher would be the same as that of the student. The handicap of age and significant differences in recent past experience would mitigate against this. Perhaps even more importantly this approach would have limited the study to one placement when one of the key factors to be studied was the affect of the variability of placements.

Thus while many of the elements of an ethnographic approach were adopted, for example, always trying to understand the meaning of events for the actors concerned, a full ethnographic approach was not possible. The approach adopted was a combination of that proposed by Reason (1988) and Schein (1997). Reason proposes working “with” rather than “on” respondents to develop an understanding of the subject in question, treating them as co-workers rather than subjects of study. Schein similarly proposes working with
respondents as a "consultant" to help them uncover, reflect on and define the meaning of events.

The final design was then one of repeated visits spread throughout the duration of the study. These visits were deliberately lengthy (approximately 1.5 hours on average) and allowed for the detailed exploration of events and possibilities with the students. Whenever the researcher formed a view of a particular event this understanding was always fed back to the respondent as a check on the validity of the researchers perception.

The frequency of the interviews was determined by the speed at which significant events were occurring in the students' workplaces. The original design had allowed for monthly visits. This was found to be too frequent from several points of view. First, the visits always concluded with the students "contracting" to undertake an agreed range of tasks to be reviewed at the following visit. A period of between six and eight weeks was generally necessary for the completion of a meaningful set of tasks. Secondly, the travelling and write-up time involved in the investigation of 23 cases (as well as carrying out 0.5 of a lecturers job) meant that more frequent visiting was virtually impossible.

**Verification Vs Falsification**

As noted above scientific theories can never be proved (verified) only disproved (falsified). When applied to positivist research this leads to a search for the limiting case, the case that does indeed prove the original theory wrong. It does not matter how many proofs of a theory are made, although the more so the greater the strength of the theory, only one contradiction is needed to require modification of existing or development of new theory.

The discussion earlier in this chapter outlines the reasons why a positivist approach to this study was rejected. The positivist approach and the debate concerning verification and falsification does, however, have something to offer this study. Reason (1998) calls on phenomenological researchers to exercise "critical subjectivity" and recognise their own
beliefs and feelings and guard against being swept along by them. He emphasises the need to search for contradictory as well as confirmatory evidence.

**Conclusion.**

The two key elements of the study, the need for understanding and the emphasis on the improvement in practice indicated that qualitative research in an action research mode was the most appropriate methodology for the study (Revans: 1983; Pedler: 1983; Sanford: 1981; Zuber-Skerrit: 1992). The search for “meaning” meant that quantitative data gathered from a positivist study would not provide the insights required.

**Action Research**

The emphasis on improvement in practice was the clearest possible indicator that an action research approach was appropriate. The process of action research was first described by Lewin (1952) and further developed by Carr and Kemmis (1986), and Revans (1983). Put simply it comprises “a spiral of cycles of action consisting of four major moments: plan, act, observe and reflect”. (Zuber-Skerritt 1992:11). Gill and Johnson (1997:62) quote Rapoport’s (1970:449) definition;

> Action Research aims both to contribute to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable framework.

Zuber-Skerritt (1992) writing specifically about action research in higher education defines it as;

> collaborative, critical enquiry by academics themselves....into their own teaching practice, into problems of student learning and into curriculum problems.
The key elements of action research are that it;
- is based in practice;
- uses changes in practice to develop understanding;
- relies on collaboration with the parties "being researched" to define the problem, develop an understanding and implement a solution.

The relevance to the current study is obvious. First, the research is very much based in practice with improvement of the student experience both at the University of Greenwich and elsewhere its primary concern. Secondly, changes in practice were fundamental to the search for understanding. The changes between the existing and experimental schemes were at the heart of the study, and the changes during the study, made possible through the late entry of some of the sample (see below), also provided some interesting insights. Finally, as discussed above, the active participation of and contribution from both students and employers was seen as crucial to the development of the desired understanding. They were regarded as colleagues rather than respondents.

The main features of an action research approach are;
- the interventions of the researcher are the equivalent of the experimental stimulus;
- the interventions are based on the researchers "personal theories";
- the intervention are aimed at producing an improvement in the researcher's practice;
- later interventions may be modified and developed as a result of the assessment and evaluation of the results of earlier interventions;
- the researcher generally adopts a phenomenological approach being primarily interested in understanding and explanation rather than description.

Once again the applicability of this approach to the present study is obvious. First, the experimental stimulus was the change to a competence based approach and the "D" 32/33 Advisor/Assessor based student support and assessment provided by the researcher. Secondly, the researcher is a lecturer with some 20 years experience of higher education, during which time he has developed a distinct style of pedagogic practice. It would clearly
be a nonsense to pretend that experience and practice did not affect the conduct of the study and a waste to try and neutralise it. The personal theories of the researcher were an essential component of this study. Thirdly, the researcher has developed his practice through informal experiment over many years with this study providing the opportunity to build on that practice in a new area in a substantial way. Fourthly, the quarterly reports to the Steering Committee provided an opportunity for reflection and revision of practice that was fed into subsequent visits. Finally, the emphasis on achieving understanding meant a phenomenological approach was adopted throughout.

Action research comes in several forms. Zuber-Skerritt builds on the work of Carr and Kemmis (1986) to identify three types of action research, technical, practical and emancipatory.

Fig 4.1 Types of action research and their main characteristics (after Carr and Kemmis, 1986)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of action research</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Facilitator's role</th>
<th>Relationship between facilitator and participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Technical'</td>
<td>Effectiveness/efficiency of educational practice Professional development</td>
<td>Outside 'expert'</td>
<td>Co-option (of practitioners who depend on facilitator)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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2. Practical As(1)above
Practitioners' understanding
Transformation of their consciousness

Socratic role, encouraging participation and self-reflection
Co-operation (process consultancy)

3. Emancipatory As(2)above
Participants' emancipation from the dictates of tradition, self-deception, coercion
Their critique of bureaucratic systematisation
Transformation of the organisation and of the educational system

Process moderatorCollaboration (responsibility shared equally by participants)

This framework provides an interesting insight into the present study. Both the DfEE as funder of the study and the researcher intended that the study reach the emancipatory level of this typology. The study was aimed at changing the practice of at least the researcher and his University, and hopefully other Universities as well. In the end the overall result was a change in practice in the University of Greenwich (see Appendix 3 for new Sandwich Year Unit specification), so while there may have been an element of “emancipation from the dictates of tradition” the extent to which there was “transformation of the organisation and educational system” was much more limited.

The relationship between researcher and students was complicated by the fact that the researcher was also a lecturer, albeit not “their” lecturer in that he had not taught this
group beforehand. This perception, of itself, limited the extent to which a truly "collaborative" relationship could be achieved with most relationships for most of the time restricted to co-operation, and the researcher consequently to a "Socratic" role. The limited contact with, and limited commitment that employers were willing to make, similarly restricted this relationship to one of co-operation.

Perhaps the most truly collaborative relationship fostered through the research, and essential to the implementation, if not to the determination of the findings themselves, was that between the researcher and colleagues who would eventually have to work any revised system. The researcher made great efforts to work with the BABS Course Director, Industrial Traineeship Supervisor and Administrator, and Head of School to ensure that they were aware of what was being done on the study and incorporating their views into the findings. This was achieved through a series of formal and informal meetings held throughout the study, and at the time of writing, ten months after the completion of the study has resulted in the formal adoption of the proposed Unit.

The Sample

The research design is perhaps best described as a "multiple case study" (Yin 1994:41-53. The multiple case study design was thought to be the most appropriate for these circumstances, with the cases covering as wide a spectrum as possible. Yin (ibid 45) asserts that the logic governing the selection of multiple cases should be replication logic not sampling logic.

*Each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) produces contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication). The ability to conduct six or ten case studies, arranged effectively within a multiple-case design, is analogous to the ability to conduct six to ten experiments on related topics; a few cases (two or three) would be literal replications, whereas a few other*
cases (four to six) might be designed to pursue two different patterns of theoretical replications. If all the cases turn out as predicted, these six to ten cases, in the aggregate, would have provided compelling support for the initial set of propositions. If the cases are in some way contradictory, the initial propositions must be revised and retested with another set of cases. Again, this logic is similar to the way scientists deal with contradictory experimental findings.

An important step in all of these replication procedures is the development of a rich, theoretical framework. The framework needs to state the conditions under which a particular phenomenon is likely to be found (a literal replication) as well as the conditions when it is not likely to be found (a theoretical replication). The theoretical framework later becomes the vehicle for generalising to new cases, again similar to the role played in cross-experiment designs. Furthermore, just as with experimental science, if some of the empirical cases do not work as predicted, modification must be made to the theory. Remember, too, that theories can be practical, and not just academic.

In summary the sample should be selected on the basis of whether or not the cases are likely to throw some light on the theory rather than in a purely random way designed to ensure representativeness. An excess of extreme or untypical cases is likely to be a help rather than a hindrance in developing the relevant theory. If the aim of the study had been to describe the Sandwich Year environment then "representativeness" would have been an important issue. However, as the aim was to develop understanding of the learning processes involved it was not.

The funding contract specified that the study should include 15 students, and provided resources accordingly. An initial decision was made to recruit 18 in order to allow for some limited dropout through, for example, students failing to find placements or loosing
their placements. In an ideal world a list of the placements of all the Sandwich Year students would have been prepared containing a description of each placement in terms of the variables thought likely to influence the learning likely to occur. The 18 students to be included in the sample would then have been selected from this sampling frame according to the logic outlined by Yin above.

In the real world this was not possible for a number of reasons. First, the sample had to be identified in the autumn term in order that the necessary briefings could take place prior to the commencement of the placement. At this time only about 70 of the 110 likely placements were known. The 40 students who had not found placements were likely to be untypical of the group as a whole (more discerning over their choice of placement, less attractive to employers), and given the logic outlined above should not have been excluded from the sample.

Secondly, while some placements were repeats of previous years, many were new. This meant it was impossible to get a full description of the placements in terms of the characteristics the literature would indicate were desirable. Even with repeat placements the level of information available was somewhat limited. Tutor reports could be examined and student work studied where available but these provided only limited and inconsistent information. A programme of assessment visits to all 110 placements was impossible to resource, and even if this had been completed there was no guarantee that last years placement or the “theoretical” placement would be an adequate description of the reality. Indeed one of the interesting findings of the study was the extent to which the same placement could vary year on year for a variety of factors.

Thirdly, it was thought to be unethical and impractical to compel students to join the study. The students had to be willing volunteers as otherwise the element of compulsion in itself might have had a negative impact on the learning. The opposite may well also be true in that as the students were told quite clearly that inclusion in the experimental sample
would involve extra work as well as extra reward (in terms of additional accreditation) the sample was more likely to include the more able and motivated students.

In practice the sample was chosen by invitation and by fortunate co-incidence 18 students initially applied to join the study. This meant that no selection had to be made at this point, although if it had had to be it would have been carried out so as to maximise the likely variety of placements. The initial sample was not the final sample. Several events led to withdrawals and additions. In the first instance three of the original 18 failed to get placements. This left an acceptable 15 but at various points through the year eight other students indicated they wanted to join the group, and were accepted. Four of this sample withdrew for reasons discussed in detail in Chapter 7, leaving 19 students who “successfully” completed the study. The reason for the latecomers joining was generally that they had heard positive things about the Project from their friends who were involved. In methodological terms it proved an interesting exercise in that lessons learnt from the main group could be applied from first contact with the late comers, and “cut-down” versions of the programme could be tested to determine their efficiency. The work with a larger sample was only possible because early visits demonstrated that the planned visit frequency of 4 weeks was not needed or desirable, and was best replaced with a 6-8 week visit interval.

### The Interviews

The study involved interviews with three different groups:
- students;
- employers;
- colleagues.

There were many similarities and some differences between the objectives of the interviews, the methods used and the skills required to carry them out. The objective of all the interviews was to gain an understanding of what the students could learn in the
Sandwich Year and how they could best do it. Each of these groups had a different involvement in the process and could therefore provide information from a different angle. The three views provided a type of triangulation. The methods used as outlined below were the same unstructured interview techniques in each case (see below). The differences arose from the different relationships that existed between interviewer and interviewee, respectively these might be characterised as lecturer-student, customer-client and colleague-colleague. These are discussed below.

**The Choice of Interview Design**

An interview is a purposeful discussion between two people (Kahn and Cannell, 1957). Interviews have been variously referred to as structured, semi-structured and unstructured: standardised and non-standardised (Healy 1991): and respondent and informant interviews ((Robson 1993). In summarising the distinctions between these different types of interview Saunders et al (1997:211-212) conclude;

*There is overlap between these different typologies, although consideration of each typology adds to our overall understanding of the nature of research interviews.*

*Structured interviews use questionnaires based on a predetermined and standardised or identical set of questions. You read out each question and then record the response on a standardised schedule, usually with pre-coded answers. While there is social interaction between you and the respondent, such as explanations which you will need to provide, you should read out the questions in the same tone of voice so that you do not indicate any bias.*

*By comparison, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are non-standardised. In semi-structured interviews the researcher will have a list of themes and questions to be covered, although these may vary from interview to interview. This means that you may omit some questions in particular*
interviews given the specific organisational context which is encountered in relation to the research topic. The order of questions may also be varied depending on the flow of the conversation. On the other hand, additional questions may be required to explore your research question and objectives given the nature of events within particular organisations. The nature of the questions and the ensuing discussion means that data will be recorded by note taking, or perhaps by tape recording the conversation.

Unstructured interviews are informal. You would use these to explore in depth a general area in which you are interested. We therefore refer to these as in-depth interviews ...... There is no predetermined list of questions to work through in this situation, although you need to have a clear idea about the aspects you want to explore. The interviewee is given the opportunity to talk freely about events, behaviour and beliefs in relation to the topic area, so that this type of interaction Is sometimes called non-directive. It has been labelled as an informant interview since it is the interviewee's perceptions which guide the conduct of the interview. In comparison, a respondent interview is one where the interviewer directs the interview and the interviewee responds to the questions of the researcher (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991; Ghauri et al., 1995; Healey and Rawlinson, 1994; Robson, 1993).

The exploratory nature of the study meant that the in-depth interview was the most appropriate form. The need to understand "why" an event had occurred; to solicit the opinion of the respondent; to provide feedback to the students; and to probe responses to questions meant there was no feasible alternative to this form of enquiry. The interviewer did not however regard the interviewee (particularly the students) as passive sources of information waiting to be drained of their knowledge. The approach (as outlined above) was one in which an intelligent discussion between two participants could result in a better understanding for both. The interviewee could bring the experience of working on the Sandwich Year to the table and the interviewer the contextual knowledge and
understanding and analytical concepts to help the interviewee make sense of that experience. The interviewee might not have the knowledge to be able to answer the interviewers questions at the start of the interview, but would build that understanding through the discussion. If done in this way both interviewer and interviewee benefit.

This notion of mutual benefit was particularly important in this study as it was a longitudinal study involving several interviews with each student. This feature, in itself, involved the building of a “relationship” with the students in a way that is not possible in a single interview design. If however, the relationship had been one-sided in its benefits it is difficult that it would have lasted so long, or the students put so much effort into it. The students did not have to do the additional work to “pass” their Sandwich Year, they could always have reverted to the “normal” Sandwich Year. One possible conclusion is that they found more in the study than the additional qualification at the end.

The Interview Method.

Following Saunders et al (1997:219) the interviewer took the following into consideration in attempting to avoid, or at least limit, any bias in the interviews;

- *time and place of the interview*;
- *preparation and readiness for the interview*;
- *level of information supplied and briefing given to the interviewee*;
- *appropriateness of the appearance of the interviewer at the interview*;
- *nature of the opening comments made when the interview commenced*;
- *approach to questioning*;
- *impact of the interviewer’s behaviour during the course of the interview*;
- *ability to demonstrate attentive listening skills*;
- *scope to test understanding*;
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- approach to recording information

Each is discussed in turn below.

**The Time and Place of the Interview.**

The interviews with students generally took place in an office or meeting room at the students' place of employment booked by the student for the purpose. This provided a pleasant environment although occasionally, when the booking was limited to one hour, the time constraint did affect the overall conduct of the interview. Generally, however, this was not a difficulty with employers placing little or no restriction on the time allowed to the student to participate in the interview. In one case, where the student was in a "normal" job rather than a Sandwich Year placement, the student was interviewed (with employer knowledge and consent) in the "canteen" during her lunch break. The ambient noise made for some difficulty with the tape recording, but there was generally sufficient opportunity to ensure confidentiality. The only real difficulty was experienced in the case of the four students working in a placement that "broke down" after three months due to the attitude and financial position of the employer. In this case the interviewer was put under some pressure to finish the first interview after a very short period and denied anything more than a brief telephone call to the employer. In this case students were seen both at the University in the evenings and, when they had secured another placement, at their new employers premises.

The managers and employers were generally seen after the students by virtue of appointments made by the students. Typically these would take place in the managers/employers office, although on some occasions the manager/employer did come to the meeting room. The choice was largely determined by whether or not the manager/employer had their own office, shared an office or worked in an open plan office. It was not felt that the venue was a significant determinant in the conduct of the interview. These interviews generally lasted between 20-30 minutes.
Interviews with colleagues were held in their offices or a meeting room booked for the purpose. Again the place was not thought to be a major determinant of the course of the interview. The main difference with this group was the influence and information gained on the subject from past and continuous contact was impossible to divorce from that gained through the formal interview.

**Preparation and Readiness for the Interview**

The interviewer was an experienced Advisor/Assessor with extensive knowledge of both the Management Standards and NVQ practice. He also had a thorough knowledge of the degree structure and regulations, had taught several Units on the degree, and had previously supervised Sandwich Year students. This level of knowledge and understanding was important in several ways. First, it enabled him to appear assured in answering student and employer questions during interviews which in turn facilitated the development of a positive relationship. Secondly, it gave him confidence to range freely within a loosely structured interview while carrying a mental map of the ground to be covered.

The regular reviews in preparation for the Steering Committee meetings also meant that as the sole researcher involved in the study he had reviewed the ground covered at that stage and was fully aware of the emerging issues. This again facilitated the development of the approach over the period of the research.

**The Level of Information Supplied and Briefing Given to the Interviewee**

Saunders et al (1997:220) argue that the more preparation an interviewee can be encouraged to undertake in advance of an interview, with certain exceptions, the better the result of the interview will be. In reality little more could be done with employers and colleagues than to very briefly outline the areas to be discussed and urge reflection in advance of the interview.

In the case of students, however, such preparation took three distinct forms. First, before going on placement the students were briefed as to the requirements of NVQs and the
content of the Management Standards. Secondly, they were given a checklist, based on the Management Standards to apply to their work soon after starting their placement. Third, there were ranges of tasks agreed to be carried out between interviews (see below). The last of these measures worked successfully. The first two less so. The briefing and checklist proved to be too lengthy and complex for the students with the result that (as reported in Chapter 7) that no student had made anything more than a token effort to complete the checklist, and few, prior to the first interview had any real understanding of the tasks they would be asked to complete. The lesson would appear to be that while briefings do help prepare interviewees they must be kept relatively short, interest the interviewee and be relatively quick and easy to carry out.

**The Appropriateness of the Interviewer's Appearance at the Interview.**

The interviewer attempted to follow Robson’s (1993) advice and build credibility by dressing in a way that was both acceptable to those being interviewed and in the situation in which the interviews was to take place. To this end he deliberately wore formal casual attire suitable for an office but perhaps less formal than a managerial employee of his age (47) might have been expected to wear. This was to facilitate identification with the student whilst not, when seen, causing undue antipathy from the employer. This did cause amusement on one occasion when a student was visited on a “casual clothing” day, resulting in the interviewer being the most formally dressed person in the office. A reverse of the normal position.

**The Nature of the Opening Comments made when the Interview Commenced.**

The interviewer was acutely aware that the early contact, and in particular the opening of the first interview with each student would, to a significant degree, determine the success or failure of the whole project. The first few minutes were crucial to establishing his credibility and gaining the student’s confidence. The initial contact was made by telephone to arrange an interview appointment. The telephone calls were deliberately made mid morning or mid afternoon in order to try and ensure that the student would be there and not rushed at the start or end of their day. The calls were also made on days when the
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interviewer would be accessible by telephone in order to facilitate call-back and avoid causing annoyance through lack of accessibility. Lengthy calls were found to be necessary to allay some student’s fears about the study and answer questions. Time was given without question or attempt to hurry at this stage in order to build a relationship. The success of this strategy is demonstrated by the fact that only one student dropped out of the study in the period leading up to the first interviews.

Each interview was opened with social pleasantries surrounding enquiries as to the student’s welfare at work and more generally. These were generally welcomed by the students and provoked discussions of splits with parents, partners and on one occasion the aftermath of a “road rage” attack. This concern, genuinely felt and expressed, was the key to the development of the interviews. The early interviews, in particular, generally involved long periods of explanation and answering questions concerning the study’s requirements of the students. This time was given and the interviews not rushed even though this time was greater than had been planned for, and as a result the study fell behind the planned schedule. The student’s agenda was satisfied in each case before the interviewer attempted to move on to his. The explanations given at this stage inevitably involved the use of jargon associated with NVQs eg Units, Elements, evidence, reflective report, indexing. The interviewer to ensure that each student understood these terms exercised great care and considerable patience.

The opening sections of the employer and colleague often involved similar explanations of the purpose and nature of the study, again taking more time than had been thought would be the case, but equally important to building credibility. The personal concern of the student interviews was omitted in these.

The Approach to Questioning.

The student interviews generally comprised three parts. First the initial opening phase outlined above. Secondly, the main part of the interview that, as the students were working towards the acquisition of a NVQ, had to follow the NVQ “D” 32/33
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Advisor/Assessor format. Finally there was the research element intended to discover both the students' views of the NVQ process, its relevance to their work, and its value in developing and measuring their learning. Within this general framework the content and order of the interviews varied according to the interests and revelations of the respondents.

The questioning technique used during the interviews was that of short, open questions designed to open up an area for discussion followed by "what, when, where, why, who and how" prompts to "funnel" down and clarify areas of interest. The interviewer had noted Whyte's "Levels of Directiveness" (1982 as quoted in Jankowicz 1996:214) in terms of the way an interviewer controls an interview as steadily increasing through the use of following techniques;

- non-committal utterance
- repeating last utterance as a question
- probing the last utterance
- probing idea expressed before the last utterance
- probing an idea expressed earlier in the interview
- a new question on the same general theme
- introduction of a new theme

He strove to maintain as "light" a touch as possible in order to minimise his impact on the interview and obtain a full and true as possible account from the interviewees. Interviewees were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and think aloud through important events.

The D32/33 Advisor/Assessor Units essentially govern the way in which candidates for NVQs are prepared and assessed. These Units include the following elements;

*D 32 Assess candidate performance,*
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- agree and review a plan for assessing performance;
- collect and judge performance evidence against criteria;
- collect and judge knowledge evidence;
- make assessment decision and provide feedback.

D33 Assess candidate using different sources of evidence,
- agree and review an assessment plan;
- judge evidence and provide feedback;
- make assessment decision using different sources of evidence and provide feedback.

These Elements outline the key features of the system. The Advisor/Assessor works with the candidate to make an initial assessment of where competence may lie or be developed. This is then worked up into a plan for both the development and assessment of competence. The assessment is usually based, in the main, on a written portfolio of “performance” evidence “naturally” generated in the workplace, contextualised and explained through a reflective report or “storyboard”. Gaps and shortcomings are then explored at an assessment interview.

Each interview was concluded with the completion of a “Portfolio Progress Report”. This was a simple one page form (see Appendix 7) that recorded the details of the meeting (points discussed) and the “actions agreed” on NCR paper, with the student keeping one copy and the interviewer the other. The form represented an agreed version of the meeting and was signed by both parties to signify this. The “actions agreed” would then generally become the starting point for this section of the subsequent meeting. Although brief this form played an important part in both crystallising and recording agreement. In terms of the NVQ process this form constituted the Assessment Plan.

In retrospect it is also interesting to note what other information it might have provided or purposes it might have been used for. It did not provide
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- a record of the length of the meeting;
- comment on or assessment of the students progress;
- information to the employer and manager;
- a basis for agreeing the next stage of the student’s placement with the employer or manager.

This process was followed through all the interviews with the students, and did, in itself, help the students learn and recognise and value their learning. In terms of the research process working with the students in this way enabled the researcher to see in detail the opportunities open to the students and the use that was made of them. This combined with the students’ reflective review of the whole process solicited in the last part of the interview provided an in-depth view of the whole process. The value of the data gathered in this way was immediately evident when a comparison was made between it and the written reports submitted monthly by the “normal” Sandwich Year students.

The researcher has considerable experience of selection interviewing and has long found the exploration of key or critical incidents through what is sometimes known as Behavioural Incident techniques to be a fruitful source of information. This involves no more than taking the respondent through in detail what happened to them in particular events, but concentrates on what happened rather than their explanations or analyses of events. This notion of initially concentrating on behaviours is given support by the idea of the “knowing respondent”, or perhaps more properly the unknowing respondent. The researcher was wary of asking the subjects to analyse situations in terms and concepts that were familiar to him but not to them. Respondents do not always “know” what has happened to them in the way the researcher desires to describe it. In these cases the researcher must determine the “facts” with the respondent but then perform the analysis. The respondents’ analysis of the events that happened to them are, of course important, but only where that is based on a proper understanding of the analytical ideas concerned.

The Impact of the Interviewer’s Behaviour During the Course of the Interview.
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In the interviews with the students the interviewer made a deliberate effort to be as “friendly” as possible. This included, wherever possible, sitting beside or “round the corner” from the student rather than across the table: encouraging the use of first names: giving his home telephone number for contact in case of emergencies: enquiring about the general well-being of the student: sorting out any “problems” that were being experienced with the University (registration, missing coursework marks, etc): adopting a friendly tone and giving as much time as was required, and ensuring that the student’s agenda was satisfied each time before embarking on his own.

This approach played a significant part in the success of the study. The researcher had not been aware of the strength of the informal networks that operated amongst the Sandwich Year students (one “good” student, generally very well thought of by her employer, was formally “told off” for spending too much time “networking”), but soon discovered that views, thankfully positive, concerning the conduct of the interview and the nature of the study spread from the early to later interviewees. This view also spread to students not initially included in the study who subsequently requested to become part of it. The importance of the relationship of trust between student and researcher highlights the need for the personal contact of the face-to-face interview and rules out the telephone interview and written questionnaire as primary data gathering techniques.

The literature in this area recommends a neutral but interested stance (Robson 1993). Neutral to ensure the minimum interviewer “interference” and interested to get a full response. While this might be true of a study solely concerned with the description of the status quo, this study was concerned to explore what might be possible in changed circumstances. This, in turn, required the co-operation and enthusiasm of the students. This focus, combined with the Action Research approach of the study was felt to justify the revised methodology.

The “closer than normal” relationship with the students brought the advantages of trust and enthusiasm. It did, however, carry the possibility of the students might distort data in
order to “please” the interviewer. The interviewer attempted to guard against this by triangulating statements against documentary and other evidence wherever possible in order to establish the veracity of responses.

**The Ability to Demonstrate Attentive Listening Skills.**

The skills of interviewing differ considerably from those of conversation. The ability to make a full and creative input to a conversation can disrupt the flow of thought of an interviewee in an in-depth interview. The role of the interviewer is to open up areas for discussion through open questions, but then to “hold back their own thoughts” while listening and developing an understanding of what the interviewee is saying. The interviewer needs to prompt, guide and encourage the interviewee, but must allow reasonable space and time for the interviewee to develop their responses. Above all the interviewer must avoid leading and “projecting” their own thoughts onto the interviewee.

The absence of time pressure from both students and employers and the external funding of the researcher’s time were important to facilitating this feature in this case, as was the experience of the interviewer.

**The Scope to Test Understanding.**

The end result of the “funnel” questioning technique referred to above is a view on the part of the interviewer of something the interviewee has experienced. The interviewer was assiduous in completing the essential next step of feeding back that understanding to the interviewee for checking. In many cases this then led to a further conversation aimed at clearing up the anomalies revealed.

**The Approach to Recording Information**

The reason for recording information from interviews is to provide a record of the data for later analysis. This means that in order to control bias and produce reliable data the recording should be as contemporaneous as possible. It is important to recall that the purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the work based learning of
Sandwich Year students, and the method to work with the three main participants, the student, employer and tutor to develop this understanding. The implications of this for data recording are that this understanding must be recorded. As discussed above the interviewer took considerable pains to check his understanding during the interview with the interviewees (tape-recorded), he did however feel that it was desirable to record his impressions and thoughts immediately after the interview in addition to the words of the interview. These subsequently proved invaluable in the analysis of the data.

In order to meet these requirements the data gathered from the interviews was recorded in three main ways;

- tape recording;
- notes made during the interview;
- notes made after the interview.

The majority of interviews in the study were tape-recorded. Interviewees were asked if they were willing to be recorded and none asked objected. All interviews with students were tape-recorded. There were, however, some occasions when it was obvious that the employer interviews were going to reveal data critical of the students that it was thought recording might inhibit the interview so recording was not suggested. None of the interviews with colleagues were recorded as again it was felt that this might inhibit discussion. This split between the interviews that were recorded and those that were not reflects on the different interviewee perceptions of the data being sought. The students were in the main providing data for their assessment against an NVQ thus the recording of data was legitimate in order to ensure the transparency of the assessment. This logic was accepted even though the interviews also went into other, more sensitive, areas. The interviews with employers and colleagues focused around critical reviews of students and process, making recording more likely to inhibit discussion.

It is interesting to compare the experience of this research with Saunders (1997:228) summary of the advantages and disadvantages of tape recording the interview.
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Advantages

- Allows interviewer to concentrate on questioning and listening;
- Allows questions formulated at an interview to be accurately recorded for use in later interviews where appropriate;
- Can re-listen to the interview;
- Accurate and unbiased record provided;
- Allows direct quotes to be used;
- Permanent record for others to use.

Disadvantages

- May adversely affect the relationship between interviewee and interviewer (possibility of focusing on the recorder);
- May inhibit some interviewee responses and reduce reliability;
- Possibility of a technical problem;
- Disruption to discussion when changing tapes;
- Time required to transcribe the tape.

(Sources: authors' experience; Easterby-Smih et al., 1991; Ghouri et al, 1995; Hecey and Rowlinson, 1994 as quoted in Saunders et al 1997: 228)

In the students case the advantages, during lengthy interviews, well outweighed the disadvantages. With the employers and colleagues the reverse was true.

The mechanics of the recording involved the use of a Sony cassette recorder with remote microphone. This was relatively unobtrusive (visual and noise) and provided good quality reproduction even in canteen situations with relatively high levels of ambient noise.
Individuals v Group Interviews

The possibility arose in two cases where there were multiple placements of students of carrying out group interviews. The interviewer welcomed this as his experience matches that of Saunders et al (1997:233) that;

there are distinct advantages. Because of the presence of several participants, this type of situation allows for a variety of points of view to emerge and for the group to respond to and discuss these views. A dynamic group can generate or respond to a number of ideas and evaluate them, thus helping you to explain or explore concepts.

In terms of this study where the early part of interviews usually related to responding to student concerns the group interview was also extremely efficient as the majority of concerns were shared by all the students. Group interviews meant repetition could be avoided. The main drawback is the skill required of the interviewer. However, in this case the researcher was experienced in this technique, and given that the groups were limited to three or four participants, the recording and later analysis was not as difficult as it can be with larger groups.

Access

The issue of access was not as difficult in this study as can often be the case as the bid for funding had been supported by, and the subsequent contract signed by the University. As the students volunteered for the study their co-operation was virtually assured. Colleagues were generally willing to talk about an issue that was of general concern within the Business School once they understood the purpose of the study. In this respect it was important that both the Head of School and Dean actively supported the study, and that the researcher was frequently asked to give presentations of findings to date to School meetings.
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The employers had all agreed to their students being a part of the study at the outset and presumed that contact with the University was a part of the Sandwich Year placement practice. With the one exception referred to above where the placement broke down all were co-operative.

Ironically the one difficulty encountered was with the Faculty registry releasing information concerning grades and biographical data. The fact that the information was held on computer meant that the Data Protection Act was invoked until Senior Management intervened.

Making Sense of it All - Analysing the Data

The approach to the data analysis is perhaps best described as “progressive reflection”. Many authors emphasise the importance of analysing data as the study progresses rather than waiting until the all data has been collected (see for example Jankowicz 1996). This is firstly, to get the most out of the data by dealing with it while it is still fresh in the mind of the researcher and before time has applied the filter of memory to it. And, secondly to prevent the repetition of errors and allow the lessons learnt from early data collection to be applied to later efforts. Some writers such as Yin (1994) emphasise the need for consistency of practice throughout the study and believe in the need to “start again” should any significant changes to methods be thought necessary as a result of early work. The action research approach of this study, however, makes alteration of later practice as a result of early findings an essential and positive feature of its methodology.

The notion of “reflection” is an interesting one. It is as difficult for researchers as for learners. The researcher found the process of writing regular reports for the Project Steering Committee a cathartic experience in that it forced him to systematically review the work to date. As reported by many other researchers he found the process of writing an important one in that it forced the development of analytical categories, the categorisation of data and the subjection of his ideas to criticism by others.
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The theoretical roots of the analytic process followed are best described as "grounded theory" (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and the methods used those described by amongst others Riley (1990). The data was "spread out" before the researcher and the categories allowed to emerge. The period of research was fairly intense, particularly at the beginning with the researcher spending approximately half the week interviewing. This level of data immersion (Riley 1990) meant the researcher was very familiar with the data. This greatly assisted the analysis as did the reflective notes made immediately after the interviews.

The number of interviews carried out and the resources available meant that full transcription of all the interviews was not possible. It is difficult to see anyway how such a mass of data could have been analysed. The analysis started with the notes of the interviews and then reverted to the relevant sections of the tape in search of evidence that would support or contradict the initial analysis. Relevant sections of the interviews were then transcribed for inclusion in the following chapters.

**Reporting Qualitative Data**

This study produced largely qualitative data. The reporting of such data in a form that is clear and informative to the reader has concerned several writers over recent years notably Miles and Huberman (1994). The traditional form of display in a study such as this has been quotes from respondent, and these have been used extensively (see Chapter 7). Miles and Huberman’s ideas on graphical and tabular displays have also been noted and used wherever possible, although less than was originally thought likely. The most notable example is the table giving an overview of the respondents at the start of Chapter 7.
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Reliability, Validity and Generalisability

The true tests of the methodological value of a study rest in its reliability, validity and generalisability.

Reliability

The reliability of a study refers to the extent to which another researcher offered the same interview opportunity would get the same data. The loosely structured interview used in this study makes this unlikely. When this is combined with the action research approach adopted to the study overall it makes it highly improbable. The whole design of the study was intended to make use of the skill and knowledge of the researcher. Another researcher without that skill and knowledge could not have reached the same understanding. As Saunders et al (1997:216-220) point out this adaptability should be regarded as a strength of the design rather than a weakness.

Two sources of bias are traditionally of concern in studies such as this, interviewer and interviewee or response bias. Interviewer bias can occur in several ways;

- the interviewer’s behaviour and appearance can affect the interviewees’ responses;
- the interviewer can project his own beliefs and frame of reference onto the interviewee;
- the data resulting from the interview can be interpreted in a biased way.

The avoidance of such bias is the reason usually given for the interviewer to take a neutral but not disinterested approach. The essence of the approach outlined above, however, was the need for the interviewees to have a favourable perception of the interviewer in order to work with him to achieve a greater understanding of the processes in question. The interviewer’s behaviour was designed to minimise bias by encouraging full and open response. The second two sources of bias are more problematic. The researcher had worked in this field for some time and as a result of this experience held views as to what constituted good and bad, desirable and undesirable practice. He had to be constantly
aware of his predilections in order neither to impose himself on the interviewee nor "force" the data into his framework. The regular reporting to the Steering Group was a valuable check on any bias originating from this source.

Interviewee or response bias can arise from the interviewee's perceptions of the interviewer or interview situation. The perception the interviewer tried to encourage has already been discussed. As it was designed to ensure maximum disclosure on the part of the interviewee it should have had the effect of minimising bias. The avoidance of bias from the interviewees' perception that they had to "pass" the Sandwich Year and that the interview was a part of the assessment was more difficult. The interview was indeed part of the assessment process. The researcher had foreseen this difficulty and had taken steps to make the requirement for passing the Sandwich Year the acquisition of only one unit. This was realised to be a low requirement but was felt to be the best way of ensuring that students on an experimental programme were not disadvantaged. The students soon came to realise that they could pass at least one unit with relative certainty and this, of itself, relieved a lot of the "pressure to succeed". Although the students were still talking to a "lecturer" they had minimal reason for withholding information.

**Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which the "researcher (has) gained full access to the knowledge and meaning of informants" (Easterby-Smith et al 1991:89), or put more simply do we have the full and true picture of the phenomena we are attempting to understand. The steps taken to try and ensure full disclosure have been discussed above. The only other way of checking the level of disclosure is through triangulation, in this case with the employers account and available paperwork. Students were always questioned over any anomalies that emerged, but generally there were few, leading to the conclusion that they were generally telling the truth. At least as far as they were aware of it.
Much has been written about the limits of generalisability of study of this type. The relatively small numbers involved, even then the lack of a random sample, the deliberate involvement of the researcher, and the feedback of early results into later practice all take this study far away from the traditional scientific method. Bryman (1998) and Yin (1994) have, however, argued that the generalisability of such studies is greater than might be thought on two grounds. First although limited in terms of number of informants the study uses those informants to look at a large number of learning situations in widely varying circumstances. Thus Student 8, for example, experienced at least 10 different learning situations each extending over a considerable period of time and each involving different actors. The sample is wider than might have been thought when conceived in this way.

The second is that generalisation can take place through application to theory. Thus Yin (1994) argues,

*How Case Studies Can Be Generalised to Theory*

A common complaint about case studies is that it is difficult to generalise from one case to another. Thus analysts fall into the trap of trying to select a "representative" case or set of cases. Yet no set of cases, no matter how large, is likely to deal satisfactorily with the complaint.

The problem lies in the very notion of generalising to other case studies. Instead, an analyst should try to generalise findings to "theory," analogous to the way a scientist generalises from experimental results to theory. (Note that the scientist does not attempt to select "representative" experiments.)

This approach is well illustrated by Jane Jacobs in her famous book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961). The book is based mostly on experiences from New York City. However, the chapter topics, rather than
reflecting the single experiences of New York, cover broader theoretical issues in urban planning, such as the role of sidewalks, the role of neighbourhood parks, the need for primary mixed uses, the need for small blocks, and the processes of slumming and unslumming. In the aggregate, these issues in fact represent the building of a theory of urban planning.

Jacob's book created heated controversy in the planning profession. As a partial result, new empirical inquiries were made in other locales to examine one or another facet of her rich and provocative ideas. Her theory, in essence, became the vehicle for examining other cases, and the theory still stands as a significant contribution to the field of urban planning. (Yin 1994:37)

This study, it is hoped, might similarly contribute to the theory and understanding of the Sandwich Year in particular and work based learning in particular. As such might be applicable outside its immediate fields of both business studies and the Sandwich Year!

**Conclusion**

The similarity in approaches between the action research style of the study and the action learning approach adopted by the Sandwich Year students is immediately obvious. In one of the Steering Committee meetings the DfEE appointed consultant to the study remarked that an early report of the findings was an excellent example of the type of work the students themselves should be producing. The key difference was the "isolation" of the author. His only available "set" was the Steering Group and a nebulous group of colleagues concerned to "do something" about the placement.
Chapter 5. The University of Greenwich BABS Sandwich Year Programme.
This chapter describes the 'normal' Sandwich Year of the BABS degree at the University of Greenwich. It outlines the Greenwich provision; describes the way in which students find their Sandwich Year placements; the preparation of the students, the support (both academic and administrative) provided during the year and the assessment of the year.

### The BABS Degree at Greenwich

The University of Greenwich BABS degree is fairly typical of its genre. Its main difference from the normal BABS is the placement of the Sandwich Year in the middle of the degree rather than during year three. For the most part its development has followed the path outlined in Chapter 1, with the exception that the intake has expanded far more slowly than many of its type.

The degree started in the late 1960's with approximately 30 students. Its success over the years has led to it growing to its current intake of between 100 and 120 students. The degree has recruited well over recent years, in 1995/6 for example 14 points at A level was the average demanded of candidates. This may reduce marginally during clearing, however, the majority of candidates accepted will meet this criteria or its equivalent, most commonly BTEC HNC and HND.

![Figure 5.1 - University of Greenwich BABS Enrolments](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>BABS Enrolments</th>
<th>A levels</th>
<th>BTEC Higher National</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991/2</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992/3</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993/4</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/5</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/6</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5. The University of Greenwich Sandwich Year.

The position of the Sandwich Year in the middle of the degree means that the students have six months less time in University than BABS students studying at most other Universities. Equally they have six months longer to feed their experience into their course on return to University, giving them longer to re-familiarise themselves with academia before the all-important final year. It also means that they have more time to develop ideas for dissertations, which are often based on the placement experience. This is an unusual approach, with advocates and opponents. The problems encountered are, in the main, concerned with practical drawbacks such as accommodation requirements not matching academic years, and employers more used to the "normal" summer to summer placement period. A majority of the students in the study thought the approach preferable, citing in particular the additional 6 months they had to "get back into the University" before starting their final year.

The University operates a 4x4 modularised system for all undergraduate courses. Put simply this means that each academic year is split into two 15 week Semesters dividing at the end of January. A typical undergraduate is expected to take 4 x 15 credit units (modules) in each Semester. The levels of the credit (1,2 and 3) correspond roughly to the years of the programme (see Chapter 2 for definitions and discussion), with a student requiring 120 credits at each level to obtain their degree. The classification of degrees is based on the marks obtained in the final two years with the marks being weighted 3:1 in favour of the final year. Interestingly, when the study started the Sandwich year did not count either for credit or towards the final classification of the degree.

