

Practical Environmental Health Training

Guidance for Students
and Student Training Officers



Chartered Institute of
Environmental
Health

Sefydliad Siartredig
Iechyd yr
Amgylchedd



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Foreword: Training our Future Professionals

The Public Protection profession offers many exciting and challenging opportunities both in the world of Environmental Health and Trading Standards. Very few professions offer such a wide range of activities that affect people's everyday lives at work, home and at places of leisure.

The Directors of Public Protection, Wales consider that our human resources at work are our most valued commodity: none more so than our cohort of students who are our professionals for tomorrow and those officers who support them through their training programme.

It is therefore with great pleasure I welcome and commend this important document to you. Enjoy and value your professional training which will help equip you to pursue a career that will make a real difference to people's lives.



Phil Walton

Chair, Directors of Public Protection, Wales

Why provide Student Training?

Environmental Health students are required to undertake a period of practical training that will lead to the completion of their ELP before they can complete the qualification process to practice as an EHP. The practical training must be undertaken in the workplace, and there is therefore a requirement for employers to offer practical training placements to students. In order that the training is meaningful and ensures that the student gets the maximum from it, employers have to make a positive commitment to the training process and engage with the student through out the training period. Where resources, both financial and personnel are under pressure, offering student training placements may not be seen as best use of resources and employers may be reluctant to take on students.

It can be argued that employers have a responsibility to train professionals, in order to support the development of the profession and to support continuity of service, however in addition to supporting and contributing to the professional pool from which they recruit their new staff there are some key benefits to providing student training.

Research shows there is a correlation between those authorities who do not train students and those who have recruitment problems. There can be considerable advantages in 'growing your own students' who may be more likely to:

- ◆ Be productive and useful within a short time after qualification by drawing on the local knowledge and networks established during training at the authority,
- ◆ Have or develop ties to the area and a degree of loyalty to the sponsoring or training authority,
- ◆ Want to stay in the area after qualification, despite accommodation costs (clearly a major issue for some authorities)

Further positive benefits of providing training include:

- ◆ Students may be able to assist qualified staff members with certain jobs as *part of* their training such that they complement the council's workforce,
- ◆ Fresh ideas and new approaches can be encouraged by training and in this way the turnover of new students may contribute a 'healthy' influence at any local authority,
- ◆ Students can help raise the profile of the service, some of their dissertations essays and/or projects undertaken during the course may require practical application to real life key issues. This could include relevant and useful research that is helpful to the authority,
- ◆ Providing training will contribute to the 'skill pool' of professionals which authorities in Wales and across the UK will need to draw on in future years to provide services for local people.

Benefits are not just derived from the student – local authority relationship. Departmental structures in Environmental Health departments are increasingly flat, with little opportunity for career advancement upon qualification. The role of Student Training Officer is an important one, and can be used as career development for qualified officers, allowing them to take first steps in management. Student training officers are required to engage both professionally and on a pastoral basis with students, and through that engagement learn hard and soft management skills, time management and partnership working – all of which can be of benefit both to the training officer on a professional basis, and to the department in which that individual works on a wider basis.

The benefits of engaging with students can also be clear to qualified and experienced practitioners working with and helping to train students. Passing on knowledge and experience may give rise to reflection and consideration of what is being done and may cause individuals to revisit what they do questioning whether accepted practice is best practice and making such adjustments as may be appropriate, or reconfirming the appropriateness of current practice.

Student training supports the development of the environmental health profession and helps to ensure its continuance, assists students and also provides career development opportunities for qualified practitioners. It can be a very positive experience for the student, the training officer and for the training placement provider and DPPW, WHEH Recruitment Training and Development Group and the CIEH strongly endorse it as a way of supporting the profession and taking it forward.

The process of becoming an EHP

For new entrants to environmental health, there are three stages to qualifying as an environmental health practitioner (EHP):

- ◆ You have to obtain a degree in environmental health from a university accredited by the CIEH (you will also have to successfully complete a practical food inspection examination during your course of study)
- ◆ You have to successfully complete an Experiential Learning Portfolio (ELP) providing evidence of work-based learning
- ◆ You have to successfully complete Professional Examinations (interview and written) to gain your Certificate of Registration from the Environmental Health Registration Board (EHRB)

The ELP and Professional Examinations are administered and assessed by the CIEH, not the accredited university. All relevant guidance, application forms and other documentation can be accessed on the CIEH website. In particular, the Examination Regulations discuss the regulations for the assessment of the Experiential Learning Portfolio and the Professional Examinations. It is essential that students familiarize themselves with all of the requirements of the professional qualification process, by reading the Examination Regulations.

Registering with EHRB

In order to apply to submit ELP for assessment, or to undertake the Professional Examinations, students must first have obtained a student registration number with the EHRB. This is NOT the same as Student Membership of CIEH (which is free – if you are not already a member, you can tick a box on the application form to become a member at the same time as registering).

A fee is charged for student registration with EHRB. The full registration fee includes one attempt at the ELP assessment, and one attempt at the Professional Examinations (interview and written). Alternatively, you can obtain partial registration. Partial Registration means that you are registered with the Environmental Health Registration Board (EHRB) but will then need to pay the appropriate assessment or examination fees when you apply for them. The current fees are shown on the CIEH website and the relevant registration application form.

