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## The Technological University Dublin Placement Experience Partnership (DIT-PEP) Framework

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# **The Dublin Institute of Technology Placement Experience Partnership (DIT-PEP) Framework**

## ***Final Report***

***Prepared by:***

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***For: School of Hospitality Management and Tourism,***

***Dublin Institute of Technology***

***Date: March 2010***



Roadmap for Employment  
— Academic Partnerships

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# ***Executive Summary***

## INTRODUCTION

The School of Hospitality Management and Tourism at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) has developed a best practice framework for managing work placement, using the tourism industry as a case study<sup>1</sup>. However, the DIT-PEP (Placement Experience Partnership) Framework has been devised so that it can be applied across other sectors. This report presents the DIT-PEP Framework and provides a summary of the approach used in its development.

The report commences with the background to the research. The research aims and objectives are then presented, along with the research methodology. The DIT-PEP Framework is presented. The main findings of the student gap analysis are provided, along with the outputs from consultations with both the Irish tourism industry and Higher Education Institutions (HEI) offering tourism educational programmes that incorporate work placement. Opportunities for partnership approaches are provided. The report concludes with a summary of opportunities for further research.

This research is timely given the importance attached to 'placement schemes in both companies for both graduates and undergraduates' in the recently launched *'Innovation Ireland: Report of the Innovation Taskforce, March 2010'*.

## BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This research is part of a larger project entitled REAP (Roadmap for Employment-Academic Partnerships), funded through the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF)<sup>2</sup>. REAP is a collaborative project involving eight Higher Education Institutional partners, for the research, development and validation of a Higher Education-Industry Partnership Model and Roadmap. The REAP project aims to identify learning needs within the workplace; draw up a comprehensive model for partnership between employers and Higher Education Institutions and verify the effectiveness of the model through a range of demonstrator collaborative activities. The main aim of REAP is to develop a mechanism to integrate and rationalize complementary initiatives and offer a relevant, inclusive framework to facilitate interaction with the workplace. The 8 Higher Education Institutional partners include

- Athlone Institute of Technology,
- Cork Institute of Technology,
- Dublin Institute of Technology,
- Institute of Technology Tallaght, Dublin,
- Institute of Technology Sligo,
- NUI Galway,
- University College Cork and
- Waterford Institute of Technology.

The project was led by Cork Institute of Technology. One of the project themes is to address Partnership Implementation and Validation and one of these partnership engagements involves undergraduate co-operative placement.

Central to the DIT research on this theme was the development and exploration in an Irish context, of the findings of an Anglo-Dutch study of Hospitality students (Jenkins 2001). Jenkins' work showed that as their degree progressed, students' perception of the industry deteriorated and their desire to work therein diminished considerably. With as few as 50% of students intending to enter the sector post placement, Jenkins critically identified that internship / placement appeared to be the key source of student disenchantment. Based on these figures, the Irish hospitality industry may be haemorrhaging up to 10,000 potential managers over a decade. There is therefore a compelling cost-benefit rationale to understanding how poor internships / placements contribute to this loss, and the corresponding lessons that can be

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report the 'tourism industry' refers to the tourism, hospitality, event and leisure management sectors.

<sup>2</sup> Further details on REAP can be found on [www.reap.ie](http://www.reap.ie)

learned in order to maximise the internship's / placement's contribution to student learning, development and continued progression in the industry.

The aim of this research was therefore to assess the current situation within the Irish context, through a series of quantitative attitudinal student surveys (pre and post placement) and qualitative consultation with placement officers and industry / host organisation representatives (via strategic conversations). The international experience was analysed by way of comparison, through consultation with international colleagues. The key output of the research was the creation of a best practice framework for optimising the placement experience. In addition, the research sought the views and ideas of the students, placement officers / lecturers in HEIs and industry to identify current gaps in relation to continuous professional development. It also identified potential opportunities for partnership approaches to address these gaps and meet long term future training and professional development needs.

Ensuring that graduates from tourism and hospitality courses successfully transfer into the industry will be a key factor in delivering on industry targets. It is estimated that more than 2,000 placements take place annually within the tourism sector in Ireland. With placement experiences potentially posing a threat to continued progression by students into the sector, this area is one that deserved closer research scrutiny.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The central research aim was to develop and explore in an Irish context, students' perception of the tourism industry based upon their placement experience and conversely the industry's perception of placement, in order to develop a framework of best practice for placement. The role of third level institutions as a central liaison between students and industry is also critical and is included in the analysis.

A number of research objectives arise from this central aim. These objectives are as follows:

- To determine student perception of and their desire to work in the industry prior to the placement experience;
- To develop a broad understanding of the issues and challenges facing placement officers / lecturers within the third level sector in Ireland in relation to sourcing appropriate placements;
- To identify the expectations of industry in relation to the placement experience and to highlight gaps which may exist between student aspirations and the reality on the ground;
- To compare and contrast the issues and challenges in relation to placement within the broader services sector;
- To determine student experience of placement post the event and to explore any deviation between the perception and reality of placement and employment opportunities within the industry
- To consult with international experts in relation to the challenge of sourcing appropriate placements and possible best practice examples;
- To develop a best practice framework for placement in Ireland
- To identify opportunities for partnership approaches to meeting the long term future training and professional development needs within the sector.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

Table 1 provides a summary of the overall research approach.

<b>Table 1: Summary of Research Approach</b>
<p><b>Pre &amp; post work placement student survey</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and explore student expectations and experiences:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Comparative assessment of pre &amp; post data</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Generation of gap analysis:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expectations v. Experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Consultations</b></p> <p><b>Placement officers (strategic conversations)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a broad understanding of issues and challenges of placement               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ sourcing appropriate placements</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Industry (workshop)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify industry expectations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify issues and challenges relating to successful placement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Highlight gaps between student aspirations and reality on the ground</li> </ul>
<p><b>International experts</b> (via networks e.g. PATH, TTRA, ATLAS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify possible best practice examples</li> <li>• Explore challenge of sourcing appropriate placements</li> </ul>
<p><b>Development of best practice framework for placement</b></p>
<p><b>Core outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical understanding of issues, challenges and opportunities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Student perspective;</li> <li>○ Industry / Host Organisation perspective;</li> <li>○ Placement officer perspective</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## THE DIT-PEP FRAMEWORK

The DIT-PEP Framework was devised to include the tri-partnership of Higher Education Institutions, Students and Host Organisations. The Framework was developed through research and consultation with each of the three partners. Research was also conducted to ascertain international best practice of placement experience. The work drew on the UK based *National Council for Work Experiences (NCWE) – Work Experience Quality Mark* which was developed for host organisations / employers who wish to ‘reach a level whereby their work placement provision matches (UK) national standards’ culminating in the awarding of the accredited NCWE Work Experience Quality Mark. Drawing on NCWE’s work, the DIT-PEP Framework expanded the scope to include: both Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and students along with the Host Organisations. Table 2 on the following page illustrates the DIT-PEP Framework under a number of key criteria:

**Table 2: The DIT-PEP Framework - Overarching Criteria**

<b>Key Criteria</b>	<b>HEI</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Host Organisation</b>
<b>Commitment</b>	HEI is fully committed to developing employable graduates	Student is fully committed to developing as an employable graduate	Host Organisation is fully committed to developing employable graduates
<b>Learning and Development</b>	HEI is fully committed to providing students with optimum learning in the college environment	Student is fully committed to attaining optimum learning in the college and placement organisation	Host Organisation is fully committed to providing optimum learning in its environment / organisation
<b>Preparation</b>	HEI complies with fair practices in recruitment, selection and equal opportunities legislation and commits to fully participate in the preparation process	Student is committed to fully participate in the preparation process.	Host Organisation complies with fair practices in recruitment, selection and equal opportunities legislation and commits to fully participate in the preparation process
<b>Placement Agreement</b>	An Agreement is put in place to which the HEI is fully committed	An Agreement is put in place to which the Student is fully committed	An Agreement is put in place to which the Host Organisation is fully committed
<b>Communication</b>	Communication between Host Organisation, HEI and student is encouraged	Communication between Host Organisation, HEI and student is encouraged	Communication between Host Organisation, HEI and student is encouraged
<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>	HEI has arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work experience programme	Student is fully committed to adhering to the monitoring and evaluation process	Host Organisation has arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work experience programme
<b>Assessment</b>	HEI has sound assessment mechanisms / techniques in place	Student is fully committed to completing all aspects of assessment	Host Organisation has sound assessment mechanisms and techniques in place
<b>Support &amp; Resources</b>	HEI fully supports the placement student	Student commits to using all support and resources available from HEI & Host Organisation	Host Organisation fully supports the placement student

Full details of the DIT-PEP Framework are presented in the main body of the report. It was initially envisaged to pilot the Framework but the timeframe of the project did not permit this.