BABS students follow a largely common first year, starting to specialise in the second year with increasing divergence in pursuit of their "major" as the course progresses. There is a strong tradition of skills development in the early part of the course, and many of the units have a "vocational focus". Much development has taken place in recent years in learning, teaching and assessment methodology resulting in a move away from blanket acceptance of examinations, and a significant quantity of assessment being carried out through presentations, projects, case studies and coursework generally. This is, however, regarded
as staff (resource) intensive and has come under pressure as recent funding cuts have started to take effect. Much interest has been shown lately by staff in more "efficient" means of assessment such as computer marked multiple choice questions.

The course is unusual in that for some time graduates taking appropriate units have been granted graduate membership of the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD), and have only to take the Case Study to be awarded full membership of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). These awards are normally achieved through two years of part-time postgraduate study. Both exemptions were reviewed and confirmed by the relevant professional bodies in 1997.

The success of the degree over the years is perhaps best indicated by the high proportion of students finding jobs in the immediate post graduation period and the quality of jobs obtained. Approximately 80% of all students annually find employment before the Christmas following graduation, many on traineeship schemes with large organisations, but increasingly with small and medium sized firms.

The degree was last reviewed and underwent significant changes in 1994. The major change then was to offer the students the opportunity to pursue "named" awards in personnel and marketing. This came about as a result of pressure from some students to be able to obtain an award that more closely identified with their chosen subject specialism, and the success of another "named" award, the BA Marketing Communications. A further review of the degree coincided with the second half of the study. This review had three main objectives, the need for more commonality in the early part of the degree, the need to review the sequencing and positioning of some units, and the need to incorporate languages. When the bid for the DfEE Project was being considered it was thought that the early emphasis on skills, the vocational orientation of some units, the work carried out on the Sandwich Year in 1995/6 and the impending review made it particularly suitable for study.
Chapter 5. The University of Greenwich Sandwich Year.

The Sandwich Year at Greenwich

The Greenwich Sandwich Year is again fairly typical of its kind with the exception of its timing. The current requirement is that the students normally undertake 48 weeks of industrial training, of which 28 weeks must be continuous. The staff view it as a valuable and integral part of the degree, although there is little formal integration. There is a placement Unit that helps students find Placements, and administers their time out in industry. Support is provided through two tutor visits, and monitoring carried out through the student submitting monthly reports. The year is assessed in a very "loose" way through a "Corporate Report" that does not influence the final degree classification. Finally like most BABS degrees it has had to adjust to a different type of student since the recent extension of the franchise to a wider group of potential students.

The Placement Unit

The students are helped to find placements by the Placements Unit. This consists of a Senior Lecturer, allocated 0.6 of his time to the task, and an administrative assistant. The Unit maintains contact with a number of employers who regularly offer placements, actively seeks new placements, helps students obtain placements e.g. by providing guidance on CVs and interviews, and liaises with students on placement. It has enjoyed considerable success in recent years regularly placing over 90% of the 100 - 120 students requiring placement.

The Unit advertises vacancies on a notice board and invites students to apply for the posts. Students have expressed some concern over recent years about the application process. In the students' version of a perfect world they would be told of all the jobs available, make their applications, receive their offers and make their choice. In reality it is difficult for the Unit to know which jobs are going to be offered in any given year; employers want to interview at any time between October and February and demand an immediate decision from the student; and the University will not allow a student who has accepted an offer to subsequently change their mind for fear of upsetting the employer and of losing the
placement the following year. The result is that students, particularly those offered jobs early in the round, sometimes end up in placements that, from their point of view, are less than ideal. Students, however, generally valued the work of the Unit in terms of advertising positions and co-ordinating applications, but were also critical of the quality of jobs provided. In addition, many thought the Unit should provide a greater focus for the University’s support during the placement, and it became clear that students would have valued more readily available telephone and face to face support, particularly those students who were trying to find their own placements.

The majority of other Universities offering Sandwich courses have suffered similar problems, particularly in recent years. The London Universities, however, face a particular problem. First they are competing for placements with other Universities nation-wide as many students from provincial Universities find the idea of a paid Sandwich Year in London attractive. Secondly, one of the main reasons students attend London Universities is that they favour the location, and are reluctant therefore, to take placements outside London. Several Universities, including for example Westminster, report that as at Greenwich, good placements outside London are lost because of lack of student interest. The one University that appears to be relatively free of competition is Robert Gordon in Aberdeen. This University has a catchment area for placements that is geographically separate from that of other Universities and as such maintains a steady flow of placements with the same group of employers.

It is ultimately the student’s responsibility to find a placement. Some students who do not see their “ideal” placement advertised go out and search for their own. Some of these use a personal connection to obtain their placement, but others have been successful on the open market. These placements are often offered to other students in subsequent years, even when a personal connection has disappeared. These ‘student found’ jobs are a valuable source of new placements. It was notable that the ‘student found’ placements in the project all figured in the top quartile of placements generally, when judged by virtually any criteria.
Preparation for the Placement.

The students are prepared for the Placement in two ways. Firstly there are two core units of their degree, Business Skills in Semester 1 and Enhanced Business Skills (EBS) in Semester 3, that provide tuition in interview skills (to get the placement), and other skills known to be important in the placement. Secondly, the office offers specific courses designed to help the student get a placement. These include programmes on CV writing, completing application forms and other skills directly relevant to the placement search process. The students interviewed thought the preparatory programme useful and many commented favourably about the EBS Unit, in particular the videotaped interview practice. Several thought the skills developed through this exercise played a major part in obtaining their placements.

Many students also commented that the 'business practice' skills included in the first three Semesters, such as for example good practice with faxes, had been important to their establishing credibility at the beginning of their placement. It is also worth noting that a significant minority of placements were IT dependent with 5 of the 23 jobs in the study involving the significant use of IT, including development and problem solving on large databases. Most of the remainder required IT skills for the use of electronic mail systems, word processing, spreadsheets and less often PC based databases. All of the students valued the IT content of the early part of their degree and thought it useful in their placements. Most thought that an even greater IT content would be useful.

Integration into the Degree

Staff generally regard the Sandwich Year as an integral part of the degree. Formal integration is limited, however, to the preparation described above. The knowledge gained by the student from the early part of the degree obviously helps in many if not all of the students' jobs, however there are no formal links. Similarly tutors often make use of students' experience in the Units following the Sandwich Year, but again this is done on an ad hoc basis and not specifically designed into the course. This 'isolation' is again
emphasised by the fact that the assessment of the year does not count towards degree classification.

**Pedagogy**

The students are required to submit bi-monthly reports on their progress, which are monitored by the Placement Unit and passed to the student's visiting tutor to be discussed at the next visit. Each student should receive two visits from a University tutor, the first within two months of starting the Traineeship, and the second eight or nine months in. The majority of the 70 staff in the Business School undertake the role of tutor, each visiting one or two students. There has been little or no staff development concerning the purpose and conduct of tutor visits for a number of years, so perhaps unsurprisingly reports from students indicate that these visits are of variable quality. Guidelines have been provided as to the purpose, content and administration of visits but practice is still heavily dependent on tutor motivation and skill. Many scheduled visits do not occur with the result that the typical student receives only one visit. The ignorance of work based learning techniques reported by Brennan and Little (1996) would appear to be prevalent at the University of Greenwich Business School with the result that many students learn despite rather than because of their Tutor Visits.

**Assessment**

The Sandwich Year assessment is through a 2 - 3,000 word “Organisational Appraisal” that consists of four sections:

- getting to know the organisation;
- evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of the unit in which the student works;
- a summary of the students tasks and duties;
- an analysis of critical incidents.

The assessment is designed to allow students to demonstrate business skills, apply knowledge developed on the course prior to the placement, demonstrate an understanding of the employing organisation, evaluate the effectiveness of the unit in which the student
works, demonstrate the value of the placement to the student and others, provide documentary evidence of learning and finally, help in preparation for the dissertation. It is marked on a pass/fail basis and does not contribute to the assessment of the degree classification. The student must, however, pass in order to pass the Sandwich Year, and must pass the Sandwich Year to obtain the BABS degree. Those students who fail the Sandwich Year may be able to transfer to the BABA degree.

One of the reasons for the trial with the Customer Care Standards in 1995/6 and the present study was concern expressed about the effectiveness of this system of assessment by some students. The work carried out on the study confirmed that a significant level of dissatisfaction existed with the Corporate Report. The criticisms levelled at the assessment included lack of relevance to the student’s learning, lack of perceived importance on the part of both student and tutor, lack of incentive to do well (pass/fail assessment) and lack of integration with the rest of the course.

**Changes in the Student Cohort**

It is impossible to ignore the effect of the recent expansion in HE on the BABS degree. The extension of the franchise has meant a change in the nature of the students recruited. This has been noted in other Universities and higher education in general (for example The Association of Graduate Recruiters, 1993: 12). While recruitment to the University of Greenwich BABS degree has held up well throughout the period, increased competition from other Universities, and changes in the 16-19 sector in terms of entry qualifications, have meant that over the last ten years the nature of the students on the programme have changed. This has meant that in recent years more preparatory work has had to be carried out with students in the early part of the degree to get them to the same level of preparedness for the placement. When this is set against reduced levels of funding it becomes a difficult task to achieve. The staff interviewed as a part of this study clearly recognised this dilemma and the need to treat the current cohort of students differently from those in the past.
The expansion of the number of students in the system has meant that employers have generally become more demanding of their recruits. This, when combined with pressures on organisations and individual managers to get the most out of each part of the organisation, has meant the Sandwich Year students have to be a productive part of the organisation throughout their placements, often taking on lower level administrative tasks to “earn their keep”. A problem arises when student expectations have not changed to meet the new employment situation for graduates brought about by the expansion of the HE sector and a hardening of the job market. Some of the Sandwich Year students were victims of this trend, having unrealistic expectations of their placements. Some came to terms with this and made the most of the opportunities available to them, others did not and either left their placements, or continued unhappy. It is difficult to see what more can be done by the University than at present to reduce this level of dissonance.

Some employers undoubtedly view Sandwich Year students as cheap intelligent labour and exploit them by using them for tasks that would command a higher salary if given to a full time administrative employee e.g. survey processing. These students start with basic administrative tasks, master these, but are given no opportunity to move to more complex and demanding work. On the other hand, the idea espoused by many staff is that there is a typical pattern to a Sandwich Year placement. The student is given a series of relatively simple tasks early on in the placement, and provided these are completed satisfactorily, is subsequently given more complex tasks. The cycle then repeats itself until the student demonstrates incompetence. It is interesting to note that one mistake need not be fatal. One student reported making a mistake on a £5,000 order that meant the whole output had to be scrapped. Despite this, or perhaps because of her attitude to it, she had a successful placement and has been offered a full time post with the company on graduation.

The overall impression left at the end of the study was that while there were many ways in which the Sandwich Year could be improved, the students thought it a most valuable
learning experience, and wanted that learning better supported, assessed and more fully recognised.

**Conclusion**

The University of Greenwich Sandwich Year is fairly typical of its ilk in that while being a valuable learning experience for many of the students it fails to reach its full potential because it is poorly designed, insufficiently integrated into the degree as a whole, under resourced, supported by staff not trained in the principles and practice of work based learning, and subject to a weak assessment that has no impact directly on the final degree classification. Like so many others it is currently a wasted opportunity.
Chapter 6.

The DfEE Project and the Business School Approach to Management NVQs.
Chapter 6. The DfEE Project and the Business School Approach to Management NVQs.

This chapter examines the context of the study reviewing in turn the impact of the DfEE funding of the study, and the approach that had been developed by the author in the School towards the delivery and assessment of NVQs.

Introduction

This context of the study is important. It was set up with £65,000 of DfEE funding in a well established University NVQ Centre with good contacts with Awarding Bodies. It was run as a Project with a Steering Group and DfEE Advisor over the 18 months from October 1995 to the end of March 1997. The actual Sandwich Year that was the subject of the study ran from February 1996 to the end of January 1997. The Business School had been involved with Management NVQs since their inception in the late 1980's and had developed a ‘progressive’ approach to their implementation. The author and colleagues had presented this approach at many conferences and events, with the result that the School was ‘known’ for its approach, and was probably, at the time, amongst the five or so Business Schools that were leading the development of approaches to integrating occupational standards and NVQs into business HE.

The DfEE Project

The Impact of the Funding

The DfEE funding meant that the author was given substantial relief from other duties for the duration of the study enabling him to effectively spend between two thirds and three quarters of his work time on the study. The funding, however, had a substantial impact beyond the time it bought. This was the first major external research funding won by the University of Greenwich Business School, and as such meant that it was well supported by management and staff as success was perceived as important to the future of the School. The DfEE Project had three parts. The work reported in this study, a survey of UK BABS Sandwich Year provision (Edmunds and Lindsay 1997), and a mapping exercise of the original MCI Level 4 NVQ Standards against the University of Greenwich BABS Degree
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(Carter 1997). The author was responsible for the work carried for this study and for the conduct of the Project overall.

The author’s involvement with the Project began in April 1995 with an “Outline Bid” proposal for funding from the DfEE’s “Business Schools Initiative” prepared in conjunction with a colleague. This outline successful passed the initial screening stage and a more detailed bid was prepared in September 1995. This bid was successful and funding commenced in October 1996. The initial work completed between October 1995 and February 1996 comprised a start on the “Mapping Exercise” and the recruitment and briefing of the Sandwich Year students. This was completed by a colleague. The author’s active involvement began at the start of the Sandwich Year in February 1996.

The way the research was set up had several important consequences. The fact that there was a contract between the Business School and the DfEE, involving substantial amounts of money and status, that was seen as being important to complete successfully by both Head of School and Dean meant that internal access to students and data was generally good, and that where access was within the control of the Business School there were few barriers. The welcoming of, and support for, intermediate findings reported directly to both the DfEE and the Steering Committee served to further ease the path of the research. The level of funding meant that the author was under less time pressure than would have otherwise been the case when it came to arranging visits to students and completing research activities generally. There were also no funding difficulties concerning the expense of visits. Finally, the completion date for the Project Final Report, monthly reports to the DfEE and intermediate reports to the Steering Committee imposed a substantial external discipline on the research.

The overall conclusion must be that without the DfEE contract and consequent funding this research would not have been possible, as the author would have had neither the necessary time or access.
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The Contract Specification

The Project was based on evaluating the usefulness of Management NVQs and occupational standards in the assessment of the Sandwich Year. The contract signed specified certain minimal criteria in regard to the Sandwich Year students that were to be the NVQ pilots. These were:

- a minimum of 15 students be recruited;
- they be visited approximately once every four weeks;
- they be assessed against as many Units of the Management NVQs as possible.

Various discussions and agreements within the University defined matters further:

- each student participating in the programme had to sign a formal agreement that they were replacing the usual Sandwich Year assessment with the NVQ;
- each student had to pass a minimum of one unit of the Level 4 NVQ in order to pass their Sandwich Year.

In practice these conditions were less of a constraint than they might first appear. It became obvious through contacts with both the MCI and DfEE that there was no pressure to find that NVQs were applicable to the Sandwich Year, and that there was as much interest in the use of Occupational Standards and work based learning generally as there was in NVQs. This meant that the study could be opened up from an early stage to consider matters well beyond the original brief.

The Business School NVQ Practice and Philosophy

From the beginning of the study there was an implicit assumption by the author that the Project would be carried out in accordance with the practice in relation to NVQs developed by him over recent years at the University of Greenwich Business School. The author had played a leading part in a small team that had developed what was considered to be good practice in relation to NVQ development and assessment (Edmunds and Carter...
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1995; Edmunds 1996). This model had several key features and practices that in combination distinguished it from much other practice. These were based around:-

- a belief that NVQs should be developmental in implementation;
- a belief that assessment of competence at levels 4 and 5 was fundamentally different from that at lower levels, particularly levels 1 and 2, and that as a consequence modified procedures for internal and external verification were required;
- experience that surprisingly lengthy and thorough preparation of candidates both in terms of reflective learning and NVQ methodology is required for successful programmes;
- a concentration on a holistic, event based approach to evidence with evidence/competence links developed initially and primarily at unit level, and a consequent avoidance of a reductionist Performance Criteria based approach to assessment;
- a focus on a reflective personal report or storyboard as a crucial part of both assessment and development;
- acceptance that the “range” of competence can be tested through an exploration of underpinning knowledge and understanding (NCVQ 1997a);
- a belief that development and assessment were best conducted through the vehicle of a written portfolio supported by meetings;
- a belief that the onus of claiming and demonstrating competence lay on the candidate and that therefor the portfolio should be both self explanatory and (relatively) ‘complete’ proof of competence;
- but nevertheless a realisation that in practice there were nearly always going to be gaps in the proof offered by the portfolio so that the interview would always remain an essential feature of assessment;
- a belief that there was a relationship between competence and academic based programmes and awards that can be exploited to the benefit of both.

Some of these features merit further discussion

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**Candidate Preparation**

The author had six years experience of preparing candidates for assessment against the Management NVQs, and during that time has discussed candidate preparation with many other Advisor/Assessors both formally in his role as external verifier for two Awarding Bodies, and informally at conferences and other gatherings of interested colleagues. The universal experience of all the practitioners has been the need to increase the component of programmes that deals with portfolio preparation in order to get candidates' portfolios to an appropriate level. Programmes vary enormously in their split between candidate development, knowledge and understanding input, preparation for assessment and assessment depending on their aim and client group. Most programmes currently, however, involve between 3 and 6 days of portfolio preparation training.

This training is generally provided through an initial workshop of 1-3 days at which principles are outlined and examples discussed, followed by a number of sessions spread over the following year or so that usually work with examples from the candidates own practice. Experience has shown that candidates take relatively long periods to understand the main principles of NVQ portfolio preparation. The main problems they have, and consequently that which the preparatory programme must deal with are;

- interpreting statements of competence written for the generic organisation in a way that relates to "their" job;
- selecting evidence that demonstrates the full range of competencies exhibited in their job;
- providing a clear explanation of and context for evidence to an "outsider";
- drawing a relationship between competence and evidence;
- writing reflectively about the way they perform their jobs and thereby demonstrating the necessary knowledge and understanding to demonstrate competence in the necessary range of situations.
Understanding the Standards

The problems connected with the understanding and interpretation of Standards have been well documented and stem from two sources. The language used to write the standards (Beaumont 1996) and the NCVQ requirement that they be written to cover the generic exhibition of competence in the widest possible range of organisations. As an example of this the MCI Level 4 standards contain a Unit “Maintain and improve service and product operations” which in turn has an Element 1.1 “Maintain operations to meet quality standards” which has ten constituent Performance Criteria. The first of these states that the manager must ensure that “All supplies necessary for operations are available and meet organisational/departmental requirements”. The problems here usually arise from the interpretation of the terms “operations”, “supplies”, and “quality standards. The standards were written with manufacturing industry in mind where these concepts are not difficult, however, they might cause some difficulty for a Marketing Manager. What should be defined as her “operations”? Are they the creative processes involved in developing a new campaign, or the more measurable ordering of promotional materials? Do “supplies” include contract labour and sub-contracted tasks as well as paper and pencils, desks and telephones? Are the “quality standards” the Advertising Standards Authority’s and others’ Codes of Practice, and do they include customer expectations. These and many less esoteric questions of interpretation appear to cause many candidates difficulties throughout their NVQ programmes. It was anticipated that as the Sandwich Year students were generally not going into manufacturing jobs this would be a difficulty they would encounter, although it was hoped that the command of language and conceptual skills developed in higher education would help alleviate this. Initial training can indicate to candidates some of the breadth of interpretation possible, generally however it is only later on, when working with the candidate’s own evidence, that it is possible to explore the full applicability of the Standards to the candidate’s competence.

Selecting the Evidence

When candidates make their initial selection of evidence their first reaction is often to assemble all the papers and reports they use in their jobs, notably those that provide
guidance or restriction. This can be problematic, as they have often played little or no part in the preparation of these documents, so as such they say little about the candidate’s competence. Once candidates have learnt to focus on documents they have prepared, played some part in preparation or which describe their competence eg appraisal reports, witness testimony, etc. the problem then moves to selecting representative documents or parts of such documents. The tendency, as is discussed in more detail later, of any approach that starts from evidence (as against the job) is to focus on what is easy to prove rather than what is important to the successful performance of the job. The Marketing Manager discussed above may, for example, focus on the purchasing of promotional materials (easily ‘provable’ through orders), rather than the more difficult to demonstrate but more important creative processes. Once again while initial guidance can be given at an introductory workshop, the point is only fully grasped by the majority of candidates when working with their own evidence later in the portfolio development workshops.

A piece of evidence, for example a memorandum, spreadsheet or report, is generally relatively meaningless on its own. It needs to be put into a context and its role and importance in the work process explained in order that the competence it is claimed to demonstrate become clear to assessors and verifiers. This might appear to be a relatively simple process, but does nevertheless appear to cause candidates some difficulty when they are asked to do so in writing. A relatively lucid explanation may be provided in a face-to-face session with an Advisor/Assessor, but this translates into a much impoverished written account. The portfolio preparation programme must aim to transfer the richness of the spoken explanation to the written one. It was anticipated here that the written and analytical skills developed in undergraduates would mean that this was less of a problem for them than managers in general. This did not prove to be the case.

Using Evidence to Claim Competence

The use of evidence to demonstrate competence against a variety of Units is an important principle of portfolio development. In an ideal scenario a candidate might prepare an account of the competences developed in her job, support that account with evidence and
then claim NVQ competence against the account. The complexity of the Management NVQ with four Work Roles, eight Units, twenty six elements and over two hundred Performance Criteria means that few candidates have a sufficient overall grasp of the NVQ when starting the process to be able to ‘mould’ their account at least in outline to the NVQ. As a consequence the approach adopted is usually to develop an account and supporting evidence in relation to one unit or at most one Work Role. This in turn produces an association in the mind of the candidate between evidence and competence that restricts the relevance of that evidence to the associated Unit. In practice, however, the evidence may well support claims to competence in other areas. The portfolio preparation programme must aim to demonstrate to candidates the best possible use of evidence in the widest possible way. Again it was anticipated that the analytical skills of the Sandwich Year students would mean that this was less of a problem for them than managers generally. This also did not prove to be the case.

**The Collection of Evidence**

There are essentially two distinct approaches possible for the collection of evidence. The most commonly used starts with the candidate reviewing their own competence and likely supporting evidence against definitions of Elements of competence at Performance Criteria level. Typically the candidate will choose a unit of competence that they appear to be competent at and goes on a “filing cabinet raid” pulling out and copying any and all documents that might give some indication of competence. This approach is reductionist in that it concentrates on presenting evidence at a level (Performance Criteria level) below that of a meaningful unit of work (a Unit of competence). It generally produces large portfolios of relatively low level material which do not reflect the essential integration of managerial practice.

The quality of evidence is low as it usually consists of a large number of memoranda and letters that are relatively meaningless until placed in an explanatory context. This is usually poorly done as the arrangement of documents is based around the Performance Criteria rather than the events to which they related. This lack of coherence in turn makes
development more difficult as it has to be based around the more abstract Performance Criteria as against the work events themselves.

These Portfolios in turn are also usually Performance Criteria based, the classic structure being at least one very thick ring binder for each Work Role, with evidence organised against each Element in Performance Criteria order. This approach generally encourages candidates to see evidence as Unit specific and leads to very little use of evidence against more than one Unit. It is however a “safe” option and is generally favoured with NVQs at levels 1-3. External verifiers and Awarding Bodies with business and experience primarily at this level appear to generally favour this approach. The bureaucracy connected with NVQs generally and the administrative forms connected with internal and external verification also often serve to encourage this approach.

The alternative holistic Event Based approach (Edmunds and Carter: 1994) starts with the candidate reviewing her job and past experience for critical events that summarise or reflect key aspects of her performance. She then writes an account (personal report or storyboard) describing this event, reflecting on it and what she learnt from it, and then goes on to gather evidence to support her account. Once this process has been completed, then and only then, is the evidence cross referenced to the NVQ at Element or Performance Criteria level. This approach tends to produce larger pieces of evidence, such as reports, which can subsequently be used to demonstrate competence against a variety of Units and in the case of the Management NVQs, a variety of Work Roles.

This approach tends to produce ‘thinner’ portfolios in a “Two-Folder” approach. Since each piece of evidence is referenced against many different Units and Elements of competence it is more efficient to place the reflective accounts and accompanying evidence in one folder and the claim to competence (evidence cross referencing sheets) in another.
Past work with candidates has indicated that whilst the Event Based approach is ultimately preferred by most, many prefer initially to work with a Performance Criteria based approach for one Unit in to develop their understanding of the NVQ assessment process. Once they have this understanding and the security of having completed one Unit they are more willing to move onto the Event Based approach. Some, however, will choose to remain with the Performance Criteria based approach throughout.

**Development**

The increasing emphasis on using NVQs and occupational standards as the basis for development programmes rather than for the accreditation of existing competence was referred to earlier in Chapter 2. The University of Greenwich Business School approach has always been built around development, placing particular emphasis on the reflective account or storyboard. This is where the candidate has been required to relate particular examples to general principles (knowledge and understanding), in strict NVQ terms to demonstrate coverage of the Range. From a wider perspective this has had the effect of identifying gaps where development of knowledge and understanding is required. This in turn has been used as the main vehicle for the integration between the competence and "academic" approaches. It has been a relatively small step for candidates to explore, perhaps more fully than would have been the case with a 'pure' NVQ, the relevant literature and acknowledge their sources in a conventional academic form. This reflective piece, with or without the supporting evidence, can then be used as the academic assessment.

This approach is very much supported, currently, by MCI who are very much concerned with promoting the Management Occupational Standards as the basis of development programmes. The Business School and the author have also developed similar approaches on other non-NVQ programmes, notably one action learning based Masters where students negotiated their own Unit specifications including learning outcomes and means of assessment. These approaches in general were discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.
The assessment of work based learning in general was also discussed in Chapter 3, there are, however, some features of the University of Greenwich approach to NVQ assessment in particular that merit mention. In brief the approach is portfolio based, with the onus very much on the candidate to prove competence. The role of the Advisor/Assessor is that defined by the “D” standards, but within those guidelines maximum use has been made of opportunities for the assessor to be proactive in pointing out links between evidence and competence, even to the extent of relating evidence to non-MCI standards. This approach has very much drawn on recent guidance from both TDLB and MCI as to the acceptability of this role for the Advisor/Assessor.

The basis of the approach has been, as far as possible, anti reductionist. This has meant that as far as possible judgements have been made at the Element rather than the Performance Criteria level. In practice this has meant discussions of evidence and competence at Element level with quick mental checks to Performance Criteria. The systematic checking of Performance Criteria has been deliberately avoided with the discussion often focusing on the candidate’s work performance and, as indicated above, the assessor often making the link between competent performance and criteria in such a way that it is not immediately obvious to the candidate. In many ways this approach has anticipated some of the MCI initiatives in this area, in that it resembled interview assessment at the workplace.

The final key feature of the approach was the belief that the Advisor and Assessor should be the same person. It was felt that only in this way could all the knowledge of competence (and incompetence) gained by the Advise during the preparatory process be put to use in assessment. Internal verification was felt to be sufficiently robust to take care of any quality assurance issues.
Verification

Verification, both internal and external has an affect on NVQ practice well beyond its formal concern for quality assurance. In practice external verifiers set the tone for practice in a Centre. Thus, if the external verifier adopts Performance Criteria by Performance Criteria auditing procedures as his practice it requires a very assured Centre to adopt different practice in its assessments. The University of Greenwich, along with many other Universities, has chosen to use the Management Verification Consortium (MVC) as its Awarding Body because it believes that as it concentrates on NVQs in business HE it, and its verifiers, will have a more sympathetic approach than Awarding Bodies with a predominance of candidates in the Further Education sector at levels 1-3 of the NVQ framework. This point is becoming particularly important as QCA has instigated a tightening up of external verifier procedures, including the use of externally set tests, in order to prevent substantial fraud in the further education sector. This, in turn, has encouraged a further reductionist approach to external verification.

This belief has generally been born out in practice with a good level of co-operation and helpful advice being received from the MVC and its verifier. The external verifier was, in fact, interested in and supportive of the developments pioneered in this study.

Practices and Procedures

The Business School approach had also developed a limited range of procedures and forms connected with NVQs that would also be used. These included:

- a competence audit which turned statements of competence at element level into question form to help candidates carry out an initial audit of their competence against the Standards (Appendix 4);
- a structure of Personal Report that would at least refer to, but might also be formally referenced to the relevant body of knowledge;
- evidence summary sheets that provided an explanation and context for individual pieces of evidence (Appendix 5);
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- evidence cross-referencing sheets that indicated the way in which a particular evidence related to, possibly, several elements of competence (Appendix 6);
- a Project/Portfolio Progress Report Form that was completed by the tutor at the end of each visit and agreed and countersigned by the student (Appendix 7).
- an assessment completed form.

These procedures had been developed to assess a range of NVQ programmes that were often linked with academic programmes, usually a Certificate in Management or Diploma in Management Studies. Although these programmes were generally developed for part-time mature students with some, often considerable, experience of management they were also, most interestingly, designed to facilitate integrated assessment of both academic and vocational qualifications.

**Evidence Summary Sheet (Appendix 5)**

Many of these administrative forms are common to a number of centres and NVQs where assessment is based on a written portfolio. The Evidence Summary Sheet for example is merely a device by which the candidate explains to the Advisor/Assessor (and later possibly internal verifier and external verifier) the 'meaning' of a particular piece of evidence. The candidate will use it to describe the history, context, purpose and result of a memorandum or spreadsheet so as to enable the reader to understand the significance of the document to the candidate's job. One outstanding example of the need for such an explanation came from one of the students in the present study who presented a one page spreadsheet to the tutor during a visit. This it emerged was the student's main weekly task to assemble; it contained sales, marketing and stock data for all the products in her division of the organisation; and was used weekly as the basis for the decisions of the Brand Managers in terms of ordering and marketing. Neither the significance of the spreadsheet or the nature and difficulty of work involved in preparing it was obvious from the document itself.
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**Evidence Cross Referencing Form (Appendix 6)**

The Evidence Cross Referencing Form is simply used to show how the evidence relates to definitions of competence at Performance Criteria level. The procedure, again in common with most Centres using written portfolio based approaches is to have one sheet for each ‘Element’ of competence. Various notations are used to indicate that an evidence is claimed to demonstrate competence against a Performance Criteria ranging from a simple ✓ or * to a more complex reference code depending on the nature of evidence and the preference of the candidate and Advisor/Assessor. Evidence was cross-referenced to Performance Criteria level to accord with current almost universal practice. It was thought at one point early on in the design process that competence might be cross-referenced at element level in accordance with the logic of NVQs that this is the smallest unit of competence that constitutes a meaningful task (NCVQ 1997a), and guidance and encouragement from MCI (Scutt 1996) and MVC (Johnson 1996). In the end however the judgement was made that assessment judgements might be difficult anyway given the nature of the jobs in the study, and that to take this step would be to add a further (interesting) complication that was not the main subject of this study.

**Relationship with External Bodies**

The importance of a sympathetic approach to external verification in encouraging development has been referred to above. The Business School’s history as a NVQ Centre was to play an important part in the development of the study as its level of maturity and ‘status’ with its external verifier, Awarding Body and the MCI gave it freedom to experiment that might not have been available to a new Centre. The University was one of the first to embrace the competence philosophy in the late 1980’s winning a contract to undertake an experimental project with the very early Management NVQs funded by the Learning from Experience Trust (LET). That project started at a time before any Awarding Bodies were accredited to offer management awards, and meant that the MCI itself had to act as an Awarding Body. This led to a continuing relationship with the MCI indicated by the invitation to the author to be one of a very few academics who presented workshops at the Launch of the “New” MCI Standards in June 1997.
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As mentioned above the University uses the Management Verification Consortium (MVC) as its Awarding Body. The MVC was set up in 1994 by the Association of Business Schools (ABS) in response to its members concerns with Awarding Bodies with little experience of higher education whose experience lay largely with NVQs at levels 1 to 3. It accredits awards only in University Business School and related institutions. The author is an external verifier for the MVC (as well as BTEC) and enjoyed a good professional relationship with key officers in the organisation including the Chief Executive, the Administrator and the Chief External Verifier at the time of the study. He was invited to apply for the Chief External Verifier position when it became vacant recently but had to decline. The University’s own external verifier is a woman also of some status and experience with NVQs, who was helpful and co-operative throughout the study.

The points in relation to the University’s and author’s experience with NVQs are important in that they provided a confident basis for experimentation. The author was sufficiently confident of his knowledge and understanding of NVQs to feel free to experiment and vary procedures as situations required. He also had the personal contacts to be able to check out quickly the propriety of any of the more radical variations that might have been contemplated.

Conclusion

The situation at the start of the Project was then one of a mature Centre and experienced Advisor/Assessor with both being known on the national scene. There was a well developed model of NVQ development and assessment in operation that had been developed to work in conjunction with academic assessment, albeit at Masters level and with employed managers. This allowed the study considerably more freedom to develop and experiment in its own particular way than would have been the case with a less experienced Centre or Advisor/Assessor. The very fact that the Project itself was DfEE funded meant the author had minimal difficulties with access, considerable internal political influence, and time and funding to conduct the research.
Chapter 7.
The Sandwich Year Students.

The competence based Sandwich Year programme started in the middle of February 1996 and ran for approximately 25 weeks through to the end of January 1997. The programme was slightly amended (by 2 weeks) due to changes in the University's academic calendar.

All the students going out on placement in February 1996 (approximately 100) were offered the opportunity to take part. The students eventually participated in the programme and were aware that their results would be included in the subsequent cohort's annual report.

It is probable that the students who chose to participate in the competence programme were a biased sample in the very best sense of having to make a positive choice to complete a different programme. This is probably so as it may not be clear that the study programme would involve any work on their part, although with positive inputs from the University and potentially greater benefits to themselves. The nature and extent of the bias is therefore difficult to determine at this stage but will probably remain so. The students final degree results (available in July 1998) may reveal them to be more intelligent, able or possibly had working more harder than their contemporaries, even so the exact nature of these differences is likely to remain obscure. The nature of the causal relationship between
This Chapter provides a detailed account of the experiences of the 23 students on the competence based programme that is the basis of this study. It concludes by drawing together a number of common threads from the students' experiences.

Introduction

The competence based Sandwich Year programme started in the middle of February 1996 and ran for approximately 50 weeks through to the end of January 1997. The programme was slightly curtailed (by 2 weeks) due to changes in the University's academic calendar. All the students going out on placement in February 1996 (approximately 100) were offered the opportunity to participate in the study. Twenty three students eventually participated in the programme. All the students were volunteers with no selection criteria being applied at any stage other than that the student's placement offered the probability of the student being able to complete at least one unit of the NVQ Level 4 in Management.

Appendix X contains examples of the raw data gathered on these cases drawn from Student 5. This is illustrative of the type of data gathered generally on all the cases.

The Student Group and Their Placements

It is probable that the students who chose to participate in the competence programme were a biased sample by the very act of having to make a positive choice to complete a different programme. This is particularly so as it was made clear that the study programme would involve more work on their part, although with greater inputs from the University and potentially greater benefits to themselves. The nature and extent of the bias is impossible to determine at this stage and will probably remain so. The students final degree results (available in July 1998) may reveal them to be more intelligent, able or possibly hard working than their contemporaries, even so the exact nature of these differences is likely to remain obscure. The nature of the causal relationship between
participation in the study and degree classification will also have to remain the subject of speculation. The argument as to what extent the students were more able before participating in the study, as against the extent to which participation raised (or lowered) their subsequent performance will remain unanswered.

The Case Studies

The following section reports on the experiences of each student that participated in the experimental programme. An overall summary is presented in the table below. The students are grouped by employer in cases where more than one student was employed by the same employer. The reference numbers given to the students represent the order in which they received their first visits. This is considered to be an important criteria as the approach to the students developed through the study with the later students receiving the benefits of the Tutor’s reflections on his practice with in the earlier cases.

Students 1-4: The Public Sector Training Organisation

These four students were all interested in the general BABS degree. They had no specialist subject interest. Students 1, 2 and 4 lived in rented accommodation in Woolwich during the Sandwich Year, while student 3 lived with her family in West London.

Students 1, 3 and 4 had “A” level entry qualifications while student 2 had taken the BTEC route. Student 2 was a mature entrant with 2 years work experience while the others had all come directly from secondary education.

The Placement

This was a medium sized organisation in its own right that organised training for a large group of government bodies nationally and provided information to central government about staffing matters in those bodies. Although the organisation itself was best described as “middle” sized its close association with government meant it had the ‘feeling’ of and displayed many of the characteristics of a much larger bureaucracy.
### Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students

#### The Sandwich Year Students

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

Its offices were located in Central London, in the West End near Victoria Station. That location combined with a salary of approximately £10,000 per annum made these attractive placements to students. They were amongst the early placements to recruit, and attracted a good range of applicants. About half way through the placement the organisation moved to another Central London location on the edge of the City. This was much less attractive to the students, as was the move from relatively old-fashioned "garret" style offices to much more modern style open plan. The students enjoyed the privacy of the old offices and did not welcome the increased visibility of the open plan.

The placement was a regular one for the University. It was advertised in the normal way and the appointments made through competitive interview by the employer. The organisation employed other Sandwich Year students from other Universities in a variety of jobs.

The Jobs.

The placements were regular ones having provided experience for four students every year for a number of years. The work was largely consistent both between the students and over the year. There was little development of tasks or duties over the year, and once the students had relatively quickly mastered the tasks there was little opportunity for further development. Interviews with previous students and University supervisors suggested that the pattern is much the same each year. The placement was generally thought by the University to be between satisfactory and good.

The work of all four students was based around checking-in, coding and clarifying responses to a variety of surveys, completion of some of which was a legal requirement. They did, from time to time, play a significant part in developing coding schedules for some of the questionnaires. Generally however, the students would receive a large pile of completed questionnaires and be responsible for coding, checking, getting and filing these. If the questionnaire was incorrectly or partially completed the students would then use a combination of telephone calls and faxes to obtain the correct data. The completed
questionnaires were then passed to a data processing department for compilation and the resulting figures in turn passed to the students’ superiors for analysis and the writing of the appropriate report. The students did not participate in the design of the surveys in any way but were, on occasions, asked to make input into the analysis or reporting of the resulting data.

Their other regular task was to prepare a daily press cuttings file for internal consumption within the organisation. This involved two of the students on any given day reviewing both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers for articles of interest to the organisation. They were given written guidelines and a briefing at the start of their employment, but were then largely left to get on with the task.

This regular diet was occasionally relieved by a “one-off” event. One of the students was, for example, asked to help in the organisation of a seminar based on the findings of one survey. One of the consequences of the competence programme was to prompt a downward revaluation of this placement by the University to “poor”.

**The Employer**

The employer in this case was a relatively senior manager who, although in the latter half of the placement sat in the same office about twenty metres from the students, had little to do with them. This was exemplified by an incident during the Tutor’s last visit after ten months of the placement. The students felt they had to ask him to approach their employer to discuss the arrangements for the completion of their traineeships. They explained that they had tried to do this themselves but had been repeatedly “put off”. The tutor got an instant satisfactory response.

The students were supervised (managed) on a day to day basis by a variety of permanent employees who were in charge of the jobs they were working on. They did have to learn an element of managing their managers when occasionally they would be faced with
competing demands from different managers. Overall working relationships were satisfactory but very little guidance or mentoring took place.

**Student Outcomes**

All four students achieved Unit 8. This was all that the placement reasonably facilitated. These placements were reviewed to see whether the Business Administration Standards would better measure the possibilities they offered. The same limitations of lack of variety and responsibility meant that these occupational standards did not offer any greater opportunities for accreditation.

**The Tutor's Visits**

The students were visited five times through the course of the placement. Planned visits were missed in September/October because the students were involved with extra work caused by a move of offices, and immediately prior to Christmas because of an underestimation by the students of the amount of "office entertainment" that would be taking place at this time. Hence the greater elapsed times between the last two visits.

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**The First Visit**
The first visit took place about five weeks after the students had started their placements. During this visit it became obvious that the majority of issues of concern to the students were common to all, and therefore best dealt with in a group situation. The four students worked very closely together, initially sharing the same office in a garret room of an old stately house converted to offices in one of West London’s more fashionable squares, and later having adjacent desks in a large open plan office. The Tutor’s visits therefore became an unintended, but nevertheless valuable, experiment in the usefulness of group interviews. This pattern continued throughout the placement but with a gradual shift of emphasis from group to individual contact until, at the end, the final session was virtually all taken up by separate one-to-one contact with the students.

It was immediately apparent that the students had little understanding of the NVQ Programme and in consequence, partly at least, had done very little work to prepare for the Tutor’s visit. They had essentially spent the first month “settling in”, learning their tasks, getting used to “working” as against studying at University, and learning and adapting to the culture of the organisation. They had had little time to either reflect upon or learn from their experiences to date in anything other than the most direct way, and had not given anything more than a passing thought to assessment. The briefing and briefing materials given to the students prior to their starting their placements had been largely ineffective. The students had, for example, been given a self-audit questionnaire for completion prior to the tutor’s visit (see Appendix), but had not completed it as they “did not understand what was required”, and a lot of it “did not seem to apply to me”.

The first hour of the visit, therefore, had to be spent working with the group finding out what they were doing in their placement jobs, explaining the nature of the study, the basis of NVQs in general and the Management NVQ Level 4 in particular, the assessment process and the types of evidence required to demonstrate competence. At this stage the students had not seen the full NVQ specification, although the self-audit questionnaire had been based on the Management NVQ Level 4 at Unit level.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The tutor quickly decided that if the students were to progress it would be helpful for him to take the initiative and point the students towards those parts of the Management occupational standards that were most likely to be applicable to them. He started by getting the students to describe to him their jobs and using his experience of the NVQ to determine the Units most likely to be applicable. These were then discussed in some detail with the students, with particular emphasis put on the interpretation of the standards as they might apply to their jobs. Those standards most likely to apply to each job were then negotiated and agreed with each student, and a “contract” signed by both tutor and student. The “contract” was a Project Report Form (see Appendix 7) that was completed at each visit by the tutor and agreed and countersigned by the student. It was a simple one page form printed on NCR paper to give three copies, for student, tutor and administration (see Chapter 4: for a fuller discussion of this form and its use).