You must apply for a student registration number *at least 3 weeks prior to applying* for ELP assessment or Professional Examinations – you will need to quote this registration number on your assessment application form.

Applying for an assessment

ELP assessments are all conducted in London at 15 Hatfields, except for one session per year in Ulster. Professional Examinations (written and interviews) are conducted at a range of venues around the country during the year, as shown on the application form. Students wishing to sit the Professional Examinations must have completed the taught elements of their degree programme, including submission of their dissertation.

In order to apply for the ELP assessment or Professional Examinations, you must make a separate application for each of the examination elements, and *each application must be submitted at least six weeks before* your chosen 'sitting'. (This means that if you are intending to undertake an assessment, and have not yet obtained a student registration number from EHRB, you must apply for that at least 9 weeks before the relevant assessment date.)

Late applications will be accepted up to 14 days after the deadline, upon payment of an additional Late Application Fee (which is usually twice the usual application fee). Applications received later than this cannot be accepted under any circumstances. Charges may also be applied if a student withdraws/defers an assessment after the application deadline, or if they fail to submit/attend without giving a satisfactory explanation in writing. Full explanation of this can be found in the Examination Regulations.

Expectations and responsibilities

The purpose of work-based learning placements

As noted above, in order to become fully registered with EHRB as an Environmental Health Practitioner, students must undertake appropriate work-based learning, and demonstrate this through the completion and successful assessment of their ELP.

Work-based learning is typically undertaken as a supervised period of professional practice at an appropriate organisation (for example, local authorities, government agencies such as the Food Standards Agency or Health Protection Agency, local NHS organisations, private sector companies or the voluntary/independent sector). Traditionally, most placements have been undertaken in local authority environmental health departments, although increasingly other organisations have been involved in providing training opportunities for student EHPs. Some students are also 'piecing together' their work-based learning across a number of short/medium term placements with different organisations and sectors. Whatever approach is taken, students need to receive a wide exposure to professional issues encountered and addressed by EHPs.

Broadly speaking, the aims of the professional work-based learning placement are to:

- ◆ Involve the student in day-to-day practices and problems encountered by EHPs
- ◆ Give students experience of responsibilities and relationships of local authorities, industry and commerce, local communities and other relevant agencies
- ◆ Allow the student to place academic studies into the context of professional practice
- ◆ Enable the student to develop key professional skills and aptitudes: for example, problem-solving, communication, and investigation skills
- ◆ Assist the student in understanding the functioning of environmental health organisations, the role of the EHP within these organisations, and the constraints that influence professional environmental health practice
- ◆ Where applicable, provide the student with the opportunity to undertake an appropriate piece of research in line with the requirements of their degree programme
- ◆ Provide opportunities for the student to become a Reflective Practitioner through work-based experiential learning, supporting the successful completion of the Experiential Learning Portfolio. (Further detail about the importance of reflection can be found in the Guide to the ELP later in this document).
- ◆ Help prepare the student for successful completion of the Professional Examinations

There is no prescribed minimum or maximum duration of the work-based learning placement, but CIEH suggest that the majority of students should be able to obtain the experience necessary to in around 9-12 months. The experiences of students over recent years since ELP has been introduced indicate that this is indeed the case, given appropriate structure and support by the training organisation.

Similarly, there is no requirement that all or any of the placement period(s) must be undertaken in a local authority environmental health department – although the majority of students continue to obtain their practical experience through this type of placement.

The role of a Student Training Officer

The Training Officer is the student's key contact during their placement – a dual role, with both educational and pastoral responsibilities. It is clearly important that the Training Officer has a good understanding of the purpose of placements and of the requirements of the ELP. He or she should also have a good knowledge of the opportunities that can be provided within the placement, and where gaps exist that will have to be filled by other providers. The Training Officer should put in place a formal training programme for the Student ELP covering the time that the student is on placement, so that the student has a clear idea of where they should be and what they should be doing at any given time. The programme should be supplemented where possible with relevant training courses and external visits and should be flexible enough to allow the student to take advantage of any unforeseen opportunities that may arise, such as becoming involved in one-off investigations where appropriate to supplement the training programme.

It is also the role of the Student Training Officer to ensure that officers engaged in training students understand that they should engage with the student to make the training meaningful, fully explaining what they are doing and the reasons for doing so, expected outcomes and legislative and other constraints on action. The Training Officer should ensure that the student understands the training programme and that it is followed to ensure that the student is fully exposed to all areas of practice.

Training Officers should understand, and should explain to the student that a student placement is about more than completion of the ELP, and that on occasions students should become involved in training opportunities which, whilst not directly relevant to ELP, help to develop skills and understanding of professional practice. On a practical note, the Training Officer should ensure that the student EHP has everything they need within the placement, such as email address, access to computers and desk space etc and has been inducted into the organisation so that they can find their way around and understand the processes and systems of the business.

