

**Case Study: Using Facebook to record learner activity**

*'Assessment and learning: involving the learner.'* LSC funded project.

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**The context:** Tyne Metropolitan College is a Further Education college based in North Tyneside. It has approximately 12,500 students on 2 campuses. The Foundation Learning Department has around 150 students with a wide range of needs. The Preparing for Employment programme is aimed at learners with mild learning difficulties or some behavioural issues, including students who do not have a specific difficulty but have previously been classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Literacy levels for learners on the course range from Entry 2 to Level 1.

**The challenge:** Part of the programme involves attending a work experience placement, either for a block week or for 1 day a week over several weeks. The quality of information course tutors receive about students when on placement is usually minimal. Students are asked to keep a written diary, but the paper format (see supporting documentation) and the students' general lack of writing skills results in very little being recorded, most of which is repetitive and not very useful.

**What we did:**

- Course tutor started a group in Facebook entitled "Prep Placements" (tutor was already a Facebook member, but joining is straightforward). Group was set up so that membership of the group had to be confirmed by the tutor, so that membership could be restricted to the relevant students.
- Students were invited via Facebook to join the group, and encouraged to do so by the tutor in person. (NB students do not need to be Facebook "friends" with the tutor to be able to join the group, thus maintaining privacy of tutor. This was important as although there is no established protocol for staff being "friends" with students, the tutor has a personal policy of not accepting students as "friends" until they have completed the course. This is so that students do not get conflicting messages about the role of the tutor.)
- Students were made aware that the tutor would be monitoring the page and that they should behave appropriately when using it. This was also posted onto the group page (see supporting documentation).
- Tutor posted a different question each week for students to answer. Examples included: *"What do you like most?"*; *"What have you been told off for?"*; *"If they offered you a job would you take it?"* etc (see supporting documentation).
- Students are reminded about the question each week on the day before their placement.

**The outcomes:**

- 4 students joined straight away and responded to the questions weekly.
- 1 student joined when she did her block placement week and responded to the questions during that week.
- 1 student had difficulty joining and was helped to join by another student, after which she responded to questions retrospectively to “catch up” and then continued responding on a weekly basis.
- 2 students joined but did not respond to any questions.
- 4 students did not join the group.

**The impact:**

- Students who have given responses have been able to print off pages from the site to use as supporting evidence for their Work Placement unit as part of the Certificate in Employability and Personal Development.
- Tutor has a better idea of what is happening away from the college and feels more involved with the students’ experiences.
- Student on a block week felt that she was still in touch with the college and being monitored even though she was off site.
- Tutor has been able to use responses as a basis for class discussion, which has also included those who did not join the group or respond to questions. One example was the question “Who is your supervisor and what do you think of them?” Although some responses were unclear in what they meant due to poor literacy (eg “Olive and a think she is dead quite”), they provided a basis for questioning and a starting point for a discussion about the role of a supervisor at work. (It emerged that Olive is *quiet*.)
- Students have used peer support and helped each other in accessing the site. They have shown a keen interest in what the question of the week would be, and when it was late being posted one week, asked “Where’s our question?”
- Some students have enhanced their ICT skills.

**Future developments:**

- Practical improvements: To increase participation in the future it is intended to introduce the online group at the start of the year, so that students are accustomed to using it prior to attending their placement.
- Students will be shown how to use discussion threads to keep several topics ongoing at the same time.
- Students will be given 15 minutes as part of their IT session to access the group in college.
- Extension: After Easter students will be given the opportunity to take turns to ask their own “Question of the Week”.
- A consent form will be produced for students to sign to say they are aware that their comments will be in the public domain and might be accessed by people in their work placement or members of the public.

**Supporting documentation:**

1. Paper based diary as recommended by City and Guilds

**For further information contact:**

Penny Blackburn  
Course Tutor  
0191 2295000 ext 5353  
07505871814  
[penelope.blackburn@tynemet.ac.uk](mailto:penelope.blackburn@tynemet.ac.uk)

# WORK PLACEMENT DIARY

Page 1

Name:

Tutor:

Telephone number:

Placement:

Placement contact:

Telephone number:

Date:

Use this page to record information about your Placement

Name and address of work placement

What service or product does your placement provide?

What tasks will you be expected to do?

Start time:

Lunch break:

Finish time:

Do you need to take lunch with you or money to buy lunch?

Page 2

Record your experiences and achievements each day before you leave your work placement or when you get home

Date

Activity/experience

**(This page is repeated for each day of placement attended)**

## 2. Examples of questions and comments from the Facebook Group page

**Tutor:** Hi All, welcome to the prep placements group – feel free to be honest about your placements and what has been happening but REMEMBER Penny is monitoring!! No bullying or slagging off anyone who is part of the group :D

**Tutor:** Who is the best / nicest person you work with at your placement? (Not counting yourself of course!!)

**Student A:** penny thats hard because there all nice to hard to choose one

30 March at 18:26 ·

Delete

**Student B:** all the staff and the boss Sue is all friendly to me but me, Sam and Paul have a good laugh at work when we put things on the selfs

30 March at 19:17 ·

Delete

**Student C:** Shelly but there all nice

01 April at 09:00 ·

Delete

**Student D:** All the staff are dead canny and they have asked me to wrk mon nd tuesday but daint nar what am doing yet

any ways have good easter to the whole of preparing 4 employment

02 April at 22:20 ·

Delete

**Tutor:** Question for this week - if you were offered a weekend job at your placement would you take it?

**Student A:** yes my friend at work has ask imogen for a weekend job for me and she said she will see

26 March at 13:03 ·

Delete

**Student B:** yes

26 March at 13:04 ·

Delete

**Student E:** Yeah I would take the job they says they will get in touch with me during the week so pleased.... I am so nackered now like wish I could go back this weekend. x.... LOVE THE JOB.

26 March at 17:46 ·

Delete

**Student C:** well yes but it would only b in my dreams lol cos it aint open on weekends but i wish it was.

26 March at 20:38 ·

Delete

**Tutor:** ok, here's this week's question.

Who is your manager and what do you think of them??

**Student A:** imogen she is friendly and shes a good laugh

16 March at 20:35 ·

Delete

**Student B:** my manager is call Sue and she is a nice lovley person to work with in netto

16 March at 20:38 ·

Delete

**Student C:** I think barbara and shes funny.

01 April at 09:03 ·

Delete

**Student D:** olive and a think she is dead quite

02 April at 22:22 ·

Delete

See online group "Prep Placements" on Facebook; administrator Penny Blackburn