It is important to note that this was the first visit of the programme overall, and as such the Tutor had little idea as to what he would encounter. He had not met or taught the students previously. The experience was important as it proved similar to, and led to the adoption of similar strategies in subsequent cases.

As the similarity of the jobs was clear at this stage a preliminary assessment of the extent of likely accreditation could be made for all four students. It was agreed that all should start off working towards Units 8 and 9, and that this was likely to be the maximum extent of accreditation achieved unless there was considerable change in their jobs. This was not thought to be likely even at this early stage.

Each student was then seen individually so that any private matters could be discussed and an assessment made of the possibility that competence had been learnt and could be demonstrated through some other activity the student either currently undertook, or had participated in in the recent past. The outcomes of these discussions are outlined in more detail in the section below on “Experiences Outside Work”.

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Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The whole focus of the meeting was on assessment. Learning and development were discussed only towards the end of the meeting in the context of requests for the Tutor to negotiate a wider range of experiences for the students with the manager. The students had been concerned to learn the requirements for “passing” the Sandwich Year and the Tutor had felt it important to allay any fears the students might have had in order that they were ‘comfortable’ in their placements. He had already taken a decision to ration the amount of information given at any one visit in order not to overload the students, and to provide a rational learning approach. At this stage he thought it would take two or three visits to work through the requirements of the assessment process. This left little room for the planned learning and development activities that it had been anticipated would dominate the early part of the placement.

The Second and Third Visits

If the first visit was basically concerned with explanation and clarification of the study’s purpose and requirements, the second and third visits moved on to deal with detailed explanation of the nature of occupational standards, their applicability to the students’ jobs, the content of the MCI level 4 NVQ, the required forms such as Evidence Cross Referencing and Evidence Summary Sheets, and the nature of competence assessment. These apparently simple ideas required repeated explanation over the duration of two visits and the use of many examples, both general and from the students own work, before the students arrived at a “Eureka Moment” when every thing became ‘clear’ to them. This happened at different points in time for different students.

This pattern of the second meeting was much the same as the first. This visit started with a group discussion based on the evidence that the students had assembled. Since the tasks performed by the students were similar so obviously was the evidence. The discussion focused around what the evidence demonstrated, its adequacy in terms of assessment, and the way it might be used and presented. In practical terms this meant a lot of discussion concerning the use of personal reports, evidence summaries, and evidence cross-referencing forms.
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The concerns expressed by the students centred exclusively on assessment, with very little interest being demonstrated in learning or development. This meant that work on development, other than through preparing for assessment, did not take place. By the second visit the students had effectively accepted their ‘lot’ and were prepared to work within it. They showed little resentment and no tendency to rebel or attempt to ‘forcibly’ improve their position.

There was much discussion and enthusiasm with students 1-3 concerning the accreditation of learning from jobs they had held or work they had undertaken before attending University. This possibility was explored with all students during the first two meetings, and was greeted with enthusiasm by three of these students. This use of these, non-placement, experiences is discussed in more detail below.

One of the surprising features to emerge at this point was the lack of student to student contact in relation to learning. The researcher made a presumption that the geographic proximity of the students combined with their common interest in the Sandwich Year would lead to significant peer tutoring and sharing of experience. This was not the case. This illustrates the need to build into programmes such as this mechanisms to make the best use of peer tutoring and support.

The Fourth and Fifth Visits

The final visits were concerned almost exclusively with assessment. Instrumentality was well established and all the students wanted to do was to “pass” the Sandwich Year. Despite the relatively simple assessment of one unit ultimately taken by all four students the final stages were problematic and time consuming from the Tutor’s viewpoint. Students did not completed agreed tasks in preparation for his visit, and/or evidence and forms were not prepared fully and properly. The pass/fail nature of the assessment appeared to encourage satisficing behaviour.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The lack of completely satisfactory written evidence led to the Tutor taking a more active role in assessing the students. By this time he had got to know the students and their jobs very well and was able to make an assessment based on this knowledge. This might well have been sufficient assessment for a University award, but as a NVQ was involved a transparent record of assessment had to be established to satisfy the requirements of both internal and external verification. This was achieved by the interviewer taping an interview in which he very much led the student through the evidence in an ordered form related to the NVQ. This format was in accordance with MCI and NCVQ sponsored developments published at that time (MCI 1998), and was agreed in advance with the External Verifier. The end result was that the assessment was much more interview (and consequently less written portfolio) dependent than had originally been anticipated.

The final part of these interviews was always devoted to a discussion as to what the study had meant for them. This had several parts. They were asked to list the good and bad things about the study, their reaction to it, and whether or not they felt it had been beneficial to them. This was followed by a discussion of the perceived benefits or detriments and the ways in which the programme could be improved. The findings of these parts of the visits are discussed throughout this thesis, but generally students appeared to be easy, open and perceptive when discussing the study.

Meeting the Employer

The employer was met by appointment at the beginning and end of the placement, during the first and last visits to the students. He was also seen without appointment on the fourth visit when he happened to be available. The employer was seen rather than the students’ immediate manager(s) as these changed from visit to visit in a way that was impossible to predict. It was therefore difficult to make appointments sufficiently in advance to secure dates in diaries. The employer knew little of NVQs but was generally supportive and complementary towards the students.
The employer was generally very positive about the students, but emphasised that he had little freedom to alter their role or provide them with a wider range of opportunities.

**Student 2**

Student 2 carried out all the tasks in the generic description above but was also uniquely involved in organising and marketing a seminar based on the report of one of the surveys. This involved her in distributing a leaflet describing the seminar to potentially interested parties, taking bookings (including noting special dietary needs) and invoicing. Twenty-eight bookings were received. She then had to send out joining instructions, arrange food, and prepare folders containing relevant information for the delegates. On the day of the seminar she acted as the receptionist, and subsequently helped prepare an evaluative report on the seminar. The work was interesting as much for the problems that arose as the tasks themselves. These included bookings being mislaid, and finding the right procedures by which to pay in cheques in the face of contradictory advice. These involved her in finding the right people to talk to, either going to see them or telephoning them, and then proposing an appropriate course of action to her manager. Feedback from her manager and discussions with her indicate that she did this satisfactorily and would have welcomed more of this “trouble shooting” work.

**Experiences Outside the Placement**

Three of these students, 1 to 3, had the possibility of demonstrating competence from experiences outside their Sandwich Year placement.

**Student 1 – The Youth Club Organiser**

Student 1 had played a major role in organising her local Youth Club before coming to University. This had involved organising weekend and weeklong trips for groups of members. She would suggest an itinerary, negotiate an agreed version with the group, book the necessary accommodation and facilities, collect the money, make the necessary payments and supervise the trip itself. As she had done this several times with some
success it appeared that she was likely to have demonstrated many of the Level 4 Management Competences through these tasks.

She was initially very enthusiastic about claiming competence against these experiences, but again the evidence proved impossible to obtain. The Youth Club had changed from Church to Local Authority sponsorship during her absence and virtually all the records had disappeared. The Tutor suggested trying to accumulate witness testimony, but the student felt this too great a task in relation to the potential outcome. She felt claiming competence in this way was interesting, but

"It's not what my degree is really about. That's about work and University and what I can do there. I don't think potential employers are going to value these things"

**Student 2 – The Retail Supervisor**

Student 2 had worked for several years as a full time, permanent supervisor in Saxone and Sainsbury retail stores prior to coming to University. Her job at Saxone had involved her in the company’s supervisor development programme. This programme ran over an extended period, involved a mix of formal training sessions, open learning, coaching and mentoring and the maintenance of a logbook that recorded the demonstration of the required competence. The company kept this logbook both during her time with them and after she left.

The logbook was an obvious source of evidence, and the student was initially enthusiastic about using it to claim competence. She made several attempts to contact Saxone in order to get access to the logbook. As these attempts started less than 18 months after she had left their employment she felt she had a good chance of obtaining the logbook. However, it proved impossible to obtain, and consequently no claim for competence was made against this experience, although she had obviously demonstrated many of the competences listed in the Management Standards in it.
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**Student 3 – The Family Businesses**

Student 3 had potentially the most promising outside evidence of any of the students participating in the study. She was involved in running her “family shop” (a small supermarket that traded for long hours) and the financial side of an Air Conditioning business run by her uncles.

Her role in the shop involved the recruitment and supervision of staff (shop assistants and ‘paperboys’); the organisation of the shop, its stocking policy and the ordering of goods; and the accounts, banking, VAT and tax returns. She played a more limited role in the Air Conditioning business dealing mainly with ordering and accounts. She had a reasonable chance of demonstrating the full Management NVQ Level 4 from these experiences.

Once again however the evidence proved to be unobtainable. This time it was blamed on the family’s reluctance to make public information concerning their businesses when they were going through “difficulties”. The student made several requests to be allowed to use the information to obtain the NVQ but these resulted in arguments with her father. In the end she decided it was not worth pursuing.

**Summary Students 1-4**

The overall impression left at the end of this placement was that it did little to stretch or develop the students other than familiarise them with the world of work and give them an introduction to office politics. The jobs were of a basic administrative type that the organisation had found over the years could be usefully and cheaply filled with student labour. The main benefits to the organisation of using students was the “intelligent” application of questionnaire coding systems to free response questions. The benefits to the student were questionable as there was little chance to either apply knowledge gained from their course or develop new skills. The one exception to this was the requirement to deal tactfully with a wide range of people in the organisation from typists to senior managers in order to get things done. One of the more interesting responses that came from all these students in a similar form at the end of the traineeship was roughly that...
"I am going to go back to University and work really hard to get a good degree so I can have a chance of choosing the sort of job I want. I do NOT want to do any old general administrative job like this that I might have to settle for with a poor degree".

**Student 5 - Computing in an Insurance Company.**

Student 5 was a finance major who had gone to University straight from school where she had taken "A" levels. She had taken the first year of a BABS degree at Leeds Metropolitan University, but had decided to transfer to University of Greenwich to be closer to home for personal reasons. She lived at home while at University travelling by train some 20 miles to attend. She lived at home during her Sandwich Year travelling some 30 miles by car to work.

She had been employed by WH Smith as a shop assistant since 1992 and was working in excess of 15 hours a week while studying at University. She was sometimes required to take a minor supervisory role and was, on occasions, given responsibility for closing the store down and locking up at the end of the day. Although she initially carried on working Saturdays she found the shop work much harder during her time in the placement and ended up giving up this work approximately half way through the placement. She was highly thought of by her placement employer and continued to work there on a part-time basis one day a week and during vacations after the placement had finished. This work was both more lucrative and more interesting than shop work.

There was an active social life based around the workplace that, although living some distance away, the student became an active participant in. For example, when she left the Director of the Department she worked in authorised (payment for) and attended a party in a restaurant for all the staff in her department. She has been offered a permanent job to train as an ACCA when she leaves University but is likely not to take it up for personal reasons.
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The Placement

This placement was in the Head Offices of a large insurance company in a large commuter belt town about 40 miles from London. The offices were modern, open plan and well equipped. The placement was a regular one for the University. It was advertised in the normal way and the appointments made through competitive interview by the employer.

The Job

The job was concerned with the provision of computing services and is perhaps best described as a Systems Analyst. It was largely Project based with some day to day problem solving and maintenance.

"To participate in the testing of various functions within the (Computerised Accounting System); input data into the system and check the output to identify any problems involved with the testing; create audit trails and collate proof to illustrate how a function works.
Assist and contribute to projects; research and collate information and present the results; analyse the information as a team and as an individual; present information in a graphical format using Performance Criteria graphics software"
(extract from job description)

Thus, for example, one of her early projects was to design and implement a revised system for processing car mileage claims. This involved her in interviewing all the people with an interest in the system (car users, managers, accountants, etc); designing and writing a package that met their needs; trialling it, getting feedback and going live with the final package. This had been a ‘problem’ area for some time and her work was so well received she got a special mention in the local monthly internal news bulletin from the Director in charge of the area.
Her early successes led to greater faith being put in her both in terms of complexity of task and exposure within the organisation. Later on in her placement she was given the task of analysing and presenting the results of the Finance Division’s Customer Satisfaction Survey. This was an important task as the results were distributed throughout the company including Board Members. Again her work was well received and publicly complimented.

Her own reflection was that “My year out was a brilliant experience” which was clear both from the evidence presented and the observation of her own and her employer’s reactions during the year.

**The Employer**

The employer was effectively at Director level and had little day to day contact with the student. As a consequence no meetings were arranged with the Tutor. She and her manager were effectively a group of two who worked very much as a partnership towards the end of her placement. They enjoyed a good professional relationship to the extent that she was allowed to use his company car whenever he was away on holiday or business for an extended period.

**The Outcomes**

The student achieved Units 2, 8 and 9 of the Level 4 Management NVQ. This was all she could have reasonably been expected to achieve in this placement. She was interested in finance and the placement offered experience in the way IT could be used to run the finance function in a large organisation. The placement was an excellent one for her. Unfortunately the Management standards were not the most appropriate measure of her total performance. The IT and/or Finance Standards may well have provided the additional necessary measures of performance.

The student did, however, value the use of the standards as an organising principle for her placement;
"This (the Standards) is really good! It helps you think about what you're doing and what you've achieved. If you don't think back you don't realise what you've learnt. It's much better than my friends are getting on the normal programme!"

### The Tutor's Visits

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The visits generally fell into the pattern described above for students 1-4. The main difference was that this student sought more contact arranging 6 visits in all, was more proactive in her relationship with the Tutor, completed agreed tasks on time and was very businesslike in her approach to the meetings. These would always be in a meeting room that she would have booked for an hour. This set a time frame to the meetings and meant they operated to a relatively strict agenda.

This student would also seek advice from the Tutor over the telephone. All students had the Tutors home and work telephone numbers, but relatively few made use of it.

It is interesting to note that even one of the most proactive and conscientious students only felt the need to see the tutor on average once every six or seven weeks. This figure is arrived at by taking out periods she was on holiday and the initial settling in period, and
averaging the result. A review of the content of the meetings also shows that some of the meetings could have been adequately dealt with through the submission of written material by the student and written and/or oral comment by the Tutor. An e-mail link backed by telephone support would have perhaps even been a preferable alternative.

**Visiting the Employer.**

The manager was easy to meet and made himself freely available whenever the student was being visited. He generally tried to be “in the office” whenever the student was being visited, and always made time to discuss her progress. He knew nothing of NVQs but was generally supportive and complementary towards the student.

**Experiences Outside the Placement.**

The student had some initial enthusiasm for using her WH Smith experience to demonstrate competence. This waned however as her placement job became more important to her and the WH Smith job less so. This importance could be measured in two ways. Firstly there was the obvious financial importance of the income. Secondly there was the obvious pleasure she derived from her position in the shop. At the start of the placement her boyfriend was a trainee manager working at the shop. The relationship was not helped by the fact that his job was moved to Reading half way through the year (although he still lived locally), but was also affected by her new found status in her Sandwich Year placement.

**Summary Student 5.**

Student 5 had an extremely successful Sandwich Year. She was an intelligent conscientious student who worked hard throughout the year. She was businesslike in her approach to her learning and contacts with the Tutor. The placement was a good one in the specialist area of finance and her learning was not fully measured by the Management NVQ. Half way through the year she made a presentation on her placement and the Project to the Steering Group, one of whom was heard to remark “She’ll have no trouble getting a job!” which is perhaps a good one line summary of her position.
Student 6 - International Finance and Accounting.

Student 6 was a finance major who had come to the University straight from A-levels. He was from South East London and lived with his parents both while at University and during his placement. He has subsequently won a place on one of the major Bank’s Graduate Entry Scheme against strong national competition.

The Placement

The placement was at the London office an international news agency on Fleet Street. The site was one of many occupied by the Agency in London and was in itself relatively small. The offices were functional rather than palatial and the atmosphere generally busy. The placement was a regular one for the University. It was advertised in the University in the normal way and the appointment made through competitive interview by the employer.

The Job

The job centred on the monthly rationalisation of accounts worldwide. Each “Country” invoiced the others for the services they had provided, and in turn paid for the services they had used. The student’s job was to oversee this rationalisation process and ensure that London got its fair share from the other countries, and was not overcharged for what it used. The sums involved were substantial amounting to several million pounds over the course of a year. Somewhat surprisingly, after an initial training period during which he demonstrated his competence, he was allowed to handle this process largely unsupervised. His own surprise was evidenced, for example, by a long conversation he had one day over payments with the Swiss office during which he negotiated an improvement in London’s position. He only discovered that he had been talking to the Director in charge of the Swiss operation after the phone call had been completed.
In order to carry out his tasks more effectively and efficiently he developed and/or modified several databases in Microsoft Access. These involved minor changes in practice in the Agency, but these were adopted as standard procedures.

The student was well paid earning around £16,000 p.a. by the end of the year.

**The Employer**

The employer and the immediate manager were one and the same person in this case

**The Outcomes**

The student achieved Unit 8 of the Level 4 Management Standards. He could have had made a better attempt at Units 2, 7 and 9 but became more and more involved in his job acquiring more and more responsibility, which in turn left him with less time for the NVQ. He ultimately adopted a satisficing strategy, doing the minimum needed to pass the year. His considerable efforts were devoted to performance in his job which he (probably rightly) felt were more important to his learning and future career than the NVQ.

The Management NVQ was not an adequate measure of his learning. The Finance standards might well have been more appropriate.

**The Tutor's Visits**

The visits again followed the usual pattern. The main variation in this case was the tailing off of interest as it became clear that the management NVQ was not really relevant to his job or future. He started enthusiastically and systematically to record his learning and the evidence of it, and had demonstrated competence against Unit 8 by the third visit. The other two visits were essentially 'checks' on possible developments that in practice revealed none relevant to the NVQ, although much interesting data about his progress in the job.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

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Visting the Employer

The Employer was seen by appointment on the first and last visits to the student and was not generally available on a casual basis. He knew nothing of NVQs but was generally supportive and complementary towards the student.

Experiences Outside the Placement.

Student 6 had no experience outside the placement that could be used to demonstrate competence.

Summary Student 6.

Student 6 was an able student who, through demonstrating competence early on in his year rose to a responsible position in his placement organisation. He had a very valuable learning experience that was not adequately measured by the Management NVQ. He started working towards the NVQ enthusiastically, but the negative pressure of the apparent irrelevance of the award to the important parts of his job, and the positive pressure of increasing intrinsic job satisfaction led to him losing interest in the NVQ. This placement, like the previous one, provided excellent experience for a finance student.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

**Student 7—Mainframe Computing.**

Student 7 was a general business studies student who stated on her CV prepared for placement applications that she “wanted to pursue a career in marketing or personnel management”. Her family home was in the Midlands and she continued to live in accommodation local to the University throughout the placement. She had come straight to University from school where she had taken an A-level programme.

**The Placement**

The placement was in the offices of a publishing company in the Notting Hill Gate area of London. The offices were modern and relatively small generally providing accommodation for between 2 and 6 people. The placement was a regular one for the University, having taken students for several years. There was another student from the University working in another office location for the same Sandwich Year.

**The Job**

The student described her job as:

“To support users on a variety of applications running on DEC VAX mini computers, mainly accounting, order processing and exhibitions. Also to provide/solve preventative maintenance, trouble shooting, answering phone queries, taking helpline calls, analysis of problems and the proposal and implementation of solutions, ensuring VAX systems are backed up and making sure that the systems within the company are also backed up. You have to have a flexible approach to work as you have to sometimes cover other positions within the department, including administrative duties and helpline duties when staff levels are low or during busier periods. You have to be willing to learn all aspects of computing, especially mini computers, PC's, NMC's and a range of software packages. You also need a good telephone manner as you have to communicate to all levels of staff and departments throughout the company. As a member of the support team you will inevitably be involved in further developments in this exciting field. You
will have to deal with any request and co-ordinate such requests and allocating the work to the relevant specialist via the help desk system. Maintenance of the asset register database and liaison with accounts department in respect of this, raising purchase orders for new equipment and consumables and dealing with suppliers and the multitude of incoming sales calls.

The department is very much a team effect with a friendly good humoured atmosphere. It can be extremely hectic at times, therefore the ability to work well under pressure is essential." (Extract from Personal Report)

In essence she spent most of her time sorting out problems or running reports on the organisation's main frame computer, with the secondary function of ordering computers and associated supplies. The job was clearly delineated with no opportunities for modification or expansion.

She had had no previous experience of computing of this type and at this level, so the level of competence she acquired was quite remarkable. She was often left alone for long periods (several days) from relatively early on in the placement to effectively sort out problems. She was well thought of by the management in the organisation, but was determined at the end of the placement not to end up in a job like this when she completed her degree. She did de facto supervise an Administrative Assistant for approximately the last three months of her year.

The job was something of a disappointment to the student, and not what she had been promised by the employer at interview. That had been a much broader job, but this became impossible when planned office moves to combine locations were initially delayed and then later abandoned.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Employer

The employer in this case was the senior manager of the Section and was never seen. The student’s immediate manager shared the office with her when he was at her site. This was about half the time.

The Outcomes

The student completed Units 2, 3, 8 and 9 of the Level 4 Management NVQ. This was all she could achieve in the job. She worked conscientiously and inventively to make the most of the opportunities open to her and assembled a full portfolio.

The Tutors Visits

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The visits again followed the typical pattern. The first visit was delayed due to threatened office moves. Thereafter the student “aggressively” pursued meetings in order to try and get as much of the NVQ as possible. Understandably, her interest waned a little when it became clear office moves were not going to take place, and she had reached the limit of the possibilities open to her.

Despite her considerable ability the procedures and practices involved in applying the Standards to her job and acquiring the NVQ took her some considerable time to understand, with the usual large number of examples being used. Her “Eureka moment did not come until over half way through the visits.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

Visiting the Employer

The manager was always willing to discuss the student's progress with the tutor when he was there and was generally willing to switch his diary around to facilitate meetings with the Tutor. The student found him a helpful coach in relation to her computing role, but this was the limit of his expertise. She rarely saw her employer.

Experiences Outside the Placement.

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

Summary Student 7

Student 7 was an able, conscientious student who, for reasons beyond her control, was in a computing based job devoid of many of the opportunities she had been promised. She enjoyed the NVQ and found it beneficial to her learning, and given the opportunity would have probably completed the full award. Given her previous lack of training and knowledge in the area she ended up working in, her performance was remarkable. Overall, however, this was a poor placement for a Business Studies student. As it turned out it would have been a better placement for a Computing Studies student.

Student 8 - Personnel Officer in a Building Society.

Student 8 was a BTEC National Student (overall distinction) who came to University direct from college. She lived at home with her family both during her time at University and during her Sandwich Year placement. During the year she went into business with her father playing a leading part in raising the finance for and starting up a “Fish and Chip” shop. She also worked part-time on Saturdays throughout University and the Sandwich Year as a Departmental Supervisor in a Shoe Express store.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Placement

The placement was in the Personnel Department of a large Building Society. It was at Head Office in well provided open plan offices. It was one of four offered to students that year in the Personnel Department, and had been a regular placement for some years. The previous occupant had been so well thought of that she was employed on a part-time basis one day a week and during holidays through the remainder of her degree. The same happened to this student.

The majority of employees worked locally and there was some work related social life that the student became involved with.

The Job

The extract below is from the advertisement the student wrote to recruit her successor. It is a good description of what she did.

"We have an excellent opportunity for a bright, enthusiastic Personnel Assistant to join a busy personnel team providing a comprehensive Personnel service to a range of employees.

You will be fully responsible for the co-ordination of the Society's work experience schemes, liaising closely with staff and pupils, together with our departmental managers. You will help to strengthen our relations with educational establishments and will represent the Society at school events and careers conventions. In addition, you will support your colleagues in various administrative duties as necessary.

This is a high profile role and you must possess an outgoing nature with the confidence to communicate both verbally and in writing with all levels. You will be a self-motivated individual who enjoys using your initiative and working within a team. You must be able to act with tact and discretion at all times."

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She did in fact get involved with a range of other duties on an ad hoc basis including helping run an Assessment Centre for Graduate Entrants, recruiting the Chairman's Chauffeur, and checking the references and security clearance of all security personnel. Her enthusiasm also led her to completely revise the procedures at the Building Society for dealing with work experience, in particular enabling the provision of work experience to pupils with disabilities. She left a comprehensive procedural manual for her successor.

The Employer

The Employer in this case was the Chief Personnel officer who was never seen, whereas the manager was a Personnel Manager effectively two levels below. The manager changed approximately half way through the year, without any serious consequences for the student. Although they worked in the Personnel Department of an organisation that had a NVQ based Management Development programme neither of her managers had anything more than a basic understanding of NVQs.

The Outcomes

The student obtained Units 1, 2, 8 and 9 of the Level 4 Management NVQ. This was probably the most she could have obtained from her job.

The Tutor's Visits

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Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The meetings followed the usual pattern, with the student being particularly conscientious about meeting deadlines and carrying out agreed work. She developed a business-like way of working, booking meeting rooms and car parking spaces for the tutor. Meeting rooms were generally booked for an hour, which occasionally proved problematic. She developed a way of working which perhaps owed something both her BTEC past and the fact that the Building Society had a NVQ based Management Development programme that several of the managers she dealt with had been through. The method was both simple and effective. Whenever she had successfully completed a new task or area of work she would write up a short account (personal report) of what she had done. This was then shown to the managers involved who were asked to sign it as "witnesses". They often suggested she put other things she had not thought of into the account. She then attached whatever "evidence" she had to support her account and presented it to the Tutor on his next visit. Once accepted it would then be cross referenced to the Management competences.

Visiting the Employer.

The employer was never seen as he had little to do directly with the student. Both managers worked in the same open plan office as the student and were readily available for meetings. They were seen on three occasions through the Sandwich Year, at the beginning, middle and end of the placement. The managers both did what they could to enlarge her experience. For example, during the first visit when the Standards were being explained the manager offered the student an opportunity to attend an Assessment Centre as it appeared relevant to her learning. This was accepted, although it meant weekend work at short notice, and proved to be a beneficial experience.

Experiences Outside the Placement.

The student had two sets of experiences outside the placement that could have evidenced competence against the Management Standards. Firstly, she was employed as a "Saturday Supervisor" by Shoe Express and had worked there for eighteen months by the start of her Sandwich Year. Secondly, during the Sandwich Year she played the leading role in
opening a family business, a fish and chip shop. This involved the preparation of a business plan; securing finance from a Bank; finding and decorating premises; hiring and supervising staff; buying goods and equipment and dealing with accounts. She could potentially have completed the full NVQ from this experience alone.

The shop experience only came to light as a result of the Tutor picking up on a casual remark towards the end of the placement. The student regarded it as “family business” and something that was separate from her career. Not only did she not see the transferability of the skills, but almost resented it. It was as if she wanted to keep her “University skills” unblemished by those she had developed or “picked up” elsewhere. Ultimately it appeared strange, for whatever reason, that a student so assiduous in claiming competence from her placement job was so uninterested in doing the same from her other activities.

**Summary Student 8.**

Student was a conscientious student who worked enthusiastically in both her placement and in pursuit of her NVQ Award. She had a very positive Sandwich Year that the NVQ assessment process helped her learn as much as possible from. Her negative reaction to her outside work experience was strong and interesting.

**Student 9 - Advertising Healthcare.**

Student 9 was a Marketing major passionately interested in her subject. She came straight to University from taking A-levels at School. She lived at home in North London with her parents through both her time at University and the Sandwich Year. She was a well organised student who continually and consciously related her Sandwich Year to her undergraduate studies.

**The Placement**

The placement was a new one for the University that the student found herself through distant family connections. There was no competitive selection process. The placement
proved to be successful from the organisation’s point of view to such a degree that they did competitively recruit another Sandwich Year student to a similar post the following year. They also provided student 11 with unpaid (generous expenses) work experience when she was left without a placement (see below).

The job was in the offices of an advertising agency in the middle of Soho employing approximately 50 people. The atmosphere was at times frenetic and the hours were worked that the job required, often until late in the evening. The offices were well equipped open plan (to impress clients), dress very smart (and expensive) casual and the culture open and egalitarian. It was a lively, exciting place to work where work and social life mixed easily.

**The Job**

The student described her job in her final Personal Report as,

"The main content of the job has been within the role of the account team, assisting with the day to day running of the accounts and dealing with clients. My first couple of months at the agency saw me as a general help to all departments, as an effective way of getting to know the various agency procedures and roles of each department. The job from there became increasingly flexible and it was left to me to work off my own initiative with those around me. Most of this included standard account handling but also left me the space to fulfil criteria that I felt was necessary to my own development.

Much of my time in the account team was spent helping with meetings, writing basic contact reports, liaising with clients over the phone, faxing over information and assisting with photographic and commercial shoots. I also had to invoice clients each month and check periodicals for relevant product or interesting marketing information. I organised and completed two in-

Michael Edmunds
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

house market research reports that were then presented to the client. I made an effort to do things for myself which other people would normally do, for example, I typed and printed all my own letters, correspondence and envelope labels in an effort to familiarise myself with the computer packages and their different uses. I always packaged up and labelled parcels to be sent out myself.

In the quieter periods at the agency I was able to reorganise the storage of the periodicals into a neater, more compact format, labelled with their names and the dates they ran from and to. This was also done for the advert files which I updated and tidied up, and also the product files which I converted from hanging files into an ordered box file system with a category index and cross referenced alphabetic index. I also spent some time building up informative files on marketing and advertising information and people.

I visited both the bigger consumer agencies and also spent a day at a media house to see how the media is chosen and analysed. I have seen a retouching studio working on one of our ads and have worked with an animation/production studio on a television ad."

This gives some idea of both the student’s enthusiasm and the range of experience that she was given. She was a “Trainee Account Executive” and while performing a range of mundane tasks, was also given the opportunity to undertake or observe a range of more complex processes.

The Employer

The employer and manager were effectively the same person, one of the Partners that owned the agency. The definition of “manager” in this case was difficult as the student worked on a number of accounts for whoever was running that account.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

**The Outcomes**

The student was only able to demonstrate competence against Unit 8 of the Level 4 Management Standards. This was a totally inadequate measure of her learning, experience and achievements.

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The Tutor’s visits again followed the normal pattern. The main distinguishing features with this student were that she had accumulated a vast body of “evidence” in advance of the Tutor’s first visit, copying virtually every document she had had a part in creating. It quickly became clear that while she was having a very good Sandwich Year experience she would only be able to demonstrate competence against Unit 8, as this was the only one of the Units that applied to her work. The Tutor continued to visit, however, as the student wanted to discuss her preparations for her final year Project. This offered the Tutor an opportunity to continue to observe her Sandwich Year experience.

The student was again very businesslike in her approach to meeting the Tutor. A meeting room was always booked and coffee and biscuits arranged. An agenda was set and papers sometimes sent in advance. The Tutor was treated as a client.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

**Visiting the Employer**

The employer was seen on three occasions by appointment and once casually. He always commented favourably on the student’s performance. The Tutor met a variety of the student’s managers on different visits all of whom talked quite openly and complimentarily about the student.

**Experiences Outside the Placement**

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

**Summary Student 9**

Student 9 found her own placement, and got the experience she wanted in an Advertising Agency. The placement worked well from both her point of view and the Agency’s to the extent that the placement is now a continuing one. The student’s enthusiasm and her willingness to undertake a variety of mundane as well as interesting tasks was a key component in the success of the placement. The Management NVQ was a totally inadequate measure of this Advertising placement.

**Students 10-13 - The Unfortunate Experience.**

Students 10-13 shared the same employer for the first four months of their Sandwich Year. This was a small electronics import and distribution company with offices in a warehousing facility on a small industrial estate in a relatively “isolated” location approximately half a mile from the New Covent Garden in London. The placements were regular ones for the University, and were advertised in the University and recruited through competitive interview. They had been acceptable placement for the previous year’s Sandwich students.

The students were all marketing students who wanted experience in that area. They were recruited to jobs described as “Marketing Assistants”. The reality, however, was very
different. They were in fact undertaking basic administrative or secretarial jobs (see below for a discussion of individual roles). Wages were paid on a weekly basis “cash in hand” usually around £120 per week. The atmosphere in the workplace was unpleasant, perhaps due to the fact that the company was undergoing a financial crisis. Employees were regularly being sacked or leaving in acrimonious circumstances.

The Tutor’s first meeting with the students was called to a halt by a phone call from the Managing Director objecting to the 50 minutes it had taken at that point. The call had been prompted by staff in the office ringing the Managing director at home to “report on” the students. It was dictatorial and abusive in tone. The next meeting with the students was arranged in the evening at the University. The three female students (10-12) resigned shortly after that second meeting with the full support of the University. The fourth, a young man from Mauritius, was so essential to the company’s operations that he managed to negotiate himself an increase to £200 per week. He also found the work more acceptable in that he was largely left alone in an office to get on with his work. It is probable that gender and ethnicity played a part in the decisions to stay and leave although this was impossible to investigate or prove.

This placement highlighted the difficulties involved in vetting or assessing placements in advance of students taking up their jobs. The placement had been satisfactory the previous year. However, a change in the company’s circumstances and personnel, and a different group of students (possibly with different expectations or tolerance levels), resulted in a totally unsatisfactory situation.

**Student 10 - Advertising.**

Student 10 was a marketing major. She came to University straight from taking A-Levels at school. She shared a flat with student 11 in Docklands throughout her time on the Sandwich Year. They had previously shared a house close to the University in South East London.
The Placement

The student had two placements. The first was discussed above. The second was as an administrative assistant in an Advertising Agency run by a “friend of the family” where she worked for two months unpaid but with generous “expenses”. The Advertising was a small four person business with an office in a block in a converted building in Soho.

The Job

The first job in the Electronics Company was essentially as the Personal Assistant (or more realistically Secretary) to the Managing Director. The role included working out the “wages” for all those involved with the company. This included the salesmen’s commissions and the invoices paid to the messengers and delivery drivers (essentially a self-employment device to avoid these people becoming employees). She was also responsible for buying approximately £400 per month of general office supplies and running the petty cash system. All her calculations had to be authorised by the company accountant but in practice he did not have the information to perform a check.

Unfortunately the most significant learning that probably took place was in regard to dealing with difficult, unsatisfactory situations. This was extremely valuable but difficult to accredit.

The second job although “unpaid” provided her with the marketing experience she so desperately sought. She still undertook a variety of administrative duties, but they were in a marketing context and in connection with marketing activities. She felt she was learning how the “business” worked. The pinnacle of her activities was to take a leading role in some retail store surveys the Agency was commissioned to do. The general situation of the office in a lively area of the city surrounded by a number of wine bars and an active social life with other Sandwich Year students working in the area, was also in sharp contrast to the industrial unit and relative isolation of her first job.

The Employer

The first employer was described above. The second was a distant family friend who was as helpful as possible to the student and available when the Tutor visited.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Outcomes

The student demonstrated competence against Unit 8 of the level 4 management NVQ. This was all that was possible from the first job because of the active opposition of her employer to the provision of evidence. The second job was essentially a marketing position where the Management Standards were not relevant. Her Sandwich Year was less than ideal in most ways, however, the amount of learning that went on and its (positive) effect on the student should not be underestimated. The NVQ certification barely scratched at the surface of this learning.

The Tutor's Visits

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The visits did not follow the usual pattern. The first visit was to the electronics company offices referred to above. It consisted of listening to and determining a course of action in regard to the students' complaints concerning their placements. They felt these had not been dealt fairly with by the then placements officer who it was eventually discovered was having an affair with the Managing Director of the electronic company. She subsequently left the University's employment.

Some basic work concerning the NVQ was carried out with the four students in the middle of this turmoil. The students did, as a result, start gathering information that was discussed at some depth at the second meeting with them in the evening at the University. This meeting did follow the well established pattern, and was an interesting example of the efficiency (from the Tutor's viewpoint) of the group tutorial. There were several points
where the students started explaining matters to one another thereby improving both their own understanding and that of the other student. Also, perhaps more obviously, many things could be said and many queries answered simultaneously rather than in series.

The final visit was to the student’s marketing placement and established both that she was enjoying a positive experience and that there were no further opportunities for her to develop and claim competence against the Management NVQ.

**Visiting the Employer**

This has been discussed above for both jobs.

**Experiences Outside the Placement**

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

**Summary Student 10**

Student 10 was an enthusiastic able student who was recruited to an unfortunate placement. She nevertheless learnt a lot from adversity and was helped in this by the reflective practice of NVQs. The NVQ itself was, however, a poor measure what she learnt from both jobs.

**Student 11 - Advertising Healthcare.**

Student 11 was a marketing major. She came straight to the University from taking A-Leves at school. She shared a flat with student 10 in Docklands throughout her time on the Sandwich Year. They had previously shared a house close to the University in South East London. She had a particularly unfortunate year in that on top of everything else she was taken seriously ill at the start of December. She was hospitalised for a short period, and then went to her parents house to recover for a month. The most astounding fact is that despite, or perhaps because of, all that happened to her she still felt the Sandwich
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

Year to be an important and valuable expedience and "would not have missed it for anything".

The Placement

The student had two placements. The first with the Electronics Company was discussed above. The second was as an account assistant in the Advertising Agency where student 9 worked. Student 9 was a friend from University and on hearing of her difficulties in getting a second placement arranged for her to work for her agency for two months unpaid, but with generous "expenses".

The Job

Student 11 was recruited to the Electronics Company as a Marketing Assistant. The extract below is from the first page of the Procedural Manual she was given on arrival at the company, and is a good description of what she was expected to do.

"CONTROL ROOM CO-ORDINATOR

The control room co-ordinator is responsible for a number of roles within the organisation, and principally in the operations department. As a control room co-ordinator your duties are as follows:

a) Answering the telephone and taking client bookings as well as updating the control room computer.
b) Liaison with clients and drivers dealing with any associated problems.
c) Responsible for all delivery paperwork.
d) Generally assisting the Transport Manager with the day to day running of the control room.

You will report directly to the Operations Director, and have regular meetings to monitor your progress and resolve any outstanding problems and/or to make improvements."
The job basically involved running the company's delivery and courier service. There was none of the promised marketing content.

The second job with the Advertising Agency was similar to that of student 9 although at perhaps a slightly lower level of responsibility and complexity.

The Employer

The first employer was discussed above. The second was the same as student 9's and the same comments apply.

The Outcomes

The same remarks apply as for student 10.

The Tutor's Visits

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The same remarks apply as for student 10. The relatively long gaps between the later visits were caused by delay in the student finding a second placement and her period of illness.

Visiting the Employer

The visits during the first job are discussed above. The same comments as for student 9 apply to the second job.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

Experiences Outside the Placement

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

Summary Student 11

Student 11 was a bright, able student who learnt much in the face of considerable adversity. All the remarks made in summary for student 10 apply here but with an added piquancy because of the extra dimension of the serious illness. The Tutor will always remember the conclusion of the final interview with this student. When asked if she regretted the year at all, despite being considerably in debt as a result of it, she replied with considerable feeling,

"It's been a fantastic year, I have learnt so much! I wouldn't change a thing!"

Student 12 - The Job Centre Interviewer.

Student 12 was a Marketing major. She came to the University straight from College where she had studied for a BTEC National Diploma in Business and Finance. She lived with her parents in Northwest London throughout her time at University and for the duration of the Sandwich Year.

The Placement

The first placement was discussed above. The second placement was in the Neasden Job Centre. She obtained this through a "Temping Agency". She worked at a desk in a large open plan office with the clients sitting in a waiting area at the far end of the office. She would occasionally have to take clients to the privacy of an interview room, but was generally in public view. Clients would, on occasions, walk up to her desk uninvited.

The Job

In her CV prepared after her Sandwich Year student 12 described her job with the Electronics Company as'
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

Position: Sales Support, Admin and In-store Promotion,

Responsibilities:
- The booking and processing of orders.
- The maintenance of the daily revenue watch.
- Handling general product queries.
- In-store training and Marketing.
- Special promotions.
- General Administration duties.

This, however, was what she thought she had been employed to do rather than what she actually did. The reality was that she spent her time taking telephone orders and handling queries and complaints. She was never asked to do the promotional work she thought she had been employed for. She was the most actively discontent of the four students resigning immediately after the Tutor’s first visit. She had been promised a job in advertising with another organisation that failed to materialise and spent the last three months of her Sandwich Year working as an Interviewer in a Job Centre. Her CV again described her duties as,

Position: Administration Officer.

Responsibilities:
- ensure clients meet the employment criteria.
- clients are advised the right way on job decisions and training.
- market the service to employers within the suitable area.
- ensure that records are kept up to date.

The reality was that she was finding interviews for the long term unemployed as a result of a Government “special initiative”. She took the job initially on a one-month contract that was continually renewed until it was time for her to return to University. The working environment was generally far from pleasant, and she frequently had to deal with large
aggressive clients. As a petite woman of obviously Asian descent she appeared to handle these potentially awkward situations with considerable skill.

**The Employer**

The employer for the first placement was discussed above in relation to student 10. The employer and manager for the second job were effectively the same person, her programme co-ordinator. The main problem in terms of the student acquiring an NVQ occurred when this woman left unexpectedly early on maternity leave about half way through the student’s time there. She was not replaced.

**The Outcomes**

The student demonstrated competence against Unit 8 of the Management NVQ. Much the same comments concerning learning from adversity could be made about this student as have been made about the previous two. She was an enthusiast for the NVQ learning and accreditation process, again perhaps because of her BTEC background, and made an attempt to demonstrate competence against the Customer Care NVQs when it became obvious that she could only use Unit 8 of the Management Standards. This was thwarted by the maternity leave of her supervisor and accreditation difficulties in the University. These apart she should have satisfied these Standards. Again the Management NVQ was a totally inadequate measure of her learning.