## **GAP ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PLACEMENT RESEARCH**

This section provides a summary of the student report and its main findings. This research addresses the issue of internship / work placement in the tourism, hospitality and event management sectors and the impact work placements have on the student experience generally, but more importantly, on whether following graduation, the graduate will take up employment within the sector or not.

### ***Student Research Aims and Objectives***

The findings outlined in this section specifically address the issue of work placement from the perspective of students. The main research objectives specific to the Work Placement Gap Analysis are as follows:



- To determine students' perception of and their desire to work in the industry prior to the placement experience
- To determine students experience (the reality) of placement post the event
- To explore the deviation between perception and the reality of placement and employment opportunities within the industry

### **Student Research Methodology**

Research was undertaken with a sample of Dublin Institute of Technology students on placement in 2008/2009. The research involved conducting a survey with 117 (tourism, hospitality and event management) students prior to going on placement. Further research was conducted with the same cohort of students post-placement. A comparative / gap analysis was conducted on these two surveys.

The main findings of the student gap analysis are presented under the following headings: student profile, programme details, placement details, placement anticipation and preparation, work placement experience, placement expectations versus actual experience, employment expectations and intentions after graduation. Details of these findings are presented in Appendix A.

As outlined above, central to this research was the need to develop and explore in an Irish context, findings of the Anglo-Dutch study by Jenkins, conducted in 2001. Jenkins showed that as their degree progressed, students' perception of the hospitality industry deteriorated and their desire to work therein diminished considerably, with as few as 50% of students intending to enter the sector post placement. While Jenkins identified that work placement appeared to be the main source of student disenchantment, this research conducted by the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) in Ireland did not produce the same findings. Prior to going on placement, 90% of students in the Irish study indicated they intended to work in the industry after they graduated. When students had completed their work placement in the tourism, hospitality or event management industry, 88% indicated they still intended to work in the industry post graduation, showing a drop of only 2%. This suggests that the attrition rate of potential managers is much lower than that illustrated in Jenkins' study.

The results of this research were used in conjunction with further research conducted with industry representatives and Placement Officers/Equivalent from HEIs in order to maximize the placement's to student learning, development and continued progression in the industry and the subsequent development of a framework of best practice for work placement.

## **INDUSTRY CONSULTATION**

Consultation took place during March 2010 with representatives from the tourism industry in Ireland who participate in the DIT's School of Hospitality Management and Tourism work placement programme. Representatives from the following sectors took place in the discussions:

- hospitality (hotels),
- visitor attractions,
- local authorities,
- international tour operators and
- event management companies.

The main findings of this research centres on the pre-placement and placement areas and includes the need for greater communication and the development of clearer systems / responsibilities between: host organisations and HEIs; host organisation and students and; students and HEIs. A number of recommendations were provided and are summarised as follows:

### **Pre-Placement**

In the pre-placement phase the following needs are evident:

1. Development of a Network of Host Organisations —to learn from each other

2. HEIs should develop a Skills list template, broad enough to include learning objectives and personal development skills
3. Development of stronger communication between Host Organisations and HEI prior to commencement of placement.
4. Host Organisations should be given an opportunity to meet as a group before placement takes place. This could be done by providing guest lectures on their organisation and insight into working in the industry
5. Host Organisations to develop job descriptions for role and to link these to students' skills list.
6. HEI to develop site visits / familiarisation trips to Host Organisations as part of overall course programme.
7. HEI to communicate Host Organisations' criteria for recruitment to students, to include key industry needs.
8. Host Organisation to introduce a Shadow day – where student can shadow someone in the area where they will be working, prior to starting placement

### **During Placement**

During the placement phase the following needs are evident:

1. Host Organisations to develop a short Induction Programme for all placement students
2. Host Organisations to appoint a Mentor to each student and if possible develop a Buddy system.
3. Host Organisations to develop a Shadowing system
4. Host Organisation to aim to rotate students around departments
5. Industry mentor to conduct regular 'job chats' with students
6. Improved communication between Placement Organisation, College and Student
7. Development of stronger interactions between HEIs and Host Organisations
8. Participation by Placement Organisation in students' placement assessment

### **Post Placement**

Further to implementation of strong pre and post placement arrangements, Host Organisations and HEI need to develop a more systematic review of placement experience upon completion.

More complete details of the findings from the industry consultation are presented in Appendix B.

## **HEI (HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION) CONSULTATION**

Consultation took place during February 2010 with Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering tourism programmes (and work placement as part of these programmes). The main findings from the consultations are presented:

1. Management of placement differs considerably in the various HEIs.
2. Importance of senior management involvement from both HEIs and industry was recognised
3. Top-line findings are summarised:
  - a. Importance of a designated person in the industry to act as intermediary with colleges
  - b. The need for the development of a tri-partite placement agreement
  - c. The need for stronger awareness of a placement agreement amongst the 3 stakeholders - Host Organisation, HEI and student
  - d. The importance of Host Organisation providing induction for students at the start of their placement
  - e. The need for Host Organisation Intermediary and Host Organisation mentor
  - f. The need for more active communication between student and Host Organisation mentor
  - g. The need for more active communication between HEI and Host Organisation
  - h. Opportunity for industry to commit to rotating students around departments where possible
  - i. The need to assess the feasibility of industry contributing to the assessment process.

Details of the findings from the HEI consultation are presented in Appendix C.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP APPROACHES

The research highlighted the opportunity to develop the following partnerships:

1. Development of a Network amongst placement organisations so that they can learn from the experiences of each other.
2. Development of a HEI Placement Network amongst placement officers / person responsible for placement within HEIs.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further to the development of the DIT-PEP Framework, a number of areas for further research emerged which could assist in consolidating the development, operationalisation, implementation and monitoring of the DIT-PEP Framework for Best Practice. These are summarised:

1. Pilot Implementation of DIT-PEP Framework
  - a. Repeat Student Pre and Post Placement Gap Analysis Research with a similar cohort
  - b. Conduct comparative analysis with 2008 / 2009 Student Gap Analysis Research
  - c. Assess the degree to which the DIT-PEP Framework complies with individual HEI practice
  - d. Assess the degree to which the DIT-PEP Framework is operable within participating industry organisations
2. Develop criteria and content for industry workshop and pilot
3. Develop criteria for the role of HEI Mentors and pilot
4. Develop criteria and content for HEI Mentor workshop and pilot
5. Implement industry contribution to student's assessment (25%) and conduct research over 2 years, tracking the results of students to ascertain how this would affect their final award if included as part of the degree mark.
6. Develop HEI Placement Network with Placement Officers / Equivalent within the Higher Education Institutions offering tourism programmes, and examine it's impact on placement in the individual HEIs
7. Develop Host Organisation Network for those offering student placement experiences.

# ***THE DIT-PEP (Placement Experience Partnership) Framework*** **(for Best Practice Placement Experience)**

## **SUMMARY OF DIT-PEP FRAMEWORK**

Drawing on NCWE's work, the DIT-PEP Framework expanded the scope to include: both Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and students along with the Host Organisations. The summary table on the following page illustrates the DIT-PEP Framework under a number of key criteria:

<b>The DIT-PEP Framework - Overarching Criteria</b>			
<b>Key Criteria</b>	<b>HEI</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Host Organisation</b>
<b>Commitment</b>	HEI is fully committed to	Student is fully committed	Host Organisation is fully

	developing employable graduates	to developing as an employable graduate	committed to developing employable graduates
<b>Learning and Development</b>	HEI is fully committed to providing students with optimum learning in the college environment	Student is fully committed to attaining optimum learning in the college and placement organisation	Host Organisation is fully committed to providing optimum learning in its environment / organisation
<b>Preparation</b>	HEI complies with fair practices in recruitment, selection and equal opportunities legislation and commits to fully participate in the preparation process	Student is committed to fully participate in the preparation process.	Host Organisation complies with fair practices in recruitment, selection and equal opportunities legislation and commits to fully participate in the preparation process
<b>Placement Agreement</b>	An Agreement is put in place to which the HEI is fully committed	An Agreement is put in place to which the Student is fully committed	An Agreement is put in place to which the Host Organisation is fully committed
<b>Communication</b>	Communication between Host Organisation, HEI and student is encouraged	Communication between Host Organisation, HEI and student is encouraged	Communication between Host Organisation, HEI and student is encouraged
<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>	HEI has arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work experience programme	Student is fully committed to adhering to the monitoring and evaluation process	Host Organisation has arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the work experience programme
<b>Assessment</b>	HEI has sound assessment mechanisms / techniques in place	Student is fully committed to completing all aspects of assessment	Host Organisation has sound assessment mechanisms and techniques in place
<b>Support &amp; Resources</b>	HEI fully supports the placement student	Student commits to using all support and resources available from HEI & Host Organisation	Host Organisation fully supports the placement student