Where the training placement is unfunded the Training Officer should be sympathetic to the student attempting to combine the training placement with paid employment, provided the paid employment does not detrimentally affect the placement. Where possible, and subject to budgets allowing, students could be given discrete pieces of funded work to do within the department, or should be allowed to undertake their placement around other paid employment, e.g. attending in the department for 4 days per week and working in paid employment on the fifth, or being allowed to leave early to go to 'after work' jobs. Where the student is holding down an additional job the Training Officer should ensure, so far as they can, that the student is not over stretched and that the placement is not being compromised by the need of the student to support themselves.

In addition to providing educational support, the Student Training Officer should be aware that students may need a degree of pastoral support. In many cases the placement will be the first experience of a work place environment that many students will have had, and some will find it strange and difficult, particularly where they may be some distance from their network of family and friends. Students may need practical assistance such as finding accommodation local to their training placement prior to its commencement, or less obvious support such as befriending until they settle in. The Training Officer should ensure that the student understands that they can approach the training officer for assistance regarding matters not directly related to work and that the Training Officer will do what they can to assist.

What can students expect of a training placement?

Mentoring and support for their professional development

A nominated training officer/placement supervisor

Support, encouragement and mentoring from a nominated training officer/placement supervisor are crucial to student development. A scheme of regular programmed meetings between supervisor and student throughout the placement is encouraged to facilitate this process. The training officer plays the most important role in supporting the student, acting as the first point of contact for the student during the placement. It is usual, although not essential, for the training officer to act as the student's line manager – although this role may pass between individuals in some situations.

- ◆ Alternatively, in larger organisations, or where the environmental health function is distributed around a number of offices, possibly some distance apart, it may be useful to nominate one or more 'section mentors', who can act as a main point of contact for their section/office for both the student and training officer.
- ◆ This can be useful in enabling students to be made aware of significant incidents or areas of work that would be of benefit, but which are arising whilst they are on placement in another office or section – for example, unplanned events such as food poisoning outbreaks, seizures of hi-fi equipment, etc; or planned events such as campaign weeks or public consultation events.

Support from other officers

Clearly, providing this support is not the sole task of the training officer. Appropriate support from other officers in the department (EHPs and technical staff) is crucial in ensuring students have the widest possible range of opportunities for experience. The general message should be clearly communicated (by more senior managers if necessary) that all officers have a role in student training and development.

- ◆ A positive and sympathetic approach from all staff is particularly important. Even the most able and confident student can be vulnerable, especially during the first few months of the programme, and the training officer should be particularly alert to any potential problems or conflicts in these early stages.

A structured programme for the placement

An essential aspect of ensuring a successful placement for both student and organisation is the development of a structured programme for the placement. The programme should provide scope for a range of training opportunities across all areas of environmental health practice. It is recommended that the structure for the programme be developed around the intervention groups and areas in the ELP.

- ◆ Different organisations will offer different types of structure – some give a student 3 month placements in each of the four key areas of practice, making up the 12 month period. Others provide a series of 4-6 week placements around the organisation that account for roughly the first half of the placement, the remaining period then being arranged by the student in discussion with the training officer and other relevant staff.
- ◆ There is no ‘right’ way to structure a placement – and indeed the same organisation may operate different programmes for different students to reflect their individual needs. Probably the only ‘wrong’ way is to provide no structure at all!
- ◆ If the student is still studying for their degree, they may be required to undertake a research project or dissertation. If this is the case, the placement programme should provide appropriate opportunities and support for this, particularly in allowing time for collection of data or samples.

Opportunities for professional development

Providing space and opportunity to develop

Providing a structured programme is essential – but just as importantly, students need the opportunity to develop their skills, solve problems and gain confidence in their own professional abilities. When students begin their placement period, they may only have completed half of their course and cannot be expected to be fully proficient in all aspects of environmental health practice. The BSc/MSc programmes provide a ‘foundation for competence’, which requires experience and practical application in order to be developed into full competence.

- ◆ Every student is different, so it is not desirable or practical to prescribe an approach to supporting development. But in general, the training organisation and officers should provide opportunities for students to gain experience and develop their skills. This may start by students accompanying officers on visits (‘shadowing’), but hopefully over time, and where the student has demonstrated sufficient experience and aptitude to do so, students should be allowed the opportunity to take the ‘lead’ role on inspections, complaints or visits. Usually in these instances an officer will still be present to offer additional support, or as a ‘safety net’ if things don’t go as planned – but such opportunities can be extremely useful in skill development and building confidence.

- ◆ Different organisations take different approaches to allowing students time in the office for writing up ELP narratives and reports. Some consider this part of the training programme; others expect students to conduct this activity in their own time. Whatever approach is taken, it is important at an early stage that the student and training officer are able to discuss this and agree the approach that will be followed, taking into account all relevant circumstances.

Checking on progress

It is often useful to give students a series of 'viva' interviews during the placement, which can be as formal or informal as the organisation and student choose. These could be conducted briefly when a student arrives in a section, in order to establish a base level of knowledge around the relevant areas.