**The Tutor’s Visits**

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Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The visits followed the general pattern of the previous two students.

**Visiting the Employer**

Again, the first employer has been discussed in relation to the two students above. The second employer was generally co-operative and supportive of the student before her departure on maternity leave. She was willing to support the NVQ even though the student was employed as an Agency "Temp".

**Experiences Outside the Placement.**

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

**Summary Student 12**

Student 12 was very similar to 10 and 11. She was passionately interested in marketing and very sad to have missed the opportunity of Sandwich Year experience in the marketing area. At the end of the day, however, she recognised that she learnt a lot from the experience, although she was more resentful and less sanguine than her colleagues.

**Student 13 - Answering Product Queries**

The student was a Marketing major. He was an International student from Mauritius who lived in South East London near the University for the duration of his degree and his Sandwich Year. He came to the University following the completion of the Cambridge Higher School Certificate (3 A-Levels) in Mauritius.

**The Placement**

The placement has been discussed above in relation to students 10-12 above. The student had a far more resigned attitude to the job than his three colleagues and despite considerable and justified grounds for complaint stayed at the job until the end of the placement year.
The Job

The student’s manager defined his job in a letter written at the end of the placement as,

"His position with PIE is that of European Technical support manager. In that position his duties included;

- Customer services
- Technical support for end users, Re - sellers and distributors of
  Zoom Fax modems.
- Maintaining local area network.
- Returns and returns procedures.
- Liase with manufacturers in America regarding technical problems.
- Attending exhibitions in a technical capacity.

Other duties;

- Processing of sales orders.
- Stock control.
- General office duties."

This does not fully reflect the student’s role the most obvious omission being the lack of any mention that he used three languages to do these tasks.

The Employer

The employer has been discussed at some length in relation to student 10 above.

The Outcomes

The student demonstrated competence against Unit of the Level 4 Management NVQ.. He adopted a satisficing strategy immediately the limitations of his Sandwich Year became apparent, and was content to do just enough to pass the year.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Tutors Visits

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The Tutors visits to the Electronics Company have been discussed above in relation to student 10. The only variation in this case was a second visit to the University to have his final assessment made. Although he continued working at the Company long after the others had left the atmosphere did not improve sufficiently to allow the Tutor to visit him on site.

Visiting the Employer.

This was discussed above in relation to student 10.

Experiences Outside the Placement.

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

Summary Student 13.

Student 13 was an International student who was placed in an unfortunate Sandwich Year job that never realised its promise. He chose to “stick it out” rather than leave and try and find another job. His overall experience was unsatisfactory, and he adopted a satisficing strategy from early on “keeping his head down” and just doing enough to pass the year.
Summary Student 10-13.

The most important overall point to be gathered from these students' experience was that very powerful and relevant learning can take place in unfortunate and adverse circumstances. The reflective learning techniques associated with NVQs can be particularly useful in separating out the positive features of this learning from the very negative "emotional baggage" of the experience. Other important lessons include the near impossibility of preparing for NVQ assessment without the co-operation of the candidate's employer; the inadequacy of the Management NVQ in measuring this learning; the difficulties of vetting placements in advance when circumstances affecting the job can change rapidly without the University being informed; and the virtual impossibility of getting a second placement opportunity for a student who leaves their first placement part way through the year.

Student 14 - Mail Order Marketing.

Student 14 was a Marketing major who came to the University straight from completing A-levels at School. She lived at home in North London both during her time at University and on the Sandwich Year.

The Placement

The placement was with a major mail order house that dealt with limited edition pictures and ornamental plates. It was an international organisation with the UK operation being an important and largely self-regulating part of the business. The offices were sited in the middle of Richmond-on-Thames in a fashionable shopping area. They were newly built and well equipped.

The student had some difficulty obtaining a placement and was unemployed at the start of the Sandwich Year. She started this placement in the middle of May. The placement was one that was offered through the University. The placement was shared with students 15 and 22 who started at about the same time. The students did have significantly different jobs.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Job

The job was in Marketing Services and revolved around a weekly meeting between that Department and the Project Managers.

This meeting served to:

- Inform Marketing Services of which products were currently mailing.
- Identify whether the product literature to be used was new, existing, or needed updating.
- Determine whether any extra quantities of components needed to be ordered (i.e., brochures for box offers or client services).
- For Marketing Services to advise the Product Managers if their mailings are running to schedule, and if there are any current problems likely to cause delay.

(extract from student's evidence summary)

The student was basically responsible for seeing that appropriate quantities of printed materials were ordered and mailed according to schedule. It is the size of the operation that was its key feature. Mailings were commonly 10,000 plus sometimes exceeding 100,000. There were normally several mailings going out in any one week.

The nature of the ordering was complex and technical. In her early days the student made a mistake in one instruction on an order that meant about £2,000 worth of printing had to be scrapped. Even early on she had earned a reputation for hard work and the mistake was "understood" although it was never repeated. The hours of the job were supposedly 9.00 – 17.00 but the culture was such that employees worked until jobs were completed, without any additional payment. The student adopted this attitude and fitted in well with both the work and the social life surrounding work. She had a reasonable placement experience that gave her some of the marketing experience she sought.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Employer

The employer was effectively the immediate manager, the Head of the Marketing Services Department.

The Outcomes

The student demonstrated competence against Unit 8 of the Level 4 Management NVQ. This was all the student could have reasonably been expected to have obtained from the placement, but was an inadequate measure of what she learnt during her placement.

The Tutor's Visits

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The Tutor's visits again generally followed the typical pattern with the obvious exception of the late start to the visits. Another important exception was that, in a similar way to students 1 – 4, the fact that there were three students (14, 15 and 21) with placements in the same organisation and at the same workplace provided an opportunity to experiment with group sessions during the visits. These were as useful in this case as they were with the previous group and all the comments made above apply here.

Visiting the Employer

The employer was always available during visits to the student and was generally complimentary about her work. The Tutor was left with the feeling at the end of the placement that the student had been so successful in the post that the recruitment of a
"normal" employee had been postponed. Another Sandwich Year student was recruited to the job for the following year.

**Experiences Outside the Placement**

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

**Summary Student 14**

Student 14 was unfortunate not to find a Sandwich Year placement starting "on-time". She was perhaps lucky to pick up a job with some marketing content in May. The job was more administrative and technical than she would have liked, but did provide opportunities for insights and experience in a busy and fast moving marketing based operation. She worked hard and well through the year to make the most of her opportunity, effectively taking over the role of a "normal" employee.

**Student 15 - Mail Order Marketing.**

Student 15 was a Marketing major from Southern Ireland. She came to the University straight from School having completed the Irish equivalent of A-levels. She lived in a "student house" near the University throughout her Sandwich Year despite having a long and costly journey each way. This student's circumstances were particularly difficult as because of her status she got no grant or loan assistance. The salary paid in this job was typical at around £9,000pa but in order to pay off accumulated debts she worked most evenings and weekends in a local pub.

**The Placement**

The placement was the same as that for the previous student.

**The Job**
This student was responsible for gathering all the data together on the organisation’s mailings and sales and putting them together in a spreadsheet for discussion at the weekly meeting of Marketing Services and Product managers referred to above. The whole job was about gathering, verifying and presenting information for others to take action upon. She did, in addition, get involved in the occasional special project such as the creation of a new catalogue, however, generally all her time was taken up preparing the marketing information.

**The Employer**

The same comments apply as for the previous student.

**The Outcomes**

The student demonstrated competence against Unit 8 of the Level 4 Management Standards. This was all she could reasonably be expected to have obtained and in that it described her duties well, was a reasonable accreditation of the majority of her learning. While it measured the ‘direct’ learning well, it did, however, miss the more indirect, but important understanding of marketing she gained from being in hot house marketing environment.

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The same comments as for the previous student apply.
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Visiting the Employer

The same comments as for the previous student apply.

Experiences Outside the Placement

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

Summary Student 15

Student 15 had a marginally less rewarding experience than the previous student. They both learned and gained a better understanding of marketing from working in a marketing focused organisation. Unfortunately, while the previous student’s job did have a fair marketing element, the marketing content of this job was more limited.

Student 16 - A Management Traineeship in Retailing

Student 16 was a Personnel major. She came straight to the University from taking A-levels at school. She lived with her parents in Cheshire during her Sandwich Year.

The Placement

The placement was as a Graduate Management Trainee in a large department store in Altringham, Cheshire. The student found the placement herself through applying to the organisation direct. The store was in a busy town centre in the middle of a shopping precinct. The store itself had two sales floors with warehousing and staff canteens and other accommodation in two more floors on the top of these. The working environment was busy but well provided. The staff canteen, for example, was pleasant and served good, subsidised food at reasonable prices. The whole culture of the organisation was one of demanding a lot of, but caring for, staff – including the student.

The Job
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

Th student was employed as a Graduate Management Trainee and treated in the same way (and subjected to the same expectations) as if she had completed her degree and graduated. She was being trained to be a store manager. She was given three placements within the store each of roughly four months duration. These were in chronological order clothing, personnel and foods.

The following extracts from her Personal Report prepared at the end of her Sandwich Year give a good indication of the work she carried out. First a summary of the clothing placement;

"In addition to (special projects) I supervised the floor. On some occasions this was just Ladies Fashions on others it was Menswear and the Customer Service Desk as well, and on others it was also the Lingerie section at the same time. The tasks involved to do this were numerous. I would have anything from approx. six to twenty people to look after. Basically all day every day I would be conversing with the management team and communicating with the staff. I would manage the day's activities and would have to plan ahead for the week's activities. I would allocate the staff to where they needed to work i.e. tills, ASR, putting out returns, actioning Head Office mail, repackaging merchandise to return to the warehouse, dealing with stock room duties etc. I would plan for staff's breaks and lunches. I really grew to enjoy this aspect of my work very much indeed.

I would be available to answer any bells for a supervisor or manager at the tills and the Customer Service Desk. At the CSD I was frequently needed to deal with customer complaints of varying severity. Health and Safety issues I documented and passed onto Head Office. Problems which I believed were a manufacturing fault I gave a full refund for. However, obviously a great deal of them were not straight forward and I had to use my discretion. If the customer was strongly dissatisfied with a garment and due to ignorance was not aware of the properties of the fabric, I would more often than not decide
to give a credit voucher refund (a goodwill exchange) as stated in the Refund Policy. Complications occur when records for old merchandise at a number of prices have to be separately pulled up, this process is lengthy and again I would have to use common sense. At the till point I would, on a couple of occasions, have to contact the bank regarding a customer's card and sometimes this resulted in being obliged to retain the card. In certain circumstances I would have to make decisions on charging different prices. I would "bag up" the money before collection. I would also do supervision audit checks.

One of the most important jobs that I performed, was a presentation I gave on "service"; the continuing success of our customer ordering point and the effectiveness of our new integrated ordering system. I gave this presentation to the Executive Director of Ladies wear, five other senior visitors and my store Manager.”

The other 'operational' placement, the foods placement, was similar in many ways to the clothing placement;

"Another significant task was to help organise a 'charge card evening' event in a team with two other trainees one of whom had been given the overall responsibility of leading it. I could not be present on the night, although, my role was to do some of the preparation. I organised ordering the catering materials and financial service leaflets. I approached local hotels to give them invites for their clients and produced a poster to publicise the event. I set the initial staffing requirements based on previous events and communicated with the personnel team who organised some of the people who wanted to work the night. I allocated people and with the help of the other team members we made changes to deal with problems that occurred. I also organised for a Church Choir to sing carols."
The day to day operational tasks were somewhat similar to those which I did on textiles. The most important job being managing the staff effectively. Also, I would deal with and reply to complaints. I would provide one-off services such as home deliveries of goods. I would promote the Homechoice sandwich and flower orders. I was involved in reviewing the cleaning schedules of our staff and the contract firm. I also contributed to making amendments to the window cleaner's contract to include high level cleaning. Part of my responsibility was to ensure the daily legal paperwork had been done this was shared with the Deputy Supervisors.

On a number of occasions I would do the estimates for the week for all the departments and update the FSLG. I would use my management summaries, stock estimate guides and sales stock and waste reports to decide on the ways forward for the week. I would 'walk' members of the management team around my departments in the morning to give them information on how well they were doing in terms of; sales against last year, last week, the business progressively over a period of time, core product groups progress as percentages of the depts., strong lines and most crucially it is important to know what all this means in cash values!!

I initiated stock moves to make bold displays for Halloween pumpkins, Christmas trees and wreath displays for example. I made contacts with Head Office merchandisers and often used this to my advantage to gain extra stock, (in strawberries, grapes, sandwiches, poinsettias etc ... ) I would re-plan the layout at both product group and line level to maximise any opportunities for greater sales. Sometimes it would be necessary to eliminate lines to give clear definition on the offers of tomatoes for example. I would have regular discussions with the sales floor staff to communicate issues of immediate importance.
One morning I was responsible for being the early morning team leader. This started at approx 6.15 and involved co-ordinating warehouse people and sales floor staff (of about 25) to get out the previous day's stock and then to receive the deliveries to be put out, to make sure the floor is clear, the section full and presentable for opening. According to the management the morning's work went well.

I also worked hard at training the temporary seasonal staff for the Christmas period. I worked on the principle of developing teams of people who would regularly work together in order that they became familiar with the stock and operations. As tension grew to Christmas I found myself getting involved in the aspects of personnel mgt. I really enjoy, i.e employee resourcing and development. I needed to be both an ear and a problem solver for people who felt under pressure at work. This varied from customer pressure at the till point for newly appointed assistants, to me setting almost unreasonable expectations on the amount of stock a person should shift before opening. As a result I tried to establish a balance between stretching the staff and appreciating their limitations.

I have learnt a great deal about managing people and other resources through my experiences of communicating appropriately with management, supervision and staff. I believe the best approach is to be friendly, professional, enthusiastic, well organised, assertive and well-mannered.

In Christmas week I did general layout plans at department and product level and 'drop plans' for fridges etc. (to show where to put each individual line) on a huge stock move affecting all my departments. With a small team, I implemented these moves, obviously outside trading hours. I was pleased
with the results and believed we delivered and consistently maintained a well-presented and well-stocked foods section over Christmas."

The personnel Placement, on the other hand, was more of a staff than operational function;

"I enjoyed my time in personnel and I learned a great deal because the work was so varied. Rather than running the day to day sales floor operation my work would comprise paperwork, investigations, making decisions on sales floor support and staffing, recruitment and employee development— to name but a few. I will explain some of the work I did in more detail. I did four thorough system reviews on the following:

- Store deliveries and dispatches
- Uniforms, cloakroom lockers, doctor, chiropodist, dentist and nurse facilities
- A post salary review
- Staffing

They all followed a set format of investigation and indirectly I found it an extremely useful way of learning more about the organisation. It was necessary to probe into the documents and procedures followed in order to find out major findings and areas of weakness. Where I believed there to be flaws in the system I brought this to the attention of the Personnel Manager and the Finance Manager and gave them my suggestions for how they could be rectified or improved. More often than not this was discussed and the action to be taken agreed. The line manager and myself would ensure this then happened. For instance, I drew up an example of a correctly filled out 'stock - in - transit' sheet and gave full instructions for how to complete it correctly. I gave this to the Admin. Supervisor to use for training purposes."
The biggest project I have been solely responsible for to date was a Head Office organised venture called 'SPI's' service performance indicators. This involved a substantial amount of work and managerial skills. The SPI's are measurements which are done every six months on a national basis for the same week. All results are documented in a standard way. I had to arrange measurer's to do the modules. Plan the timescales involved and integrate this with the staffing and the timing of the modules. I had to produce a pack on how to measure and fill out the forms. Following the measurement I sent off information to H.O. etc..I collated the store's results and communicated this together with a plan of action on how to improve weak areas. I gave out summary slips on the results to staff. I also gave feedback on the measurement style to the managers of the shopping region.

I have interviewed people for general assistant jobs and completed contracts for people to suit their individual needs. I have given informal counselling sessions with a couple of people who wanted to talk about their concerns and how it affects their work. For instance a girl who was not sure whether to continue in education, a girl who was experiencing family problems and a man who wished to change sections and hours. I organised a Health and Safety awareness week based on H.O guidelines. In doing this I led the Health and Safety Officer and Dep. to get together some information to display in poster form around the store."

This student has been quoted at some length because she was undoubtedly the most “successful” student in the group, by more or less whatever criteria could be applied. There is however nothing in her academic record or other past performance to suggest that she is atypical of the group as a whole. She does, therefor, illustrate the level of responsibility and complexity of task that a Sandwich Year student can successfully undertake if given the opportunity.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

**The Employer**

The employer in this case was particularly problematic to define. The recruitment and selection of the student to the Graduate Management Trainee Scheme was carried out by Head Office. The student worked for the Store Manager, but would generally have an immediate manager either one or two levels below the Store Manager. The supervisory arrangements changed both within and between placements.

**The Outcomes**

The student prepared a portfolio that amply demonstrated competence against the full Level 4 Management NVQ. She was, in many ways, the ideal candidate for the Award, which was a good measure of the learning she achieved.

**The Tutor's Visits**

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<th>Meeting No</th>
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The Tutors visits again largely followed the typical pattern. There were two main exceptions. The first was the late start to the visits, due to a planned earlier visit being cancelled because it clashed with the student being sent on a two week residential Graduate Development programme. The second was the need for two interviews after the end of the Sandwich Year and her return to University to carry out the final assessment. This was not possible earlier as the student only had time to undertake the final preparation of the written material after she had finished in the job.
Visiting the Employer

The employer, in one guise or another, was always willing and available to talk to the Tutor. These were some of the lengthiest and fullest discussions that took place with employers during the whole of the research. The employers were both complimentary and critical of different aspects of the student’s performance, and probably spoke from the fullest knowledge of performance of any employer. The standards of performance expected of the student were the highest of any of the placements, and as indicated earlier were those also expected of graduates who had completed their degrees. The Store Manager did not anticipate the student being offered a permanent job with the organisation when she completed her degree. In his judgement her performance had been satisfactory, but she had not demonstrated the sort of “self-starting initiative” that the organisation required in such appointments.

The employer fully supported the student in her work towards the NVQ once it became clear that the development would be complimentary to the organisation’s own training programme. The organisation was well used to NVQs at the lower levels as it used these for retail staff training, but had not previously dealt with NVQs at this level.

This student made a presentation of her Sandwich Year experience to the Steering Committee of the Project who were generally impressed with both what she had done and her general level of competence. The view was expressed that she should have little difficulty getting a job on graduation.

Experiences Outside the Placement.

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

Summary Student 16
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

Student 16 was the most successful of all the students in that she was the only one to obtain the full NVQ. She also had what she felt was an extremely rewarding Sandwich Year from which she learnt a lot and was one of the foremost in praise of the reflective learning that was an essential component of the NVQ. She worked hard and with enthusiasm through her Sandwich Year, and towards the NVQ.

**Student 17 - Computerised Payrolls.**

Student 17 was a Marketing major who came to the University directly after taking A-Levels in School. She lived with her parents in East Sussex throughout her time in University including the Sandwich Year.

**The Placement**

The student was initially placed with a printing firm in Tunbridge Wells but was sacked after two weeks when she went absent without any explanation. She later claimed to have been ill and not to have known that she should have contacted the firm to notify them of her absence. She subsequently found employment as a "Temp" in an organisation that was an offshoot of a major Bank specialising in the payment of payrolls. This was situated in a large office block on the edge of the City of London.

**The Job**

The student worked inputting data into a network computer system setting up and problem solving payroll contracts. The main tasks involved the collecting, verification and inputting (presentation) of information. There was no marketing content.

The job paid the student a reasonable wage that kept her through the year and just about satisfied the course requirements for a period of work experience. She was fortunate in that her employer was supportive of her working towards the NVQ, and that although she was an Agency "Temp" she was continually employed for nearly seven months. The job was a far from ideal placement.
**The Employer**

The employer was her immediate supervisor, the manager of the section.

**The Outcomes**

The student demonstrated competence against Unit 8 of the Level 4 Management NVQ. This fully assessed her learning from her job, and provided a good description of her role.

**The Tutor's Visits**

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The Tutor's visits followed the usual pattern, with the exception that as this job was not a Sandwich Year placement but a “Temp” job paid by the hour the meetings had to take place in the student's lunch hour.

**Visiting the Employer.**

The employer was always willing to see the Tutor on his visits even though this was not a Sandwich Year placement. He was supportive of the student working towards the NVQ, and generally complimentary about her work.

**Experiences Outside the Placement.**

This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.
Summary Student 17

Student 17 lost her initial placement through somewhat dubious conduct. She then experienced great difficulty finding another placement and ended up in a “Temping” job. This just about met the University criteria for a satisfactory placement, but provided no marketing experience. She demonstrated competence against Unit 8 which was a fair measure of her learning.

Students 18 and 19 - The Latecomers.

Students 18 and 19 formed an interesting subgroup. They were two students who went to work in placements in the USA found for them by the University under an exchange programme with an American College. Student 18 returned to the UK half way through the year, whereas student 19 spent the whole of his year in the USA.

The interest from the present study’s point of view lay in the effect the NVQ process could have in facilitating learning in retrospect. The original intention had been to also experiment with support and assessment at a distance, but various practical and technical difficulties prevented this.

Student 18 - Computing in a Building Society

Student 18 was a Marketing major who came to the University straight from taking A-levels in School. He lived with his parents in South East London during his time at University.

The Placement

The student had two placements, one in the USA and one in the UK. The USA placement was as a salesman with a cold selling operation that moved around New York State staying in Motels and working mainly afternoons and early evenings. It was essentially door step selling.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The UK placement was with the same organisation as student 8. He did, however, work in the Marketing rather than the Personnel Department.

The Job

The job was, in the main, involved with the developing and testing of a computer programme supporting a new financial services product. There was some marketing content in that the programme had to be client friendly, and get from and provide to the client the right information. This was, however, minimal.

The student was employed on a “Temping” basis through an agency. This was not a proper Sandwich Year placement. He had had one other short “Temp” job with the organisation immediately before getting this one. He had done well in that and had been recommended for this post when the vacancy arose.

The Employer

The employer was the student’s immediate manager.

The Outcomes

The student demonstrated competence against Unit 8 of the Level 4 NVQ in Management. This was all that he could have reasonably been expected to complete and was a fair reflection of his direct learning from the job.

The Tutor’s Visits

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Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Tutor’s visits started much later on in the year, and carried on after the student’s return to University. This late start enabled the Tutor to experiment with a different approach, developed out of his own reflections on his experience with the other students. This approach can be characterised as a much more aggressively “event-based” approach. This involved a first meeting at which there was little or virtually no discussion of NVQs or standards. The meeting concentrated solely on what the student had done and what she had learnt from it. She was then asked to prepare an account of this for the next meeting.

The following meeting focused on this account and started by developing the account in terms of both the quality and quantity of the experiences and learning listed. This was then followed by a discussion as to what evidence might be gathered to support and illustrate the account. The final part of this meeting then involved the Tutor in suggesting to the student the NVQ Units that might be applicable to his experience. The student was given the task of producing a revised account, referenced to both supporting evidence and the relevant occupational standards for the third meeting. This meeting served as a preliminary assessment, with final details being sorted out for the fourth, final assessment, meeting.

This pattern worked well for both Tutor and student. It appeared to make the processes of both learning and assessment more efficient, effective and enjoyable for both parties.

**Visiting the Employer**

The employer was available during the Tutor’s visits and supportive of the NVQ even though this was not a Sandwich Year placement job. He was generally complimentary about the student’s performance. He had some understanding of the Management NVQ as some of his staff had been through the organisations own NVQ based development programme.

**Experiences Outside the Placement.**
This student had no experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence.

**Summary Student 18**

Student 18 had had an interesting, but difficult to quantify, experience of cold selling in the USA. This proved impossible to document towards the NVQ. He then came back to the UK and was fortunate enough to obtain “Temp” work that met the Sandwich Year requirements. He was a capable and conscientious employee who impressed all his managers and who worked well towards the one unit of NVQ (Unit 8) he eventually obtained. This was a fair reflection of the majority of his direct learning, although it was obvious in the interviews with him that his overall experience and personal development through the year were much richer.

**Student 19 - Personnel in the University USA.**

Student 19 was the last to join the study and in many ways one of the most interesting students involved. He had left school in the mid 1980’s with 8 GCSEs. He had been active in the Conservative Party and had passed the Agents Final Examinations (NEBS equivalent) in 1990. He then worked as a constituency agent from 1989-1994. He had also been employed in a variety of other jobs including a period as an EFL teacher in Spain. He was a fluent Spanish speaker.

He was a general Business Studies major.

**The Placement**

The placement was in Boston, Massachusetts, in the USA. The student worked for a year for the same organisation but in a variety of departments as vacancies arose. The organisation was a multinational operating mainly in the finance sector. His jobs were all in the Personnel Department. His work was highly regarded and the University of Greenwich Tutor who visited him was praised by his managers as to the student’s conduct and ability.

**The Job**
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The student worked as a “Temp” on a weekly contract basis throughout his year. He had three main jobs. He spent the first four months as a maternity cover for a “Research Associate” in what was essentially the organisation’s own recruitment consultancy. He was an assistant to a “Vice-President” who head-hunted “the best people” for senior jobs (Vice-President and above) in the organisation, and on a contract basis for other organisations. In simple terms he researched a list of potential candidates using business magazines, contacts and so forth; discussed this with the ‘client’; contacted the approved long-list by phone to determine who might be interested in the job; and finally made the administrative arrangements for interviews with a selected shortlist. His telephone manner, ‘research’ experience, and experience of talking to senior managers acquired from his experience as a political party agent made him ideal for this job.

His second job was for six weeks as a “HR Co-ordinator” in the organisation’s in-house temporary employment agency, “TempWorks”. Here he handled all aspects of the job both recruiting staff to the register of available “Temps” and placing them in vacancies. He was recruited to this job to cover the increased workload brought about by the summer holiday vacancies for secretaries.

His third job was for four months as a “HR Co-ordinator” with the relocation section. This section handled the moves of senior employees both into and within the organisation. He was given a caseload and expected to handle these under the guidance of his manager. He would discuss an employees entitlement with him, put him in contact with appropriate companies such as estate agents, removal and car hire firms, generally help with the move, and finally ensure the employee was promptly paid his expenses entitlement.

The Employer

As the student was a “Temp” employee throughout his time with the organisation his employer in one sense was the TempWorks agency that placed him in his jobs. On the other hand his managers were generally his immediate supervisors, and it is certainly these who had the most impact on his day to day performance.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Outcomes
The student started off on his return from the USA at the end of the Sandwich Year with a good deal of enthusiasm to get the full NVQ which was certainly possible. Ultimately, however, pressure of University work meant that he only obtained Unit 8 of the Level 4 NVQ in Management.

The Tutor's Visits

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The somewhat unusual pattern of "visits" was brought about by the fact that the student only joined the study on his return from the USA at the end of the Sandwich Year. The "visits" all took place at the University. The student was visited in the USA by the Tutor responsible for the Sandwich Year overall, but was not visited there in connection with this study.

The visits followed the pattern outlined for the previous student. They were partly aimed at bringing about some reflection on the Sandwich Year experiences, but mainly at accreditation. This was intended to cover both the Sandwich Year and his previous experience as a political party agent.

Visiting the Employer.

The employer was not visited for reasons of geography.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

**Experiences Outside the Placement.**

The student’s previous experiences have been discussed above and were a potential source of evidence for the full Management Level 4 NVQ.

**Summary Student 19.**

Student 19 had the potential to demonstrate the competences of the full NVQ. He had had interesting, relevant and recent outside work experience that he had undoubtedly learnt from, and an interesting and productive Sandwich Year. The Level 4 Management NVQ was a suitable accreditation vehicle for these combined experiences. However, the pressure of trying to complete the NVQ assessment process at the same time as completing his degree proved to be too great for even as able a student as him. Ultimately he only achieved Unit 8, the minimum required to ‘pass’ the Sandwich Year.

**The Students who Withdrew**

Four students withdrew from the study, each for a different reason. They are discussed briefly below in the date order of their withdrawal.

**Student 20 - The Unsuccessful Marketer.**

Student 20 was a Marketing major who came straight to the University having taken A-Levels at school. He lived in a “student house” both during his time at University and during his Sandwich Year.

**The Placement**

The placement was a regular one for the University and had been very successful in previous years. It was in the Marketing Department of a large legal firm in the middle of the City. The Department consisted of a Head, an Assistant, the student and a Secretary.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The location was central and the offices extremely well equipped. It was well paid and regarded as one of the best placements on offer through the University.

**The Job**

The job revolved around a series of projects. The student started off preparing brochures, organising receptions for clients, seminars, wine tastings and the organisation’s entry to a Dragon Boat Race. The student was unhappy with the level of task being given to him, which he regarded as mundane and below his capability. His employer, however, had pointed out to him that he had to prove his reliability and competence at these tasks before he could be given anything more complex. His lack of application meant he never achieved the work he desired.

**The Employer**

The employer was the Head of the Marketing Department. She was also the student’s immediate manager. She was an ex Sandwich Year student of the University of Greenwich herself, having completed her degree some ten years previously.

**The Outcomes**

The job provided the potential to demonstrate many of the competences of the Level 4 NVQ in Management, the main exceptions being in the Managing People Role. The NVQ would not, however, have measured much of the marketing learning potentially available.

Unfortunately the student was dismissed after about 16 weeks as a result of being unable to come to terms with the “work regime”. The final incident that led to his dismissal was illustrative of previous behaviour. He spent the previous evening and night helping a flatmate finish off an assignment (perceived of as a priority) and had had virtually no sleep. This followed several late nights on social engagements at the University. He arrived nearly two hours late for work and one hour later was found snoring loudly at his desk. His employer was not unsympathetic, but as he had been counselled and formally warned previously for similar behaviour she felt she was left with no alternative but to dismiss.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Tutor's Visits

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Only one visit took place, which followed the usual initial visit pattern.

Visiting the Employer

The employer was available during the visit and was full and frank concerning her reservations about the student at the time.

Experiences Outside the Placement

The student had no relevant experiences outside work that could have been used to demonstrate competence against the NVQ.

Summary Student 20

Student 20 was a bright and able student who was in a very good placement. He had unrealistic ideas about the level of work he should be given at the start of the placement, and through lack of application failed to prove himself capable and reliable enough to be given the level of work he sought. He maintained a strong contact with University life that was ultimately, in part at least, responsible for the unsatisfactory conduct in the workplace that led to his dismissal.

Student 21 - The Industrial Marketer.

Student 21 was a Marketing major who came straight to University having completed A-levels at School. He lived with his parents in West London throughout his time at University and during the Sandwich Year.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Placement

The placement was in the Marketing Department of a large Chemicals firm in South West London. The department had four employees including the student, and concentrated on industrial marketing. The offices were well-equipped open plan in a large 1930’s office building on a large industrial site. The placement was a regular one for the University.

The Job

The job involved the preparation of promotional and safety literature for the organisation’s products, and the arrangement of and attendance on exhibition stands. This included everything from booking the sites to ensuring supplies of appropriate literature were available.

The Employer

The employer was the head of the Marketing Department.

The Outcomes

The job had the potential for the student to develop and demonstrate competence against the majority of the Level 4 Management NVQ with the obvious exception of the Managing People Role.

Unfortunately, following discussions with another University tutor and his employer the student chose to withdraw from the study. The exact reasons were never clarified but had, in part at least, something to do with the fact that the student was a committed “marketer” who did not see the relevance to his career of a “Management” award.

The Tutor’s Visits

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Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The only visit to this student followed the normal first visit pattern of explaining the nature of the NVQ process. There was nothing in this visit to indicate that the student would subsequently withdraw from the study.

**Visiting the Employer**

The employer was available during the first visit and was extremely complimentary about the work of the student.

**Experiences Outside the Placement.**

The student had no relevant experiences outside the Placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence against the NVQ.

**Summary Student 21**

Student 21 was a committed “marketer” working well in a good placement. He could have demonstrated competence against the majority of the NVQ but did not perceive a Management award to be relevant to his planned career in marketing and so withdrew from the study.

**Student 22 - The Customer Services Assistant.**

Student 22 was a Marketing major who came straight to the University having taken A-levels at school. He lived in student accommodation in South East London throughout his time at University and during his Sandwich Year placement. He had difficulty getting a Sandwich Year placement and took this job at the beginning of June.

**The Placement**

The placement was in the same mail order house as students 14 and 15.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

The Job

The job title was "Customer Services Assistant". The job itself involved spending all day and every day on the telephone answering customers' queries concerning their orders, using an on-line database to search for information during the call.

The Employer

The same comments apply as for students 14 and 15.

The Outcomes

The job provided no opportunity to demonstrate competence against the NVQ, so the student withdrew from the study.

The Tutor's Visits

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The same comments as for student 14 apply. The Tutor's visits followed the normal pattern until it became clear both that the student's job was not going to change and that there was no opportunity for him to demonstrate that competence against the NVQ.

Visiting the Employer

The employer was available during both visits and was complimentary about the student's work. He was asked if there was any possibility of introducing some variety into the student's duties but replied that that was the job that needed doing and was the job the student had been taken on to do.
Chapter 7. The Sandwich Year Students.

**Experiences Outside the Placement.**

The student had no relevant experiences outside the placement that could have been used to demonstrate competence against the NVQ.

**Summary Student 22.**

Student 22 was a likeable, able student who was unfortunate not to be able to get a better Sandwich Year placement. He made the most of the opportunities available to him and was well regarded by his employer. His job was, however, extremely limited and allowed no opportunity to demonstrate competence against the Level 4 Management NVQ. The main learning will have come from working in a marketing environment, and will have taken place through a process of "absorption". It would have been both difficult to define and assess and might not have been fully realised until sometime after the placement had finished.

**Student 23 - Working for the Referendum Party.**

Student 23 was a Marketing major who came to the University straight from taking A-Levels at school. She lived with her parents in North London during the first part of her degree course and the early part of her Sandwich Year. She later left home to share a flat with colleagues from her placement organisation.

**The Placement**

The placement was with the now defunct Referendum Party in the 16 months leading up to the May 1997 general election. It was initially based in small modern offices in Hammersmith and then later from October 1996, for obvious reasons, in larger offices in Westminster near the Houses of Parliament. The student found the placement herself through answering an advertisement in "Miss London".

**The Job**

The initial job the student was recruited to was as a receptionist/general administrator. The nature of the organisation and the impending general election, however, meant that the
organisation was continually expanding and in turmoil throughout her period with it. She quickly demonstrated her competence as an administrator and her willingness to work long hours and was promoted to “Campaigns Assistant”. In this job she was responsible for organising and participating in the selection and training of the Party’s Parliamentary Candidates. This was carried out at residential events, often at weekends, in hotels around the country. She received continual increases in salary eventually being paid around £20,000 per annum.

The Employer

The employer was a different person and/or position each time the student was visited. As mentioned above the organisation was in a continuous state of flux with people and positions continually changing. It was very much a “frontier” atmosphere, wild, exciting and in some ways frightening, with people sacked on the spot for perceived or real misdemeanours. The student had little opportunity to develop any sort of long term relationship with any of her managers.

The Outcomes

The student had developed all the competences of the Level 4 Management NVQ by the end of her Sandwich Year period. However, at that time she was totally wrapped up with the job, both workwise and socially, to the extent that on occasions she and other employees would end up sleeping in the offices because they had worked so late that it was not worth going home. The job became all consuming for her and led to the breakdown of family and personal relationships. She, however, found it a wonderful experience and put off her return to University for a year in order to see the Party through to the general election. The pressure of work meant that she never had sufficient time or energy to complete the required portfolio, although she professed interest in the NVQ until the end.

The Party organisation was disbanded shortly after the election. The student has not to date returned to her University course, and did not submit a NVQ portfolio.
The visits followed the normal pattern. Initially the student was very interested in the NVQ and in the early part of her year worked with some diligence to assemble evidence of her competence. As described above, however, the later part of her time was too busy to allow her to complete her portfolio and the later meetings were relatively worthless as promised materials were never produced.

Visiting the Employer.

The difficulties involved in this case are discussed above. All the managers met were complimentary about the student’s performance.

Experiences Outside the Placement.

The student had no relevant experiences outside work that could have been used to demonstrate competence against the NVQ.

Summary Student 23.

Student 23 was an interesting and capable student who had a fascinating and potentially valuable Sandwich Year. She learnt a lot through the year, but it was probably too intense an experience, eventually causing problems in both her personal and University life. The very pressure of the experience left no time or energy to complete the reflective and
administrative processes needed to acquire the NVQ, although it would have been a very relevant to and an appropriate measure of her learning.

**Summary.**

The above is a detailed account of the experiences of all 23 students who participated in the study. The following chapters discuss this experience in overall terms and attempt to draw some overall conclusions.
Chapter 8.
The Outcomes of
the Competence
Based Programme.
This is the first of four Chapters that draw some general conclusions from the data presented in the previous Chapter. This Chapter summarises the students’ achievements and reaction to competence based learning and teaching, and assessment, and discusses the appropriateness of the Level 4 Occupational Standards and the Management NVQ as a vehicle for BABS Sandwich Year student development and assessment. Chapter 9 reviews the relationship between the Sandwich Year and the degree as a whole, examining in particular the support each can provide for the other. Chapter 10 discusses the ways the Sandwich Year student is best supported by all concerned. Chapter 11 examines the relationship between “academic” and “vocational” programmes and awards and the way these can be integrated to the benefit of the Sandwich Year student. Finally, Chapter 12 attempts to bring the discussion to a conclusion by proposing an “ideal” Sandwich Year structure based on the findings of the study.

Introduction

The reaction of the students to the programme was generally positive in that they valued the structuring of the placement and the assessment of their learning. They did, usually after something of a struggle, generally come to terms with, and perceive value in, the NVQ assessment methodology. Some also developed considerable expertise and ingenuity at interpreting the standards for their particular job. There was however, even at the end of the study, considerable scepticism as to the value of a NVQ, particularly at the level of unit accreditation, in the job market. Despite this, several of the students went beyond the minimum requirement of one unit of competence, and ‘voluntarily’ sought additional accreditation. Their experiences are summarised in the following Chapter.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

The Students Participating in the Study.

Fig 8.1 Age, entry qualifications and entry type of students participating in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>A-level</th>
<th>BTEC</th>
<th>18yr old entry</th>
<th>Mature entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrew</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows a predominance of female students involved in the experimental programme not matched by the proportion of female students on the BABS degree (54%). The students were largely from a conventional background taking A-Levels at school and progressing straight to University. There were two students who came via the BTEC National route. Although these students were amongst the better portfolio builders and enthusiasts for the NVQ, there was no evidence that students coming through this route were significantly different from the norm. The case of the two mature students was a little more decisive, with student 19 being a notable example suggesting that prior relevant experience can facilitate a higher level of Sandwich Year performance. This is also supported to some degree by the generally good and sometimes excellent performance of those students with relevant part-time experience.

It is an interesting observation that the more remote the Sandwich Year students were from other students, in general, the more they integrated into the workplace and the more they treated the placement as a real job. Students in placements where they were with other students from the University of Greenwich, or to a lesser extent with students from other Universities, tended to get less involved with their work colleagues and the accompanying social life. Their reference group remained the student body. This was also true of students who remained in close contact with the University during their Sandwich
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

Year, for example sharing a house with students on other courses at the University. The obvious assumption is that the more involved the students become, the more they get out of the Sandwich Year, and the more learning that goes on. This, however, needs testing directly.

The students generally worked well and productively in their placements, taking them seriously and putting a great deal of effort into their jobs. The Tutor was left with a great deal of admiration for the overall performance of the vast majority of the students. The value of the students contribution and the esteem accorded them by their employers is evidenced by the fact that a number, for example 5 and 8 are, working part-time and holidays in the same or similar jobs during the remainder of their degrees.

The Placements

The placements were with a wide variety of organisations of different sizes and in different industrial sectors. The slightly atypical feature was that there was only one employer who could remotely be described as public sector. All the placements but one were in the London area, with the sole exception choosing her placement in Altrngham so that she could return home for the year. There was a mixture of large organisations and SMEs with no obvious relationship between the size of the employer and the quality of the placement.

Fig 8.2 Industry sector and size of organisation of placement organisations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Large</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrew</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note - number of placements is larger than number of students as some students held more than one placement.
The predominance of private over public sector organisations undoubtedly reflects the recent decline in public sector organisations, and the predominance of small and medium sized companies again probably reflects recent changes in the structure of industry. The public/private balance is in fact more extreme than the above figures would indicate as one public sector employer employed four students.

Whichever way the study group is viewed they are a contradiction of the perhaps familiar stereotype of ten years ago of a male student, taking a placement in a large public sector organisation. This is in itself an important point, as although the nature of industry, and hence of placements available has changed significantly, the literature and the current research (Edmunds and Lindsay 1997) would suggest that the general expectation amongst Universities of the Sandwich Year has not.

The source of the placement was also interesting. Some of the best placements were those students found themselves. There was no evidence from this study that the University was better equipped to find placements than the student, in fact if anything the reverse was likely to be the case.

### The Jobs

The Sandwich Year students were generally capable of undertaking and learning from far more responsible jobs than they were generally recruited to. Some students, for example 6, 9, 16 and 19, had jobs that were ideally suited to them, providing them with a ‘stretching’ variety of work in appropriate subject areas, with good employer support. Others, for example 1-4 and 14-16, were in relatively mundane jobs that while providing experience of work did little to utilise or develop the capabilities developed on their University course.

The development of students in jobs was also interesting to observe. There was a definite pattern of students being given relatively simple tasks at the beginning of their placements, and being progressed onto more complex tasks as they proved their capability and
reliability. This progression relied on two elements, the developing capability of the student and the growing confidence in that ability of the employer.