## DETAILED DIT-PEP FRAMEWORK MODEL

The following table provides more detailed explanation of the Criteria / issues addressed by the framework:

<b>The DIT-PEP Framework (for Best Practice Placement Experience)</b>			
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Higher Education Institute (HEI)</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Host Organisation</b>
<b>Commitment</b>	Development of employable graduates	Development as employable graduate	Development of employable graduate
	Adhere to Best Practice Framework	Adhere to Best Practice Framework	Adhere to Best Practice Framework
<b>Learning &amp; Development</b>	Promote student as Independent Learner	Develop clear learning objectives & personal goals/skills to be achieved	Rotation between departments/tasks
	Use curriculum to encourage work in and contact with Industry	Active participation in learning	Agree Project with student
	Work with students to identify objectives/skills list for Placement	Willingness to address barriers/issues as/when they arise during Placement	Monthly reviews related to: Skills/Learning Objectives/Project/Tasks
	Align assessment with industry needs	Formulation of industry project	
	Assist students to adequately prepare to actively participate in the development of the business of the Host Organisation	Commit to engage fully and actively participate in the business of the Host Organisation	Explore opportunities for students to actively participate in the development of the business of the Host Organisation
<b>Preparation</b>	Provide classes/workshops/one-to-one for students prior to Placement	Actively participate in Pre-Placement preparation	Familiarisation with student learning objectives and skills list
	Prepare students for interview	Conduct Industry research	Develop 'job description'
	Facilitate recruitment through presentations/interviews based on equal opportunity	Develop Learning Objectives & personal development goals	Guest lecturer role/site visits
	Prepare industry for work placement	Participate in Interview process	Conduct interviews (person/telephone)
	Invite Industry speakers/organise site visits	Visit Host Organisation, if possible, prior to commencing placement	Option of shadow day prior to commencement of placement

The DIT-PEP Framework (for Best Practice Placement Experience)			
Criteria	Higher Education Institute (HEI)	Student	Host Organisation
Preparation (cont'd)	Provide Induction for students prior to commencing placement	Explore opportunities to actively contribute to the development of the Host Organisation through creative input	Offer Induction, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profile of Host Organisation</li> <li>• Familiarisation with physical location</li> <li>• Introduction to staff</li> <li>• Overview of Student Learning objectives /project/skills</li> </ul>
	Manage expectations- student vs. industry	Conduct research on Organisation	
	HEI mentor to actively participate in preparation stage		
Placement Agreement	Prior to commencement – Agreement signed by three parties	Prior to commencement – Agreement signed by three parties	Prior to commencement – Agreement signed by three parties
	Profile of position and Student Learning Objectives and skills to be included	Profile of position and Student Learning Objectives and skills to be included	Profile of position and Student Learning Objectives and skills to be included
	Student to initiate agreement	Student to initiate agreement	Student to initiate agreement
Communication	Initiate Network of Host Organisations for Placement providers	Monthly contact with HEI Mentor to review 'My tasks/My objectives/My Experience'	Participate in Network of Placement Providers
	Provide student assignment information to Host Organisations	Monthly contact with Industry Mentor to review 'My tasks/My objectives/My Experience'	Monthly review with student
	Monthly contact with student		Monthly communication with HEI Mentor
	Monthly contact with Industry Mentor		
Monitoring & Evaluation	Review Placement Programme annually	Adhere to monthly reviews	Nominate mentor to each student
	Allocate Mentors to students	Attend Debrief with HEI	Conduct student appraisal and communicate to HEI
	Organise Debrief/Post Placement meetings		

<b>The DIT-PEP Framework (for Best Practice Placement Experience)</b>			
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Higher Education Institute (HEI)</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Host Organisation</b>
<b>Assessment</b>	Model based on student preparation/development/performance	Complete Logs/Reports/Project	Participate in student assessment
	e.g. Preparation (25 %), Careers Assessment (25%), Report/project (25%) Host Organisation Appraisal (25%)	Conduct self-assessment of skills and learning objectives	Conduct competency (skills, attitudes, behaviours) based assessment (25%)
		Participate in Host Organisation Appraisal and Debrief with HEI	
<b>Support &amp; Resources</b>	Provide adequate support and resources to Placement process	Uses and maximises resources and support offered	Mentor in place & provide opportunities to shadow



## BENEFITS OF THE DIT-PEP FRAMEWORK

1. More effective placement experience from the perspective of students, Host Organisation and Higher Education Institutions
2. Sets a level of good practice for work placements
3. Ensures a structured approach to work experience, thus giving all 3 parties maximum benefit
4. Helps employers address issues of recruitment and retention
5. Provides a national framework for improving work experience
6. Clearly communicates work experience objectives
7. Shows commitment to high standards in the placement process
8. Shows commitment to developing the student and future workforce
9. Commitment from all participants to follow certain procedures / standards during placement
10. Emphasises the importance of collaboration between HEIs and Host Organisations
11. Adds value to the development of students, HEIs and Placement Organisations
12. Assists in increasing competitiveness within the industry
13. Assists in reducing costs in recruitment and training
14. Assists in improving customer satisfaction

<b>HEI will benefit through:</b>	<b>Students will benefit through:</b>	<b>Host Organisation will benefit through:</b>
Reduced recruitment and retention costs	Job satisfaction	Reduced recruitment and retention costs
High calibre students will be attracted to HEIs which run Placements to a high standard	A good working environment	High calibre students will be attracted to Placements in Host Organisation which runs Placements to a high standard
	Good quality training	High calibre students will be attracted to work full time in Host Organisation which runs Placements to a high standard
Raised profile and increased return: Students will be become vehicle for promoting HEI	Recognition and development	Raised profile and increased return: Students will be become vehicle for promoting Host Organisation
Added value – by being actively committed to developing the student and their skills, HEI will benefit from higher and more targeted productivity and student development	Being given responsibility and involvement	Added value – by being actively committed to developing the student and their skills, Host Organisation will benefit from higher and more targeted productivity and outputs
	Having the opportunity to discover what career suits them	
	Gaining real skills, both transferable and practical	
	Increasing their employability	

***APPENDIX A:***

***Summary of Pre and Post Placement Gap  
Analysis:***

**A Case Study of Work Placement on DIT  
Undergraduate Tourism Programmes**

## INTRODUCTION

This section provides a summary of the key findings of the main report on student placement research. A copy of the main report can be obtained directly from the School of Hospitality Management and Tourism at the Dublin Institute of Technology, DIT.

## RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The research addresses the issue of work placement in the tourism, hospitality and event management sectors and the impact work placements have on the student experience generally, and whether following graduation, the graduate will take up employment within the sector or not. The main research objectives specific to the Student Gap Analysis are as follows:

- To determine students perception of and their desire to work in the industry prior to the placement experience
- To determine students experience of placement post the event
- To explore the deviation between perception and the reality of placement and employment opportunities within the industry

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted with a sample of Dublin Institute of Technology students on placement in 2008/2009. The research involved conducting a survey with 117 (tourism, hospitality and event management) students prior to going on placement. Further research was conducted with the same cohort of students post-placement. A comparative / gap analysis was conducted on the pre and post placement surveys. The research employed the following methodology.

Pre-placement questionnaire	Post-placement questionnaire
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administered in person at induction seminar</li> <li>• 117 students going on placement</li> <li>• 100 valid responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administered via email for return with placement report</li> <li>• Circulated to 117 students</li> <li>• 78 valid responses</li> </ul>

Students from a number of programmes were surveyed as outlined:

Programme Name	Year of Study	No. of Students
B.Sc. International Hospitality Management	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	32
BA (Ord) Tourism Management	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	23
BA (Ord) Hospitality Management	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	17
B.Sc. Tourism Marketing	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	18
B.Sc. Event Management	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	27

## STUDENT PROFILE

Student profile is discussed under the headings of age, nationality and gender.

- Ages ranged from 18 to 37 years and the average age was 21 years.
- 14 Nationalities were represented, 79% of the students were Irish.
- For the pre-placement analysis, 35% were male and 65% were female. For the post-placement analysis, 29% of respondents were male and 71% were female, indicating possibly that females were more likely to complete both elements of the study.

## PROGRAMME DETAILS

The programme details of respondents are presented, along with the level of response from each programme, year of students, level of rating of programme on CAO form and key aspects that attracted students to the programme they are currently studying.

- Response rates were highest amongst BA (Ord) Tourism Management students, where 83% completed the pre-placement survey and 96% completed the post-placement survey.
- 51% indicated that their course/programme was their first choice on their CAO form. A further 33% indicated their current course/programme was the 'second' or 'third' choice.
- The top 5 programme attractors are:
  1. Interest in industry as a career (career opportunities)
  2. Business programme, with tourism/hospitality/events focus
  3. Opportunity to travel
  4. Programme elements (including work placement)
  5. Interesting and varied programme, with diverse opportunities

It is interesting to note that the opportunity to avail of programme elements such as work placement was considered important when choosing the programme/course.