In addition, it is particularly useful for more detailed 'examinations' to take place towards the end of the placement, to assess the student's competence in core areas. These should take place early enough that the student still has time to arrange additional training and experience to address any 'problem' areas. Such interviews can also provide useful practice for subsequent viva examinations that may form part of their university studies, and the interview element of the CIEH Professional Examination.

Giving students chance to get things 'wrong'

- ◆ Sometimes it can be useful to allow a student to 'fail' or make an error (providing the consequences are unlikely to be severe for them or others). We often learn much more from our mistakes than our successes.
- ◆ Similarly, whilst officers should give advice and support, students should be given appropriate responsibility to tackle and solve problems in their own way – officers should refrain from 'jumping in' and giving the student a solution to a problem, at least until the student has had a chance to address the issue themselves – they may come up with an innovative solution!

Flexibility

Increasingly it is the case that students are undertaking unpaid placements, and in combination with student loans and the payment of fees, many students in this position will need to obtain other paid employment in order to make ends meet. In these situations, placement organisations and officers should be sympathetic and flexible to the circumstances of the student – for example, a student with a part-time job may not be able to come out on an evening inspection at short notice.

Some organisations and students have reached arrangements where the student attends for 4 days a week rather than five, in order that they can undertake paid employment. Others have been able to offer a student some paid sessional work – for example, administrative duties, or work for which they already possess necessary aptitudes, such as informal food sampling. Again, there is no right or wrong approach: the student and training officer (and others as appropriate) should discuss any issues at an early stage to reach an appropriate agreement

What should a training organisation expect of a student?

In offering training opportunities to a student, a training organisation is making a commitment of time and resources to that individual. It is therefore reasonable for the training organisation to have certain expectations of students. Students on placement can generally be expected to:

- ◆ **Be punctual** – attending the offices of the organisation in line with the organisation's usual business hours (flexitime systems etc incorporated). Similarly, it is reasonable to expect students to be available outside normal office hours on occasion, for specific purposes – usually it is possible to plan for these in advance.
- ◆ **Dress appropriately** – the exact 'dress code' will vary depending on the organisation and section concerned, but students are expected to dress professionally, as appropriate to the situation.
- ◆ **Show a willingness to learn**, and to be assigned tasks and duties appropriate to their knowledge, skill and ability, and to carry out these tasks and duties to the best of their ability. No one expects a student to be taking the lead on a major investigation, e.g. a serious accident, but students should expect to be assigned certain tasks and duties. It may be that not every task can be written up as an ELP intervention (although most can) – but this is not a sufficient reason for the student to refuse to undertake the activity.
- ◆ **Engage in constructive discussions** about their training and development with their training officer and other members of staff as appropriate, and take part in viva voce interviews and other informal assessments of their progress. Such discussions and assessments are provided to assist the student in their professional development. Many organisations also operate similar appraisal/personal development programmes post-qualification, so becoming familiar with these processes is a useful preparation for professional practice.
- ◆ **Demonstrate a professional approach** in their communications and relationships with other members of staff and service users.
- ◆ **Develop a familiarity with the ELP** and the requirements of the EHRB qualification process – whilst training officers may develop a reasonable understanding of the ELP requirements, the onus is on the student to become familiar with the framework of the ELP and its completion, and to seek out advice and support where necessary.
- ◆ **Communicate any issues or difficulties** arising during the placement to the training officer so that they can be discussed and resolved at the earliest opportunity.
- ◆ **Make satisfactory progress** towards completion of the ELP. The placement organisation keeps their side of the deal by providing the opportunities and professional development support – the student has a responsibility to make the most of these opportunities and make progress towards the completion of the ELP. It should be entirely possible to complete the ELP during a 12-month placement.
- ◆ **Take appropriate steps to safeguard their own health and safety** and that of others. Like all other employees of an organisation, students on placement have duties under health and safety legislation.

A guide to the Experiential Learning Portfolio

What is the Experiential Learning Portfolio?

The requirements of EHRB include provision of evidence of work-based learning to allow the student to demonstrate that they have been 'set on the road to competence' as an EHP. The ELP is part of the Environmental Health Registration Board qualification process (as discussed above). Version 2 of the ELP was launched in early 2009, and should be used by all students commencing placements from 2009 onwards. The ELP and relevant guidance documents can be freely downloaded from the CIEH website.

Experiential learning, as required by the CIEH, is learning that involves both 'seeing' and 'doing' but, additionally, involves 'checking', 'questioning', 'reflection' and, hopefully, the development of real understanding. It is more than just watching what other professionals do in the workplace and then trying and repeating it for yourself, which is likely to lead to incorrect or incomplete learning resulting in the perpetuation of inherited errors or mistakes. Experiential learning develops practitioners who can think for themselves and who have the skills to develop and justify a course of action and to amend it if it doesn't work out.

The information in this guide is not intended to be fully comprehensive or authoritative, but hopefully will be of assistance in helping students and training officers understand what the ELP requires and how to go about completing it. Where there is any doubt, advice should be sought from the CIEH Education Unit and through the ELP Mentoring Scheme (see section later).

What is work-based experiential learning?