The jobs could be divided according to the type of experience they provided. The categories suggested by the data are Management Traineeships, General Administrators, Advertising, Marketing and Finance. These types were not better or worse than one another, merely different and therefore suitable for different students.

Another way of looking at the jobs is to attempt to define them in terms of the type of learning they offer. A number of categorisations of learning are discussed in detail in Chapter 2, but two are perhaps worthy of consideration here:

- Skills, competences, capabilities (i.e. vocational) vs academic knowledge,

And,

- Type 1 – routinised action based on tacit knowledge – non-learning or reinforcement of existing ideas.
- Type 2 – non-reflective learning through imitation and memorisation.
- Type 3 – unusual situations where reflection-in-action is required and new theories and ideas developed during the action.
- Type 4 – deliberative reflection where the new theories and ideas developed are limited to the type of events concerned.
- Type 5 – deliberative reflection where the new theories and ideas developed change the learner’s view of the subject and/or their world view

(see page 88 for full discussion of derivation)

The following tables are a crude attempt to classify the way in which learning opportunities were distributed amongst the placements. The tables include only the placements of those students who completed a NVQ unit as much more data was gathered
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

concerning these jobs than those of the students who did not complete a NVQ. The judgements made are necessarily subjective but represent the considered opinion of the researcher based upon a full knowledge of the University of Greenwich placements and a reasonable knowledge of other Universities’ placements.

Fig 8.3 Placements offering opportunities to develop skills, competence, capability and academic knowledge (n=22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of learning opportunity</th>
<th>skills</th>
<th>competence</th>
<th>capability</th>
<th>knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good opportunity</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable opportunity</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor opportunity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opportunity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The noticeable features of the above table (based on placements not students) are that:

- Virtually all placements provide some opportunity to develop skills, competence and capability;
- There are more and better quality opportunities to develop skills and capability than competence and knowledge;
- Approximately half the placements provided little or no opportunity to develop academic knowledge.

It was interesting that when classifying placements there was a degree of uniformity in several placements where judgements on each criteria fell within the same band. In many cases however the profiles were quite different, notably between skills, competence and capability and knowledge.

The implications of this for assessment and awards are obvious. Any award must contain some assessment of skill and capability, as well as knowledge and competence if it is to truly reflect the learning of the student.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

Fig 8.4 Placement offering learning opportunities by “Type of Learning” (n=22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of opportunity</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>reasonable</th>
<th>poor</th>
<th>none</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that while the majority of placements conform to the perhaps expected pattern of offering good opportunities at the lower levels and then gradually poorer opportunities at the higher levels, there are some placements, notably 10-13 which contradict this pattern. In these cases much of the learning came about through students having to deal with unfortunate circumstances.

The general pattern of the opportunities is what might have been expected, with the majority of placements offering opportunities to develop the basic levels of learning, with fewer giving opportunities at the higher levels. The implications for assessment and awards are clearly that while it is legitimate to expect some Types 1,2 and 3 learning from all students there are some for whom types 4 and 5 are going to be difficult or impossible. The extent to which these types of learning are incorporated in the pass/fail and grading criteria must be carefully considered, although it is important it is recognised when it occurs.

A comparison with the students on the “normal” Sandwich Year programme revealed that the students on the study received considerably more attention than their contemporaries. The likelihood of a “Hawthorne” type effect has to be considered at all the stages of the analysis. Yet the findings were so strong as to suggest that causal mechanisms other than the “Hawthorne” effect must be present.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

The Accreditation Achieved by the Students

The accreditation achieved by each of the students is shown in Figure 2 (page 190). In overall terms the project was a success in that 19 out of 23 participants presented a portfolio and were assessed as competent against at least 1 unit of the NVQ 4 in Management.

![Fig 8.5 Accreditation achieved by the students (n=23).](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Units Achieved</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of Students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Fig 8.6 Number of students achieving each management NVQ unit](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Placement Achieved</th>
<th>Placement Possible</th>
<th>Other Source Achieved</th>
<th>Other Source Possible</th>
<th>All Achieved</th>
<th>All Possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Competence</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rows do not necessarily add up as some students had the opportunity to demonstrate competence both in their placement and from some other source.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

The pattern of Units obtained is shown in Figure 8.6. The most commonly achieved Unit by far is Unit 8, “Seek, evaluate and organise information for action”, which was achieved by all the students. In relation to the Units generally it should be noted that:

- Unit 1 - many students could achieve 1.1 but very few 1.2 - they did not have the necessary responsibility for a “workplace”;
- Unit 2 - several of the students worked hard in trying to achieve this Unit, but found difficulty in that while they may “suggest and participate in changes” their level of their participation in the implementation of the changes is insufficient to demonstrate the necessary competence;
- Unit 3 - very few students were in control of any meaningful level of resources;
- Unit 4 - very few students played any role in the recruitment of staff, although students in ‘personnel’ jobs did sometimes play an active role;
- Units 5 & 6 - most students worked in teams, but few had any influence or control over their structure or process. Elements 5.3 and 6.2 could have been demonstrated by most students;
- Unit 7 - very few students actually supervised staff, so although elements 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4 could have been demonstrated by most, 7.1, 7.5 and 7.6 were beyond all but a few;
- Unit 8 - obtained by all but one of the students who would have chosen to complete the programme. This student’s placement offered no opportunity to complete any part of the NVQ;
- Unit 9 - 9.2 and 9.3 were demonstrable by most students. The leadership roles implicit in 9.1, however, meant it was beyond the range of all but a few students;
- Personal Competence Model - was demonstrable by all students.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

The outcomes in terms of completed NVQs were perhaps disappointing. The evidence suggests that while BABS Sandwich Year students can develop competence at Level 4 and can, given the opportunity and desire, display the full range of competences of the Management NVQ it is not the appropriate developmental or assessment vehicle for the majority of placements. The reflective element of the NVQ process is helpful, as are the relevant occupational standards. The emphasis of the Sandwich Year, however, should be on development. The heavy workload of NVQ assessment process thwarts this. A 'lighter' assessment process is needed.

In some cases the failure of the Management occupational standards was because the students' learning was outside their coverage. In this case it could be corrected by reference to the relevant occupational standards, for example in Personnel or Marketing. In other cases, however, the problem was more complex with the Tutor being clear that there was more learning going on than, by their nature, could be defined by occupational standards. The development and assessment of this learning is discussed in theory in Chapters 2 and 3, and in practice in the following Chapters.

Perhaps not surprisingly, as they had chosen to participate in the study, the majority of students were enthusiastic about the NVQ process and, at least initially worked hard in their attempts to demonstrate competence. Some, generally those to whom the award had the greatest relevance (coverage), continued with this attitude throughout the study. When it became clear to some students, however, that they were only going to be able to get limited accreditation of perhaps one Unit of the NVQ they adopted a satisficing strategy of doing just enough to pass the one Unit. This in turn was just enough to pass the Sandwich Year (this being the criteria set in advance of the study). As the competence assessment was made on a pass or fail basis the students appeared to feel that there was little point in trying to do well. Learning, or more likely the assessment of learning, appeared to be valuable to these students only in that it led to qualification. It was not a valued activity in itself. The implications for the design of programmes are clear. Either the assessment has
to be projected and perceived as a valued part of the learning process, or the assessment has to be graded (not pass/fail) to encourage excellent performance.

One important point to note is that even given all the problems connected with the use of the NVQs and occupational standards in this way the general agreement amongst the students was that they were significantly better than the traditional alternative (see Chapter 5). The overall conclusion of the study, however, must obviously be that the original Management Occupational Standards and NVQ were not an appropriate vehicle for the assessment of the BABS Sandwich Year, and the conventional NVQ Advising process not an appropriate means of development.

The Use of Alternative Sources of Evidence

The initial visit to each student involved an examination of situations where they might have learnt and demonstrated competence outside the Sandwich Year placement. Several examples emerged, notably where a student:

- had previously been employed for 10 years as a Constituency Agent by a political party and had been through the Party's training programme (student 19);
- was heavily involved in running two family businesses, a local supermarket where she handles the accounts and recruits and generally manages staff, and a central heating business where she does all the administration including orders and accounts (student 3);
- had played a major part in starting up a "Fish and Chip" shop business and was working as a "Saturday Supervisor" in Shoe Express (student 8);
- had previously worked full time as a supervisor in a Saxone shoe shop, participating in that organisation's competence based management training programme (student 2);
- was working as a 'Saturday Supervisor' in a branch of WH Smiths (student 5);
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

- had played a major role in running a Youth Club, including organising several lengthy 'trips' (student 1);

The key difficulties that emerged with the use of evidence from experiences outside the placement fell into two categories. These were the difficulties of obtaining the physical evidence of events that had taken place sometime in the past in an organisation the student no longer had contact with, and the failure of students to value or see as relevant learning outside of their University degree. Unfortunately, therefore, despite some initial promise, evidence from outside the Sandwich Year placements did not play any significant part in final accreditation, although learning had undoubtedly taken place and competence been demonstrated in such situations. If the frequency (25%) of such easily identifiable and potentially valuable experience were common across the Sandwich Year as a whole this represents a significant wasted opportunity.

The solution to the first of these problems is only partly within the control of the University. It could facilitate maximum capture by encouraging or requiring students to assemble a portfolio of past performance in a Semester 1 unit. This is not an unrealistic possibility. The increasing acknowledgement of the importance of skills in Universities, the development of Study Skills units and Skills Portfolios, and the advent of QCA Higher Level Skills all support developments such as this. Lifelong portfolios would be a preferable alternative, but these are somewhat less likely, and outside the control of the University.

A Semester 1 assembled portfolio and its development and assessment, could also encourage the students to value their past learning and experience and transfer these skills to their University experience. This is likely to become particularly important as more mature students with previous experience, and hopefully learning, enter Universities.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

The Standards as a Measure of the Sandwich Year

As indicated above the Management Standards were a useful measure of some of the learning of some of the students. There was, however, much learning that went on in the Sandwich Year that was not recognised by the standards. This section first considers the learning and competence measured by the original standards, speculates what might have happened had the current standards been available, and then moves on to look at those types of learning not covered and how these may be assessed and accredited in the light of the inevitable variability of Sandwich Year placements.

The Learning and Competence Measured

By the Original MCI Standards

Sandwich Year placements come in many guises. Generally, however (as discussed at the start of this Chapter), they fall into three categories:

- general management, where the student is given experience in a broad range of management functions, including some level of supervisory responsibility;
- functional, where the experience is concentrated in a specific functional areas such as personnel or marketing;
- general administrative, concentrating on administrative rather than management tasks.

The study found that there were very few general management placements available to students. However, those students that were fortunate enough to obtain such a placement were generally given an excellent all round introduction to management. Student 16 was an excellent example of this type. The MCI Standards (original and current) were an excellent measure of such a Placement, as student 16 proved by achieving the full NVQ. This demonstrated that BABS students are capable of performing at NVQ 4 during their placements, in terms of both the level and range of competences required. It is the lack of
suitable placements, rather than a lack of ability on the part of the students, that prevents more from accomplishing the NVQ. The implication is clearly that employers are not making best use of the skills of the students available to them.

Several of the study students were, by their own choice, in excellent 'functional' placements. These were available in a variety of specialisms including marketing, personnel and finance. Placements 9, 8 and 6 were respectively excellent examples of such placements. However, the MCI Standards did not measure all the learning that went on in these placements as they do not include units with the relevant competences. This was true of marketing and finance placements in particular, and to only a slightly lesser extent of those in personnel. This should not be surprising as the management standards are intended to describe the general management competences necessary for the competent performance of general management roles, whereas the students had quite deliberately sought roles that gave them experience of their functional specialisms. This was common practice. While all of these students achieved MCI level 4 unit 8 the remainder of the units were not realistically achievable by these students, although much else had been learnt in what were often very rich placements.

In many placements the students undertook a general administrative role, involving few management activities and little functional expertise. The level of responsibility involved in such placements varied enormously. Student 10, for example, in her first placement spent about 20% of her time each week calculating and arranging payment of the company's manual workers wages, a bill of approximately £250,000 per annum. The figures were 'signed off' by the company accountant but could not have been altered, as he had no information to check them against. Students 1-4 on the other hand spent their year repetitively collecting, checking, correcting and preparing data for large surveys. Another department processed the data and analysis carried out by their superiors. Again all these students achieved Unit 8. Unfortunately, however, this is not an adequate measure of the learning that went on in even the poorest placements.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

As discussed above, 19 of the 23 students participating in the Project achieved unit accreditation. One student achieved the full NVQ, with another still expressing his wish to continue, and having a reasonable opportunity to obtain, the full NVQ. The obvious conclusion is that as so few students are generally going to be able to obtain it, the level 4 Management NVQ is not an appropriate qualification for assessing and accrediting the Sandwich Year of a BABS degree. It is important to note, however, that the achievements of a few would demonstrate that it is the limitations imposed by the placements rather than the ability of the students that leads to this conclusion.

The Learning that Might have been Measured by the Current MCI Standards

The ‘current’ MCI Standards were launched on 6th July 1997 as a replacement for the ‘original’ Standards. They were originally supposed to be available for use in the study but were delayed by a number of outside factors, including the need to take account of the Beaumont Reports (1996) recommendations. There are several important changes that it can be imagined would make the standards more useful for working with BABS Sandwich Year students. These include;

- a modular structure that allows some choice of units,
- regrouping of certain elements into units where Sandwich Year students are more likely to be able to demonstrate competence against all the elements in a unit,
- clearer wording and layout to facilitate understanding and self assessment,
- a much improved personal competence model.

There is, as yet, limited experience of working with this model as the first Centres are currently (early 1998) being re-approved to use it, and the first registrations taking place. In general, however it would appear that while making the occupational standards more applicable to, and more usable by, students in general management placements, it still does
not take account of the learning of functional or administrative placements. It improves the position, but does not fundamentally change it.

**The Use of Alternative Awards**

Unfortunately, as it is neither likely or even desirable to be able to find new placements or to develop existing ones to the point where they allow all Sandwich Year students to demonstrate the full NVQ level 4 in Management, some alternative qualification needs to be developed which:

- allows full recognition of the students' learning of all types (see Chapter 2);
- is flexible enough to be a valid assessment of placements that vary significantly in terms of responsibility and 'subject' areas covered;
- incorporates occupational standards in order to acquire the credibility of nationally recognised benchmarks of good practice;
- allows a development and assessment process appropriate to the needs of the students and the resources of the University.

The study considered the possible use of the LCGI. The City and Guilds Senior Awards System has been developed to recognise achievement in industry, commerce and the public services at the higher levels. The Licentiateship is the first level of this framework. The City and Guilds claim the LCGI is comparable to the NVQ Level 4, and that it is recognised by Universities for entrance purposes, by professional bodies for membership purposes, and by employers as evidence of professional capability. Eligibility for the award varies. For example, candidates holding vocational qualifications (level 2 or 3 NVQ or equivalent) with five years relevant experience may be considered. Undergraduates with appropriate work experience may also be considered. The use of the award with Sandwich Year students is relatively recent with the first student achieving the award in 1992. Approximately 1,000 LCGI awards were issued either directly or through
delegated authority in 1996, in comparison to 640 in 1995. This represents an increase of just over 56%. (Figures obtained from the City and Guilds of London Institute)

It is open to Universities to apply for ‘delegated authority’ to offer the award. This necessitates the preparation of a detailed submission that meets the general guidelines of the LCGI. These focus on the development of personal skills in a professional context, requiring specific competence in the areas of, self management and development, managing tasks, communication, working with and relating to others, applying knowledge and problem solving. However, the C&G Institute encourages Universities to adapt the list to suit their own requirements and meet course aims. For example Liverpool John Moores University recommended the addition of a seventh personal skill - that of reflection and review of the learning taking place.

In the BABS context, there are four universities with delegated authority using, or proposing to use, the LCGI to accredit the Sandwich Year. Liverpool John Moores University and The University of Central England currently offer BABS placement students the opportunity to complete an LCGI. The University of Greenwich and Bournemouth University have delegated authority status and are currently considering implementation.

The University of Greenwich has delegated authority to offer the LCGI in three forms, one of which is specifically designed for the Sandwich Year of the BABS degree. This approval is for an award based around two elements, the first, the demonstration through a portfolio of the competences included in the MCI Personal Competence model, and the second, a project that demonstrates the student’s ability to apply the knowledge and understanding learnt on their degree to a practical situation. This approval was obtained in November 1996, too late to use in the study. However, an analysis of the study students’ work and their placements would suggest that all could have obtained the LCGI.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

While the LCGI may be obtainable by all Sandwich Year students it still might not be the 'best' vehicle to encourage the development and measure the learning of a minority of students. Some students who obtain general management placements may still be better off with a 'straight' Management NVQ. Others whose placements allow them to pursue specialist subject interests in, for example, marketing or personnel, may be better served by negotiating a learning contract based around standards from the relevant Lead Bodies. Further work is needed to determine the most appropriate courses of action.

The use of the LCGI award, as against the full award or unit accreditation from an awarding body such as the Management verification consortium (MVC) or the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), enables the management standards to be used in a flexible way than is not currently possible with NVQ Awarding Bodies. It may well be, however, that following current reviews being undertaken by both MCI and NCVQ that it will be possible to approach Awarding Bodies to validate qualifications based on selections of standards designed to suit particular needs. A second benefit of the LCGI is that it allows the University to follow its own quality assurance procedures, and consequently does not require staff to be certified to the relevant “D” standards, or for the programme to go through the normal NVQ processes of internal and external verification.

By the Personal Competence Model

The Personal Competence Model had the capacity to provide a relevant measure of a significant proportion of the learning of all the study students. All would have been able to demonstrate competence against all the ‘Dimensions’ of the model. This general applicability of the model is one of its major strengths in regard to the current exercise, it does however have the weakness that it does not measure all learning. The idea emerged during the study of accessing this additional learning through the vehicle of a project undertaken in the placement, that applied the knowledge acquired by the student in their time at the University to a problem or situation in the workplace. These two elements together could then be used to satisfy the requirements of the LCGI.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

By Other Occupational Standards

As indicated earlier, there is little doubt that the students in the study either developed or had the opportunity to develop competences outside those included in the MCI NVQ 4 Standards. A detailed analysis of the possibilities was not possible during the study as the University only held accreditation for the management standards. A crude analysis would suggest, however, that units from the business administration, personnel, accounting and finance, customer care, marketing and small firms standards would have been applicable to the competences developed by different students.

The Learning and Competence Not Measured By the MCI Standards

Personal Development

Even the most successful Student in MCI terms, student 16, felt that the MCI NVQ did not fully measure what she had learnt. She wanted some explicit measure of what it was like to work in an organisation, of developing the personal relationships necessary to get work done, of handling the pressure and stress of the working environment, of making subtle judgements as to the reliability of staff and colleagues, and of making decisions that have a significant impact on both organisations and people.

Her view was shared by many other students, many of whom did not have the opportunity to develop and demonstrate the wide range of competence open to student 6, but nevertheless felt they had learnt a lot from their sandwich year.

Subject Expertise

Students in functional placements strongly took the view that their learning and competence development in the area of their subject expertise was not adequately accredited by the MCI NVQ. They felt that they had both learnt significant new things, and had had their University based learning ‘enhanced’ by the opportunity to apply it or see it applied in practice.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

These findings once again point to the usefulness of the LCGI with its dual emphasis on personal competence and a knowledge based project in accrediting the Sandwich Year.

By Other Standards

As indicated above, the learning and development of students during their Sandwich Year is both complex and varied. In general a judicious selection of a particular combination of units from a variety of elements is likely to describe a significant proportion of any student’s learning. The role of a student on a Sandwich Year, however, is not the same as that of the intended target audience for NVQs, the competent or very nearly competent practitioner. The Sandwich Year student is likely to focus far more on development during and even beyond their placement than the NVQ competent manager, with some development not being completed until reflection on experience has been undertaken in the light of academic units studied in the final part of the degree after the completion of the Sandwich Year.

Conclusion.

The Sandwich Year students’ learning requires an award that includes explicit assessment of skill, competence and capability as well as knowledge to fully measure their learning. It should be capable of covering a variety of “subject” areas depending on the interests and experience of the student, and “adjustable” to cope with the variety of “levels” of learning opportunity open to the student. The award should also facilitate the incorporation of competence demonstrated in experiences outside the placement.

The Standards as a Tool for Developing Placements

Finding new and servicing existing placements is an onerous task for any Placement Office. The current loose definition of most Sandwich Year Aims and Objectives makes it difficult to judge the worth of a placement once it is in operation let alone before the first
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

The student has taken up post. The standards, or some similar, fuller definition of desired purpose, provide the opportunity for:

- detailed discussion with employers of both what the students have to offer and the requirements of the Sandwich Year at the time of the ‘negotiation’ of the first placement;
- providing clearer information to applicant Sandwich Year students as to the learning and development opportunities available and not available in particular placements;
- more detailed monitoring of the learning and development of the student during the placement;
- the identification of additional opportunities that might become available through changes of circumstances during the placement.

The willingness of several employers to modify the Placement experience on becoming aware of the MCI Standards indicates that this is a realistic possibility in many cases. The use of occupational standards as against other criteria is likely to give added credibility to requests in the eyes of employers.

The Students’ View of the NVQ Award

It is generally accepted that the market currency of NVQs is lower than that of conventional qualifications. In the past this has been blamed on poor marketing and consequent ignorance of the system (NCVQ 1996: 89; Beaumont 1996: 30). Robinson (1996) is critical of Government and NCVQ training statistics, and provides probably the most reliable and up to date figures of candidates holding and working towards NVQs. He reports that the growth in uptake of NVQs has been slowing down since 1992, and that awards of traditional vocational qualifications in 1994-5 were still significantly higher than awards of NVQs and GNVQs. In his view, traditional qualifications are likely to retain their market share and NVQs remain under represented in the higher managerial occupations.
Chapter 8. The Outcomes of the Competence Based Programme.

Figure 8.7 The take up of the management NVQs (MCI 1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NVQ 3</th>
<th>NVQ 4</th>
<th>NVQ 5</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registrations</td>
<td>21,196</td>
<td>33,337</td>
<td>9,730</td>
<td>64,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>4,648</td>
<td>9,981</td>
<td>2,880</td>
<td>17,509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note the difference between registrations and awards figures that cannot be explained by the length of time taken to develop competence or prepare for assessment.

The MCI claim that 13,000 organisations in the UK now use the standards to improve the performance of more than 100,000 managers and supervisors (MCI Draft Revised Management Standards). However, this would not appear to have had a positive effect on the perception of the management NVQ award. In one 1996 study (Institute of Management, The Executive Summary) of the 724 managers responding, only 5 percent had NVQ at Level 4 or 5. These managers also ranked the NVQ award as lowest in terms of portability, and improving employment prospects. The one possible advantage, where it ranked almost top with a rating only 1% behind the MBA, was "evidence of my abilities". The IM survey also found that only half of the managers surveyed were familiar with the detail of the Management NVQ, only a quarter of organisations were using the standards, and that only 1 in 3 used the qualification when recruiting (The Executive Summary).

Given this scepticism on the part of managers the general concern of the study students for the value of their NVQ award or unit certification would seem justified. It is, however, certain, due to the pressure of Government funding, that the system of NVQs will endure in some form or other following present reviews. It is also interesting to note that while relatively few managers recognise the NVQ in terms of graduate recruitment, at least some do. Therefore, despite the justification in the large part of the student view, the management NVQ does have some credibility which is only likely to increase as the qualification itself develops and more managers obtain it.
Conclusion

Overall the use of the occupational standards proved beneficial to the student experience. The MCI Level 4 NVQ did not, however, provide a full assessment or accreditation of the learning of the majority of the students. The use of a wider variety of standards, particularly those relating to specialist functional areas such as marketing, personnel, accounting and finance, business administration and small firms would improve the coverage, but still not measure all the learning. The Sandwich Year learning, while it includes a significant degree of competence, is not best defined exclusively in this way. There are also elements of skill, capability and knowledge that cannot be inferred from, or subsumed into competence and therefore need to be directly addressed.

The “New” MCI standards, with their clearer language and presentation, modular approach, and wider coverage and flexibility, are likely to offer an improved vehicle for the assessment of the competence element of the learning of the Sandwich Year student. However, traditional NVQ approaches to assessment, do not best serve the Sandwich Year student as their heavy workload and census approach tends to bias the Sandwich Year experience towards assessment and away from development. The reverse of what should be the case. The new approaches to assessment currently in the experimental stage could well prove to be an improvement in this case. The benefits of a NVQ in terms of “recognition” to the student are, currently, not worth the additional effort and detriments suffered.

The study clearly demonstrated, however, that students welcomed and benefited from an approach that is more structured, and focused directly on the assessment and accreditation of their learning and development. The vast majority of the students involved in the study thought the use of competence based learning and development techniques improved their Sandwich Year experience. Ultimately, however, a NVQ in isolation would appear to be a poor measure of the learning of a Sandwich Year student. The nature of a Sandwich Year placement means that there will always be a greater focus
on development, than is the case with a practising manager, and this in turn means that a specialist qualification is required to properly assess it.

This award should:

» measure skill, capability and knowledge as well as competence,
» be capable of individual adjustment to the coverage of different subject areas,
» allow for the different qualities of learning experiences in different placements,
» use much of the reflective learning methodology associated with NVQs (and other awards),
» use occupational standards and/or the MCI Personal Competence model wherever possible to build on “established wisdom” and improve employer acceptability,
» be awarded under the authority (or in joint authority) of an Awarding Body with credibility in the vocational training area.

The most obvious award available at the time of the study was the Liscentiateship of the CGLI. The emerging Modern Apprenticeship in Management will also no doubt merit consideration.
Chapter 9.
The Relationship Between the Sandwich Year and the Taught Programme.
Chapter 9. The Relationship Between the Sandwich Year and the Taught Programme.

This Chapter examines the part played by the Sandwich Year in achieving the aims and objectives of the degree as a whole, and considers ways in which the integration of the year might be increased to the overall benefit of the student experience.

Introduction

In his discussion of the relationship between Degrees and Sandwich Years generally Eraut noted;

\[
\text{The relationship is dependent to a significant degree as to the way you expect the student to function both during the Sandwich Year and later as a manager. If you expect replicative behaviour of a technologist then you teach adherence to a set of principles. If you expect applicative behaviour you teach the skills of a craftsmen. If you regard management as an “art” to be applied in uncertain circumstances you teach interpretive and associative behaviour. (1994:66)}
\]

The first stage to assessing the relationship between Degree and Sandwich Year is therefore to re-examine the Aims and Objectives of the BABS degree. These were discussed in some detail in Chapter 1. It is sufficient here to note that there has been increasing divergence of the aims and objectives of different courses over the years since the BABS degree was first conceived. The current position is that while some degrees still hold true to the original aims of students learning about business, others most definitely prepare students for business.

The nature of the aims and objectives of a particular degree will obviously affect the most appropriate role for the Sandwich Year. If the degree is “about business” then the experience itself, and the observational opportunities generated, may be sufficient. On the other hand if the degree is educating students “for business” then the most must be made
Chapter 9. The Relationship Between the Sandwich Year and the Taught Programme.

of the opportunities to develop the skills and competences the student will need to make a success in a business career.

The University of Greenwich BABS most definitely fits into the latter category.

Its overall aims are as follows:

- To develop knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to general management careers in industry and commerce;
- To promote an ability to approach and solve problems and to initiate and respond to change;
- To challenge the students intellectually so as to enable them to make an effective contribution to their place of employment and to pursue further academic studies.

The Sandwich Year was similarly discussed in some detail in Chapter 1, and the University of Greenwich BABS Sandwich Year in Chapter 5. The aims and objectives of the University of Greenwich BABS Sandwich Year are poorly defined, but are loosely concerned with providing the student with experience of a business environment, and ensuring the student has the opportunity to place academic work in the context of 'the real world'.

The Practice of Integration

It became increasingly apparent as the study progressed that students would gain the most from the Sandwich Year if it were as closely integrated as possible with the surrounding elements of the BABS programme. This requirement has been recognised since the inception of the BABS degree over 30 years ago.

"The object is to ensure at each stage of the course an interaction of academic study and practical application such that each serves to illumine
Chapter 9. The Relationship Between the Sandwich Year and the Taught Programme.

*and stimulate the other*” (Advisory Sub Committee on a Higher Award in Business Studies, 1964: 12)

Integration can occur in five ways. Through:

- the development of relevant knowledge and skills, and familiarity with assessment methodologies, through the units studied in the pre-Sandwich Year part of the programme (prior-general);
- a dedicated briefing programme, designed to familiarise the student with the assessment requirements, learning and teaching support and the administrative arrangements for the Sandwich Year (prior-specific);
- a programme of support during the Sandwich Year that enables the student to make clear connections between their prior University based learning and their Sandwich Year experiences (work integration);
- a specific unit following the student’s return, based in specific tasks carried out during the Sandwich Year, designed to enable to make the most of the learning opportunities presented by the Sandwich Year (post-specific).
- following the student’s return to University, a programme that makes the best use of their experience by encouraging reflection upon and utilisation of that experience in the degree units taken (post-general);

These are each discussed in turn below.

**Preceding BABS Degree Units (prior-general)**

The units studied in the first half of the degree should obviously prepare students for the Sandwich Year. This preparation can, however, take several forms:

- it should give the students enough *subject knowledge* to be immediately ‘useful’ to an employer. Much discussion has occurred at Greenwich in the past about, for example, how much marketing is included in the early units, resulting generally in
recent years in increasing amounts being included in the early part of the degree. The advent of occupational standards offers the opportunity to align or include in these units the knowledge and understanding of relevant units from both the MCI and ‘functional’ standards e.g. marketing and personnel;

- it must equip the student with the necessary skills, competences and capabilities to work in a ‘management’ or ‘professional’ capacity. Again much discussion has taken place concerning the aims and outcomes of the Business Skills units that will run in each of the first three semesters, with increasing importance being attached to this area of work;

- perhaps more controversially, it must teach the student the self-development techniques necessary to reflect on, and learn from, the experiences they will have in the placement. This might be best achieved through the use of learning and teaching methodologies which place a heavy emphasis on reflecting on experience (e.g. reviewing role play videotapes), and self development (e.g. mini projects designed and undertaken by the student);

- it must familiarise the student with the experientially based assessment methods appropriate to the Sandwich Year. Again this might be best achieved by assessing the early units at least in part by experiential methodologies involving the use of ‘evidence’ and the matching of this to ‘performance criteria’.

It is crucially important that the student has the capability to perform adequately, but also the ability to reflect analytically and critically on what they are being asked to do. Without this skill Sandwich Year students are likely to be socialised at work into and accept the existing ways of doing things. (Korthagen 1988:38-9)

**Student Briefing Programme (prior-specific)**

Considerable efforts were made to brief students on the study programme. However, the level of uncertainty encountered amongst students during the early visits, indicated that
Chapter 9. The Relationship Between the Sandwich Year and the Taught Programme.

this is an area where significant improvement could still be made. The briefing programme needs to address four issues:

- choosing the assessment for the Sandwich Year;
- building a portfolio;
- negotiating development and assessment opportunities;
- learning from experience.

Choosing the Assessment for the Sandwich Year.

As noted earlier, while a standards based approach is suitable for some Sandwich Year placements it is unlikely to ever be appropriate for all. It is important therefore that the first Sandwich Year Briefing Session makes the student aware of the choices open to them, and the appropriateness and consequences of each choice. The choices available might include:

- LCGI;
- units from the MCI Standards;
- units from relevant functional standards;
- other e.g. learning contract.

Although some students may have a Sandwich Year placement arranged by the time of the Briefing it is unlikely that they would be able or wish to make a fully informed choice until several weeks into the Sandwich Year. The obvious point for a decision to be made is at the first Tutor visit after approximately 4 weeks in placement. This decision should then be reviewed and confirmed at the first university call-back day approximately 12 weeks into the placement (see Chapter 12).

The key to the success of such an assessment programme is the move to a common approach whatever the assessment vehicle, the approach should:
Chapter 9. The Relationship Between the Sandwich Year and the Taught Programme.

- adopt the principles of self-development;
- focus directly on the student's learning and development;
- assess using evidence of the student’s experience;
- make maximum use of employer judgements.

This common approach would allow the student to switch between assessment vehicles at a relatively late point in their Sandwich Year without suffering any penalty.

**Building a Portfolio**

The study visits demonstrated that the skills of portfolio development and assessment were alien to students in a way that other forms of learning and assessment e.g. the presentation, case study or essay, were not. Interestingly this was equally true of all students, including those with BTEC entrance qualifications.

The problem is most likely one of lack of familiarity, in which case it is best addressed by building in every possible opportunity to use portfolio methodology or its component parts in the early degree units. This could take the form, for example, of partly assessing the Business Skills units through the development of a 'skills portfolio' (Thatcher 1996) using evidence from the Skills Units, other BABS units and outside the course e.g. part-time work, student union activities, sports club or charitable work, etc. Other current units that are amenable to this approach include Business Functions and Applied Behavioural Science (ABS). Other units, for example Financial Accounting, might use the assembly of a series of exercises based around a case, and completed partly in seminars, and partly in the students own time (assembled in a portfolio) as the course work element of their assessment.

Familiarity and understanding of the portfolio methodology could then be built on in a specially designed series of workshops designed to take students through the stages of portfolio development:
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- describing work;
- gathering evidence;
- obtaining witness testimony;
- reflecting on performance;
- interpreting and applying occupational standards;
- completing evidence summary sheets;
- completing evidence cross referencing sheets;
- writing reflective reports.

These workshops could use examples from the portfolios of final year students, and could be partly taught by them.

**Negotiating Development and Assessment Opportunities**

One of the main benefits of using occupational standards is that they help clarify the objectives of the Sandwich Year for all the parties involved. This has enabled several students, with the help of the visiting tutor and the co-operation of their manager to enjoy experiences and opportunities that would not otherwise have been available to them. One trainee for example, was invited to participate in a weekend assessment centre after a discussion between tutor and employer, while another manager on being introduced to the standards by the visiting tutor commented;

"This is great. Now I really know what you have to do we can get on and organise this. It's much clearer than before. We'll have to try and arrange for you to take over the XXX meeting for a while"
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It is important to note that this manager was a personnel officer, working for a large organisation with a commitment to NVQs, which has consistently provided good Sandwich Year placements over a number of years.

The development of placement audit materials for both student and manager could be an important step forward in the identification of such opportunities. The variability of placements might mean that one of the early tasks of the student in placement should be to use a combination of occupational standards and other measures to produce, with assistance from the tutor, a realistic checklist of what might be achieved in the year. This could then form the basis of discussion and negotiation with the manager, and be incorporated into a learning contract to cover the year.

Once again students would need to be prepared for this task through a series of workshops. These would aim to help students identify and make the most of chances that might arise to extend the opportunities open to them, and to equip them with the skills required to make the most of these opportunities. The use of examples from former students, role-plays and other exercises could aim at instilling a realistic sense of ambition in the students, while at the same time avoiding the worst excesses of students 'demanding' particular experiences.

**Learning from Experience**

The main reason for the success and continuance of the Sandwich Year is that students learn from the experience. The study found, however, that this learning was far from uniform in its efficiency and effectiveness, and that an individual student’s capacity to learn from experience could be improved, through teaching the theory, skills and practice of reflective learning.

The students in the study tended to concentrate overtly on assessment throughout their placement. This was due in part to uncertainties concerning the assessment methodology that could be corrected by the measures suggested above. However, an understanding of
the ways in which learning and development occurs, and skill in managing the process, are crucial prerequisites to it taking place. The modified, “event-based”, Tutor visit programme (see Chapter 8) suggests that the early part of the Sandwich Year should concentrate on this, rather than assessment, to the extent that the first tutor visit and recall day should focus on learning and developmental aims and the successful negotiation of a learning contract for each student. Only once the intended learning and development has been agreed should the assessment be discussed. This is likely to be as difficult as it is important to adhere to in practice.

**Supporting the Sandwich Year (work integration)**

It became evident during the study that students did not always readily make links between their Sandwich Year experiences and the early part of their degree. The support programme for the student during the Sandwich Year needs to be organised to bring out these connections.

The student herself can be helped to make the connections by consciously recording and reflecting on her experiences. Work at the University of Greenwich with other programmes has shown that keeping a diary and journal greatly helps and facilitates this process. The diary is a regular factual record of the activities undertaken by the student, and the journal an irregular, more reflective account based on events e.g. a recruitment interview, or themes e.g. the recruitment and selection process. These accounts can be used for reflection by the student, possibly with the explicit linking of theory to the experience in the portfolio prepared for the year end assessment.

The Sandwich Year Student’s manager can use the diary and journal as the basis of regular review meetings with the student and might profitably regularly include the question, “What did you learn from your degree course about X?” and even, “Do you think you could find out something more about good practice in regard to X from the literature?” Some managers in the Project worked with their students on weekly or
Chapter 9. The Relationship Between the Sandwich Year and the Taught Programme.

monthly “Task Lists”. The students involved generally liked this and included many of the lists in their portfolios.

The visiting tutor could use the diary and journal and possibly a report or review prepared by the student as the basis of their meetings at the student’s workplace. Similarly, reviews prepared against “standard” themes could be used in the call-back days. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the increasing use of e-mail and the Internet might well mean that in the near future the diary and report could be kept in electronic form and mailed to the visiting tutor or Placement Unit on a monthly basis for comment. The tutor could then point out connections the student might have missed quickly enough for the learning to be incorporated in the student’s practice.

The key to making the diary and journal system work is to incorporate it directly into the assessment of the Sandwich Year, and make the Sandwich Year assessment influence the final degree classification. If the student sees these as contributing to his final degree classification he is likely to put more effort into them and thereby improve his learning. Managers and tutors too are more likely to view them as important. E-mail and CMT make supervision at an appropriate level a realistic possibility.

Specific Units Delivered in the Final Part of the Degree (post-
specific)

The final part of the “jigsaw” is incorporating the Sandwich Year experience into the degree when the student returns from the Sandwich Year. The obvious vehicle in most degrees is the Project unit, and the obvious method the basing of the final year Project in the work carried out in the placement. This often takes place currently and is of great value to the student, although to gain the most he often has to return to the placement workplace during the final year to gather appropriate information. It might well be that more explicit mechanisms for linking the two could be developed such as the requirement to agree a project title with the employer during the Sandwich Year, and to negotiate appropriate (unpaid?) access during the final year.
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There is also, however, the possibility of a more reflective unit based possibly in a portfolio assembled during the Sandwich Year, including the gathering of specific data, the performance of specific tasks and the diary and journal suggested earlier. Stone (1997) has successfully tried a similar unit at Manchester Metropolitan University but has focused it around issues of organisational structure. There would appear to be no reason, however, why a more broadly based Unit could not be developed covering a wide range of subject matter, perhaps in the vein of the “Contemporary Issues” Units that are a feature of many degree programmes. The main differences between reflective learning resulting from such a Unit and that carried out during the Sandwich Year would lie in the possible joining of the experiences of several students and the intensity of the academic part of the reflective cycle.

**Using the Sandwich Year Experience in the Latter Part of the Degree (post general)**

The tutors involved in the units taken in the final part of the degree do generally attempt to make the most of the students’ Sandwich Year experience. This might be more formally integrated by asking the tutors to define “themes” that could be used in their teaching and requiring the students, where possible, to include reflective reports on their experience of these “themes” in their journal and portfolio. Individual’s or group’s experiences could then be incorporated into learning and teaching and assignments. Again if the connection with assessment is made explicit at the start of the Sandwich Year it is likely to encourage effort.

**Conclusion**

*The Sandwich Year is a powerful learning experience in its own right. However, the benefits derived by the student from both the Sandwich Year and the rest of the degree can be significantly improved if the level of integration between the Sandwich Year and the rest of the degree is maximised. In practice this involves:*

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- better preparing the student for the Sandwich Year in the first part of the degree;
- using the learning from the first part of the Sandwich Year to inform performance during the Sandwich Year, and making the links between the Sandwich Year and academic content explicit;
- making more and better use of the learning and experiences of the Sandwich Year in the final part of the degree.

There is considerable scope generally for the development of innovative practice both in the Sandwich Year and the Degree generally to develop and support this integration.

The Sandwich Year student can be regarded in many ways as facing an extreme version of one of the oldest training problems. This can be characterised as the employee who goes on a training programme learns lots of new ideas, returns to his work with great enthusiasm to apply them, only to face insurmountable scepticism and conservatism amongst his colleagues thwart his every initiative. A short time after his return he is a disgruntled, frustrated employee whose training is proving to be dysfunctional. Perhaps the most surprising fact is that so many students not only serve their time on the Sandwich Year and return to complete their degrees but appear to enjoy and learn from both elements. The schism between Sandwich Year and the remainder of the degree noted earlier might be a type of psychological defence mechanism. Keeping the two separate avoids the dissonance that might arise if they are placed side by side. Greater integration might well bring some problems as well as great benefits.
Chapter 10.
Supporting the Sandwich Year Student.
Chapter 10. Supporting the Sandwich Year Student.

This chapter reviews the roles currently played by the student, Placement Unit, University staff, employer and manager, other students and support materials in the Sandwich Year. The number, pattern, length and content of visits to students and employers made during the study are reviewed in the light of current developments in practice and thinking, and suggestions made as to developments likely to improve the learning experience of the student.

Introduction

Most models of the Sandwich Year posit three parties as the main players in the year, the student, the employer and the University in the person of the visiting tutor (see for example, Ashworth and Saxton, 1990: 137. Chatterton, 1988: 6. Brooke and Lacey: 1996 Unit 6, Section 7). This study suggests a more complex model also involving the students’ peers, and the University Placement Office as parties in their own right. In practice the ‘employer’ is often two split roles, the generally more senior person who arranges and recruits the Sandwich Year student (the ‘employer’) and the “manager” who supervises the student on a day to day basis. It also suggests that any model must also consider the mechanisms of communication and support used by the parties as these play an important role in shaping the process. This usually involves a body of documentary support materials, but may well in future involve greater use of telephone and electronic communication. If the Sandwich Year is assessed and accredited, then the role of the Awarding Body or other accrediting agency must also be considered.