## PLACEMENT DETAILS

Placement details are discussed under the main heading of type, location and size of organisation, industry sector and payment details for placement.

- The DIT students surveyed were placed in 57 diverse industry organisations
- 53% of placement organisations were located in Ireland. Overseas locations included the UK, USA, South Africa, New Zealand, Argentina, Belgium, Spain and Kazakhstan.
- Furthermore, 45% of all students were based in Dublin, and 18% were based in London.
- The majority of respondents were based in large organisations which employ 100 or more employees, 54% and 45% respectively for pre and post survey respondents. A further 26% (pre) and 33% (Post) were based in smaller organisations employing 1-25 employees.
- The sector that best describes the area of the tourism industry that the student was working in while on placement was presented. 37% of post-placement students indicated they worked in hotels and 17% indicated they worked for an event management company.
- Nearly two thirds (61%) of students received monetary payment for their placement work and 47% received payment in kind. Some students received both types of payment.

## PLACEMENT ANTICIPATION AND PREPARATION

A key element to successful work placements is the planning and preparation that takes place before the work placement starts and even before a student decides on the type of organisation they would like to work in. These issues are discussed under the following areas: level of contact with organisation prior to placement, method of finding placement, setting learning objectives and preparing for placement.

- 89% of students had made contact with their organisation prior to commencing placement
- 76% of respondents participated in an interview process and a further 34% of respondents met with the contact person/industry mentor in advance.
- 75% indicated they had a contact person or industry mentor in the placement organisation

- DIT's Placement Officer directly sourced the placement for 54% of students. 16% identified and approached the organisation independently, 18% either used family contact, friends or had worked previously in the organisation (6% each), highlighting the importance of using networks/contacts to gain employment, even at placement stage.

### Setting Learning Objectives

As part of the preparation classes students were asked to identify learning objectives for their placement. The purpose of this exercise was for students to be able to specifically identify what they aimed to achieve from the exercise. The top 10 learning objectives that respondents wished to achieve when on placement were presented in order of importance:

1. Skills development
2. Deepen sectoral specific knowledge and understanding through learning experience
3. Industry experience
4. Networking and contact development for future
5. Career decision making and development
6. Deepen industry knowledge and understanding through experience
7. Apply learning: supplement theory with practice
8. Personal development
9. Social and cultural development
10. International experience

### Preparing for Placement

The main activity taken by students to prepare for placement was research on the industry

- 84% felt activities taken to prepare for placement helped them during their placement.
- Strong research prior to placement helped students to manage their expectations and therefore increase their confidence and made them more prepared (21%)
- Respondents were asked to provide recommendations to improve placement preparation in terms of them-selves, DIT and Placement Organisation. The main comments are outlined:
  - *Self - Need to conduct more research on organisation and industry*
  - *DIT – Revise format of the pre-placement meetings with placement officer*
  - *Placement Organisation: to have clearly defined roles (with a job description)*

## WORK PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE

Students' actual placement experience is discussed under the main headings of work duties (expected v actual), application of learning, level of satisfaction with placement and reasons for same, best and worst aspects of placement, problems experienced while on placement and how this was handled, matching expectations and actual experience and a summary of overall experience of placement. This section concludes with a discussion on how the work placement experience impacts on students' intention to work in the industry after graduation and a summary of students' recommendations for improving the overall work placement experience.

- The main duties students undertook while on placement were administration, marketing, restaurant, accommodation/housekeeping, customer management/customer service and, planning and organising events.
- 82% indicated this was the type of work/duties they expected to be involved in.
- For respondents who indicated this was not the type of work/duties they had expected to be involved in, the differences in expectations was identified. While only 19 respondents provided examples, 21% of these expected less administration/basic computer tasks and a further 16% expected less

responsibility than they were actually given. A further 11% expected more responsibility than they had been given.

- Respondents were asked to show an understanding of how they applied what they had learned in college to work by indicating the modules they had used while on placement. Management (11%), Marketing (10%), Communications (10%), Computer Applications (10%), Human Resource Management (8%) and Accounting (6%) were the main modules used while on placement.
- Examples of how they applied what they had learned in DIT were provided and included for example: Communication Skills: *dealing with customer complaints, giving presentations, holding meetings, public speaking, using relevant terminology, use of all mediums - face to face, email, letter, phone*
- Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their placement experience. A total of 87% were either satisfied (43%) or very satisfied (44%), while only 1% was unsatisfied.
- The main level of satisfaction related to the broad range of experience obtained, increased knowledge of the industry, the enjoyable experience and atmosphere and the development of new skills/achievement of learning objectives. The main dissatisfaction related to boredom.
- Students indicated the 'best' part of the placement experience related to working on a work specific task, learning new skills and knowledge and working as part of an organisation/team. The *repetitive/uninteresting work/not being busy enough or lack of opportunity to learn* was the greatest sources of disenchantment.
- Respondents were asked to indicate if they had any problems while on placement. Two thirds of students had not experienced problems while on placement. *'Sorting out pay and emergency tax'* proved to be difficult for some students as did *'doing menial tasks, asking to be changed and not being changed'*.
- Respondents were asked to indicate if their experience matched their expectation. 43% felt the placement experience was 'better than expected', 43% indicated it was the 'same as expected' and 14% indicated it was 'not as good as expected'.
- 38% of respondents felt the experience was a 'great learning curve', where they 'learned a lot' and a further 14% indicated they had experienced 'great personal development'.
- Respondents were asked to indicate how the work placement experience impacts on intention to work in the industry after graduation. 75% still intend to work in the industry after graduation.
- Respondents were asked to indicate their level of interest in employment in the specific placement area post graduation. Prior to placement 85% indicated a desire to work in the specific area and upon completion of the placement this figure had just dropped by 1% to 84%.
- For those intending to work in the industry post graduation, the main comments provided related to having a better understanding of the industry where work placement helped to clarify different areas of opportunity and different areas of work. Hence for 46% of respondents, the work placement helped to re-clarify their desire to work in the industry. A further 33% indicated the work placement reinforced their already existing intention/desire to work in the industry
- While there were only a small number of responses from those who do not intend to work in the industry, almost half of these indicated that they were now not interested in working in a specific area such as events, food and beverages etc.
- The main suggestions/recommendations for improving the overall placement experience related to increasing interaction with the college (14%), paying student/providing support for those not paid (14%), reducing or increasing placement period (11% each) and making changes to the placement assessment (11%).

## PLACEMENT EXPECTATIONS V ACTUAL EXPERIENCE

One of the main objectives of the research was to assess student's perception of working in the tourism industry (tourism, hospitality and event sectors) pre and post work placement in order to ascertain if there were any major differences in the two. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to a series of statements. The comparative assessment of pre and post placements was then analysed under the following headings:

- Overall Expectations v Experience
- Application of Learning
- Support from the Dublin Institute of Technology
- Support from Placement Organisation
- Training and Development
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Work Environment
- Future Career Prospects

### *Overall Expectations v Experience*

The degree to which respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements on 'overall expectations versus experience' is summarised:

- Prepared for placement: 62% pre and 75% post
- Support from DIT to prepare for placement: 74% pre and 72% post
- Support from Placement Organisation: 67% pre and 65% post
- Understanding of what was expected of me by placement organisation: 66% pre & 72% post
- Understanding of duties/tasks expected to complete during placement: 53% pre & 79% post
- Confidence in abilities to undertake duties & fulfil requirements of placement: 83% pre & 90% post
- Satisfaction with length of placement: 75% pre and 68% post

In the majority of cases, students were less negative once they completed work placement when compared with their perceptions prior to going on work placement. The research suggests that students provided more cautious responses pre-placement, given they were going into unknown territory. This is evident for example in the 27% who stated they did not know whether to agree or disagree with the statement that 'I have a clear understanding of what was expected of me by the organisation during my placement'. Upon completing the work placement, the corresponding figure of uncertainty was reduced to 17%.

This uncertainty is also evident in the 37% who did not know whether to agree or disagree with the statement 'I had a clear understanding of what was expected of me by the organisation during my placement'. Upon completing the work placement, the corresponding figure of uncertainty was reduced to 17%.

Three other statements were included only in the post-placement survey and are summarised:

- Work Placement was a valuable learning experience – 91% either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'
- Satisfied that learning objectives were achieved - 78% either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'
- Enjoyed placement – 84% either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'.

