Work-based learning in the biosciences

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Work based learning and placements in the Biosciences at UWS

❑ During the 2007-8 session the Biosciences at UWS revised all the degree programmes to accommodate a move from 15 to 20 point modules and an integration between Hamilton and Paisley campuses.

❑ Of the 4 Bioscience programmes, 3 (Applied Bioscience, Health & Lifestyle, & Applied Biomedical Science) were designed to include an academically validated work based learning component to help students focus on employability issues.

❑ The Applied Biomedical Science work based learning modules were developed in conjunction with NHS Scotland and through collaboration with Glasgow Caledonian University and managers of hospital laboratories. This 15 week placement in Level 9 was designed so that the student could complete an IBMS portfolio and thus register with the HPC as a Biomedical Scientist upon successful graduation.

❑ For the Applied Bioscience and Health & Lifestyle programmes, 2 work based learning modules were developed to support and further enhance practical experience : a 4 day per week placement (40 point module) and a 1 day per week placement (20 point module).

Key aspects

❑ **Flexibility of opportunity**: at one extreme, the Applied Biomedical Science placements must meet professionally prescribed conditions, while at the other, students may benefit from experiences in a wide range of biologically related graduate professions by adapting to the preferences of the specific provider. Some placement providers prefer students to be present for an extended period, while others are more comfortable with a student for only one day a week.

❑ **Assessment undertaken by academics**, although placement provider feedback may help inform the decision. Includes aspects of health & safety, evidence-based accumulation of skills, individual role and 'value' to the organisation, record of progress & self evaluation, report production and audio-visual presentation.

❑ **Feedback from placement providers** can influence programme design, as it soon becomes apparent what skills are lacking, but required by students on placement.

❑ **Highly valued by students who participate**. Most students return for their Honours year with an improved focus on what they wish to gain from their degree, a few changing direction. A few students do not return but go straight into employment, while others may complete their Honours year on day release from the new employment.

Graduates of the 21st Century Project

❑ **Production of a work based learning guide by student for students**: the team leaders who worked on the various placement modules obtained funding to support 4 students to produce a guide that would:

a) Encourage fellow students to take a work based learning module
b) Promote UWS Bioscience degrees as opportunities for work experience

❑ Four students who had recently been on placement were recruited to produce the guide. They were given a remit and supported through 3 workshop sessions to generate the ideas and messages that they wished to convey. The last workshop was used to consider how these messages may be best conveyed. Students submitted Powerpoint presentations and had access to an online learning facility (Blackboard) to exchange and develop ideas.

❑ The 4 separate contributions were then integrated and rationalised by the academic team and the final booklet generated through the University graphics department.

❑ Some examples of key pages in the booklet are shown below.