The Placement Unit

Placement Units vary between Universities. The study did not include a systematic survey of all Placement Units, however, it became obvious through the various contacts made that there were wide variations in the organisation, functions and practice. A Unit might be run either by a combination of academic and administrative staff, or by specialist administrative staff. Academic staff, where involved, were either full time or had their
time split between the placement unit and other University functions. There was no obvious correlation between the size of the Sandwich Year programme and the size of the Placement Unit.

The function of the Placement Unit is generally to find and administer sufficient placements to ensure that every Sandwich Year student who so desires can have a placement. Outside of this general purpose, however, there are substantial variations between Units in terms of:

- whether the ultimate responsibility for finding the placement lies with the Unit or the student;
- the role of the Unit in preparing the student for the placement. Some Units run preparatory workshops and hold preparatory tutorials, while in other Universities this is part of the 'normal' taught degree programme;
- whether Placement Unit staff carry out all tutor visits during the Sandwich Year, or arrange for staff from the Business School generally to carry these out and monitor the process;
- similar variations to those above in regard to the assessment of the Sandwich Year;
- the extent to which a proactive role is taken in finding placements and employer liaison generally;
- the relative importance attached to learning and development as against administration and control of the student.

It is beyond the scope of the study to determine the most appropriate form of organisation for a Placement Unit, and indeed it is likely that this will vary according to the aims ascribed to the Sandwich Year. However, in principal it would appear that if the
Sandwich Year is to be assessed with sufficient rigour to assign credit and perhaps have it influence the final degree classification, then:

- the preparatory, support and assessment programmes need to be carried out by an appropriately trained team of tutors who understand the links between the Sandwich Year and the rest of the degree;
- the Unit needs to provide readily available authoritative support to students throughout their placements.

These factors suggest that the Placement Unit is best run by a member of academic staff who teaches on the degree, with appropriate administrative assistance. The preparatory, support and assessment programmes in turn need to be organised by the Unit but run by a relatively small team of appropriately trained tutors who also work on the degree. The findings of the study continually emphasised the centrality of the Placement Unit to the success of the Sandwich Year.

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**The Visiting Tutor**

**Current Practice**

The majority of investigations into the Sandwich Year have ascribed a pivotal role to the University Tutor, as such, the role of the visiting Tutor is undoubtedly crucial to the success of any scheme. Ashworth and Saxton (1992) emphasise the importance of this role and the implications should it not be clearly defined.

"Tutors actually have a key role in the management of placements, and the lack of any clear specification of their tasks can mean that the educational purposes of placements are subverted." (Page 30).
Interestingly, research findings have indicated that each party to the sandwich year holds a different vision of the role of the visiting tutor. Moreover, within these groups, varying perceptions have been evident. (Jahoda: 1963, Ashworth and Saxton: 1990). The key elements of the role revolve around the notion that the tutor is the link between the university and the employer (see for example, Smithers: 1976; Day et al: 1982). As such, the tutor is required to wear many hats. Essentially, for both groups the tutor must be an ongoing placement negotiator and peacemaker. (Ashworth and Saxton: 1990). For the student, the tutor must be a facilitator of learning, a counsellor and assessor. And for industry, the tutor is an ambassador of the university, controller of the student and possibly an importer of knowledge.

The tutor is likely to see himself primarily as a representative of the University and an agent of the student. He may view himself as an ambassador for the university and of higher education, a gatherer of up to date knowledge of industrial practice, a provider of knowledge, an evaluator of the placement, and even a salesman in terms of research and consultancy opportunities. He is, however, likely to receive little formal guidance on the role he is expected to fulfil, and may well be stranded in a mire of uncertainty over the exact nature and purpose of his role (ibid).

Little previous research has been carried out into the role ascribed to the visiting tutor by the Placement Unit or the “University” in some other form. Edmunds and Lindsay (1997) suggest that in the majority of Universities the Placement Units view the visiting tutor as primarily fulfilling a controlling and administrative role.

Visiting tutors at Greenwich are given guidelines that identify the objectives of their visits as to:

- provide support for the student in their work and assessment;
- evaluate the placement;
- evaluate the student’s performance;
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- identify shortfalls in the student's skills or achievements;
- maintain good relations with the company;
- obtain company information - in terms of future placement needs, graduate opportunities, research possibilities, case study development;
- identify any action required by the placement office/course director;
- identify possible consultancy opportunities within the company.

These objectives neglect the role of the tutor as "a catalyst to enrich the placement," through helping to maximise the potential for learning from the placement (Ashworth and Saxton, 1990: 38). In order to achieve this most important function, visiting tutors should promote experiential learning by:

- discussing a programme of work with the student and establishing the relationship of the subject area and techniques to be used with the first (or subsequent) year's lecture material and practical exercises, in as much detail as possible;
- pointing out that the student will be learning about industrial procedures and that these may well differ from what has been taught in the University;
- pointing out that the student is expected to acquire general practical experience and specific technical expertise, and that this can never be achieved to the same extent from practical work at University;
- pointing out that the student is expected to think about the work (particularly so if some of it is routine and repetitive); enquire why the particular procedure/techniques are being used, and about the wider aspects of the work: analyse the results. The enquiries can be made from one of the student's supervisors. The onus is on the student to ask and search out information. The supervisor will be pleased to help but will expect most of the initiative to come from the student;
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- pointing out that the student is expected to read up about the particular industry in which they are employed;
- pointing out that at the end of the training period the student is expected to have a good working knowledge of the employing industry and to have thought deeply whether it would appeal as a full time career. (Ashworth and Saxton, 1990: 39)

The visiting tutor role is as important as it is problematic. Edmunds and Lindsay (1997) indicate that there has been some small development of this role, generally, in Universities over recent years. However, much more could be done to improve the effectiveness of visiting tutors, particularly with regard to improving the quality of student learning. One of the potential benefits identified by the study was the clearly described and benchmarked role given to the visiting tutor by the description of the Advisor/Assessor roles contained in the "D" standards.

A New Role for the Visiting Tutor

The role of the visiting tutor in Sandwich Year schemes such as those developed through the course of the study changes in several ways. The tutor:

- plays an active part in negotiating a learning contract with trainee and employer;
- develops closer contact with a larger number of employers and plays a more important part in finding and developing placements;
- helps the student choose the assessment methodology appropriate to their placement;
- acts as a facilitator during the three recall days (see Chapter 12);
- develops a role as an assessor.

This new role within the proposed new scheme would mean that the tutors that were to be involved would require appropriate training. The more extensive role and increased
importance of the activity, in terms of it affecting the final degree classification, also brings
the need for more co-ordination and control of the group of tutors. This would mean, that
initially at least, it would be beneficial to limit the number of tutors concerned to as small a
group as possible, deliberately choosing those with an interest in this area of work. This is
a significant departure from current University of Greenwich procedure where a majority
of Business School staff, about 50 in all, are used as visiting tutors.

The proposed scheme would mean each tutor carrying out 3 visits to each Sandwich Year
student they supervised (see Chapter 12). The visits would take longer than at present
because of the regular and programmed contact with the student’s manager and employer,
making at most two visits possible in any one day, and then only when students’
workplaces were close together. A supervisory load of 10 students would therefore require
at least 15, and probably 20 days work in visits alone, suggesting a teaching equivalent
load of at least 45 hours a year or between 1 and 2 hours a week. A figure towards the
higher end of this band would also allow for the additional telephone and CMT
supervision to be undertaken by the tutor, as well as participation in the recall days. In
that a supervisory load of 10 students would constitute 14% (2 hours equivalent) and 15
students 20% (3 hours equivalent) of a lecturer’s workload, the maximum number of
students that should be allocated to any one lecturer probably lies between these two
figures.

In a programme the size of that at Greenwich, i.e. between 100 and 120 placement
students annually, this would mean a core team of between 8 and 12 tutors could run the
Sandwich Year placements. This would appear to be a manageable size from the point of
view of both training and administration, and should allow for the rapid identification and
promulgation of good practice.
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The Tutor Visits

The author carried out all the Tutor visits with the students in the study. He is an experienced lecturer in management development and Advisor/Assessor with extensive experience of Management NVQs, including research into portfolio construction and acting as an External Verifier for two Awarding Bodies.

The Number of Visits

76 student visits were carried out during the placement year, followed by 12 meetings in University after the Sandwich Year had ended. The average duration was approximately 2 hours and the median number of visits to each student 4. The 12 visits at monthly intervals originally envisaged in the proposal were not required in practice. All the students were visited as often as they wished, which generally turned out to be at between 6 and 10 week intervals. This appeared to be a long enough interval to allow the student to carry out a meaningful amount of work, but not too frequent as to interfere with her placement job or be seen to be demanding too much of her time. This gap was also not so long as to allow the student to lose track of the learning and development focus of their year. This finding has heavily influenced the proposed new Sandwich Year Placement Scheme which suggests 6 meetings over the year at roughly 8 week intervals, 3 meetings at the placement workplace and three call-back days at the University.

Several visits were cancelled by students, or wasted, because they had not had time to complete the work agreed at the previous meeting. No student complained that the frequency of visits was delaying their progress either through ‘under’ or ‘over’ visiting.

An analysis of the interviews leaves little doubt that the students benefited from the frequency and ‘quality’ of the visits they received. The increased frequency is self-evident and is likely to have produced its own “Hawthorne” effect. The increased ‘quality’ may have two causes. First, Project visits were all made by one member of staff who had chosen to work in this area, and had developed his own practice through making a large
number of visits. And secondly, because the design of the Project scheme provided a clearer focus for the visits.

**The Pattern of the Visits**

In the same way that the total number of visits varied between students, so did the distribution of the visits over the year. Some students were visited at regular intervals of between 6 and 8 weeks throughout the period. Some students were visited with a greater frequency at the beginning of the year than at the end and some vice versa. This variation of pattern and frequency in practice served as an unintentional experiment.

The experience of the study indicates two conflicting trends. The first argues for the front loading of the visit programme in order to explain and familiarise the student with the assessment process, and "settle" the student into her job. The counter argument for the pattern of visits to be loaded towards the end of the placement is that students are generally assigned more meaningful work towards the end of the placement when their competence has developed and their employer's confidence in them grown. This is supported by the argument that the issues that supposedly require the front loading of the programme are perhaps better dealt with before the placement starts. Clarification of concerns common to a number of students, might then be best answered at a group recall day at the University about 12 weeks after the start of the placement.

**The Length of Visits**

The average duration of a visit was approximately 1.5 hours, although this varied between extremes of 1 and 3 hours. The main factors that governed the length of visits were:

- the level of preparedness of the student;
- the range of issues to be covered;
- the physical surroundings in which the meeting was held;
- the personal (pastoral) circumstances of the student at the time;
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- the level of development of the student/tutor relationship.

Several of these factors are obvious. Some merit brief discussion.

Some students were extremely "businesslike" in booking meeting rooms and running the meeting to a schedule, sometimes as short as an hour. These generally tended to be the 'better' students that enjoyed 'good' Sandwich Years and made the most of their opportunities to obtain NVQ units. This level of organisation was generally reflected throughout their performance. The 'productivity' of the visits was not necessarily adversely affected by their relative brevity.

An analysis of the visits suggests that it would be beneficial to run the visit programme in a more 'businesslike' manner. The student's role in arranging, preparing, participating, recording and reviewing the meetings would form part of the Sandwich Year assessment. The tendency of students to focus more clearly on matters that are an overt part of their assessment supports this idea. The process might be facilitated by the development of a 'model' for each tutor visit (different models for those at different times in the Sandwich Year) and a "check-off" list, completed by student and tutor after each meeting, giving an assessment of the student's competence and effort. The student would then prepare a short reflective account of each meeting for inclusion in the portfolio. This would form the basis of a year end and/or later reflective review of the student's learning and competence in regard to meetings.

**The Content of Visits**

The content of the visits developed similarly in all cases despite variations in the frequency and pattern:

- the early visits were heavily concerned with the technicalities of NVQs, the requirements for a "pass" for the Sandwich Year, and the language and application of the standards;
• as visits progressed students became more accustomed to the NVQ procedure and more at ease with it;

• tutor guidance became more useful to the student when based in the student’s own work;

• most visits involved the lengthy discussion of examples of the way evidence could be used and assessed with the tutor carefully checking student understanding at each stage;

• students favoured assessment plans (“D” 33) and incremental assessment, and were constantly seeking the reassurance of having units “signed off”;

• students were comfortable with a unit centred approach to the gathering of evidence, and were reluctant to develop an “event-based” portfolio describing their work in general terms for later assessment;

• most students experienced a “eureka” moment at which the learning and development and assessment process suddenly became clear to them;

• there was no obvious pattern as to what produced this sudden insight, but its effect was very powerful;

• even after this insight students still required (less) help at interpreting and applying the standards to their work;

• many students experienced difficulties with evidence summaries and evidence cross referencing to the end of assessment;

**Developments in the Pattern of Visits.**

The Tutor’s visits fell into two patterns. A conventional pattern, described above, that was followed with the 21 students joining the study in the early months and a modified pattern with the last two students who joined the study near the conclusion of the fieldwork. The conventional pattern is that described in detail in relation to students 1-4 and the modified pattern that described in relation to student 18.
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In brief the conventional pattern was the one inherent in the design of the study. It derived from conventional wisdom in relation to NVQ practice. It could be summarised as having three phases;

- the initial visit – developing an understanding the NVQ development and assessment process;
- the middle visits – advice on and assistance with assembling the portfolio;
- the final visits – assessment through the portfolio and interview.

The modified pattern also had three stages but was more aggressively “event based”. It is referred to as the “event based approach” from here on;

- the initial visit - the student’s work experience and possible future experiences are explored and discussed and the student asked to write up written reflective accounts for the next meeting;
- the middle visits – the written reflective accounts which are explored and expanded; evidence that might be used to substantiate and illustrate the accounts is identified and referenced to the accounts; the accounts are also referenced to appropriate occupational standards at the suggestion of the Tutor.
- The final visits – the written accounts, supporting evidence and references to occupational standards are assembled into a portfolio that is used as the basis of assessment for the NVQ (or possibly another award).

The event based approach, as explained above, was developed by the Tutor out of reflections on his own practice. In its limited trial it appeared to work more effectively and was more clearly understood and easily absorbed by the students. The key factor was that it concentrated on the student’s experience and the learning from that experience, and slowly built to the assessment process, making it appear almost as a side affect of the learning process. The conventional approach, on the other hand, concentrated on the assessment process and made learning and development appear almost incidental to assessment. The opposite of the desired effect.
As noted earlier in this Chapter the "employer" of traditional models of the Sandwich Year placement is often two people. The person offering the placement and recruiting the student (the employer) may be different from the 'manager', the employee with day to day responsibility for the student. Both are important to the success of the Sandwich Year, and as such, must be briefed. It is important to note, however, that the employer and manager may not always be in agreement over the role of the Sandwich Year student or his level of performance.

One of the most powerful ways of the student learning the competences and skills of business and management is to learn from a mentor. Eraut (1994:50) is amongst many who note that the acquisition of practical knowledge and skill is best made through having the opportunity to observe experts tackle problems while listening to the expert give a contemporaneous commentary outlining their thinking. Schon proposes a similar way of teaching that he calls the "practicum". The employer mentor is in many ways likely to be more important to a successful Sandwich Year than any University representative or input.

**Briefing**

The study found that the briefing of both employers and managers required sensitive handling. The initial telephone contact by the tutor with the student coincided with the arrival of a 'detailed' briefing pack with employers. The size of this pack, together with the implied work required, produced a significant adverse reaction from some employers. Telephone conversations and subsequent meetings reduced the loss of students to the study to 1 at this point. It did however serve as a salutary lesson in the need to be professional, realistic and economic in the first briefings.

Two types of briefing need to be developed, one for new Sandwich Year employers and managers and one for continuing employers and managers. The experience of the study indicated that the briefing for new employers should include a visit from a University tutor.
prior to placement to provide answers to the inevitable questions, allay fears as to workload and maximise learning and development opportunities that might be available. The briefing for ongoing employers may be best handled through a combination of written material and prompt follow up telephone call, although the increasing spread of e-mail may lead to this becoming an appropriate medium in the near future. Some form of interactive personal contact, however brief, is crucial.

**The Roles of Employers and Managers**

Virtually all the employers and managers were met at least twice, usually during the first and last visits to the student. Some were available more frequently but the difficulties involved in making appointments often meant that more frequent meetings were impossible. In a few cases where student performance was unsatisfactory there appeared to be little difficulty in making appointments at short notice. These occasions were, however, few and far between.

The first meeting usually involved discussion of the University’s requirements for the Sandwich Year, the processes involved in the student obtaining the NVQ, and the employer’s and manager’s involvement in these. Interestingly it was often the employer rather than the manager that was seen at this stage. As little information concerning the realities of the placement was available at this time the meetings were largely reduced to pleasantries and information giving concerning assessment procedures.

The first meeting is crucial to the whole placement. The timing of the meeting is subject to contradictory pressures. On the one hand, the need to check that the student is in an appropriate placement and behaving appropriately, suggest that the visit take place as soon as possible. On the other, the need to make the most of the meeting by negotiating at least a draft learning contact for the placement suggest the meeting be delayed long enough for the information that should form the basis of the contract to be collected. The study suggests that a meeting approximately four weeks into the placement is an acceptable compromise. However, in order for the student and manager to carry out the
necessary preparatory work and assemble the required information for the learning contract both must be briefed such that the process begins immediately upon the student’s arrival in the placement. It may well be that some telephone or e-mail contact needs to be made before this in order that minor problems can be resolved prior to, rather than during, the first visit. The use of carefully, professionally prepared documentation could play a significant role in facilitating this process. A pre-set agenda for the series of meetings would provide valuable focus.

The lack of employer contact during the bulk of the Sandwich Year was interesting in itself. It was partly due to the high frequency of the visits carried out for the study, sometimes as often as every 4 weeks, and partly to the difficulties of matching diaries. However, probably the most significant cause was the lack of definition of the role the employer should play in regard to the placement, and the consequent absence of purpose or reason for such meetings. This highlights the need to agree with employers in advance the role, no matter how limited, they are prepared to play in the Sandwich Year.

The three visits proposed in the revised programme (Chapter 12) at between 4-6 month intervals are thought to be a more manageable commitment from the employer and/or manager. If the first meeting focuses around the negotiation of a learning contract, the second should review both the student’s performance and the appropriateness of the contract, leaving the third to review the student’s performance over the year. Any documentation from these meetings should be included in the student’s portfolio. Each of the meetings could be facilitated by the provision of pre-set agendas and documentation in the form of checklists. Ease of completion is crucial to success.

Another matter that provoked much thought during the study was the order the different parties were seen during a visit. A suggested order of meetings and the underpinning logic is shown below. However, more work is required to establish best practice.
• visiting tutor meets employer to get overview of placement (discussion based on checklist and ratings against specific criteria);

• visiting tutor meets manager to review student performance (discussion based on checklist and ratings against specific criteria);

• visiting tutor meets student to feedback employer’s and manager’s comments to student, reflect on the student’s view of their own performance, and the assistance given by the manager (discussion based on checklists and ratings against specific criteria);

• visiting tutor meets with student, manager and possibly employer to get agreed view of past performance and future expectations - student draws up contract or memorandum of agreement as a record of discussion to circulate to all as a basis for the next period of the placement;

• visiting tutor meets with student alone to check on understanding of meetings.

Both the competence and willingness of employers and managers to adopt a role of coach and mentor to students varied enormously. In terms of formal qualification to “D32” or “D33”, one of the study’s more surprising findings was the complete absence of any such qualification amongst the managers involved. Given the current high profile of NVQs, the commitment of several of the employer organisations to NVQs as a training and development system, and the fact that several placements were in Personnel Departments, the complete absence of any awareness of NVQ methodology or the MCI Standards amongst any of the managers concerned was something of a surprise.

If employers are to get the best out of their Sandwich Year students as either current or future employees then they need to consider training and development in this area or even formal qualification, if not to the “D” standards then to the new qualification proposed by BTEC/BABSIP specifically for this expertise, or for a more general Mentoring unit such as that offered by the University of Greenwich. In terms of managers who also hold a professional qualification such mentoring training is likely to count as CPD. For managers
generally it should become a part of their “lifelong learning” and recognised as improving their employability. However, the University, in reality, has little power to influence such matters.

Peer Support - The Underground Network

The Sandwich Year is a very different experience for the student in a variety of ways. One of these is that, for many for the first time, they are working ‘alone’ apart from their peer group and other obvious sources of friends. Most develop friendships in the workplace, but virtually all express the need for contact with their peer group from University during the Sandwich Year.

This is relatively easy to achieve for some. During the study, for example there was a regularly weekly meeting of students in the evening in central London with a varying attendance each week. For others in more remote locations it was not so easy, and one student who generally received excellent reports from her manager, vividly remembers being reprimanded for spending too much time on the telephone on ‘social’ calls. The author also experienced the effect of the continuing student networks when, thankfully favourable, reports and comments of his early visits preceded him to subsequent visits.

The student networks were used mainly for social intercourse, but were also on several occasions used for support with the NVQ assessment and even, on fewer occasions, for help with placement work. Many students put considerable effort into supporting these networks and it would seem, therefore, that they should be harnessed as far as possible to support the Sandwich Year learning. There are several ways in which this might be done including setting up groups of students in similar placements and encouraging them, possibly with their employers support, to meet and phone one another on ‘work’ as well as social matters. The recall days could be used to reinforce these groups and through an extended buffet style lunch, with tutors absent, used to provide at least some of the required peer group contact. Computer Mediated Tutoring (CMT) also offers some
considerable possibilities including the use of ‘notice boards’, coffee lounges, ‘conference rooms’ and ‘virtual classrooms’ as well as student to student e-mails for social and work based activity.

The full involvement of peers, not just in group work, but in peer tutoring and assessment could be a crucial development in Sandwich Year practice. Race (1992) has demonstrated the power of these strategies as pedagogic devices, and in the case of the Sandwich Year they provide a rare and valuable opportunity for students to work in an “informal” setting and try out moves away from “theoretical correctness” of University based written work or workplace orthodoxy.

Documentary Support

Currently, in the absence of any electronic means of communication, the vast majority of support is paper based. This includes briefing notes for employers, students, and visiting tutors. The very fact that this support is paper based, and consequently has to be sent or given to its recipients tends to mean it comes in large ‘chunks’ the very size of which can be off-putting. The study clearly demonstrated that there is a need for such material to be carefully designed and professionally produced.

Most Sandwich Year schemes prepare separate guidance notes for the students, employers and tutors which outline the requirements of the scheme and the conduct expected from the parties. The study in addition provided a Competence Checklist for the students to use in analysing the opportunities open to them. Other documents which were either used at other Universities, or suggested by the study, include a learning contract pro-forma; manager/employer monthly or quarterly student review checklists; student monthly performance review checklist; student diary and journal pro-formas; tutor visit report checklist; and agenda/checklist for manager/employer and student, and tutor and student meetings.
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The balance to be struck with all these documents between a heavily prescriptive checklist, forced choice, “tick-box” format and a more free ranging, open design is a difficult one. The prescriptive checklist at least has the advantages of defining the information to be provided and, hopefully, being relatively quick and uncomplicated to complete. It was mentioned by several managers in the study as being the form they felt most appropriate to their use. The more open format, while having the advantage of inviting the provision of “richer” information, also has a greater possibility of causing uncertainty and confusion as to what is required, and requiring greater effort and time for completion. This in turn makes its use and regular completion less certain.

In practice every supporting document is going to be a compromise between the two extremes. The search for the most appropriate design for each is again the subject of ongoing work.

Other Support

The mechanisms discussed below have been already mentioned briefly above. They do however each merit consideration in their own right.

*Telephone*

No matter how much CMT is offered there is likely to always be a requirement for telephone contact between Sandwich Year student and University. The difficulty is that, as much research on the marketing of Universities has demonstrated, University staff are notoriously difficult to contact by telephone at work. The problem therefore becomes one of managing the telephone contact.

The most obvious solution is to have a central contact at the University in a Placement Unit that is constantly staffed, or where an answer-phone is used at specified times and regularly ‘cleared’. The answer-phone also needs to be used for evening and weekend contact. This still leaves the Placement Unit with the problem of quickly contacting the
visiting Tutor in order that he may return the call. In practice, because of split sites and off site working, the only reliable way of this happening is for staff to be telephoned at home and messages left on answer-phones, although these are still not used by all staff.

The return phone call can also be problematic. The confidentiality of the matters discussed in ‘urgent’ telephone calls often means it is inappropriate to talk to the student at work. Reliable lists of students’ home numbers are notoriously difficult to maintain, answer-phones are uncommon amongst students, and students often out in the evenings. Many lecturers are reluctant to give students their home telephone numbers for a variety of obvious reasons and, understandably, many staff are reluctant to ‘work’ on the telephone in the evenings, although a lot do. The issue of staff claiming the cost of telephone calls made from home is also one that has to be addressed.

The telephone is not used to best advantage in most cases. More thought needs to be given to developing clear contact procedures, and making sure all concerned are aware of these. The use of e-mail or CMT might show the way forward by both better fulfilling the function of much of the work carried out on the telephone at the moment, and providing a way of students directly ‘booking’ telephone appointments with tutors without involving the Placement Unit.

E-mail

E-mail through the Internet can be used to the benefit of all concerned. It provides a quick and reliable means of making the type of contact discussed above. It does, however, have two serious disadvantages.

The first is the cost. Although some students might get an e-mail address as a part of their Sandwich Year placement, the evidence from the study suggests that this is currently rare. The University e-mail system is currently virtually impenetrable from outside the University Network. Students would therefore have to pay for an address from a Service Provider, currently around £7-8 a month.
The second is the limiting nature of the Internet gateways offered by Service Providers which make the transmission of complex files such as word processed documents or spreadsheets complicated and unreliable. This in turn limits its use as a learning and teaching mechanism. This can be overcome to some extent if all parties, students, tutors and University use the same Service Provider, but this is unlikely to be achieved in practice.

Current developments and on-going work with the current Sandwich Year suggest that both the above objections are rapidly disappearing.

**CMT**

The more attractive solution, used widely in countries where geographical separation makes distance learning more important than in the UK, and being experimented with by the Academic Development Group in the University of Greenwich, is the use of CMT using Lotus Notes or First Class. This involves running a separate server that is accessed by students and tutors alike through short telephone calls at off-peak rates. All working is carried out off-line. Each student and tutor has an address on the server making one to one communication possible, including the transmission of large and complex documents. This thesis, for example, is about 110,000 words (460 pages) and takes approximately 10 minutes to send using Notes, with the formatting remaining consistent.

The other advantages of Notes and First Class are their ease of use, and the ability to set up virtual classrooms, notice boards, common rooms and coffee shops in which interactive communication can take place. The relative brevity of the telephone calls required to keep a students ‘home’ machine up to date and transmit her inputs, between 5 and 10 minutes a week, means that this is also a feasible way of supporting International students.

The rapid spread and increase in use of the Internet has meant that approximately 60% of the 1997/8 Sandwich Year had access at work to the Internet. It is possible to create databases in Notes and First Class that can be viewed with any Web Browser obviating the
need for a "client" licence and installation of special software on an employers computer (although most working has to be done on-line). New HTML authoring packages such as Microsoft's "Front Page" have also made the construction of Web sites to support the Sandwich Year a possibility (see http://www.unn.ac.uk/dfee/dfeefram.htm for an example as applied to the MBA).

Conclusions

The student visits made during the study indicated that:

- the employer and manager should be seen both privately and with the student at each visit;
- visits should be based around considered evidence of learning and performance. This might involve student and manager completing and reflecting upon a written assessment of the student's performance before the tutors visit;
- the student should complete both a diary (fact) and weekly journal (reflection) for review and summarisation in preparation for the tutors visit. This summary should then be used, together with the evaluations of the student's learning and performance, as the basis of a more meaningful meeting;
- the diary, journal and summaries should form a key part of the portfolio assembled for year end assessment for an award such as the LCGI;
- the increasingly widespread use of IT and the Internet means that it should be possible for all students to keep diary and journal in a word processed or similar electronic form which, together with summaries, could be regularly e-mailed to a tutor using a system such as Lotus Notes. This could form the basis of much more frequent and thorough student/tutor interaction, and consequently student learning than is common at the present time;
• at most periods of a placement the student will not have time to do enough work to justify a visit from a tutor or attendance at a recall day at less than 6 week intervals, and for many students the ideal interval is nearer 8 weeks;

• many matters dealt with during visits would have been best dealt with either in the preparation for the placement, or at sessions with groups of students at the University during the placement;

• the difficulty of student/tutor contact leads to relatively minor problems and uncertainties causing discontent out of all proportion to any objective measure of their importance;

• there is a need for student/student contact during placement which is not formally catered for at present, but could be better met through a combination of recall days and CMT;

• the making, managing, preparing, keeping and minuting of meetings could usefully become a student responsibility that in itself would generate development of managing self and others type competences, and provide evidence of that development;

• the Tutor's visits should follow an "event-based" pattern.
Chapter 11.
The Compatibility of Competence Based and Degree Programmes.
Chapter 11. The Compatibility of Competence Based and Degree Programmes.

This Chapter discusses the ways in which the different learning developed and assessed on “competence” and “academic” programmes can be brought together most profitably in one “experience” for the Sandwich Year student.

Introduction

The Government is committed to competence based Vocational Qualifications based on occupational standards, although precisely what form these take in practice appears to be rapidly changing with a much “softer” line emerging as far as development, and in some ways assessment, are concerned. A shift of emphasis from NVQs to Vocational Qualifications that are ‘based on’ occupational standards is even detectable in some areas with higher level NVQs. At the same time University programmes are often becoming increasingly vocational, with the employability of students becoming an increasingly important criteria for programmes to meet. In this climate there is continuing pressure to develop links between the two systems, including notably the recognition of vocational achievements assessed by NVQ programmes by Universities for their “academic” programmes through the establishment of CATS ratings.

Most of what has been written about compatibility has concerned postgraduate programmes (see for example Walton 1996; and Randall 1995). This has explored, for example, dual assessment and accreditation. Little has, however, been written about compatibility at undergraduate level. This chapter, therefore, explores the findings of the study in so far as they illustrate both the ways forward and limitations of compatibility at undergraduate level. It reviews the compatibility of the two types of programme in terms of;

- resourcing,
- definitions of purpose,
- learning and teaching methodology,
- assessment,
Chapter 11. The Compatibility of Competence Based and Degree Programmes.

- accreditation and,
- quality assurance.

**Resourcing**

The majority of University courses and virtually all degrees are financed from the public purse through the HEFCE. It funds work in or through Higher Education institutions at degree level (including HND but not HNC) and above. It also funds NVQs at Levels 4 and above. NVQs in general, however, are largely funded through the FEFC, TECs or Companies and delivered through Colleges of Further Education or private sector training organisations. This split in itself is not facilitative of integration. In this study, for example, the fact that HEFC would not fund level 3 NVQs meant that the Business School was not interested in developing these (funding was available to the University through FEFC but this was considered to be too difficult to be worthwhile by the University Administration). This meant that they were effectively unavailable to the students, even though in some cases they might have been the most appropriate vehicles for development and assessment. 

Ironically if a University chooses to base an award in occupational standards, while the NVQ level of the standard used will generally guide the level of the award, it need not follow automatically. Thus a University validated award made up, amongst other things, of a combination of Level 3 and Level 4 occupational standards could well be at Undergraduate level, or even post-graduate level in HEFC terms.

There is undoubtedly a difficulty in this area that will remain for as long as the funding of Further and Higher Education is split. The problem arises because the split is defined in "academic" terms, whereas NVQs are by definition "vocational" qualifications. An Undergraduate can be "academically" advanced but "vocationally" naïve. Her status is, however, defined by her "academic" programme that in turn renders her ineligible for funding for what might be the most appropriate NVQ. There are two possible ways forward;
undergraduates registered for a first degree could be made eligible for parallel funding on NVQ programmes at any level (in practice 3 & 4 would suffice);

integration and compatibility concentrates on the occupational standards rather than the National Vocational Qualifications.

The advent of higher level skills awards associated with NVQ levels has perhaps added an element of some urgency towards the need for change as, in many cases, particularly in the early parts of their degree, the skill levels reached by graduates may well be below Level 4 in some areas.

Learning And Teaching

The areas of compatibility in terms of learning and teaching are probably far greater than any differences. Again the increasing focus of NVQ programmes on development and of undergraduate programmes on skills has moved the two areas much closer than was originally the case. Thus, for example, NVQ development programmes may use "courses" to deliver underpinning knowledge and understanding, while undergraduate programmes may use competence audits and development plans. There are, of course, significant differences, most notably the pervasive use of large-scale lectures on undergraduate degree.

In recent years undergraduate programmes in many Universities have embraced APEL philosophy and practice with the result that, as is the case with NVQs, students are not required to 'relearn' things they already know. Instead of sitting through a course and taking the assessment at the end they can apply to have their learning from experience (APEL), or learning from a prior certificated source (APCL), recognised as part of their current programme.

There is no general reason, other than perhaps resources, that should inhibit compatibility in this area.
Chapter 11. The Compatibility of Competence Based and Degree Programmes.

Definitions of Purpose

Compatibility in terms of ‘definitions of purpose’ can be examined in two ways. First, the language and terminology in which these are defined in the two types of programme. Secondly, what achievement of the aim or objective means to the student in practice.

The statements of purpose of NVQ programmes are comprised of occupational standards which in turn are voiced in competence terms, whereas those of undergraduate degrees are increasingly defined in terms of learning outcomes (see Chapter 2). The NVQ competences are voiced in terms of “Performance Criteria” which are, as the name suggests, very much things that the candidate has to prove they have done (performed) successfully. These are supported by increasingly specific “Evidence Requirements”, and definitions of underpinning knowledge and understanding. Learning outcomes are generally, on the other hand, supported by “Indicative Content” of the accompanying teaching programme and a reading list for students. While both are output related, the Performance Criteria always refer to behaviours while Learning outcomes might also include definitions of capabilities, understanding and knowledge alongside, rather than in support of behaviour. In practice, while most Performance Criteria could very easily become Learning Outcomes, the reverse is only true for behavioural Learning Outcomes.

The theoretical difference in the two types of definition is probably less than the practical difference. In the main this lies in the level of definition. NVQ Performance Criteria are always extremely detailed and exclusive. The original version of the Management NVQ 4, admittedly with options, occupies a 267-page A4 book. The equivalent Certificate in Management would normally be about a tenth of that size. If there is an equivalence in terms of level of detail then most Learning Outcomes would not stray below Element Level in NVQ terms.
Chapter 11. The Compatibility of Competence Based and Degree Programmes.

The overall conclusion must be that there is nothing inherent in the definitions of purpose for these two types of programme that prevents compatibility, particularly in the way it is normally required – of NVQs with University based programmes.

The methods of assessment used for both NVQs and University based programmes may at first glance appear to be similar. The main NVQ method of assessment is the written portfolio, supported by interview. This is also, increasingly used in University based programmes. NVQs have also long used observation and are increasingly experimenting with what in the University world might be termed presentations and vivas (MCI:1997). The reverse, however, is less true. Examinations in particular, the backbone of University assessment at Undergraduate level, are not an acceptable form of assessment for NVQs.

This superficial compatibility, however, masks considerable deep-rooted differences. These come in two main forms. First, philosophically most forms of “academic” assessment rely, in some way, on sampling the knowledge and understanding of the student. NVQs on the other hand require a census of the competence, and in some cases the knowledge and understanding, of the candidate. The “size” of, and consequent emphasis on, assessment in NVQs is much greater. Secondly, academic assessment focuses on the body of knowledge developed by the student, sometimes directly accessing this, and at other times accessing it indirectly through the performance of tasks. Reference to an accepted body of knowledge is always required. NVQ assessment on the other hand focuses on the performance of task and implies that knowledge and understanding must be present to underpin the successful task performance. Only occasionally, although increasingly, with some higher level NVQs is knowledge and understanding directly assessed.

The methods, and particularly the philosophies, of assessment are where the two types of programme are at their least compatible. There have, nevertheless, been attempts to
develop some form of compatibility through using the same pieces of student work, perhaps slightly modified as the basis of the assessment for both programmes. This approach seeks forms of assessment, notably the written portfolio, that are acceptable to both programmes and develops variants that involve little additional work for the student to render the output acceptable to both. Thus, typically, a student may develop a portfolio for assessment against a NVQ that with some development can be used for assessment on a University programme. This additional work usually involves development of the reflective account or storyboard including explicit reference to, and acknowledgement of, underpinning knowledge and understanding, and severe editing of supporting evidence.

Accreditation

Accreditation of undergraduate degrees comes through the “Charter” of the University granting the degree. The right to award NVQs is granted by QCA (NCVQ at the time of the study) to Awarding Bodies, who in turn licence providers such as Further Education Colleges and private sector training organisations. This has, to some degree, led to Further Education Colleges using Management NVQs at levels 4 and 5 as a way of circumventing the Business Schools’ monopoly of the CM and DMS.

Undergraduate degrees, or rather their component parts, are frequently measured in CATS points which indicate both the level and amount of learning. NVQs are measured in either whole awards or Units. These include statements as to the level of the learning but little as to amount. The original Management standards were a classic example of an award where the Units were widely recognised to be of different “sizes” in that they covered very different amounts of learning. Post-Beaumont Standards will make some effort to standardise the size of Units within sets of awards, but can do little to standardise size between cognate areas.

The levels of learning in both academic and NVQ awards have come in for some criticism in recent years. There have been some debates as to whether there should be more than
Chapter 11. The Compatibility of Competence Based and Degree Programmes.

one "Masters" level, just as there have been many suggestions that NVQ level 5 should be split more subtly into more Levels.

Given these differences and difficulties in accreditation it is difficult to see that a direct 'Tariff' will ever be established between University programmes and NVQs. The most likely course is for expansion of the present arrangements whereby individual Universities and Courses make arrangements to recognise learning from particular NVQs or of particular students. There appears to be little evidence of or demand for the reverse recognition of University based learning in NVQs.

Universities have their own well established quality assurance procedures. These are basically internally run with input and guidance from "externals" and subject to external audit from HEQC. Quality assurance of NVQs is through a system of External Verification of their licensed Centres according to NCVQ guidelines (1997). The Centres themselves are responsible for running a system of Internal Verification, also in accordance with NCVQ guidelines (1997).

Most Awarding Bodies have developed highly bureaucratic forms of quality assurance to deal with their provision, the bulk of which lies at NVQ levels 1-3. They then automatically use these procedures and personnel to verify higher level NVQs in the Universities. If applied rigidly and unsympathetically this can lead to a clash of the two systems. University Business Schools, therefore, formed their 'own' Awarding Body, the Management Verification Consortium, to interpret QCA rules and guidance in a way as 'sympathetic' as possible to their culture and objectives. Some other Awarding Bodies, notably EDEXCEL and City and Guilds have altered their procedures in some cases (notably with the HND) to take account of this possible clash.
It remains to be seen what happens in this area, but at the time of writing the author is aware of several initiatives in their early stages designed to provide more "user friendly" NVQ Quality Assurance procedures for Universities. The pressure for this is obviously for the expansion of NVQs into all sectors of education. The pressure against special arrangements, however, is the current concern for quality generally with NVQs (see for example Smithers 1995; Eraut 1997).

**Conclusions**

The above discussion demonstrates that compatibility can be developed at several levels and in several ways. The diagram below is an attempt to represent the possibilities diagrammatically and the "x" an attempt to plot the Sandwich Year in this study against the criteria. It would be an interesting exercise to plot other programmes on the chart, perhaps facetiously, awarding 'points' for the score on each criteria.

**Fig 11.1 Dimensions of integration of “academic” and “competence” based programmes.**

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There are, however, significant differences between competence and academic programmes, even when the two have moved as close together philosophically as possible.
Chapter 11. The Compatibility of Competence Based and Degree Programmes.

These lie not so much in the way the objectives of a programme are defined or delivered, but in the methods of resourcing, assessment, accreditation and quality assurance. Compatibility, however, is not an all or nothing affair. As the table above demonstrates, it can be achieved at a variety of levels and by a variety of means. The increasing emphasis on the importance of work experience generally for undergraduates and the likely continuing rise in importance of NVQs generally means that there are an increasing number of areas in undergraduate degrees where compatibility could be explored and achieved to the benefit of the student experience.
Chapter 12. The Ideal Sandwich Year Programme.
Chapter 12. The Ideal Sandwich Year Programme.

This Chapter summarises the work of the study by suggesting an ideal revised structure for the Sandwich Year placement. It then proceeds to suggest ways in which future efforts might be directed to further develop the programme.

Introduction.

The discussion of the findings of the study contained in the previous Chapters continually suggested modifications and developments to the Sandwich Year placement programme. These are brought together below in summary form as an outline for a new “ideal” programme. The justification for each measure will be found in the relevant Chapter earlier in this report, mainly Chapters 8-11.

The Assessment of the Sandwich Year Placement

The Sandwich Year placement could be assessed through one or a combination of five methods negotiated between visiting tutor, student and employer/manager. These could be either individually or in combination the:

- Management occupational standards and/or NVQ;
- Functional occupational standards and/or NVQ e.g. personnel, finance or marketing;
- LCGI, based on the MCI Personal Competence Model plus a Project;
- Modern Apprenticeship in Management;
- Other University award based on a learning contract, but possibly using any of the above plus QCA Higher Level Skills and/or negotiated learning claims.
Chapter 12. The Ideal Sandwich Year Programme.

**BABS Degree**

Preparatory programme of Units through first part of BABS degree with:

- series of preparatory skills units to run through each of first three semesters;
- unit content aligned to relevant NVQs wherever possible;
- unit assessments designed to give experience of NVQ style assessments;.