### *Industry Experience: Application of Learning*

Application of learning was assessed under the main areas of applying the skills, theory and concepts learned on the DIT programme. The degree to which respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements pertaining to 'application of learning' is summarised:

- Ability to apply skills learned on DIT programme to work: 78% pre and 73% post
- Ability to apply theory and concepts learned on DIT programme to work: 66% pre and 68% post
- Experience on work placement will have little relation to what is learned on DIT programme: 37% pre and 39% post

**Industry Experience: Support from DIT**

The degree to which respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements pertaining to 'support from DIT' is summarised:

- Development of realistic expectations of placement role and responsibilities: 66% pre and 59% post
- Assist performance of duties and meet organisations expectations: 67% pre and 57% post
- Assist in achievement of learning objectives: 71% pre and 59% post
- Support from DIT mentor: 83% pre and 56% post
- Good communication between DIT and placement organisation: 79% pre and 58% post

**Industry Experience: Support from Placement Organisation**

The degree to which respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements relating to 'support from placement organisation' is summarised:

- Provision of Induction: 90% pre and 76% post
- Receipt of detailed job description: 82% pre and 58% post
- Support from industry mentor to understand requirements on the job: 85% pre and 72% post
- Support from industry mentor to perform duties and meet organisation expectations : 86% pre and 71% post
- Assistance from industry mentor to deal with problems: 85% pre and 67% post
- Care of industry mentor of student's progress: 79% pre and 78% post
- Organisation's expectations of role and abilities: 88% pre and 86% post
- Feedback on progress from organisation: 85% pre and 68% post

**Industry Experience: Training and Development**

The degree to which respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements relating to 'training and development' is summarised:

- Receipt of training necessary to do the job: 94% pre and 65% post
- Opportunity to discuss training and development needs: 86% pre and 61% post
- Deepen understanding and knowledge of the industry: 95% pre and 87% post
- Develop skills relevant to my career goals: 95% pre and 80% post
- Opportunity for personal development: 95% pre and 84% post

**Industry Experience: Roles and Responsibilities**

The degree to which respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements relating to 'roles and responsibilities' is summarised:

- Experience in a variety of roles and work situations: 89% pre and 82% post
- Opportunity to contribute new ideas: 68% pre and 68% post
- Opportunity to make decisions: 59% pre and 63% post
- Receive clearly defined projects/tasks for the duration: 80% pre and 75% post
- Relevancy to career goals: 77% pre and 58% post

**Industry Experience: Work Environment**

The degree to which respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements relating to 'work environment' is summarised:

- Treated like full team member: 78% pre and 84% post
- Included in staff meetings: 60% pre and 63% post
- Included as a team member by colleagues and managers: 82% pre and 90% post
- Included in social activities within the organisation: 75% pre and 77% post
- Opportunity to form positive working relationships with colleagues: 95% pre and 91% post
- Good work-life balance: 76% pre and 68% post
- Expectation to be flexible with hours worked: 79% pre and 50% post.



### Industry Experience: Future Career Prospects

The degree to which respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statements relating to 'future career prospects' is summarised:

- Placement attractive on CV: 99% pre and 94% post
- Better prepared for career in the industry: 98% pre and 88% post
- Improving career prospects: 97% pre and 87% post

Two statements were just asked in the post-placement survey and are summarised:

- Development of contacts that will benefit career: 80% either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'
- Assistance in career decisions and planning: 89% either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'

## EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS AND INTENTIONS AFTER GRADUATION

This section addresses the area of employment expectations and students' intention to work in the industry after graduation and is discussed under the following main areas: previous work experience in the tourism/hospitality/events industry, intention to work in the industry post graduation, preferred organisation to work in the industry, preferred position to work in the industry, expected annual salary in a preferred role, expected hours per week, time student expects to work in one position before being promoted and future employment priorities.

- 74% of respondents had worked in the tourism industry prior to going on placement
- Prior to going on placement 90% of students intended to work in the industry post graduation. When the students had completed work placement in the industry, 88% indicated they still intended to work in the industry post graduation. While this finding shows a slight drop of 2%, it bodes highly favourably when compared to international research conducted by Jenkins (2001) which found that as their degree progressed, student's perception of the industry deteriorated and their desire to work therein diminished considerably. Jenkins (2001) research had found that as few as 50% of students intended to enter the sector post placement. The finding in DIT's research bodes well for the industry.
- Upon completion of placement, the 12% who were either unsure or do not intend to work in the industry were asked to provide reasons for their decision. Only 5 respondents provided a response.
- The organisations students would like to work in post graduation was provided by respondents. While 21% were unsure, a further 21% indicated a desire to work in a hotel. A further 16% indicated that an event management company was their preferred organisation, 8% expressed a desire to work with a tour operator, 6% want to work in the public sector such as a local authority and a further 5% would like to work with Fáilte Ireland, a travel agency or a marketing organisation/promotional company.
- Three quarters of students have a career aspiration of working in management. More specifically, 56% indicated a preference to work in overall management and 19% specifically stated a preference to work as sales and marketing managers. A further 9% indicated a desire to be self employed working as their own boss and 7% indicated a desire to work in supervisory level positions.
- Thirty two percent of pre-placement respondents and 31% of post-placement respondent did know what their expected salary was in their preferred role. It can be inferred that overall, the reality of placement has reduced students' salary expectations, where 12% of pre and 18% of post placement respondents expected to earn a salary of €30,001-€40,000, while 17% of pre and 15% of post placement respondents expected to earn a salary of €40,001-€50,000.
- Students realise from placement that the average tourism/hospitality/event job requires more than 40 hours per week. This is evidenced in the following findings - 30% of pre and 43% of post placement respondents expect to between 41 and 50 hours per week, while 45% of pre and 29% of post placement respondents expect to work between 31 and 40 hours per week. It is interesting to note

that the number of hours that students expect to work increased after they had completed their work placement.

- Post placement the students expect to work longer in one position before being promoted: 25% of post-placement students expect to work 19-24 months in one position before being promoted. The corresponding figure for pre-placement students is 18%. For 29% of both pre and post placement responses, there was an expectation to work 13-18 months in one position before being promoted. A significant 18% (for both pre and post responses) did not know how much time they would spend in one position before being promoted.
- 34% of pre and 38% of post placement responses indicated they expected to spend 1-2 years with their first employer upon completing their studies in DIT. A further 30% of pre and 26% of post placement respondents were unable to answer this question.
- When considering future employment opportunities, respondents were asked to identify a number of key areas. These were ranked in order of importance. Taking the top 3 ranking preferences for each of the priorities, a combined result is provided. A *'challenging and interesting job'* was the top priority for both pre (62%) and post (70%) placement respondents. A *'good salary'* was the second most important priority for both pre (60%) and post (57%) of respondents. The third most important priority for students pre placement was *'job security'* (44%), perhaps reflective of the economic climate in 2008/2009. Interestingly, the third most important priority for students post placement was the *'opportunity for training and professional development'*. *'Excellent benefits and perks'* ranked lowest for both pre (25%) and post (11%) placement respondents in terms of priority.
- Further in-depth analysis reveals that both sets of respondents ranked a *'challenging / interesting job'* as the number one future employment priority. This was even more apparent after placement when 46% of post placement respondents compared to 37% of pre-placement respondents ranked *'challenging / interesting job'* as their main priority for employment. This highlights a significant increase of 9% once students had completed placement.

## CONCLUSIONS

As outlined at the beginning of this report, central to this research was the need to develop and explore in an Irish context, the findings of an Anglo-Dutch student study by Jenkins, conducted in 2001. Jenkins had showed that as their degree progressed, students' perception of the industry deteriorated and their desire to work therein diminished considerably, with as few as 50% of students intending to enter the sector post placement. While Jenkins identified that work placement appeared to be the main source of student disenchantment, this research conducted by the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) in Ireland did not produce the same findings. Prior to going on placement, 90% of students in the Irish study indicated they intended to work in the industry after they graduated. However, when students had completed work placement in the tourism, hospitality or event management industry, 88% indicated they still intended to work in the industry post graduation, showing a drop of only 2%. This figure shows that the industry in Ireland is thus haemorrhaging only a small portion of potential managers.

The results of this research are to be reviewed in conjunction with research conducted with Placement Officers/Equivalent from colleges and industry consultations, to identify lessons that can be learned to maximize the placement's contribution to student learning, development and continued progression in the industry.

***APPENDIX B:***  
***Summary of Outputs from Industry  
Consultation, 2010***

## INDUSTRY CONSULTATION – SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC CONVERSATIONS

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010

**Present:** Veronica Beausang, Dublin City Council (Events), Niamh Fitzpatrick (Belvedere Hotel), Lisa Fitzsimons (Guinness Storehouse), Niamh Jordan (Gresham Hotel), Gemma Lucey (Maldron Hotel), Joanne Martin (Radisson Blu Hotel), Mary McCann (Dublin City Council – Dublin City Hall), Sophia Rudehall (Abbey Tours),

**In Attendance:** Dr. Sheila Flanagan (Head of School of Hospitality Management & Tourism), Dr. Kevin Griffin (Head of Tourism, School of Hospitality Management & Tourism), David Kirk (DIT, Head of Professional Development Services), Stephanie Bourke (DIT Placement Officer) and Liz Kennedy-Burke (DIT-REAP Research Co-ordinator).

