

This session introduced us to the development process of a new Level Two module, "History@Work", to be launched on 18 students in September 2002. The heritage industry in the area (NW England) was an obvious choice, providing work placement opportunities in archives, curation, historical research and work with the public.

This module aims to provide heritage industry work experience placements and in September 2002 18 students will be the first cohort to try it out. The push comes from the institution which is keen to develop work based opportunities. From the work done so far, it is clear that everyone benefits. Apart from the benefit for the students, placements demonstrate community links, which are important both to the institution, and to the providers, who need to sustain any local or central government funding.

The process had three stages:

- Building the contacts, with meetings on site to seek commitment
- Developing the module in partnership with the placement providers
- Consultation with placement providers, other academics and external bodies

Collecting sufficient placement providers was time consuming, but it is expected that with good institutional support in the operation of the first year, providers will return in further years, and given the close links within the heritage industry, requests will come to the institution. Practical issues like health and safety risk assessments were less onerous than expected, because placement providers usually have sophisticated systems in place, due to their work with the public.

There is a risk that students will spend too long working on such a course, to the disadvantage of other courses in the year, and this has to be monitored carefully, perhaps by limiting physical attendance at the placement.

The module runs over 2 semesters: the first being lecture/seminar based - introducing issues about the heritage industry. In the second semester the students take up their placements.

- The benefits for the student were summarised as:
- Demonstrating the relevance of historical knowledge and skills in the workplace
- Allowing a greater responsibility for their own learning
- Providing a useful insight into possible career opportunities
- Helping to acclimatise to the demands of professional life
- Increased understanding of the world of work, including its social and cultural aspects

For the department, the benefits were seen as:

- Introducing a real world dimension to teaching and learning
- Providing staff with direct insights into how organisations which might be taught about, actually function in practice
- Providing case study material to test academic concepts and theories
- Opening up possible research or consultancy opportunities
- Enhancing the subject areas portfolio of modules
- Billy Frank, a historian himself, intends to run the first few years of the programme, ironing out any issues, and then expects to pass it over to the department.