**Student Briefings**

A series of briefings taking place immediately prior to placement designed to address four issues:

- choosing the assessment for the Sandwich Year placement;
- building a portfolio;
- negotiating development and assessment opportunities;
- learning from experience.

**Employer Briefings**

*New employers* - a personal visit from the tutor to negotiate the placement content using relevant standards as a guide to maximise the learning and development possibilities open to the trainee.

*Existing employers* - brief, professionally produced written details of the scheme followed by a tutor originated phone call or e-mail dialogue.

Links with a named tutor for a minimum three year period.
Chapter 12. The Ideal Sandwich Year Programme.

Tutor/Assessor Briefings

Creation of a small team of around 10-12 tutors each responsible for up to 10 placement students.

Student Support

Creation of a CMT system and/or Web-site to act as the central support mechanism.

First visit to student - 4 weeks

- check on student welfare;
- review placement with student, manager and employer;
- concentrate on negotiating learning and development aims with trainee and employer/manager;
- agree learning contract between student, employer/manager and tutor;
- negotiate student assessment method with student and employer / manager.

First recall day - 12 weeks

- check on student welfare;
- peer review and summary of learning and development going on in the placement against learning contracts;
- ‘how can I increase my learning’ exercise;
- peer review of portfolios;
- workshops on writing reflective accounts, evidence gathering, and evidence summary sheets;
- negotiation of assessment contract with student.
**Second Visit - 20 Weeks**

- check on student welfare;
- review of student learning and development against learning contract;
- review of portfolio assembled to date;
- review and confirmation of learning and development contract with student and employer/manager.

**Second recall day - 28 weeks**

- check on student welfare;
- peer review of student learning and development against contracts;
- “what have I learnt exercise”,
- ‘matching’ of work based and University learning;
- portfolio development workshops.

**Final visit - 38 weeks**

- check on student welfare;
- assessment against portfolio of learning and development to date;
- confirmation of learning and development with employer/manager;
- review of placement and confirmation/negotiation of next placement with employer.

**Final recall day - 44 weeks**

- check on student welfare;
- review of student learning and development;
- “what have I learnt exercise”;
Chapter 12. The Ideal Sandwich Year Programme.

- ‘matching’ of work based and University learning;
- preparation for Semester 4
- ‘top-up’ assessment.

Follow-up After the Return to University.

- clear linking of Sandwich Year learning and development to units;
- reflective unit to extract maximum learning from Sandwich Year;
- ‘top-up’ assessment
Chapter 13.

On Going and Further Work.

The action research with the students effectively finished in February 1997. The nature of the study was such, however, that the work and its ramifications for both students and the University carried on beyond that point. The students have not yet (March 1998) sat their finals, and have only just started the search for employment. The Business School has revised its programmes, with some of the changes starting in September 1997 but most the following year. The "new" Sandwich Year has only been implemented on a pilot basis in February 1998. This Chapter briefly describes this ongoing work and summarises the lessons to be learnt from it.

Continuing Developments - April 1997 on

The main themes for continuing development are:

**Student Development**

An investigation as to how the students whose Sandwich learning was structured around the Standards perform in their final three Semesters at University in comparison with others.

**Student Assessment**

Continuing assessment with students who have indicated a desire to demonstrate further competence using part time, vacation or other work (currently one student).

**Student Careers**

A review of the first destinations of the Project students in comparison with others.

**Course Development**

The development of a credit bearing Sandwich Year placement with assessment based around the standards, in particular the personal competence model, and using the LCGI as an award — implemented on a trial basis February 1998.

Three redesigned skills based units will support the Industrial Placement, one taken in each of the first three Semesters. These units are focused on the development of business and studentship skills but their design has taken account of the need to prepare students to get, work in and learn from a Sandwich Year Placement – implemented September 1997.

**Materials Development**

The Sandwich Year Placement unit was introduced on a trial basis in February 1998. It was recognised that the materials used in the study required considerable revision and augmentation for the new scheme to be successful. The aim was to produce a set of professionally produced materials that met the needs of students, employers tutors and the placement unit. These were are currently being prepared and trialled and will be evaluated in 1999.

**Staff development**

It is again an essential requirement of the new Sandwich Year Placement unit that if it is to operate successfully with up to 120 students and a new team of specially selected tutors there will have to be appropriate staff development. The current trial is limited to five “volunteer” staff.

**Computer Mediated Tutoring (CMT)**

A trial with 20 1998/9 Sandwich Year students to test the viability and effectiveness of CMT as a means of supporting the learning and development of students on placement has been started. Five tutors are involved, and all have completed on the School of Post Compulsory Education’s CMT unit (15 credits at level 3). The trial database can be found using a Web browser at “gre-guns2.gre.ac.uk”. Access is password protected. It will go live after Easter 1998.

**The DfEE HEE Development Prospectus Bid**

This study led directly to the preparation of a bid, in July 1997, for £200,000 of DfEE funding over two years to develop work experience placement Units for all students in the Business School, novel means of supporting, assessing and accrediting these, and a
qualification structure for University tutors. The bid was developed in partnership with the University of Glamorgan, the Robert Gordon University Aberdeen, the MCI, CIHE, STEP, BABSIP, and ABS/MVC. It was successful at the initial selection stage but ultimately failed to attract funding. Alternative funding is currently being sought for this work including an application to the Higher Education Regional Development Fund (HERD) from the Government Office for London. The DfEE bid is shown as Appendix 9 to illustrate some of the directions of ongoing work. The partners represent the majority of institutions currently working in this field and the present study generally formed the basis of their willingness to participate in the bid.

The MCI are also currently supporting a joint bid to DfEE for funding to examine the relevance of the “Modern Apprenticeship in Management” to the BABS Sandwich Year, and another bid is in to a different part of the DfEE for funding to examine the use of “virtual classrooms” with the Sandwich Year.
Chapter 14.
Evaluation and Critique.

This final Chapter is an attempt to evaluate the conduct and the findings of the study.

Evaluation

This study could be evaluated in many ways according to many criteria. The most obvious are perhaps:

- the effect on the student experience;
- the impact on student success in the job market;
- the impact on later "lifelong learning" and CPD;
- the effect on the University of Greenwich BABS degree;
- the effect on BABS degrees generally;
- opinion of employers and relevant professional bodies and interest groups;
- opinion of the study in the Academic community.

The fact that the students do not graduate until July 1998 makes it impossible, as yet, to form a judgement against several of these criteria. The effect on the student experience of those involved in the study was generally felt to be positive in both formal and informal evaluation, to such a degree that many of the recommendations have been incorporated into the University of Greenwich BABS degree. These are currently largely at the pilot stage, but there is every hope and commitment to developing the systems to the point where they can be extended to all Sandwich Year students in the Business School. This is particularly important because in two years time, due to developments in the course offer, there will be over 300 Sandwich Year students going out on placement each year.

The wider reception of the research has been positive and favourable, ranging from a mention in the Minister for Higher Education's speech at the launch of the current MCI standards in July 1997, to favourable reactions to conference presentations. As an example, the Institute of Personnel and Development's representative at a recent review of the Institute of Personnel and Development Membership exemptions of BABS students requested copies of the DfEE Project report for distribution to other similar Institute of
Personnel and Development Centres, and mentioned the “interesting work” being carried out on the Sandwich Year as one of the reasons for continuing the approval of the exemption. The preparation of the ultimately unsuccessful bid to the DfEE HEE prospectus in July 1997 was also interesting. This study was used to establish the credibility of the University of Greenwich Business School, and the author, as a partner to a number of organisations whose work in this field is generally highly respected. These organisations have also been willing, even keen, to continue with joint developments in this field. Internally, within the University, the study was accepted by the “Bidding Committee” (that is responsible for vetting all bids for external funding) as the basis of one of four HERD bids (see Chapter 13) against considerable internal competition, and has secured the author “designated researcher” status (two days a week relief from teaching to pursue research in anticipation of contributing to the Research Assessment Exercise).

The ultimate value of the study is, as yet, difficult to judge, however initial assessments appear to be favourable.

**Critique**

The wisdom of hindsight is a wonderful thing. It is interesting to look back at this study and wonder how, if it were to be done again it could be improved. The key central methodology of an action research approach with a sample of students stands up well to the test of hindsight. Given the resources available it is difficult to see what other methodology could have led to greater insight. There are, however, several areas of detail where improvements could have been made. These include:

- co-operation with other Business Schools;
- the identification and development of “controls”;
- the preparation of the students;
- the design of the student experience;
- the use of “other” awards;
- the involvement of employers

Co-operation With Other Business Schools.

In retrospect it would have been of great value to have worked in parallel with colleagues in other Universities to check on the wider applicability of the insights and the initiatives developed. The original bid, and to some extent the linking of the study with this PhD mitigated against this. The practical difficulties of getting the necessary individual and committee support in several Institutions also made the practicality of this scheme questionable.

The Identification And Development Of “Controls”.

The design of the original study drew on the classical experiment in that it envisaged experimental and control groups of students. In practice it was impossible to form any meaningful control in that it was impossible to match the students on the competency programme according to even a relatively simple list of criteria. The fact that those identified as “controls” were not “volunteers” and as such sometimes chose not to participate in the study added to the difficulties. By the time this became clear it was effectively too late to do anything other than gather as much information as possible about what was happening on the “normal” Sandwich Year by ad hoc means.

In retrospect the control group design was perhaps a little naïve. It would have been better to have systematically set about gathering as much data as possible about the existing Sandwich Year from the beginning and using this as the basis for comparison. Fortunately the author’s current and past (as Head of School) positions in the Business School had given him access to a great deal of information that already existed about the Sandwich Year which, judiciously topped-up in this study provided a realistic basis for comparison.

The Preparation Of The Students.

The preparation of the students was somewhat rushed due to the late involvement of the author in the DfEE Project. The author had been involved in the original bid but then became involved in other work until the colleague taking the lead on the Project took maternity leave. The authors “full-time” involvement dates from immediately before the

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Sandwich Year students went out on placement. His colleague handled the briefing of the students and the other pre-placement assessment.

The original design of the Project envisaged a more comprehensive briefing than was given, and the use of a more “user friendly” self audit questionnaire. If these had been carried out and available then perhaps some of the initial confusion of the students found in the early visits could have been avoided.

**The Design Of The Student Experience.**

The forms and procedures used to prompt and monitor learning left a lot to be desired. Again the timing of the funding for the study and the late involvement of the author were major factors in this. More design time before the students went on placement would have allowed for fuller consideration of later procedures. The author would certainly wish to extend the planning stage of any future study.

**The Use Of “Other” Awards.**

It became clear about half way through the study that the MCI NVQs were not going to be an adequate measure of the students learning. It would have been desirable to switch to working with the students towards other, perhaps more appropriate awards at this time. Unfortunately the Business School did not have the necessary validations nor any processes for rapidly obtaining them.

The current Head of School would not allow students to start working towards an Award which was not approved, so experiment in this direction was impossible. Again in retrospect it would have been advisable to set up a wider range of validations in advance of the fieldwork starting. The political and resource situation in the School at the time made this virtually impossible.

**The Involvement Of Employers.**

The study focused on the relationship between tutor and student to the detriment of the involvement of the student’s employer or manager. This was again, perhaps, due to the
focus on NVQs and the relatively late involvement of the author, but later work revealed it would have been interesting to attempt to work with employers from the pre-placement stage i.e. as soon as a student obtained a job.

Reviewing this in hindsight it is interesting to muse on the reasons why it did not happen. Much of the literature suggests that the “mentoring” role of the employer is crucial. However, NVQs, which were the focus of the study, concentrate on the candidate’s relationship with the Advisor/Assessor. This would appear to be one of the key modifications required when using NVQs with Sandwich Year students.

**Conclusion**

The study has been well received and has had a considerable impact on the University of Greenwich. Its wider impact is difficult to judge, but there are some favourable signs that it will lead to changes more generally outside the University. The failure of the bid for development work in related areas for 1998-2000 was a disappointment, but the reaction to ongoing applications has been encouragingly positive, both inside and outside the University.

The study produced some powerful insights and was well conceived overall. The late approval of the funding and the late involvement of the author, however, led to certain problems that could have been avoided with more planning time.
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Bibliography and References


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Appendix 1.
The Business Skills Units.
UNIT DEFINITION

UNIT CODE: ASC: SCHOOL: Finance
Unit Title: Business Skills 1 (Communications)
Unit Co-ordinator: Tony Bysouth
Level: 1 Credit: 15 Subject Group: Business Information Systems
Donor Teaching: Donor School:
Associate College Unit: No
Linked Unit: No

Introduction and Rationale:
This is a core unit that develops basic skills essential for any student on a business related degree course. These skills include study skills, research skills, presentation skills and the use of the formal and informal language of business. Students will also develop computing skills in the context of business communication. The emphasis in this unit is on developing a range of key basic business skills. These skills will be further developed and extended in later units; e.g. Business Modelling & Information Systems and Problem Solving and Communication Skills.

Aims:
This unit aims to develop:

- An understanding of learning and perceptual processes and their implication for study and communication
- A knowledge and understanding of the key information requirements of typical business organisations.
- Skills in the use of a variety of information sources, including library resources and computerised databases, to collect relevant information on a particular business issue.
Appendix 1 – The Business Skills Units.

- Skills in the examination of a variety of qualitative and quantitative information sources for inconsistency and bias.
- Basic communication skills, particularly those related to the production of reports on research findings and the presentation of such findings to small audiences.
- Practical skills in the application of PC software to the analysis and presentation of qualitative and quantitative business data.
- Teamwork and time management skills.

Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this unit students should be able to:

- Make effective use of lectures and seminars for the development of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Work effectively as either an individual or as a member of a team.
- Be aware of personal strengths and weaknesses as a student and of performance
- Write clear and expository essays
- Identify key information requirements related to routine work in the main functional areas of a typical organisation.
- Identify the main data sources available to support research into key trends and issues related to any selected UK industry/sector.
- Use library resources, including computerised databases, to collect, evaluate, analyse and interpret relevant business data to support business research and simple problem solving.
- Be aware of the basic problems associated with working in teams and be able to work effectively as a member of a team.
- Analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources and critically appraise reports on research findings.
- Use a spreadsheet software to produce simple analyses of business data, including tables, charts and diagrams.
- Write summaries of research findings in simple report format using good, plain English.
- Present research findings to a small audience, using appropriate visual aids.
Appendix 1 – The Business Skills Units.

• Understand the basic practical problems associated with the design and implementation of sample surveys of large populations.

Indicative Content:

Analysis of learning style
Elements of communication: barriers and solutions
Essay writing and critical thinking
Effective use of lectures and seminars; note taking
Analysis of the information needs of typical business organisations.
Sources of data, use and abuse, interpretation problems.
Working in teams - problems and solutions.
Analysis and interpretation of business data - basic numeracy and presentation skills.
Basic computing skills, Windows environment and network principles.
Use of spreadsheet software in the analysis and presentation of business data.
Use of word-processing software in business communication. Cutting and pasting between Windows applications.
Introduction to business graphics. Use and abuse of PC graphics software.
Design and implementation of sample surveys. Practical interpretation problems.
Telephone skills, business letters, report writing.
Presentation skills. Use and abuse of visual aids.

Main Learning and Teaching Activities:

This unit uses a mixture of lectures, practical tutorials, tutor-led and student-led computer laboratory sessions and group work on practical case studies. Material on general principles and methodology in business research, learning and communication skills will be included in
Appendix 1 – The Business Skills Units.

lectures. These lectures will make use of video material and computer display equipment to illustrate general ideas and applications.

Tutorials will offer the student the opportunity to practice skills in business research, analysis and interpretation of data and the use of presentation techniques in a simulated business environment. Most of the activities in tutorials will involve working as part of a small team on a series of small case studies. This will be carried out under strict time constraints so that students develop skills in working as a member of a team in a controlled environment.

Students will be strongly encouraged to participate in the analysis and evaluation of skills used by other students within the same tutorial group when presenting their ideas and/or solutions to problems set. This, together with feedback provided by the tutor and the knowledge that their contributions during tutorials are constantly being monitored and assessed by their tutor should encourage students to quickly bring their skills to a satisfactory standard.

Students will be encouraged to develop business writing skills and an independent learning style through a carefully designed set of progressive exercises. This is seen as being part of an ongoing process that continues throughout the degree programme.

This unit will focus initially on study skills. These will be delivered in a ‘wedge’ model, providing a great deal of support for new students and clarifying their expectations. Explicit study skills support will be reduced as the unit progresses and student competence and confidence increase.

Study skills lectures will be followed by seminars which will provide opportunities for self evaluation and practice of skills.
Appendix 1 – The Business Skills Units.

UNIT DEFINITION

Assessment Details:

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Specific Entry Requirements. (Required Pre-requisites, Co-requisites and Non-requisites)

Pre-requisite: Minimum GCSE Mathematics Grade C or equivalent
Appendix 1 – The Business Skills Units.

UNIT DEFINITION

UNIT CODE: ASC: SCHOOL: Finance
Unit Title: Business Skills 2 (Quantitative Methods)
Unit Co-ordinator: Tony Bysouth
Level: 1 Credit: 15
Subject Group: Business Information Technology
Donor Teaching: Donor School: 
Associate College Unit: No
Linked Unit: No

Introduction and Rationale:

This is a core unit, essential to underpin the development and application of quantitative models and information systems in units throughout the degree programme. Knowledge, skills and understanding developed in this unit are directly applicable to core material throughout the remainder of all business pathways. The material in this unit is essential to a wide range of later core and option units e.g. the planning aspects of the core unit Business Strategy, the basis of any unit concerning business forecasting and the analysis component of the final year honours degree project.

Aims:

- To develop practical skills in business modelling necessary to support study of a wide range of units in a business related degree course.
- To develop basic skills in the application of simple quantitative techniques to a range of standard business problems.
Appendix 1 – The Business Skills Units.

- To further develop practical skills in the use of PC software as an aid to business problem solving and presentation of data.
- To further develop communication skills, particularly those connected with the explanation and justification of methodology used in solving business problems.
- To develop an understanding of the basic concepts underlying commonly used models in business practice.
- To develop a basic understanding of the issues involved in developing business systems and the role that business models play in such systems.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit students should be able to:

- Use a logical, structured approach to the solution of a range of simple quantitative business problems.
- Select, calculate and interpret appropriate measures of location and dispersion for a range of typical sets of business data.
- Formulate simple mathematical models from outline descriptions of routine business problems. Manipulate such models, using simple algebraic and graphical methods, in order to generate one or more solutions to business problems.
- Interpret and evaluate solutions and discuss the practical validity of any assumptions made. Explain and justify methodology used in good, plain English.
- Carry out simple sensitivity analyses related to variations in data and/or assumptions underlying any model used.
- Develop and evaluate specific models related to the analysis of compound interest problems and the evaluation of alternative investments.
- Investigate relationships between two business variables using the techniques of regression and correlation.
- Apply simple time series models to business forecasting problems.
Appendix 1 - The Business Skills Units.

- Be aware of the basic issues involved in developing computer systems and in utilising business models in such systems.
- Understand the basic concepts underlying the economic order quantity model and show awareness of the practical shortcomings of this model when applied to real problems.
- Develop simple spreadsheet models as part of the process of obtaining solutions to business problems and use such models to carry out simple sensitivity (what-if) analyses.
- Write reports on solutions to simple case studies involving quantitative business analysis.

Indicative Content:

Measures of location and dispersion.
Introduction to business modelling; logical approach to problem solving.
Simple cost, revenue, profit models, break-even analysis.
Economic order quantity model, effects of discounts on optimum policies.
Simple linear regression models, use and abuse of correlation coefficients.
Smoothing of typical business time-series data; e.g. demand and production.
Use of moving average and trend models for business forecasting.
Application of simple models to compound interest problems, investment appraisal problems.
Design and evaluation of business information systems; e.g. for sales and order processing, demand forecasting and inventory control. Role of business models in computer systems.
Main Learning and Teaching Activities:

This unit uses a mixture of formal lectures, practical tutorials, tutor-led and student-led computer laboratory sessions and group work on practical case studies. Material on basic concepts, general approaches to problem solving, formulation and application of models and techniques used in the manipulation of models will be covered in formal lectures. These lectures will make use of computer display equipment to illustrate general ideas and applications.

Practical tutorials will offer the student the opportunity to tackle practical applications of business modelling techniques with the support of a tutor and to obtain help and guidance where necessary. An optional separate program of mathematics support classes will provide an opportunity for the less able/experienced students to obtain additional help and guidance where necessary.

A small number of simple practical case studies will be used to provide students with an experience of the whole process of practical business problem solving. A more substantial case study will form the basis of assessed coursework.

UNIT DEFINITION

Assessment Details:

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Specific Entry Requirements. (Required Pre-requisites, Co-requisites and Non-requisites)

Pre-requisite: Business Skills (Semester 1). Minimum GCSE Mathematics Grade C or equivalent.

Keytexts: (list information in the table)

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Occurrence Parameters: (specify for each occurrence of the unit)
UNIT DEFINITION

UNIT CODE: ASC: SCHOOL: Finance

Unit Title: Business Skills 3 (Problem Solving)
Unit Co-ordinator: Tony Bysouth
Level: 2
Credit: 15
Subject Group: Business Information Technology
Donor Teaching: Donor School:
Associate College Unit:
Linked Unit:

Introduction and Rationale:

This is a core unit that builds on the content of the Business Skills and Business Modelling and Information Systems units from year one. Business today puts a high premium on problem solving, and communication skills. The unit is dedicated to developing these skills to a level that will support students throughout the remainder of their studies as well as in their careers on graduation.

Aims:

The unit will emphasise the importance of using a wide range of different types of skill and knowledge when attempting to solve business problems in practice. Hence, the unit will include both creative and logical approaches to problem solving and will integrate the use of interpersonal, numerical, technological and communication skills. A particular aim here
is to increase the student's awareness of potential areas of conflict involved in the solution of business problems and to develop skills in the resolution of such conflict.

One of the primary objectives of this unit is to assist in the preparation of students for their early years in business organisations, including industrial traineeships.

In particular, the unit aims to further develop:

- Skills in the use of creative and logical approaches to solving business problems.
- Practical skills related to project management, team work, conflict resolution and routine negotiations.
- Skills related to the selection and professional use of a range of business communication techniques.
- Practical skills related to the effective use of interviews in both job interview and research situations.
- Skills in the analysis, interpretation and presentation of sample survey data.
- Professional skills in the use of word-processing, graphics and presentation software in the preparation of business reports and presentations.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit students should be able to:

- Approach the solution of a range of typical business problems in a sound, thorough and professional manner.
- Use PC software to analyse results from a typical sample survey.
- Write summaries of research findings in simple report format using good, plain English.
Appendix 1 – The Business Skills Units.

- Present research findings in a professional manner to a small audience, using appropriate visual aids.
- Select appropriate methods of communication to be used in typical business situations.
- Use a thorough and professional approach in the application of a wide range of communication skills.

Indicative Content:

- Creative and logical approach to solving business problems.
- Job interviews - objectives, design, practical skills and evaluation/analysis.
- Use and abuse of interviews for collecting business information.
- Professional skills in project management.
- Team work and conflict resolution.
- Presenting a case and basic negotiation skills.
- Professional skills in business communications - face to face, letters, memos, faxes, electronic mail and telephone.
- Selection of appropriate communication methods.
- Professional skills in the selection, design and analysis of tabulations in the analysis of survey data.
- Introduction to basic ideas of statistical inference related to analysis of research data.
- Basic rules of probability applied to problem solving and sampling of populations.
- Professional skills in writing business reports on survey findings.
- Explanation and justification of research methodology and data analysis.
- Presenting research findings - report writing and professional presentation skills.
- Use and abuse of business presentation software.
Main Learning and Teaching Activities:

This unit uses a mixture of formal lectures, practical tutorials, tutor-led and student-led computer laboratory sessions and group work on practical case studies.

Material on general principles and methodology in business research and data analysis together with general instruction on basic business skills will be covered in formal lectures. These lectures will make use of video material and computer display equipment to illustrate general ideas and applications.

Practical tutorials will offer the student the opportunity to practice skills in problem solving and business communication with the support of a tutor. Most of the activities in tutorials will involve working as part of a small team on a series of small role play case studies. This will be carried out under strict time constraints so that students develop skills in working as a member of a team in a controlled environment.

Students will be strongly encouraged to participate in the analysis and evaluation of skills used by other students within the same tutorial group when presenting their ideas and/or solutions to problems set. This, together with feedback provided by the tutor and the knowledge that their contributions during tutorials are constantly being monitored and assessed by their tutor should encourage students to quickly bring their skills to a satisfactory standard.
## UNIT DEFINITION

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### Specific Entry Requirements. (Required Pre-requisites, Co-requisites and Non-requisites)

Pre-requisite: Business Skills, Business Modelling and Information Systems
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<td>Stanton N</td>
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### Occurrence Parameters: *(specify for each occurrence of the unit)*

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*Michael Edmunds*
Appendix 2

The Managing People Unit.
UNIT DEFINITION

UNIT CODE: ASC: 7 SCHOOL: Business and Management
Unit Title: Managing People
Unit Co-ordinator: Mike Edmunds
Level: 2 Credit: 15 Subject Group: Management Studies
Pre-requisites: Business Functions, Managing Organisations

Introduction and Rationale:

The unit prepares students directly for work in or for organisations. It builds on the theoretical and knowledge base of earlier units (Business Functions, Managing Organisations) concerning the general structure and practices of organisations and develops the student's knowledge and understanding and competence in the key skills necessary to survive and prosper in an organisation.

It concentrates on developing those "managerial" skills that will enable the student to both get their own work done and influence others (superiors, subordinates, colleagues and those outside the organisation) to achieve their objectives.

It also explores the varieties of employment practice developing in organisations, the range of employee types emerging and the effects these will have on the future work role of students.
Aims:

By the end of this unit, a student will be able to:

1. manage their own learning and development in a work role.

2. manage themselves in order to achieve their work objectives.

3. influence others in order to enable the student to fulfil their organisational role.

4. operate within the variety of personnel management practices that operate in a successful organisation and the way these are used to manage the performance of the members of organisations.

5. operate within the range of organisational contexts and work roles in which they are likely to operate and the different behavioural requirements of each of these.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit a student will understand and be able to manage:

1. their own learning in a working environment.

2. their own workload in an organisation in order to achieve their agreed objectives.

3. the political nature of organisations, the ways of influencing important others, and the means by which their own power can be increased in any given situation.

4. the role and operation of formal and informal groups and teams in organisations.
Appendix 2 – The Managing People Unit.

5. conflict in organisations and the conduct of negotiations between individuals and groups in the variety of contexts normally found in an organisation.

6. the various methods by which the performance of employees is managed and monitored including performance appraisal, payment systems, motivation and incentive schemes, absence control etc..

7. the motivation of people to work.

8. the systems of employee relations - communication strategies, grievance and disciplinary procedures, employee participation and involvement, dealing with trade unions and collective bargaining, negotiation and consultation, and handling redundancies

9. the basic statutory requirements in employment, including contracts of employment, discrimination law and fair dismissal.

Indicative Content:

1. reflective learning and self development.

2. managing stress including time management.

3. power and influence in organisations.

4. building a strong power base and using influence wisely.

5. the management of conflict.

6. the principles and practice of negotiation.

7. the role and performance of groups and teams.

8. being effective in meetings and committees.
9. the measurement and management of performance.

10. increasing motivation and performance.

11. the legal framework of employment.

12. the industrial relations context of employment

UNIT DEFINITION

Assessment Details:

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Specific Entry Requirements. (Required Pre-requisites, Co-requisites and Non-requisites)

Business Functions, Managing Organisations.
Appendix 2 – The Managing People Unit.

Unit is validated for:

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<td>0-201-54448-2</td>
<td>Evenden, R and Anderson</td>
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<td>Making the most of People</td>
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<td>Improve your People Skills</td>
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Appendix 3

The New Sandwich Year Unit.
Introduction and Rationale:

The Industrial Traineeship provides the student with the opportunity to spend Semesters 4 and 5 of her degree in an industrial placement in order to consolidate and develop the learning of the first three semesters and build a practical knowledge of the way industry works. This in turn provides a foundation for the final three semesters.

The unit builds on all 12 units taken in the first three semesters but is particularly supported by the Business Skills 1-3 Units, as these units are designed to develop the skills, capabilities and competences necessary for immediate successful performance in the workplace.

The experience gained and skills and knowledge developed are used in all Semester 6 to 8 units. They are, however, of particular relevance to the Project where past experience shows that the Traineeship provides the inspiration and/or source material for a substantial number of students. In other units the Traineeship experience may be fed in through a variety of mechanisms ranging from seminar presentations to general comments based on the Student’s experience.
Appendix 3 – The New Sandwich Year Unit.

The student will normally complete a minimum of 40 weeks paid employment (including normal periods of paid holiday), of which at least 30 must be continuous. It is the student’s responsibility to find a suitable placement although assistance is provided in CV and interview preparation through the Business Skills 3 unit. The staff of the Industrial Traineeship Unit also provide interview appointments for some students.

The students’ learning and development is facilitated and monitored by a work-based supervisor and nominated University Tutor. The University Tutor is responsible for the satisfactory conduct and outcome of the Traineeship, liaison on all matters between the employer and the University and the pastoral care of the student. The Traineeships as a whole are administered and co-ordinated by the Industrial Traineeship Unit.

There are two essential parts to any traineeship that are encapsulated in the Aims and Learning Outcomes of this Unit. The first, the development of skills, capabilities and competences is assessed through a portfolio of evidence that demonstrates the full range of activities developed during the Traineeship. This will be an event based portfolio that will provide evidence of the major tasks undertaken and skills developed by the student during the Traineeship. It will also include the learning diary and journal kept by the student, the monthly reports and the tutors responses, and the preparation carried out for the tutors visits and recall days. The student will analyse this portfolio in relation to, and ultimately compare it against the current MCI Personal Competence Model. The student will be expected to demonstrate competence against the majority of the Competences and insight and understanding in their reflections on their own performance and the opportunities, limitations and constraints imposed by their employing organisation.

The second is a report of a project undertaken by the student where they apply the knowledge and understanding developed in the early part of their degree and the Sandwich Year to a real situation in their work. In ideal circumstances this is a real project with real outcomes. If this is not possible then a report will be agreed between student, tutor and employer that while unlikely to be implemented will be based on a real problem or
situation. This would normally be presented to the employer and her/his comments included as part of the assessment.

All assessments will be made on a percentage basis in accordance with University regulations.

The opportunity has been taken to offer dual accreditation to all students who successfully complete the Traineeship. In the majority of cases this will take the form of Liscentiateship of the CGLI. In a small number of cases however it may alternatively result in the acquisition of relevant NVQ units from the MCI, Personnel and Development, Small Business, Marketing, Business Administration, or other relevant Standards. The determining feature will be the nature of the placement, the learning achieved by the student and the student's desire for the qualification they perceive as relevant to their future.

The portfolio and project report may also allow the demonstration of competence against units of NVQs in a variety of occupational areas. The student’s tutor will advise the student on such possibilities and it will be the student’s choice as to whether or not they pursue such an award.

Successful completion of the unit is a requirement for the award of the BABS degree. In exceptional cases the unit may be awarded on an through APEL to students who complete a portfolio on the basis of past and/or current work experience, or on an APL basis to students who have completed a similar Traineeship and can demonstrate the achievement of equivalent learning outcomes.
Appendix 3 – The New Sandwich Year Unit.

Aims:

1. To develop the skills, capabilities and competences necessary for satisfactory performance in the workplace in the students chosen specialism.

2. To develop the students knowledge of their subject through the application their University based knowledge and understanding to real situations.

3. To enable the student to become familiar with and successfully apply the techniques of reflective learning and self-development required by managers for lifelong learning and continuing professional development.

Learning Outcomes:

On completion of the unit the student will:

1. Have developed appropriate skills, capabilities and competences to operate successfully as a junior manager or functional specialist in an organisation.

2. Understand the relationship between theory and practice and be capable of applying appropriate knowledge and theory in a way that improves practice.

3. Understand the principles and practices of reflective learning and self development, and be capable of applying these to his/her own learning and development.

Indicative Content:

The nature of Traineeships will vary considerably in terms of content, subject coverage, level of responsibility and level of employer supervision. They all, however, offer numerous opportunities to learn and Trainees invariably learn much from their time in
industry. The aim of this unit and its pre-requisites is to ensure that the Trainees are capable of making the most of the opportunities presented to them, learning as much as possible from each opportunity.

Traineeships generally have been found to fall into two types, general management traineeships and specialist functional traineeships. The general management traineeships at their best give students the opportunity to learn and demonstrate a wide range of capabilities and competences such as those described in the current MCI Standards at Levels 3 and 4. The specialist functional traineeships usually provide more specific experience in marketing, personnel or finance roles. Students choose the type of traineeship the feel most appropriate to their future career. Both provide relevant and valuable learning experiences.

Some traineeships, for a variety of reasons, fall short of the ideal in terms of the breadth, level and appropriateness of learning opportunities. The vast majority of these, however, still provide adequate opportunities for trainees to learn. In some, unfortunately, the traineeship is so impoverished that the trainee has to withdraw. Trainees and tutors are briefed as to the point at which this should occur and prompt withdrawal and reassignment is usually possible.

The situation whereby all traineeships are vetted and provide similar experiences is not possible. There will always be variations in the quality and range of experiences offered. This unit therefore adopts the approach that students must be uniformly prepared to learn from their traineeships and uniformly supported through them. This, together with limited vetting of the traineeships themselves, is seen as the way to ensuring the quality of the student experience.
Main Learning and Teaching Activities:

Trainees are largely responsible for their own learning and development through the Traineeship. They receive preparation through the first three semesters from all units in terms of subject knowledge, and the Business Skills 1-3 units in terms of skills capabilities and competences.

The trainee is expected to keep a learning diary which is a daily record of the activities and achievements undertaken. The form of this diary will vary between traineeships but it is essentially a contemporaneous record that is available to the tutor through the CMT system. She is also expected to keep a learning journal which is a weekly reflection on her development over the previous week. Again this is available to the tutor through the CMT system. These are summarised by the student in her monthly reports that are submitted initially to her employer for comment and then with response to the employers comments to the tutor. The tutor will be expected to respond within 3 working days.

Each trainee will receive three visits from their University tutor at around weeks 4, 28 and 36 of their Traineeship. These visits will be used to:

- check on the welfare of the Trainee;
- draw up specific learning contracts agreed with each trainee and their employer;
- advise trainee and employer as to how the contracted outcomes may be achieved;
- check on progress towards achievement of the outcomes;
- advise on portfolio development;
- liaison with employer over future placements.

The trainee and employer will be expected to review the trainees diary, journal and reports in advance of the tutors visits and rate the trainees development against both the learning contract and a predetermined checklist.

Each trainee will also attend three “recall” days at the University at around weeks 12, 28, and 44 of the Traineeship. These days will be used to:
Appendix 3 – The New Sandwich Year Unit.

- check on the welfare of the Trainee;
- review and develop the Trainees’ understanding and practice of reflective learning and self-development;
- review the learning and development going on in the Traineeships;
- review the operation of the learning contracts;
- review and develop the Trainees’ practice with in portfolio based learning and assessment.

The trainees will be asked to review their performance in work and bring in specific examples of the work undertaken as a basis for these days.

The materials prepared for the tutor visits and the recall days will be submitted as a part of the students skills portfolio.

The CMT system will be used to provide both peer and tutor support to trainees. It will also be used to maintain contact with employers. Group conferences will be set up for groups of students with related interests, the trainees as a whole, the employers, tutors and the trainees that are the responsibility of an individual tutor. It will greatly ease administration and facilitate learning.
UNIT DEFINITION

Assessment Details:

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<th>Words Length</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Outline Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Skills Portfolio</td>
<td>6,000 max</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>A portfolio of evidence demonstrating the skills developed during the Traineeship, and the students reflections on that process</td>
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<td>Project Report</td>
<td>6,000 max</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>A report of at least one substantial project where the student was required to apply their business knowledge to a real work situation</td>
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It is intended that the portfolio submitted to enable assessment against the outcomes of this unit should also satisfy the requirements for Liscentiateship of the CGLI, or at least one unit of the MCI, TDLB, Marketing, Small Firms, Business Administration, Finance or other appropriate Standards.

Specific Entry Requirements:
(Required Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and Non-requisites)

Successful completion of 12 units in Semesters 1-3.
Appendix 3 – The New Sandwich Year Unit.

Unit is validated for:

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<th>Pathway Code</th>
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Keytexts:

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<td>0 330 30229 9</td>
<td>Adair J</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Effective Time Management</td>
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<td>0 7126 5087 3</td>
<td>Fischer R et al</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Getting to Yes</td>
<td>Books McGraw</td>
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<td>0 07 707460 2</td>
<td>Megginson D</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Self Development - A Facilitators Guide</td>
<td>Hill (UK)</td>
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<td>Pedler M</td>
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<td>0 00 499005 6</td>
<td>Whetton D et al</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Developing Management Skills for Europe</td>
<td>Harper Collins</td>
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Appendix 4.

Self Audit Questionnaire.
Appendix 4 – Self Audit Questionnaire.

The full questionnaire was printed over 26 pages, with each element having its own page. In each case space was left for the student to write on the form, the first two questions occupying approximately a quarter of a page each and the last half a page.

Some early questions are reproduced below to give the reader an idea of the structure of the questionnaire. The questions need to be related to the “original” Management occupational standards.

Unit 1. MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE SERVICE AND PRODUCT OPERATIONS.

ELEMENT 1.1
What do you do to make sure your section meets its quality standards?

What knowledge do you need to ensure you work to the standard?

What evidence can you provide?

-----------------------------------------------

ELEMENT 1.2

What do you do to make the work environment as good as possible for productive work?

What knowledge do you need to ensure you work to the standard?

What evidence can you provide?
UNIT 2 CONTRIBUTE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE IN SERVICES, PRODUCTS AND SYSTEMS.

ELEMENT 2.1
What sort of contribution do you make when changes are being considered to what your department does and the way it does it?

What knowledge do you need to ensure you work to the standard?

What evidence can you provide?

ELEMENT 2.2
What do you do to make changes to what your department does and the way it does it?

What knowledge do you need to ensure you work to the standard?

What evidence can you provide?
Appendix 5.
Evidence
Summary Sheet.
# EVIDENCE SUMMARY

A brief description of the evidence:

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<th>Title of Evidence</th>
<th>Unit/Element Claimed</th>
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<td>Michael Edmonds</td>
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Appendix 6. Evidence Cross Referencing Form.
## EVIDENCE CROSS REFERENCING FORM

**Unit Number**

**Element of Competence Number:**

**Element:**

**Title:**

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Michael Edmonds

Page 422
Appendix 7.
Project/Portfolio Progress Report.
PROJECT/PORTFOLIO PROGRESS REPORT

Candidates Name: .............................................................................

Name & Stage of Programme: ............................................................

Date: ......................... Time: ......................................................

Points Discussed:

Actions Agreed:

Date of Next Meeting: .................................................................

Supervisor Signature: .................................................................

Candidate Signature: .................................................................
Appendix 8.
1995 DfEE Business Schools Initiative Funding Proposal.
SUMMARY:
This project aims to test the appropriateness of the MCI Occupational Standards for Supervisory Managers at NVQ Levels 3 and 4 ("the standards ") and the MCI Personal Competence Model for sandwich year students on the B.A. Business Studies undergraduate degree. It further aims to map the Knowledge and Understanding specifications and Assessment requirements of the standards and the MCI Personal Competence Model to the B.A. Business Studies curriculum and identify areas where co-teachability and dual accreditation might be possible.

The intended outputs are:

an academic curriculum which has integrated within it competence based standards.

students able to demonstrate both occupational and personal competence developed during their study and 'sandwich' time and from other activities.

identification of comparability, co-teachability opportunities and thus possibilities for dual-accreditation of both the Knowledge and Understanding and the Units and Elements of the standards during - and after - the B.A. Business Studies degree.
Appendix 8 - 1995 DfEE Business Schools Initiative Funding Proposal

Costs: £65,319.42

PROPOSER: The University of Greenwich Faculty of Business
Woolwich Campus
Riverside House
Beresford Street
Woolwich
London SE 18 6BU

Rationale
The aim of this project is to enable undergraduate students on the B.A. Business Studies sandwich year to be accredited with Units and Elements of the MCI Occupational Standards for Managers at NVQ Level 3 and 4, the standards and the MCI Personal Competence Model. It is anticipated that much of the competence based evidence will be developed during the sandwich year but the standards need to be fully integrated within an academic programme and must therefore be 'mapped' to the academic curriculum. The purpose of this mapping is to identify areas where co-teachability, and thus possibilities for dual-accreditation, would be available subject to alterations in the delivery and assessment methodologies of the academic Units. This would then enable students to develop Portfolios of evidence of competence and relevant Knowledge and Understanding and Records of Achievement during the entire 4 years of their degree. The evidence would be made up of a combination of relevant Knowledge and Understanding evidence, simulation evidence generated during their period of academic study, competence based evidence from their sandwich year placement and other work experience, membership of voluntary organisations and various other activities. It is expected that students will be able to demonstrate competence against many of the Units and Elements of the standards. Where a student is able to develop only the relevant Knowledge and Understanding evidence, then opportunities can be created for them to develop competence post degree. This
would serve to inform more employers about the advantages of a competence based management development system and contribute to the concept of the 'life long learner'.

**METHODOLOGY**

There are two parts of this project, both running concurrently:

**Part 1**

Anticipated start time: January 1996. Students go on sandwich year placements from February 1996. If project commenced earlier, then more briefing time for both students and employers would be available.

1) A pilot group of students to be invited to participate in the project. A current project funded by The Enterprise in Higher Education initiative, which aims to test whether the Customer Care Standards are appropriate for sandwich year students, has shown a high level of interest and support for initiatives such as this.

2) Students and host employers to be briefed on the project and the standards.

3) Students assigned an NVQ advisor.