**Apologies:** Yvonne Brady (Hilton Hotels), Gerard Mulligan (Ovation), Nicola Walsh (Dublin Tourism), Francis Roche (Marathon Sport Travel), Liz Hanly (Hanly Events), Jay Rochford (Cool Bawn Quay), Eoghan O'Mara Walsh (Heritage Island).

A written contribution was received from MCI Ovation, which has been incorporated into the outputs.

### PRE-PLACEMENT PREPARATION

1. Industry/Placement Organisations to receive copy of students' induction material
2. Industry/Host Organisations to be given the opportunity to meet as a group before placement takes place or receive a copy of induction material as outlined in point 1.
3. Industry/Host Organisations to receive student's expectations/learning objectives in advance
4. Industry/Host Organisations to develop job descriptions for role – link to students' learning objectives and skills list
5. Industry/Host Organisations to receive copy of criteria for students' report/assessment project
6. Industry/Host Organisations to continue to present as guest lecturers to students and DIT to assess the opportunity of expanding this programme. In addition to presenting on their organisations, Industry/Host Organisations to provide students with a real insight about working in the real business world, social skills, punctuality, dress code, writing business emails etc.
7. DIT to continue to offer site visits to Host Organisations as part of other modules
8. DIT to encourage students to work in industry during holidays (e.g. complete 200 hours work per year as in Event Management and Hospitality Management– assess feasibility of expanding this to all programmes)
9. DIT to impress upon students the importance of making a first impression with employers, clients, guests etc.
10. DIT to develop familiarisation trip programme to Host Organisations (within Ireland/Dublin)
11. DIT to develop Skills list template – this should be broad enough to include learning objectives, personal development skills etc.
12. Industry/Host Organisations to receive a copy of Skills list in advance of placement
13. Industry/Host Organisations to introduce a Shadow day – where student can shadow someone in the area they will be working in, prior to starting placement
14. DIT to communicate to students Industry/Host Organisations' criteria for recruitment of students:
  - a. Ability to show evidence of motivation/honesty
  - b. Ability to show evidence of willingness to do hard work
  - c. Ability to show evidence of real interest in working in sector (e.g. through previous experience)
15. DIT to communicate to students the following key industry needs:

- a. The importance of being prepared for the real business world
- b. The need to improve business language in terms of writing business emails etc
- c. The need for social skills, punctuality, work dress code etc.

## DURING PLACEMENT

1. Industry/Host Organisations to develop a short Induction Programme for all placement students. and could incorporate some or all of the following:
  - a. Presentation on the Host Organisation – outlining mission, objectives, organisational structure and related departments and personnel
  - b. Provide short Market Overview
  - c. Provide Industry Segmentation/Positioning Overview
  - d. One-on-one chat with student outlining Host Organisation’s perspective through the job profile/description and linking to students’ learning objectives and skills list
  - e. Short tour of the organisation, introducing student to staff members in their roles
  - f. Include short desk time (e.g. around 1 hour) for student to read up on organisation material
2. Industry/Host Organisations to develop a Mentor and if possible a Buddy system. The initial meeting could include the following;
  - a. Assess what student wants to achieve
  - b. Outline role of the mentor to achieve organisation and students objectives
  - c. Outline barriers
  - d. Outline what student can do to achieve objectives
3. Parameters outlined in point 2, could be re-assessed at regular intervals throughout placement.
4. Develop a Shadowing system – this could be the buddy/mentor or someone working in the area the student will be working in.
5. Develop stronger linkages of student’s projects/assessment report to Industry/Host Organisations needs
6. Aim to rotate students ( around departments – e.g. for a 6 month placement – 3 departments every 2 months – if scale of the organisation permits)
7. Industry mentor to conduct ‘job chats’ with students every month - linking to learning objectives, skills development or Conduct one-on-one reviews every few months
8. Improve communication between Host Organisation, HEI and Student by implementing the following:
  - a. Develop a network of Host Organisation so they can learn from each other
  - b. Students to communicate with other students while on placement
  - c. Students to communicate more regularly with HEI Mentor by keeping monthly time-logs on the following: ‘My tasks v my objectives v my experience’
  - d. Students to communicate more regularly with Industry Mentor by keeping monthly time-logs on the following: ‘My tasks v my objectives v my experience’
  - e. Industry Mentor and College Mentor to communicate on the outputs of (c) and (d)
9. Develop stronger interactions between colleges and Industry/Host Organisations
  - a. E.g. Where feasible, College Mentor to visit Host Organisation on occasion during placement.
  - b. College Mentor to send emails to students – particularly overseas placements
10. Inclusion of Host Organisation in students’ placement assessment e.g.
  - a. 5% - successful completion of placement
  - b. 5% - review of skills list (student also to complete review of skills list before and after placement – self reflection/self-actualisation exercise and see how it matches that of Industry/Host Organisations’ Mentor.

## ***APPENDIX C:***

# ***Summary Of Outputs From HEI (Higher Education Institution) Consultation, 2010***

## PLACEMENT OFFICERS CONSULTATION – SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC CONVERSATIONS

**Date:** 9th February, 2010

**Present:** Deborah O'Hanlon, Shannon College of Management; Gerry Talbot, GMIT; Pat Hannon, Athlone IT; Stephanie Bourke, DIT; Clem Ryan, DIT; TJ O'Connor, IT Tralee; Catherine Staunton, Dundalk IT; David Irwin, IT Tallaght Dublin; Liz Kennedy Burke, DIT

*Note:* Sheila Flanagan, Head of School of Hospitality Management and Kevin Griffin, Head of Tourism joined the group for part of the meeting.

**Apologies:** Antonio Sejean, Tallaght; Angela Feeney, Tallaght; Sean Duffy, Tourism Killybegs, James Hanrahan, Sligo; Adrian Gregan, CIT.

### 1. Introductions

Introductions were made and it became apparent that management of placement differed considerably in the various colleges. Some colleges have dedicated Placement Officers, others have a dedicated Links office managed by administrative staff, while in other colleges, and members of academic staff manage the entire placement process. In all colleges it was agreed that senior management involvement is important to ensure effective running of the placement element of programmes.

### 2. Existing Experiences/Practices of Colleges

Extensive discussions took place on existing experiences and placement practices of colleges. The exploratory nature of the research showed that in most respects, the discussions led to more questions than answers. In order to consider all experiences, the attendees were asked to provide DIT with a summary of placement practices/systems in their respective colleges. The detail is provided at the end of this document.

Participants were asked to outline their needs from industry and the following is a summary of that provided.

### 3. HEI/Placement Officer's Needs from Industry

- Designated person who understands placement as intermediary with Colleges. Stronger internal communications within placement organisation i.e. Department Head and HR Manager (who both have an awareness of the placement agreement). With reduced budgets, many HR departments are now being removed / reduced.
- Industry Intermediary and one Mentor (line manager) in the organisation e.g. assistant manager to take ownership of placement and manage the student
- Assess the degree to which industry organisations would accept responsibility for a percentage of assessment mark –(tick box format)
- What type of support can the college/Placement Officer offer the industry
- Ensure there is active communication between student and industry mentor – student to have an active role in solving problems/offering solutions
- Be open/aware of students who are finding placement themselves
- If possible, commit to rotate student around departments, every 2 months for example (possibly just applicable to large organisations)
- Provide Induction at the start of placement to outline their role, to show them around the organisation and to introduce them to other staff members.
- Be sure to be aware of legal responsibility/duty of care to student (HR)
- Need to gain greater awareness and respect for the placement process through enhanced participation

### 4. International Best Practice/Relevant Research

Participants to forward any relevant research/best practice initiatives to Liz Kennedy Burke (LKB)

## **5. Model/Framework Development**

Given this research is at its initiation stage in terms of model/framework development, the group agreed to provide information on the Placement Model (s) within their individual colleges to LKB, which was collated and incorporated into this report.

## **6. Placement Network**

- The attendees showed a strong level of interest in becoming part of a HEI Placement Network.
- The Network might act as a Consultative/Research body with a remit to ensure best practice
- It was agreed to host future meetings in the different Network member colleges on a rotational basis.
- Attendees provided their vision for the Network and the outputs are presented later in this document.

## **7. Other Matters**

David Irwin agreed to distribute details of Diary Pro (software package that includes learner profile, learner outcome etc.) to DIT for circulation.



## SUMMARY OF EXISTING PLACEMENT PRACTICE IN IOT SECTOR

The following table outlines a summary of placement Practice across the IoT sector.