The ELP requires the student to gain experiences and develop skills within a range of prescribed intervention areas. It requires the student to reflect upon their learning and skill development. It is no longer sufficient for a student to demonstrate that they have been somewhere and seen something. What is important is that you demonstrate how you have learned from the experiences you have gained. It doesn't matter whether the intervention went horribly wrong (in fact that could turn out to be a great example, if you can demonstrate how you have learnt from the experience, what you would do differently, how things can be improved).

The importance of reflection

Leading on from the above, reflection is the key to demonstrating experiential learning. The best ELPs focus on reflection on the activity and experience, and what was learnt from it. The philosophy behind the ELP is very different from the old practical training logbook. With the logbook, all you had to do was demonstrate that you had been somewhere, seen something, done something.

With the ELP, you need to demonstrate how the things that you have seen, visited or done have influenced your learning. If you have learnt something, your knowledge, behaviour, practice and/or attitudes will have changed as a result.

The key to demonstrating this is the use of reflective learning. A bit of theory here. Learning takes place when:

- ◆ An individual recognises in themselves something which they did not know before; and/or
- ◆ An individual recognises that they are able to do something which they were not able to do before

In both cases, proof is required. Students must develop the habit of providing evidence that shows that, as a result of being exposed to a learning situation, they know that positive changes have been made to behaviour, thought patterns and attitudes – i.e. they have learned!

Moving from description ...

- ◆ I did this ... this happened ... it went OK

... to analysis, critical awareness, understanding

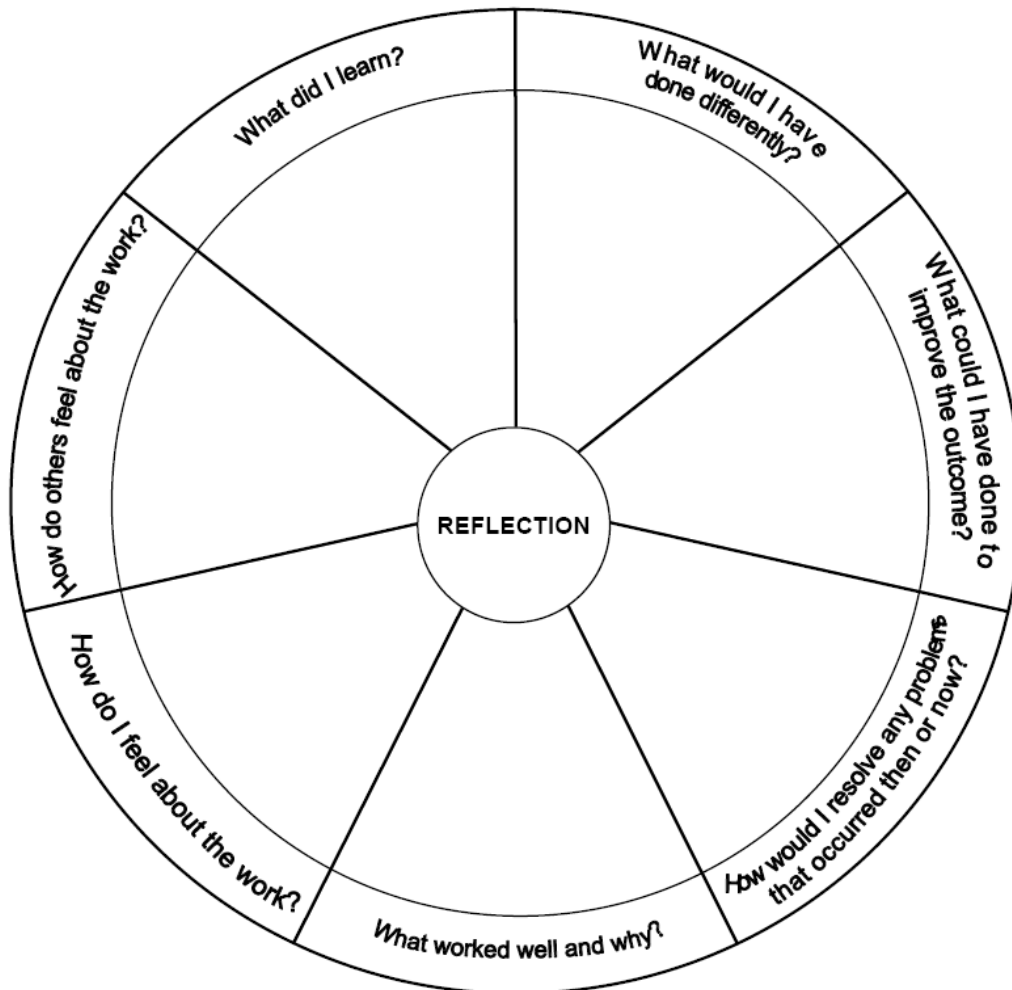
- ◆ I realise now that ... I can appreciate that ... next time I will consider ...
- ◆ I can see now what influenced Mr Smith's actions and my response
- ◆ I understand how what I did might have been seen by others

Reflection is demonstrated in the narrative that the student provides, alongside the evidence that they have submitted. There is no set template for narratives (with the exception of key intervention reports, see below), but they should include a short background, consideration of the options available to deal with the situation, identification and justification for the chosen option, and most importantly, personal reflection on the experience and what has been learned.