4) Competence audits to take place with cohort to identify:
   - areas of current competence and evidence that can be generated
   - areas where the placement can be used to develop competence and thus learning contract can be negotiated with student, host employer and student's advisor
   - areas where only relevant Knowledge and Understanding can be generated.

5) Students visited by their NVQ advisor on a 4-6 week basis and evidence developed.
6) Students develop Portfolios of evidence according to The University of Greenwich Faculty of Business Guidelines. These will consist of a range of evidence generated from the placement and academic study and other activities. In addition, Reflective Narratives developed from Models by Kolb and Schon are used so that the students have the opportunity to 'take 2 steps back' - 'Meta Competence' - and examine the nature of their competence, how it was achieved, using what particular Knowledge and Understanding and how this was developed and obtained.

Portfolios submitted for assessment February 1997 on the students' return from sandwich year placement. (THIS TIMESCALE IS PROPOSED BECAUSE OF THE DEMAND OF THE EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT PORTFOLIOS WILL CONTINUE TO BE DEVELOPED DURING THE STUDENTS' REMAINING TIME OF THEIR DEGREE AND POST GRADUATION).

Part 2
Anticipated start time: January 1996.

A preliminary mapping of "the standards" and The MCI Personal Competence Model to the Academic Units of the B.A. Business Studies degree. A list of proposed areas to be drawn up where co-teachability and therefore dual accreditation is possible subject to alterations to the delivery and assessment methodologies of the Academic Units.

Discussion of draft proposals with Dean and Heads of School.
Discussion of revised proposals with all Unit Leaders and Unit Tutors and Subject Group Heads to discuss the practicalities of integrating "the standards" within the Units.
Proposals for Re-validation of the B.A. Business Studies degree Units to fully integrate within them "the standards".

**Measurable Outcomes**

Approximately 15 students with Portfolios of evidence capable of assessment against "the standards".

The B.A. Business Studies degree mapped against "the standards" and the MCI Personal Competence model

Areas of co-teachability and dual assessment opportunities identified

Academic staff development with approx. 55/60 staff to enable them to consider the benefits of a competence based system of assessment and how that might improve the assessment methodologies of the Academic Units.

Proposal for reviewing the B.A. Business Studies degree so that the standards and the MCI Personal Competence Model are integrated within it and opportunities for dual assessment are available.

**Timetable**
The project is made up of two parts running concurrently. Part 1 is the visits to students on sandwich year to enable them to develop Portfolios of evidence against the standards. Part 2 is the mapping of the academic curriculum with the standards and the MCI Personal Competence Model.

**Part 1**
( Anticipating that the project will commence in February 1996 but preferring a start in the autumn of 1995)
Appendix 8 – 1995 DfEE Business Schools Initiative Funding Proposal

September 1995 - February 1996
Choice of pilot group of students (approx. 15), briefing of students, competence audits, matching placements to student requirements.

February 1996 - April 1996
Briefing of host employers and first visit to students on placement.

April 1996 - February 1997
Visits to students on placements to enable them to develop Portfolios of evidence demonstrating their competence against the standards and the MCI Personal Competence Model.

February 1997
Portfolios presented for interim assessment against the standards.

Whilst the life span of the project as envisaged by The Employment Department is one year it is anticipated that students will continue to develop their Portfolios during the remaining time they have of their degree and indeed post graduation.

Part 2
September 1995 - February 1996
Preliminary mapping of the standards to the Academic Units and presentation of draft proposals on co-teachability and dual assessment.

February 1996 - April 1996
Draft proposals presented and discussed with Dean of Faculty and Heads of School and Steering Group.

Michael Edmunds
April 1996 - December 1996
Revised proposals discussed with Unit leaders and Unit tutors and recommendations made on alterations of delivery and assessment methodologies to ensure dual accreditation.

January - February 1997
Proposals for revisions to the B.A. Business Studies degree Units submitted to Dean of Faculty.

Dissemination
It is anticipated that the project findings would normally be disseminated in the following ways:

- An academic paper in the relevant and appropriate journal.

- Open seminars and workshops making use of the ABS, MCI, MVC and SEEC Networks

- Formal staff development workshops within the University to academic peers. (Polly Carter is Staff Development Manager responsible for the Management Development of University staff - academics and support staff alike.)

- Dissemination through Local TEC Networks - Solotec and Kent TEC both of which have expressed interest in being kept informed of the progress The University continues to make in the area of dual accreditation and CATS for NVQ'S.

Final report to be presented to the University's Academic Council.
Key Performance Indicators

- Approximately 15 students returning from sandwich year placement with Portfolios of evidence developed against the standards and the MCI Personal Competence Model which are capable of assessment.

- The B.A. Business Studies academic curriculum mapped against the standards and the MCI Personal Competence Model.

- Identification of areas of comparability, co-teachability and opportunities for dual accreditation.

- Staff development with approx. 55 academic staff to discuss ways of enabling dual accreditation and benefits of competence based assessment criteria for academic methodologies.

- Document containing proposal for re-Validating the B.A. Business Studies degree to enable it to become a dual accreditation programme giving opportunities for students to achieve both academic units and NVQ Units during their period of academic study, during their sandwich year placement and post graduation.
Appendix 9.

The Accreditation of Work Experience in Business Degrees.

Aims of Project

To provide every undergraduate student (full and part time) in the participating Business Schools with the opportunity to include a work based learning module/unit in their degree.

To develop models for the incorporation of part-time and vacation work based learning into Business Degrees.

To improve the quality and "depth" of the learning achieved through work experience: recognise and accredit all the learning achieved by each student: and where the learning is at an appropriate level have this influence the final degree classification.

To develop methods of using computer mediated tutoring (CMT) and the Internet to provide cost-effective methods of supporting students in work based learning.

To develop methods of accreditation and certification that clearly articulate the nature and extent of undergraduate work based learning to employers.

To increase the participation of employers in, and the benefits they derive from, supporting and assessing the work based learning of undergraduate Business Degree students.
Objectives

Improve the outcomes of work based learning for the student, employer and University by;

1. using Occupational Standards, Vocational Qualifications and supporting credit bearing modules/units to provide, assess and accredit work based learning in Business Studies Degrees, and thereby provide a clear and recognised "transcript" of the learning of each student.

2. developing new and innovative means of support for the work experience learner in particular utilising the possibilities of "Groupware" and the Internet for Computer Moderated Tutoring (CMT), peer support and tutoring, and assessment.

3. ensuring the maximum use of employer based procedures for evaluating and developing employees (eg appraisal) in the development and assessment of work based learning.

4. developing assessment methodologies that allow for the dual assessment of "evidence" from work based learning against both academic and vocational criteria in order to capture all the learning from the work experience.

5. designing and implementing training programmes and accompanying awards for University tutors and employer mentors involved in providing work based learning.

6. collaborating with MCI, MVC, CIHE, STEP and local TECs to develop new collaborative approaches with both large organisations and SMEs to ensure maximum utilisation of recent developments such as alternative approaches to Vocational
Qualification assessment, in-company assessment of Vocational Qualifications and IIP.

7. using and developing the Business Studies Discipline Network (BIZNET 2000) technology to draw in the widest possible support for the Project and provide a forum for the identification and dissemination of good practice.

8. securing the recognition of credits earned through work based learning in the CATS and degree regulations of the participating Universities, thereby providing a model for other Universities' Business Schools and other Faculties.

### Relevance of the Proposed Work to the Theme

Periods of work experience are currently included in many undergraduate programmes. Research shows that at their best such experiences provide an extremely powerful learning experience for the student. Practice is, however, far from uniform and placements are often unsatisfactory from the students', Universities' and employers' points of view in terms the work carried out by the student, the learning that results from that work, and its assessment and recognition.

Students are also increasingly coming to University with work experience, and working while in University both part-time during their periods of study and full-time in vacations. Little attempt has been made so far to incorporate learning from this work experience into undergraduate degrees, although vacation placements, such as those organised by STEP, have long been recognised as beneficial to the student.

If work based learning is to fulfil its potential as a learning and teaching methodology then students, Universities and employers must learn to use it better. Students must be taught to learn better from experience in order that they may start and later continue on the road
to lifelong learning. Universities must develop new learning and teaching and assessment methodologies, ensure their staff are competent in their use, and accept the resultant learning in terms of both academic credit and as playing an important part in determining degree classification. New awards need to be developed jointly by Universities, employers and Awarding Bodies that assess and demonstrate the appropriate skills, capabilities and competences in work experience learners and their "teachers". Employers must become more aware of the potential of work experience students and the way they can both get most out of, and best support, the students in both the short and long term.

Research carried out by DfEE, MCI, BIZNET 2000, CIHE, STEP, BABSIP, and the University of Greenwich amongst others, clearly shows that:

- work experience is a valuable learning experience for graduates generally, and in particular in preparing them for permanent employment;
- the quality of undergraduate learning in particular is improved by integrating (before, during and after the placement) the work experience into the degree programme;
- undergraduates are not natural "reflectors" and have to be taught to, and supported in, learning from experience;
- students who develop skills as reflective learners can use these as a basis for "lifelong learning";
- while a lot is known about the theory behind devices such as the diaries, logs and portfolios that are used to support work based learning, far less is known about good practice in their use;
- staff both in Universities and employing organisations do not always understand the ways in which to best support the experiential learner;
- staff are not always aware of developments that have proved successful elsewhere;
- only limited use is made of peer support, and even more restricted use of peer assessment;

- existing awards often "miss" or discount much of the learning that goes on during work experience;
- little use is made of employer practice in the evaluation of employees in the assessment of work based learning, and little new practice has been forthcoming to take advantage of developments such as IIP and TQM;
- dual accreditation of "evidence" for both academic credit and NVQ Competence is currently "problematic";
- Universities' reluctance towards Vocational Qualifications has been transferred over to occupational standards restricting their use in programme design;
- work based learning, even when accredited, is rarely recognised in final degree classifications;
- employers find it difficult to compare the work based learning of different students from the qualifications currently used to accredit it;
- University/employer partnerships in training and other matters can improve the effectiveness of staff and thereby the competitiveness of organisations;
- little consideration has been given to the use of IT based developments using groupware products such as Lotus Notes, First Class and Microsoft Outlook through the Internet or otherwise to support the work based learner.

This proposal seeks to address all these issues.

Methodology

Year 1

It is anticipated the Project will run for two years from 1st February 1998 to 31st January 2000

Set up the Project Steering Committee comprising representatives from participating Universities, DfEE, SOLOTEC, TECs local to participating Universities, at least one large employer, at least one SME or representative, MCI, MVC, ABS, CIHE, BABSIP, STEP, and 2 student representatives.

Appoint Research Fellow (0.75) and Project Administrator/ IT Developer (initially part-time then later full time) for two years (at the University of Greenwich). This is likely to be a Sandwich Year student from a Computing Degree who would work part-time from February to July, full-time for one year, and then part-time again for the remainder of the Project. This meets both the anticipated needs of the Project and the likely availability of the student.

Appoint Project Manager (0.4) in each of the two partner Universities.

Identification of at least 10 employer partners for each University(Project Managers, CIHE, STEP, local TECs together with Research Fellow). The involvement of CIHE’s 50 employer partners, STEP and TEC databases and contacts will be crucial to the success of this stage.

Evaluation and purchase of "Groupware". Training of key staff.
Evaluation, acquisition and adaptation of existing good practice, including particularly building on the STEP model, and using distance learning staff development programmes and existing units/modules from other Universities.

Review of full and part-time degree requirements to ensure possibility of all students being able to incorporate work-based learning as a part of their degree. Development of appropriate documentation and validations as necessary at year end.

Development of models of good practice amongst partner Universities and employers for validation as appropriate units/modules at year end. (Project Managers, local employers, consulting organisations and Research Fellow)
(Target to develop modules/units that will involve at least 10 staff, 20 students, and 10 employers in each of 3 Universities)

Development and validation of at least two work based learning units/modules in each University. (Project Managers, Research Fellow and local employers, with assistance from consulting organisations).

Consideration of STEP style work based learning modules/units for students wishing to incorporate part-time and/or vacation work based learning into their degrees.

Development and validation of a Sandwich Year Vocational Qualification in each University based in MCI and/or other occupational standards. MVC to be likely Awarding Body. (Project Managers, local employers, local TECs, MCI, MVC, CIHE, STEP and Research Fellow)

Development and validation of "Work Experience Tutor" and "Work Experience Mentor" qualifications jointly with Awarding Body (MVC) - possibly partly based in training and development standards, and probably using similar assessment methods to those proposed for the work based learners.

Staff development centrally with 15 key staff, 5 from each University (3 x 2 day events spread over the year) (Research Fellow + consultant organisations) - supported by CMT.

Staff development locally with 10 further staff from each University and at least 10 employer mentors (2 x 1 day events at each University) (Research Fellow, Project Managers and employers) - supported by CMT.

Identification and/or training of appropriate Vocational Qualification Advisor/Assessors amongst University and employer staff.

Appointment of Independent Evaluator.

End of Year Conference of all involved (including representative students) to compare practice and make interim evaluation. Report to be published using BIZNET 2000 technology and other appropriate Web sites. Report to be considered by appropriate committees in each University, employers and Governing Councils of consulting organisations.

5 conference presentations and papers to be prepared for summer and autumn 1999.

**Year 2**

Piloting of units/modules in each University with an average of 10 students per unit/module. (Project Managers)

Piloting of Sandwich Year Vocational Qualifications with at least 10 students in each University. (Project managers)

Staff development with at least 10 staff in each University, and 10 local employer mentors. (Research Fellow, Project Managers, consulting organisations and local employers)

At least 5 staff in each University to achieve the "Work Experience Tutor" Award.

At least 5 employer mentors working with each University to achieve the "Work Experience Mentor" Award.

University staff briefings through ABS, MVC and BABSIP events and BIZNET 2000 technology. (Research Fellow, Project Managers and employers)

Employer briefing sessions provided through MCI, CIHE, STEP and TECs. (Research Fellow, Project Managers and local employers with relevant organisations' staff)

End of Project Conference of all involved (including representative students) to compare practice and complete evaluation

Evaluation of Pilots. (Research Fellow, Project Managers and local employers with independent evaluator.)

Completion of Final Report. (University of Greenwich with all partners)

Preparation of 5 conference presentations/papers for summer and autumn 2000.
The section above on "Relevance of Proposed Work to Theme" outlined the relationship of the proposed bid to existing work, and shows that it is largely designed to fill in gaps in current knowledge and understanding. It will however utilise and/or develop the following work:

- distance learning materials for staff development with University tutors and employer mentors (eg Universities of Middlesex and Portsmouth);
- BABSIP work on awards for work experience tutors and mentors;
- CIHE's 50 employer partners;
- CIHE projects on Work Experience and Key Skills in Work Placements;
- the STEP model for Work Experience Placements, including the student “Skill Tracker” and Employer Handbook;
- ABS's and BIZNET 2000's research and development work on the BABS curriculum;
- current work on the nature of “graduateness” and the way work based learning can best be incorporated into this;
- experience with Vocational Qualifications, the use of occupational standards, portfolios and dual accreditation of the partner Universities;
- University of Greenwich DfEE project on the use of competence in the assessment of the Sandwich Year;
- Liverpool John Moores University use of the CGLI in the assessment of the Sandwich Year;
- University of Glamorgan pilot study on the use of MCI NVQ 3 in the Sandwich Year;
- Robert Gordon University developments in the assessment of the Sandwich Year;

- University of Greenwich work on the use of CMT and groupware to support work experience students;
- local TEC employer databases and studies on the impact of IIP;
- MCI and NCVQ developments in the assessment of Vocational Qualifications;
- all relevant work as identified in the recent review of work based learning in higher education (Brennan and Little 1996).

**Expected Outcomes**

1. three Business Schools where every student full and part time will have the possibility of including credit from work based learning in their degree, and where the learning is at an appropriate level, having it influence their degree classification;

2. a methodology for joint employer/academic assessment of work based learning sufficiently robust to satisfy 1. above;

3. a model approach defined in terms of stages, roles and activities to securing and maintaining the involvement of both large organisations and SMEs in work experience placements;

4. a development of the STEP model that facilitates the support and assessment of work based learning from part-time and vacation work;

5. a CIHE best practice guide for employers on supporting and assessing work based learning;

6. "Work Experience Tutor" and "Work Experience Mentor" Awards, and accompanying staff development programmes;

7. a Vocational Qualification or NVQ, based in occupational standards and/or related skills, that accredits the Sandwich Year and/or other learning work based learning of undergraduates;

8. at least 6 validated modules/units for the development and assessment of work based learning within undergraduate programmes;

9. support mechanisms and assessment strategies for the above units/modules making the best possible use of developments in "Groupware" and the Internet;

10. 15 University staff with a "Work Experience Tutor" award;

11. 15 employers’ staff with a "Work Experience Mentor' award;

12. 60 students who will have been through and been assessed on a validated work experience unit;

13. 30 students that will have achieved a Vocational Qualification based on their Sandwich Year or other substantial work based learning;

14. a report evaluating the effectiveness of the piloted work experience modules/units and qualifications;

15. staff development with 30 University staff;

16. briefing of 100 University senior staff;

17. briefing of 100 employers;

18. 10 conference presentations and/or papers.
Potential for Dissemination

The bidding partners are in a particularly strong position to ensure effective dissemination of the results of the Project.

The Association of Business Schools (ABS) will use its annual programme of Conferences to publicise the interim findings of the project and hold a Conference on work based learning following the completion of the project at which the findings would be presented. A copy of the final report will be sent to all Deans of Business Schools who will be offered a briefing on its contents. All Business Degree Course Leaders will also be sent a copy of the report and an invitation conference of Course Leaders held to discuss the findings and products. ABS will also ensure inclusion of the findings in any Codes of Practice that may be prepared for their membership in this area.

BIZNET 2000 technology will be used to publish the interim and full reports together with examples of good practice. It will also provide a discussion forum for interested parties, the results of which will again be published on its Web site. Examples of good practice from throughout the discipline network will also be sought through questionnaires and other devices posted on the BIZNET site.

The Management Verification Consortium (MVC) is the Awarding Body arm of the ABS and is approved to accredit Vocational Qualifications in all business and management areas. It is essentially a co-operative venture set up by the Business Schools to facilitate the development of Vocational Qualifications amongst their membership. It will promote the new Vocational Qualifications for both students and staff through its newsletter, network of external verifiers and conference programme.

The British Association of Business Studies Industrial Placements (BABSIP) will publicise the work and outcomes of the project through its twice yearly conferences and will include relevant findings in its Codes of Practice. It will also promote the "Work Experience
Tutor" and "Work Experience Mentor" awards to its membership in response to their frequently expressed need for qualifications in this area.

The Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) will call a meeting of its membership (50 employers) to discuss the findings of the report and how its recommendations might affect them and their partnerships with higher education. It will also develop a best practice guide for its members’ use in the support and assessment of work based learning. Copies of the final report and the best practice guide will be sent to all members and their supply chains. It will also promote the findings of the Project through its membership of the Employment Skills Overview Group.

STEP will incorporate developments from the Project into its placement model and support materials. STEP and CIHE are involved in a separate joint bid to this funding initiative aimed at providing a franchisable model to facilitate the large-scale expansion of work placements. Should both bids be successful, the work from this project will both feed into and draw from that project.

The Management Charter Initiative (MCI) will publicise the findings of the report in its publication "Management Leader" and through its conference programme.

The local TECs will hold meetings of key local employers with an interest in work-based learning and work experience placements.

The participating Universities will promote the findings both within their Business Schools and across their Universities to other discipline areas. Each will hold an invitation conference of all tutors and employers involved with work based learning throughout the University to discuss the project's recommendations and how they might be incorporated into programmes in other discipline areas.
Briefings will be offered in-house to participating large employers, or to groups of SMEs through TECs, to ensure maximum spread through the participating organisations.

All UK Universities will be contacted to identify the maximum possible number of work based learning modules/units. The leaders of these modules/units will be sent a copy of the final report and invited to a conference to determine the wider applicability of its findings. Up to 15 "free" one-day in-University briefings will be provided by the project team for other Universities interested in developing work based learning.

Other relevant associations and Professional Bodies will be contacted and offered free briefings.

**Experience of the Bidder**

The University of Greenwich who will act as the main contractor heads the bid. The parties involved are a consortium of three universities and organisations representing the main groups involved in undergraduate work based learning programmes both locally and nationally. Between them the parties have substantial experience of research and practice in this area, having already completed several successful projects. The Project seeks to build on that expertise.

The University of Greenwich has recently successfully completed a DfEE funded project examining the use of competences in the assessment of the BABS Sandwich Year. Prior to that it has (with EHE funding) examined the use of the Customer Care Standards for accrediting the Sandwich Year. It has also had experience with dual accreditation through the linking of its CM/DMS programmes to the MCI Standards at Levels 4 and 5.

The University of Glamorgan has an extensive MCI NVQ programme with many examples of innovative practice. It has also conducted a pilot study reviewing the use of the MCI
NVQ 3 Standards in the assessment of the Sandwich Year. It has also linked its CM/DMS programme to the MCI Standards.

The Robert Gordon University has for the last two years awarded a full 120 SCOTCAT Credit points for the 48 week placement period, the equivalent of a full Academic Year. The placement is assessed solely by the work-based supervisor. The student must produce a supporting portfolio of output and a Management Report outlining the benefits and skills accrued during the period. This has been facilitated through the development of learning materials for work-based supervisors, university tutors and students. This is currently a unique scheme.

The Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) has carried out research into the relationship between higher education institutions and industry for a number of years with recent projects including studies of work experience and the role of key skills in work experience. It has also played a significant role in establishing partnerships between education and industry including co-founding with the CVCP and CBI the Employment Skills Overview Group.

STEP has developed a model of good practice and supporting materials for work experience placements, and has many years experience of successfully organising work placements.

BIZNET 2000 has carried out research into the development of the Business Studies Degree, the needs of employers for business graduates and the nature of Sandwich Year placements. It is developing a Discipline Network of active partners in Business Schools around the country, and a web site that lists latest developments in curriculum and learning and teaching, and assessment practice.

The Association of Business Schools (ABS) is the representative body of UK Business Schools. It regularly carries out reviews of developments in its members’ practice and is
currently reviewing the aims and content of the BABS degree. It recently successfully co-operated with MCI in the DfEE Business Schools Initiative that promoted the use of the Management Standards in Business Schools and their clients.

The Management Verification Consortium (MVC) is the Awarding Body arm of ABS. It is currently authorised to accredit the majority NVQs available in the business and management area, including those for Advisor/Assessors and Verifiers. It has a network of external verifiers drawn from amongst Business School staff who are generally amongst the most active University staff in terms of those working with Vocational Qualifications and work based learning.

The British Association for Business Studies Industrial Placements (BABSIP) represents the tutors responsible for work placements in Universities and Colleges of Higher Education. In response to membership demand it has recently carried out some initial development work on a qualification framework for its members and their industrial partners. It holds a twice yearly conference at which members discuss, with the assistance of outside speakers and researchers, latest developments relative to their field of interest.

The Management Charter Initiative (MCI) is one of the more active Lead Bodies. It has recently launched the first set of "post Beaumont" occupational standards and has been active in developments concerning the use of standards generally and assessment of competence against them in particular. It has the most extensive experience of any Lead Body of working with higher level standards, and has been working with Business Schools to develop academic awards for managers based on the standards.

**Proposed Partner Institutions or Agencies**

*University of Greenwich* - will act as the main contractor and Project co-ordinator. In this role will be responsible for servicing the Steering Group; co-ordinating the work of all the partners in carrying out the Project; the production of all generic materials resulting from
the Project; the development and maintenance of the generic CMT and Internet support mechanisms; organising the evaluation of the Project; and producing the Interim and Final Reports. As one of the University partners it will be responsible for activities involving its students, staff and associated employers. It will also co-ordinate and play a leading role in dissemination activities.

**Universities of Robert Gordon and Glamorgan** - will be responsible for developments with students, staff and associated employers within their Universities; the development and maintenance of local CMT and Internet support mechanisms; and for contributing to the Project overall. They will also actively participate in dissemination activities.

**ABS, MVC, BABSIP, BIZNET 2000, MCI, CIHE, STEP, and local TECs** - will be responsible as outlined elsewhere in this bid for variously assisting in the development of appropriate;
- models of employer involvement and dissemination;
- module/unit specifications;
- qualifications;
- learning and teaching and assessment strategies;
- codes of practice relevant to their memberships;
- the recruitment of employer partners;
- staff development;
- evaluation;
- and dissemination activities.

**Employers** - will provide placements and mentors for students, and assist in the development of good practice in relation to University/employer co-operation. They will also play a key role in evaluation and dissemination.

**Funding (over 2 years)**

**University of Greenwich**

Research Fellow (0.75) £63,633
Administration and CMT/Internet Development £17,181
Expenses including independent evaluation £15,000
Total £95,814

**Robert Gordon University and the University of Glamorgan**

Project Managers (0.4 SL) £26,919
Expenses £5,000
Total 2x for the two Universities £31,919 = £63,838

**ABS/MVC** - £5,000 for consultancy on award development, development of Codes of Practice and dissemination activities.
**BABSIP** - £8,000 for consultancy on award development and dissemination activities.
**CIHE** - £8,000 for consultancy activity, securing employer involvement, development of employers best practice guide dissemination activities.
**STEP** - £8,000 for consultancy activity, securing employer involvement, development of support materials and dissemination activity.
**MCI** - £8,000 for consultancy activity, securing employer involvement development of awards and dissemination activity.
**BABZIP 2000** - £3,000 administration of appropriate Web pages.
Total = £199,652

In the case of the Universities funding is sought for the lead personnel in each institution and expenses to cover travel, and the purchase of materials, software and related equipment. The time of other staff involved, and, with the exception of the main central administrator/IT developer, all administrative and office costs will be borne by the partners. The partner consulting organisations will charge their normal day rate for the
personnel involved, however, administrative support, meeting and conference facilities and materials they have previously developed relevant to the Project will be made available at no charge. Employers and TECs will be providing their assistance free of charge.

**Scale of Additional Contributions to the Work**

Within each of the three partner Universities the equivalent of 150 staff days (£400 per day £60,000) on developing units, qualifications and assessment procedures; validation (both sides of the table); staff development; supervising students; achieving "Work Experience Tutor" awards. (Total £180,000). Office accommodation and staff development facilities. (Total £25,000)

Each University's partner employers the equivalent of 50 staff days (£400 per day £20,000) mentoring students, achieving the Employer Mentor Award, serving on committees, participating in interviews and meetings, facilitating staff development and briefings. (Total £60,000)

Consultancy organisations will make available such materials, meeting and conference facilities and clerical and administrative support as are necessary for the successful completion of the project. This may be estimated to be normally charged at 25% of their day rate cost ie £10,000

The cost of evaluations and further research completed after the Project period has ended will be borne by the Universities (approx £10,000 per University)

This figure of £305,000 represents a minimum figure which it is anticipated would be considerably exceeded in practice, and again might be considerably increased if a different basis were used for the calculation.
Evaluation Strategy

An independent evaluator will be appointed towards the end of the first year of the project. Her role will be to work with the project team to develop evaluative criteria and an evaluative strategy to measure the impact of the Project on the participant Universities, their students, staff and programmes; the employers providing placements; the students after they have completed their degrees and entered employment; other Universities that have adopted an approach to work placements based in the work of the Project; and the approaches of the consulting organisations involved.

It is probable, however, that the impact of the Project will be measured in several ways and at several points in time. The first evaluation will be carried out at the end of the Project period. This is likely to focus on the “Objectives” and “Expected Outcomes” described earlier. A second evaluation will be carried out when students seek and enter employment, and a third when they have been in employment for some time. These later evaluations will focus on the long term impact on the students and their employers, but will revisit the criteria established in the first evaluation to check on progress. They will also be widened to include the impact of the Project on other Universities (the effectiveness of dissemination) and the consulting organisations.
Appendix 10.
Examples of Raw Data.
CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Details
Name: Student 5
Address: yyyyyyyyy
Gravesend
Kent
DA11 XXX

Telephone: 1111111111
Age: 19
Date of birth: 05/08/76

Traineeship Objectives
To apply learned academic skills in a business environment. Broaden my knowledge of business functions whilst establishing my ultimate career goals.

Education
1995 - University of Greenwich BA (HONS) Business Studies (Second Year)
1994 - 1995 Leeds Metropolitan University BA (HONS) Business Studies (First Year)
1989 - 1994 Gravesend Grammar School for Girls
A-levels: Government and Politics, Mathematics with Statistics, English GCSES: English Literature, English Language, Mathematics, Science Dual Award, Geography, French, Drama, Music

Degree Course
First Year
Economic Awareness
Business Accounting
Business Law
Business Information Skills
Quantitative Business Analysis 1+2
Business Environment
Transferable Business Skills
Appendix 10 – Examples of Raw Data.

Second Year
Economics for Business
Accounting Practise
Consumer Law
Enhanced Business Skills
Business Organisations

Achievements
1994 - 1995  Elected member of Student Representative Council and Student Union Executive
1993 - 1994  Editor of School Yearbook, School Prefect

Work Experience
1992 - Saturday Customer Service and Support assistant, WHSmith, Gravesend, Dartford and Leeds Branches
Responsibilities: Fully conversant with all EPOS terminals within the retail operation of the store. Customer and sales liaison duties. Accountable for cash handling and reconciliation of safe. Updating of financial transactions, between the office and all cash terminals within the store, on the Branch Manager computer system. Carried out practical stock duties ranging from receiving stock to displaying. Requested by other stores to run departments in their own staff's absence.

1993  One week placement Trustee Savings Bank Responsibilities: Cash administration, Customer liaison duties, General office duties.

1992  Two week placement credit control department Comma Oil Responsibilities: Understanding credit management techniques, learning credit limits, setting up new accounts, producing invoices. Due to staff absence I was asked to continue for an extra week, for which I was paid.

Long Term Objectives
After obtaining my degree I would like to pursue a career in the functional area of finance, which will allow me to make full use of my numerical skills and previous experience.

Skills
Information Technology: Knowledge and experience of Microsoft Word and Excel.
Communication: Experience in reporting and presentations. Experience in dealing with the public and colleagues in the work place.
Appendix 10 – Examples of Raw Data.

Business Skills: Responsible and mature attitude.
   Able to analyse and interpret data.
   Logical and positive approach to problem solving and decision making.
   Numerically competent.
   Possess good leadership and administration skills.
   Flexible and reliable.
   Work effectively in a team

Interests and Attributes
Cinema, Theatre, Reading, Aerobics, Tennis
Full, clean driving licence - mobile for any position for which I may be considered.
Grade 5 Clarinet and Theory of Music

References
Available on request
Example 2 - Progress Report (Learning Contract)

PROJECT/PORTFOLIO PROGRESS REPORT

Candidate’s Name ….. Student 5

Name and Stage of Programme ….. Sandwich Year Study – First Visit.

Supervisor’s Name ….. Mike Edmunds.

Date … 1st May 1996 Time ….10.00 – 11.20

Points Discussed:
Unit 8 is likely to be the easiest to achieve – she will also include evidence from a
Saturday job at Smiths and probably LMU voluntary work.
Units 1 and 2 are also strong possibilities.
Most other units may be possible depending on Projects at XXX.
Unit 4 is unlikely to be demonstrated as she works in a small team with her manager.
Use of Saturday job and LMU administrative experience as evidence.

Actions Agreed:
1. Prepare a report of work carried out on Company Car Mileage System; gather evidence
to support report; check report against Units 1 and 2 to determine where it supports a
claim to competence.

2. Prepare a personal report of current job and history of work at Smiths (Saturday job).

Date of Next meeting ….. 12th June 1996 – 10.00am
Example 3 – Part of a Transcript of the final interview with Student 5.

In the Interview the researcher has just summarised the assessment by the NVQ of the student’s learning over the year. The words spoken by the student are in black, and those of the researcher in blue.

In a sense you’ve ended up with a fair description of what your job was. You didn’t make recommendations for expenditure, which is 3.

No.

You didn’t do all the peoply things.

No, not enough of the peoply things.

Which are 5, 6, ---- 4,5,6.

Yeah but I mean some of these things --- you just couldn’t do them could you. Not in the position what I was in.

No.

Which is you have to be management don’t you to make some of the decisions that were here.

Yeh.
I mean like define future personnel requirements. Don’t know. I suppose if I was still there now and I was taking on another Sandwich Student, I’d be involved in that.

Yeh, but remember what I said all along. Its not just doing it once its, its more, more...

It’s a part of the Job.

The reason I’m happy, joking apart, to sign off 2, 8, and 9 is that to me they adequately describe what...

What it was I did.

What it was you did. Aaa in a sense I don’t think, I have no doubts that did them, in a sense the portfolio is possibly a bit light which might, you know, you might have done a bit more with the, made a bit more of the accounts and things like that.

Oh right.

I’m quite happy that you, that you actually did them. I mean this is about our seventh or eigth meeting now.

Yeh

So I don’t actually have a problem with that. Ummmm. Go on.

No, I was just thinking....

So, the year, sum it up for me in one minute.

Oh, just a brilliant experience, um, better than I would have hoped for actually.
What was best about it?

Being given responsibility and being trusted, and being .... To get the respect of my parents.

Your parents? (surprise)

Yes, for getting up in the morning and travelling all the way, and just like, dunno. I suppose that actually, actually acting like an adult. Hu Hu (nervous laughter)

So growing up.

Oh yeh., yeh. I mean I’ve changed an awful lot since I’ve been here.

(Grunt)

So like things that use to worry me about being, you know very inconsiderate, that I’m not interested, you know like...

Inconsequential.

You know.

Give me an example?

Um, I don’t know....its to do with prioritising all the things you’ve got to do. I realise how important it is to be here now, and so I’m not going to, ... I haven’t left things to the last minute at all. I’ve always got my work done in advance and I’m actually going to..... I made the fatal mistake starting to read a book and once I start reading a book, because
I’m really into reading, I can’t put it down. That means I wasn’t really reading enough textbooks.

So this is a novel not a work book?

Yeh, that’s what I mean.

(Grunt)

And so like I’ve banned myself from buying any more books ‘cause otherwise I won’t read enough textbooks HuHuHu (nervous laughter)

(Grunt)

No, I don’t know. It was a really good experience, and even if the work wasn’t really, really intense, it was still far better than I would have hoped it would be. It wasn’t mundane at all. It was interesting, it was, it was almost exciting without sounding really sort off........

No, I know what you are saying!

Um, um just really good.

And the worst of the year?

Um, getting told off for using the phone too often, ‘cause that was really embarrassing.

(Laughter) (Your manager) had to that to you did he?

Yeh.
I remember you....you did have your tail between you legs!

(Laughter)

That was pretty grim. Um, other than that......

Oh it didn’t. He just treated it like a complete joke. And then I made a point. ‘Cause you know how up front I am about these things..

(Agreement)

We had a meeting ... um.....we had a meeting, and then we had another meeting afterwards, and I made a point of putting it into the minutes and he said that it was all alright now and itdidn’t matter.

Yeh.

The other thing was it was brought more to his attention because none of the other people who are there now, were there then, and I mean my friend Catherine has moved back down there now, and my friend Gillian has moved like into my desk

Yeh.

And so like it wouldn’t have been as noticeable other than the fact that there is just me, and well at the time when I first done it, that was one of the worst things. Knowing that there was the opportunity for loads of other people to be there. Like Chata was in London, and Julia was doing part of her accountancy training somewhere else.

Yes.
And Adrian, and knowing now that there is a huge team of them there while there were times when I was there and it was just me and (my manager) and I was just like, oh God.

But he still lent you the car after that, didn’t he? So there can’t have been......

Oh yeh. Oh no. There was absolutely no problems. He’s a really nice guy, slightly annoying. And although it was one of the bad things, I was very friendly with Lee who had worked where I was working before, and she didn’t get on with him, and so she sort of told me things and I had to learn to put them beside, and just treat him as he treated me sort of thing, rather than taking into account the fact that she hadn’t got on with him. So, that was a bit strange.

So you made your own judgements rather than rely on her ....? 

Oh yeh. No.

How about the NVQ in retrospect?

Miles better than those stupid things the others are doing.

What makes you say that? You don’t have to say ....

(Laughter) No honestly, ‘cause this has got structure. From what I can tell about what the others did it was basically just like writing sort of – I did this this month, and like I mean that wouldn’t have been any good to me ‘cause I did the same thing month in, month out and it would have made my job just seem really mundane, but at the end of every month I would have had to sit down and say “So what did I do this month?” and then I’d think “Oh, I did exactly the same thing the month before that” and so doing it this way identifies sort of all the things I did rather than just doing sort of, and making it seem....
But have you identified all the things you did?

Well it identifies more. It identifies the skills more, because what I think the others did was, it was just like a page of A4 wasn’t it?

Right.

About what they did in the month.

Yep, but then they had to do a big report on the organisation so you’d have had to do a thing about (your organisation) at the end as well.

Yeh, which. I don’t know, I suppose in its way I was aware. I’d probably. I mean I don’t know what’s going to happen when you take this folder away.

Did you learn anything from doing the NVQ?

Yeh, ‘cause I thought it was really hard actually, putting my job into these categories and so I learnt how to view things differently to the way I did before, ‘cause my job was just my job and I thought about it in sort of…… I thought about it with the rest of the company and how it worked within the company, but not from looking in from the outside and seeing what it was I was actually doing. So.

So what do you… I mean did it help you do your job better?

Um.

Don’t say it did if it didn’t.
No, I don’t know that it did but then I wouldn’t have expected it to.

Mmm

And certainly writing something about (my organisation) at the end of it wouldn’t have made me do my job any better.

Right.

We’ll see. But no.

Fair enough. Anything else you’d like to tell me before we destroy this beautiful relationship?

(Laughter) No. What happens now?

The Tutor goes on to explain the procedure surrounding the assessment and verification of NVQs before concluding the interview.
Example 4 - Journal Entry for an Employer Visit.

Notes of a meeting with Student 5 and her employer at 11.30 on 1st May 1996
(This was the first visit to this student – she had been in placement for approximately 11 weeks at the time of this visit)

Three objectives of visit-

Placement OK
Advise/assess Student
Brief employer on NVQ.

The student is settling in well, some difficulty in getting her an appropriate range of tasks due to, a) her newness and relative inexperience, and, b) hold-ups in the flow of work to the department.

Her employer was a very positive towards her and the NVQ approach. He initiated a discussion about how evidence might be provided of the meetings where an oral description of the customer requirements for the car mileage system was elicited.

He will be helpful in providing witnessed testimony on a number of matters and will be likely to assist the student by juggling the projects she works on as much as possible.

He appears to have gained an adequate, if not extensive knowledge of NVQs from the briefing notes sent, conversations with the student and a 20 minute conversation with me.

The student is well prepared and positive towards the NVQ. She has a copy of the BTEC version of the Standards.
Appendix 10 – Examples of Raw Data.

There is a network of placement students operating. They meet in London on Wednesday nights. The student is friendly with students 1-4 and news of my visit has been exchanged on the phone. I apparently am regarded as “friendly” and “nice”.
Example 5 - Portfolio extract from Student 5.

UNIT 2
Contribute to the implementation of changes in services, products and systems.

Business Mileage Spreadsheet.
Asked by salaries whether we could create a system that would work more effectively than that used at present.
Needed to decide what we could offer and how to make it as user friendly as possible.
The key to achieving this was by maintaining constant contact with salaries (ie the customer). Their requirements needed to be worked with closely so that it was as effective as possible.
The technical experience of the future users also needed to be taken into consideration, so that the spreadsheet remained user friendly. I regularly met with YYY XXX (from salaries) so that she could agree on any advancements, before I put them into place. This also meant that any differences of opinion were dealt with immediately, rather than at a later date. I tried to create as many varying options based around the same idea, so that salaries were totally aware what the new spreadsheet could offer them.

Once I had finished the technical compilation, with guidance from AAA BBBB, it was then passed to salaries for a period of user acceptance testing. Any modifications that were obviously necessary were made and then once the spreadsheet was in full use it was monitored to ensure effective performance.

Cheque Formats for NPI Companies
1 was required to liase with MMM NNN (Accounting Operations Manager) informally to ensure that the formats designed met her requirements and that any changes needed were noted. These were then either dealt with by me or more often forwarded to the appropriate person.
Appendix 10 – Examples of Raw Data.

Once the cheques were due to be implemented into the Production Environment, they had to be tested in a User Acceptance Environment of the SOLAS system. I was responsible for these tests and for gaining the actual user's acceptance before the move. For user acceptance to be recorded I compiled a form, which was then kept on file, this could act as proof (should it be needed) that the Accounting Operation's Manager had agreed to the changes.

Finance Division Customer Satisfaction Survey

After compiling the above survey and producing the document, I was then fully involved in a discussion regarding how the compilation of the survey could be improved.

Witness Signature … (Note was signed by her manager)

Snr. Development Accountant
Appendix 11. Abbreviations Used.
Appendix 11 – Abbreviations Used.

ABS - Association of Business Schools
APL - Accreditation of Prior Learning
BABA - Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration
BABS - Bachelor of Arts in Business Studies
BABSIP - British Association for Business Studies Industrial Placements
BTEC - Business and Technology Education Council
CBI - Confederation of British Industry
CGLI - City and Guilds of London Institute
CIHE - Council for Industry and Higher Education
CM - Certificate in Management
CMC - Computer Mediated Communication
CMT - Computer Mediated Tutoring
CNAA - Council for National Academic Awards
DfEE - Department for Education and Employment
DMS - Diploma in Management Studies
EHE - Enterprise in Higher Education
GNVQ - General National Vocational Qualification
HEC - Higher Education for Capability
HESA - Higher Education Statistics Agency
IM - Institute of Management
LCGI - Licentiate of the City and Guilds Institute
LET - Learning from Experience Trust
MCI - Management Charter Initiative
MVC - Management Verification Consortium
NCVQ - National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NVQ - National Vocational Qualification
SCOTVEC - Scottish Vocational Education Council
TDLB - Training and Development Lead Body.