**DIT – Dublin Institute of Technology**      **GMIT – Galway / Mayo Institute of Technology**  
**IT Tralee – Institute of Technology Tralee**      **LYIT – Letterkenny Institute of Technology**  
**AIT – Athlone Institute of Technology**      **WIT – Waterford Institute of Technology**  
**DKIT – Dundalk Institute of Technology**

Note: DKIT – applies to BBS in Event Management only

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Sector								
		DIT	IT Tralee	AIT	DKIT	GMIT	LYIT	WIT
<b>Person responsible for Placement within College</b>	<i>Placement Officer</i>	Yes	No	Yes	Co-ordinates Student preparation; Placement site contact; Administrative follow-up; Records/ Contract mgnt	1 Manager & 2 Administrators	Yes - Administration Grade III	No
	<i>Academic</i>		Programme Lecturer	Yes	Lead Lecturers input: Sourcing suitable site; Site visits; Assessment development and delivery	No		One academic assigned some hours to manage placement
	<i>Combination</i>	Support from Programme Tutors		Yes	Yes, as above	No		
<b>Preparation for Placements</b>	<i>Time allocated for Preparation</i>	Yes, Semester prior to Placement	15 hours	Yes	x3 , 2 hour sessions/ workshops prior to placement, Overview of placement & key points of process outlined, CV preparation; Interview guidelines	4-5 months	Learners issued with placement guidelines at beginning of year	Academic allocated 4 hours per week to manage placement for three class groups, total students numbers - 47
	<i>Frequency/Duration</i>	Weekly, 1 timetabled hour	1 hour Weekly	No set procedure	As above	Daily		Weekly
	<i>One-to-one or Class Groups</i>	Class	Both	Yes	Combination – workshops with class groups and one-to-one follow up where necessary	Class visits & individual consulting	Both	Both
	<i>Is it a module that is assessed, if so how is it assessed</i>	Assignments pre and during Placement	Portfolio		Students attendance at sessions is mandatory	Assessed by academic staff	Assessed as part of Learning lifestyle and communication module	Not assessed

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Sector

		DIT	IT Tralee	AIT	DKIT	GMIT	LYIT	WIT
<b>Preparation for Placements (cont'd)</b>	<i>Portion by Placement Officer/College</i>	Yes	50%	Yes	80%	80%	60 70%	All - In cooperation with students and college
	<i>Portion by students</i>	Yes	50%	Yes	20%	20%	30-40%	
<b>Selection of Placement</b>	<i>How are organisations chosen?</i>	Track record/word of mouth/student sourced	Professional Suitability	Past experience, vacancies, recommendation, direct contact by organisation	All placement must be approved through Placement Office to verify suitability according to: Placement learning objectives, ability to reach set hours; Comprising: Existing databases, academic contacts, student sourcing	Contacts through Fáilte Ireland, lecturers & staff, past graduates	Based on registered establishments, quality of business, historical links with College	
	<i>What percentage of placements are based in Ireland</i>	60% Varies from year to year	90%	90%	60 - 70%	90%	95%	Recent years 90% Irish placements – students did not wish to travel. Up to 2002 – around 50/50 overseas/ domestic placement.
	<i>What percentage of placements are based overseas</i>	40%	10%	10%	30 – 40%	10%	5% - Hoping to increase this with new relationships with international colleges/ organisations	Currently more overseas placement than previously - see above
	<i>Do Students complete interviews for Placement?</i>	Yes	Yes	10% are interviewed by industry	80-90% of students attend interview	Yes - 98%	Yes in general, have an industry day, interviews held in College	Yes – possibly 90%. Overseas placement, telephone interviews are conducted

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Sector

		DIT	IT Tralee	AIT	DKIT	GMIT	LYIT	WIT
<b>Admin / Paperwork / Agreements</b>	<i>What sort of Agreement do you have with industry</i>					Student Work placement Letter of Agreement signed by employer and student	No formal agreements, work closely with trade associations, IHF, RAI and Fáilte Ireland North West and alumni	
	<i>Written document signed by student/college/ Employer</i>	No	Yes – currently for Level6 Programmes	No	Yes – Learning Contract	Also, Student Work Placement Registration Form (signed by employer & student)	Yes	
	<i>One document for student /one document for employer</i>	Yes		Yes		No	Yes	Yes
	<i>What % of employers provide Job Descriptions</i>	60% - Estimated figure	0%- Has not been a requirement to Date	Very few.	30%		50%	Very few
<b>Payment for Placement</b>	<i>Does College have policy for students to be paid/Payment policy</i>	No - Advice if requested	Normally came from Fáilte Ireland	Yes	Follow the payment policy of the host organization –		Yes - Follow national guidelines from Fáilte Ireland	Preference for paid placement, but if good learning outcomes, unpaid placement used.
	<i>What % of students are paid while on placement</i>	50% Estimate. Often small figure/expenses	90%	95%	Majority (90%) of placements in Ireland non-paid, Majority (90%)of placement abroad paid	90%	100%	Up to 2008 100% paid placement, 2008 90% paid placement
<b>English Language Difficulties</b>	<i>How does your College address English language deficiencies</i>	Classes are conducted through English	Not Experienced to date	English classes arranged at start of each academic year. No clear policy, has caused difficulties in past			Generally not an issue	Special English classes

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Sector

		DIT	IT Tralee	AIT	DKIT	GMIT	LYIT	WIT
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<i>Are your students asked to set learning objectives</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes - Log book assists students with objectives	Yes	No	Yes	As part of placement report student's document objectives at the outset of their placement
	<i>Do the learning objectives include personal/professional objectives</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes and recorded as part of learning contract	n/a	Yes	
	<i>Does the college send learning outcomes of placement module to placement employers</i>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes as part of placement overview/promotional information	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Managing Expectations</b>	<i>How do you manage employers expectations of students' ability</i>	Discussion/Building relationships	Yes, By Holding workshops and discussions on individual Students	Based on grade of establishment, and student performance during academic year	Use of learning contract; Placement Office makes contact with host org prior to placement commencement & central point of contact during placement; Academic Tutor visits host org. and issues can be addressed	N/A Expectations are seen and met between student and employer	Have meeting/lunch with industry once per year (sometimes poor attendance from industry) Visit majority of placements & meet with employers	Discussion with employees – complete honesty.
	<i>Do Colleges request Placement Role Profile</i>	Yes - Do not always obtain	Yes	No - If business is unknown to us then yes	We ask for job description/ profile but cannot insist on it		No	
<b>Level of employer involvement</b>	<i>Inductions</i>	Varies from one organisation to another	Yes	Expected	Yes	Yes	High	Yes
	<i>Involvement in Assessment</i>	No but do Appraise – no mark at present	No	Student evaluation report completed by employer	30% - towards student placement final grade	Yes	Yes	No
	<i>Conduct Appraisals</i>	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Depends on establishment	Yes

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Sector

		DIT	IT Tralee	AIT	DKIT	GMIT	LYIT	WIT
<b>Level of employer involvement (cont'd)</b>	<i>Provide Training plans</i>	Not always possible to obtain	Yes	Expected	Yes, where possible	Yes	Depends on establishment	Sometimes
	<i>Does employer request a student profile</i>	Yes - CV	Yes - Some	On occasion. Front office positions	Yes - Varies from org. to org.	Yes	No	
<b>Format of Assessment</b>	<i>Progress Report</i>		Yes, By Visiting throughout Placement	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	<i>Interviews/Oral exam</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Presentation upon return to College	No
	<i>Diary/Log</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes - Case Study & Learning Portfolio	Yes	Yes	
	<i>Business Report</i>	Yes	Yes- Relevant to some Programmes			Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Placement itself – input from industry, mentors report, students report</i>	Yes Placement is pass/fail. Mandatory element	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Level of involvement of Placement employer in Assessment</i>	None	50%	None	Yes 30% - towards student placement final grade	Monitor evaluation through employer	High	Informed by report from employer
	<i>Does Placement mark count for Final Award (yes/no)</i>	No	No	No		Yes - Awarded Pass or 5-30 Credits depending on course	No	Pass/fail basis
<b>Visiting Students</b>	<i>Do you visit every student while on placement, if yes, who does this</i>	Within Ireland and Europe	Yes	Yes		Yes	Visit 90% by combination of placement officer and academic lecturers	Visit as many as possible. Not overseas.
	<i>Academic</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Placement Office</i>	Yes				Yes	Yes	