The Reflection Wheel

Sometimes students find it difficult to 'get started' on reflecting on a particular intervention. In these circumstances, use of a model such as The Reflection Wheel can be of assistance.

To start you off, try using the reflection wheel below to prompt your thoughts. Do not copy the questions/answers word for word in your final piece, rather let the narrative flow. Ask yourself 'what if' questions: e.g. What if this intervention had not been undertaken?



(Public Health Resource Unit, 2005)

The Reflection Wheel is one example of many different models of reflection and reflective practice. Students may also wish to consider other frameworks for reflection, such as those of Gibbs¹, Johns & Graham² or Kolb³, all of which can easily be researched via a simple web search.

¹ Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford.

² Johns, C. and Graham, J. (1996) Using a Reflective Model of Nursing and Guided Reflection. *Nursing Standard* 11 (2) 34-38.

³ Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice Hall, New Jersey

Framework of the ELP

The ELP is based around five Intervention Groups, each with its own matrix:

- ◆ Food Safety
- ◆ Health & Safety
- ◆ Environmental Protection
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Health Protection & Development

For each of these groups, there are several intervention areas – for example, in the Housing intervention group, there are five intervention areas:

- ◆ H1 – Maintenance and Improvement in Private Sector Housing
- ◆ H2 – The Suitability of Houses for Occupation
- ◆ H3 – Multi-Occupancy Housing
- ◆ H4 – Area Renewal
- ◆ H5 – Financial Support for Private Sector Housing

Within each intervention group there is also a designated key intervention area, shaded in grey. For the Housing group, this is H2 The Suitability of Houses for Occupation.

Intervention areas

At a first look, the matrix may seem very complex, with reference to both intervention areas (the columns) and skills (the rows). It may be useful to think of these as entirely separate parts of the portfolio. When considering the intervention areas, you may even want to cover up all the ‘skills’ rows in the matrix, and just consider the top shaded area.

For each intervention area (e.g. H4 Area Renewal), there are three columns, representing the three interventions/activities that the student considers demonstrates evidence of their experiential learning in relation to that intervention area. The “Ref:” fields are for the student to indicate to the assessor where in the portfolio they can find the relevant narrative and evidence.

Intervention area headings are intended to be broad – so for example, H3 Multi-occupancy Housing can be considered as more than simply Houses in Multiple Occupation as the legally defined term, but any housing with multi-occupancy – which could include, for example, other types of student accommodation, halls of residence, sheltered housing complexes, hostels etc.

Primary and supplementary evidence

For each intervention area, the student must identify one 'primary' piece of evidence, and two 'supplementary' pieces of evidence. The primary piece of evidence should be the intervention that the student considers provides the best evidence of their experiential learning in relation to that intervention area. It does not necessarily follow that this will be the largest, most detailed piece of work, nor the most 'successful'.

When the ELP is being assessed, the assessor will look first at the primary piece of evidence. If they are satisfied that the student has demonstrated learning via reflection and subsequent or potential application of that learning, then they will 'pass' that intervention area and move on. If the assessor is unsure, then they will look at the other items of evidence indicated to be 'supplementary' to try to assess whether these demonstrate sufficient learning and/or sequential improvement across the three interventions.

Students are advised not to try to make decisions about which pieces of evidence to designate as primary and supplementary until towards the latter part of their placement, when most of the evidence and experience has been obtained. The student is then in a better position to make a decision about which interventions provide the best examples of experiential learning. To begin with, simply ensure that you are gaining experience across the range of interventions, and start writing things up from an early stage.

Where cross-referencing is taking place, it is perfectly plausible for a piece of evidence to be designated as primary under one intervention area, but supplementary under another. For example, investigation of a food complaint (e.g. a mouldy pork pie) might be designated as a primary intervention under F1 Contamination of Food, but a supplementary intervention under, say, F2 Food Preservation.

Key Intervention Areas & Reports

The key (shaded) intervention areas are treated slightly differently. These are the areas identified by the CIEH as being central to professional activity under each intervention group. They are intended to be the student's best examples of experiential learning, and will probably be the first evidence that the assessor looks at. It's the student's chance to demonstrate to the assessor that they know what they are doing, that they have progressed and learnt from their experiences.

Under these key intervention areas, only one report is required, which must follow the prescribed format designated by the CIEH (see Appendix 2 of the CIEH ELP guidance document). The reports must also demonstrate use and development of the key skills for the intervention group (indicated by asterisks * in the relevant rows on the matrix).

Success therefore hangs and falls by that Key Report. This emphasises the importance placed on these key reports in these key intervention areas. These reports are intended to be your best pieces of work, your best examples of experiential learning. Done well, they often allow you to cross-reference to a number of other related areas.

During the placement, it is recommended that students attempt to gain experience for the key intervention areas at an early stage – since key intervention areas are also likely to present opportunities to demonstrate learning under other intervention areas.

For example, an assessment of suitability of housing for occupation might also develop into a situation considering maintenance and improvement, multi-occupancy, financial support, and/or area renewal. By gaining experience in these areas at an early stage, the student gets the best opportunity to cross-reference the activities into other areas (see note below on cross-referencing).