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Sector

		DIT	IT Tralee	AIT	DKIT	GMIT	LYIT	WIT
<b>Visiting Students (cont'd)</b>	<i>Combination</i>	Yes - Students assigned Mentor by Placement Officer. Placement Office also Mentor				Yes	Yes	
	<i>No visits</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	<i>What is the timing of the Mentor visit within the placement</i>	No set time. After 6/8 weeks unless an issue arises	Half-Way Through	Mid-term of placement	Mid placement where possible, All international student during Summer time	Visits carried out from June – September	Generally between mid May and Mid June each year	Once the student is in placement a number of weeks
	<i>How is this funded</i>	DIT if in Ireland, at cost, by Erasmus Programme if in EU	Traditionally Fáilte Ireland	Institute Funded	By Academic Department/ School		By College/Fáilte Ireland	Very small travel budget
<b>Contact With Student</b>	<i>What format of contact is in place in college for student while on placement</i>	College Mentor/Placement Office		Placement officer.			Can contact placement officer by mobile phone/e-mail or contact College directly	
	<i>Dedicated person - academic mentor</i>	Mentor	Yes	Academic staff roster for a specific week to deal with issues	Yes	No		Yes
	<i>Dedicated person/office – administrative</i>	Placement Officer		Yes		Yes	Yes	
<b>How deal with problems</b>	<i>Does your college have a Plan if all students are not placed</i>	Yes - Keep working with students who fail to secure places until they do. This has been successful to date.	This problem has not yet been encountered but has been discussed	Has not been an issue. Under current climate, expect problems			To date all are placed with the exception of illness or deferrals	Yes - Flexible semester, enterprise project
<b>Level of Interest in Placement Network</b>	<i>Level of interest in being involved in HEI Placement Network</i>	Strong	Yes	Very interested		Strong	Strong	

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Sector

		DIT	IT Tralee	AIT	DKIT	GMIT	LYIT	WIT
Value of Networking	<i>Broad Vision and what you would like this Network to achieve</i>	Awareness raising vis-à-vis industry/sharing ideas/ pursuit of best practice	Yes - A support mechanism and a more uniform approach by all providers.	Develop placement procedures that would be common in all IT'S, Share information and assist each other in sourcing establishments at home and abroad; Develop software; Networking		Sharing of Information	Feel that we could learn from the experience of others and begin to formulate best practice guidelines and could co-operate in placing learners	

## STATUS OF PLACEMENT IN IOT TOURISM, HOSPITALITY, CULINARY ARTS PROGRAMMES

The following tables outline the status of placement in a range of Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts Programmes from across the Institutes of Technology sector.

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Tourism / Hospitality / Culinary Arts Programmes							
HEI	Title of Courses	Level	Compulsory	Duration (weeks)	Paid/ Unpaid	ECTS	Assessment
Dundalk Institute Technology	Hospitality Skills (Fáilte Ireland)	6	yes	12	Paid	N/A	
	Professional Cookery(Fáilte Ireland)	6	yes	12	Paid	N/A	
	BBs Event Management	7	yes	21	Where possible	30	Pre placement assessment - 15%; Lecture visit - 25%, final Report - 30%, Employer 30%
	BBs Hospitality Management	7					
Athlone Institute Technology	Front office management	6	yes	10	Paid		Logbook, visit and employer evaluation
	Front Office and tourism Management	7	yes	24	paid	10	Logbook, visit and employer evaluation
	Hotel and leisure management	7	yes	25	paid	10	Logbook, visit and employer evaluation
	Spa Management	7	yes	26	paid	10	Logbook, visit and employer evaluation



Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Tourism / Hospitality / Culinary Arts Programmes

HEI	Title of Courses	Level	Compulsory	Duration (weeks)	Paid/ Unpaid	ECTS	Assessment
Dublin Institute of Technology	BA Hospitality Management, year 2	7	yes	15	either/or	yes/30	Pre-Placement Prep/Learning Log/Report/Employer Appraisal
	BA Tourism Management, year 2	7	yes	26	either/or	yes/30	Pre-Placement Prep/Learning Log/Report/Employer Appraisal
	BA Leisure Management, year 2	7	yes	12	either/or	yes/10	Pre- Placement Prep/Learning Log/Report/Employer Appraisal
	BA Culinary Arts year 1	8	yes	5	No	yes/5	Reflective Journal/Employer Appraisal
	BA Culinary Arts year 2	8	yes	5	No	yes/5	Reflective Journal/Presentation/Employer Appraisal
	BA Culinary Arts year 3	8	yes	9	either/or	yes/15	Pre-Placement prep/Reflective Journal/Report/Presentation/Employer Appraisal
	BSc Tourism Marketing, year 3	8	yes	26	either/or	yes/30	Pre-Placement Prep/Learning log/Report/Project/Employer Appraisal
	BSc International Hospitality Management Year 3	8	yes	26	either/or	yes/30	Pre-Placement prep/Learning Log/Report/Project/Employer Appraisal
	BSc Event Management year 3	8	yes	26	either/or	yes/30	Pre-Placement prep/Learning log/Report/Project/Employer Appraisal
	BSc Culinary Entrepreneurship, year 3	8	yes	12	either/or	yes/30	Pre-Placement prep/Learning Log/Report/Presentation/Employer App
BSc Bar Management, year 3	8	yes	12	either/or	yes/30	Pre-Placement prep/Learning Log/Report/Presentation/Employer Appraisal	

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in IoT Tourism / Hospitality / Culinary Arts Programmes

HEI	Title of Courses	Level	Compulsory	Duration (weeks)	Paid/ Unpaid	ECTS	Assessment
Institute of Technology, Tralee	Higher Certificate in Arts - Culinary Arts	6	Yes	10	Paid	5	Work Based Reflective Journal and Mentors Evaluation
	Higher Certificate in Arts - Hospitality	6	Yes	10	Paid	5	Work Based Reflective Journal and Mentors Evaluation
	Higher Certificate in Arts - Bar Supervision	6	Yes	10	Paid	5	Work Based Reflective Journal and Mentors Evaluation
	Higher Certificate in Business - Tourism	6	Yes	10	Paid	5	Work Based Reflective Journal and Mentors Evaluation
	Higher Certificate in Business - Front Office Management	6	Yes	10	Paid	5	Work Based Reflective Journal and Mentors Evaluation
	Hotel and Resort Management	7	Yes Semester 6	6	Either	15	Pass/Fail, Reflective Journal, Mentors Evaluation, Student Presentation
	Travel and Tourism Management	7	Yes Semester 6	6	Either	15	Pass/Fail, Reflective Journal, Mentors Evaluation, Student Presentation
	Adventure Tourism Management	7	Yes Semester 6	6	Either	15	Pass/Fail, Reflective Journal, Mentors Evaluation, Student Presentation
	Hotel and Resort Management	8	Yes Semester 6	6	Either	15	Pass/Fail, Reflective Journal, Mentors Evaluation, Student Presentation
	Travel and Tourism Management	8	Yes Semester 6	6	Either	15	Pass/Fail, Reflective Journal, Mentors Evaluation, Student Presentation
	Adventure Tourism Management	8	Yes Semester 6	6	Either	15	Pass/Fail, Reflective Journal, Mentors Evaluation, Student Presentation

Summary of Existing Placement Practice in HEI/loT Tourism / Hospitality / Culinary Arts Programmes							
HEI	Title of Courses	Level	Compulsory	Duration (weeks)	Paid/ Unpaid	ECTS	Assessment
Letterkenny Institute Technology	Higher Certificate in Business Studies in Front Office Management	6	Yes	12 weeks	Paid	no	Reflective Journal/Presentation/Employer Appraisal
	Higher Certificate Arts in Culinary Arts	6	Yes	12 weeks	Paid	no	Reflective Journal/Presentation/Employer Appraisal
	Higher Certificate in Arts Hospitality Studies	6	Yes	12 weeks	Paid	no	Reflective Journal/Presentation/Employer Appraisal
	Higher Certificate in Arts Bar Supervision	6	Yes	12 weeks	Paid	no	Reflective Journal/Presentation/Employer Appraisal
	Higher Certificate in Business in Tourism	6	Yes	12 weeks	Paid	no	Reflective Journal/Presentation/Employer Appraisal
	BB in International Tourism & Hospitality Enterprise	7	Yes	12 weeks	Paid	no	Reflective Journal/Presentation/Employer Appraisal
	BB in International Culinary Enterprise	7	Yes	12 weeks	Paid	no	Reflective Journal/Presentation/Employer Appraisal
Shannon College of Hotel Management	Diploma in International Hotel Management**	6	Yes	52	Paid	30	3 progress reports, 1 project, presentation
	BBs in International Hotel Management - year 2	8	Yes	52	Paid	30	3 progress reports, 1 project, presentation
	B. Comm. in International Hotel Management - year 2	8	Yes	52	Paid	30	3 progress reports, 1 project, presentation
	BBs in International Hotel Management - year 4	8	Yes	40+	Paid	30	2 progress reports and a viva voce interview
	B. Comm. in International Hotel Management - year 4	8	Yes	40+	Paid	30	2 progress reports and a viva voce interview

\*\*only available if student does not progress to year 3

**HEA**

**Higher Education Authority**  
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