Skills

The rows of the matrix for each intervention group refer to the core skills that the student needs to demonstrate. These skills are the same for all groups, although the asterisks designating which are the key skills for a particular group will vary.

For each skill (i.e. each row), the student must again designate one primary and two supplementary pieces of evidence, this time across the entire intervention group. Therefore, each row should have one P and two Ss indicated somewhere across the matrix. The column selected for the designation is relevant solely to indicate the portfolio reference for the evidence demonstrating the skill.

Apart from the need to demonstrate development of the key skills in the key intervention reports (see above), there is no other direct relationship between the intervention areas columns and the rows. So a supplementary narrative for the intervention area could still be used to present a primary piece of evidence for the development of a particular skill.

Again, reflection by the student on how their skills have been developed through their experience is the key to demonstrating the embedding and transferability of core skills, which is what the assessor will be looking for.

Evidence

Evidence in the ELP serves two main purposes. Firstly, it provides evidence of your personal involvement in the intervention. Secondly, it also gives the opportunity to assist in the demonstration of certain key skills - for example, inclusion of a letter drafted by the student could help to evidence written communication skills.

In general, evidence included should be items or documents that the student has produced themselves. However, there are exceptions to this - for example, it is unlikely that a student will have been able to serve a Hygiene Improvement Notice themselves, but they may have drafted the notice with the assistance of the officer. In such instances, it is acceptable to include the final notice as evidence - just provide a short note at the top of the relevant item indicating that this notice was drafted by the student.

Photographs can be a very useful way of highlighting key issues identified during an intervention - if used correctly. The assessor is not looking for 'holiday snap' type photos - a picture of the student outside the main entrance to the canning plant tells the assessor nothing except that the student has stood outside the canning plant ...

A good general rule of thumb with photos is to think about whether the image could be useful in supporting any legal/enforcement activity – if so, it will probably be useful evidence for ELP.

The Personal Declaration

There is now no necessity (as was previously the case) for confirmatory signatures on each narrative. When you have completed all your interventions, documented your skill practice, provided appropriate documentary evidence in the portfolio and completed the entries on the matrices you must complete your declaration (found at Appendix 3 of the new Success in Experiential Learning guide). This is your declaration that certifies that you have attained the experience claimed and that the portfolio is your own work. You must also get your placement supervisor to endorse the declaration – so if you have spent time with more than one training organisation, you should provide a Personal Declaration (signed by training supervisor) for each organisation.

This is certainly a major time saver, and gets round difficulties that some students encountered with officers asking/demanding students to change or remove elements of their reflection because it was critical or suggested an alternative course of action to that followed by the officer. Hopefully students can still have sensible professional discussions with officers about why they took the course of action they did, but the removal of the requirement for signature should alleviate potential problems.

Plagiarism

CIEH treats cases of plagiarism or other forms of cheating very seriously. Never, under any circumstances, be tempted to falsify entries or copy from another person's portfolio. If any such case is suspected, your portfolio will be seized, pending a full investigation. Upon a case being proven, the CIEH Qualifications Board will impose a severe penalty that can include a lifetime ban from resubmission.

Practical advice on completing the ELP

Data Protection and confidentiality

The ELP is a confidential document and will be treated as such by CIEH and ELP Assessors. No one outside the training organisation will see the ELP, except staff at CIEH Education Unit, the ELP Assessor and/or Moderator and/or ELP Mentor – all of whom are governed by the CIEH Code of Professional Conduct. Equally, ELP Assessors/mentors do not assess ELPs where there is a potential conflict of interest (for example, where the assessor is an employee of the same organisation as the student, or a consultant of a company under investigation in an ELP narrative, etc.)

There is no need for students to redact or obliterate personal data from ELP narratives or evidence; although equally students should avoid including personal data where there is no need. Students may want to consider reflecting on data protection/patient confidentiality issues in certain situations in order to demonstrate skills such as ‘interpreting legal requirements’ and ‘working within legal processes’.

Cross-referencing

The ELP allows a great deal of scope for cross-referencing activities and experiences across several intervention areas and between intervention groups. Such cross-referencing is encouraged and, if managed appropriately, significantly reduces the number of narratives and the amount of evidence required.

However, students should be careful not to stretch cross-referencing too far. The assessor will look at the evidence for each intervention area as a standalone piece of work. It is quite possible for a piece of work to score A under one intervention area, but D under another, because in the latter case the narrative does not demonstrate experiential learning around the specific intervention area.

If need be, students should write a second separate narrative for a particular intervention area – at the very least they should review the narrative to ensure that it demonstrates how they have learnt around each intervention area they have cross-referenced (which will almost certainly need more than just a couple of words!)

Make use of the marking scheme

The marking scheme used by ELP assessors is freely available on the CIEH website. Students are advised to familiarise themselves with the marking scheme, so that they understand what it is that the assessor will be looking for, and the process that will be followed.

As mentioned earlier, for each intervention area, the assessor will look first at the primary piece of evidence – and if that is up to the mark then the assessor doesn't have to look at any of the other evidence, and the area is passed. Supplementary evidence will only be considered if the assessor is not satisfied by what is presented in the primary piece of evidence. The same goes when reading across the matrix looking at the skills.

Leading on from this, designate the best examples of experiential learning as primary evidence. This doesn't have to be the 'best' piece of work, or the most exciting thing the student did. Students should choose something where they can demonstrate the range of options that they had, and justify which one was taken, and should be able to demonstrate lots of reflective learning from the episode. Developing the ability to identify these best examples is a key aspect of reflective learning, which is the fundamental basis of the ELP.

The marking scheme also indicates the administrative checks that will be undertaken as Stage 1 of the marking process, which are also detailed in the CIEH ELP guidance. If the ELP doesn't pass these checks, it will never be seen by an assessor, and will be returned to the student, who will have wasted their time (and money) and won't even have the benefit of any feedback from the assessor. Dot every 'i' and cross every 't'.

Training courses and the ELP

There are a wide range of training courses provided at various locations around the UK to help students gain experience in different settings and areas of work. **NB: There is no requirement to go on any courses in order to fulfil the requirements of ELP.**

The student should consider what opportunities the course provides to demonstrate experiential learning based around an intervention. A quick guided tour of a particular type of premises is unlikely to be sufficient to demonstrate this learning. Equally, office-based chalk-and-talk style training is less likely to provide an opportunity for a genuine intervention experience - although in certain circumstances the use of detailed case studies, exercises and scenarios may provide this, as is often the case with issues such as emergency planning or outbreak control.

That being said, the placement period is about far more than just the ELP, so if going on a course will help the student gain valuable experience, then it may well be appropriate for them to go, even if they do not end up using the experience directly for the ELP.

Using A4 poly-pockets

When compiling the physical portfolio of evidence, it is tempting to use A4 poly-pockets to enclose each piece of work. During the early stages of the placement, this will be fine, but as the year goes on and the portfolio becomes more battered as it follows the student on their travels, these poly-pockets can look distinctly shabby, and don't present a particularly professional impression to the assessor.

It also makes things more awkward for the assessor if they have to pull out all the evidence from a poly-pocket every time they look at some evidence, particularly if there is a lot of evidence and the assessor has to try and cram it back into the (probably damaged) poly-pocket each time.

If you are going to use poly-pockets, our advice (which is not official CIEH advice, who have expressed no opinion on the subject) is to use a poly-pocket for each sheet, back-to-back where appropriate, so that the assessor can view the narratives and evidence without ever needing to remove the paper from the plastic pockets. You may find it just as easy to do this using normal hole-punched paper (but make sure you leave enough of a margin so that the holes don't obliterate your evidence).

Backups

Whatever approach you are taking to storing your narrative reports, you will have some form of electronic storage system on which to save the documents. PLEASE make sure you identify and use some form of regular backup system for these files - more than one student has lost most of their ELP narratives because a USB data drive malfunctioned late in the placement year. Your backup system doesn't have to be complicated, and you don't need to be a technological genius - one simple but effective approach is to email copies of documents as you finish them to a specific webmail account created for the purpose (Yahoo, Google Mail, Windows Live, etc) - then you always have access to it wherever you are.

On the same lines, make sure that any relevant paperwork (copies of letters etc that you may use as evidence) is kept safe and secure.

Tips for students

- ◆ Start early, write things up quickly – don't wait for the 'perfect' intervention, it doesn't exist!
- ◆ Get along to an ELP Workshop – organised by CIEH on a regional basis
- ◆ Make use of the ELP Mentor scheme – see details later in this document
- ◆ Make the most of your Key Reports – use them to cross-reference where appropriate
- ◆ Be wary of using training courses or 'desktop studies' unless they include some kind of intervention (e.g. scenarios, exercises) – it's very difficult to reflect on something if you haven't had some kind of experience of the situation and possible interventions
- ◆ Clear referencing and presentation is important – make life easy for the assessor
- ◆ Discuss issues and problems with other students – at www.ehnewprofessionals.com. If in doubt, ask! ELP Mentor, CIEH, or on the forums – but don't just listen to rumour without checking.

ELP pointers for Training Officers

Some key questions to ask your students in relation to the ELP

- ◆ Ask to see an ELP report – ideally a Key Report if they have written one, or failing that a ‘normal’ one. Does the report include the following elements in some form?
 - ◇ Introduction and background to the intervention – what was the situation? (e.g. complaint, inspection/audit, planning consultation, accident, etc.) Which intervention areas are being addressed in this intervention?
 - ◇ Identification of relevant intervention options (may be enforcement/legal, and/or practical solutions and/or delivery methods) and selection of an appropriate option with appropriate justification
 - ◇ **REFLECTION** on what the student learnt from the experience (e.g. what went well, what could have been done better/differently, how the student felt about the process) – this can also move into discussion of skills that have been developed and demonstrated.
 - ◇ Evidence of the student’s personal involvement in the case – e.g. letters, notices, notes.
- ◆ Has the student been to an ELP workshop?
 - ◇ Workshops are held in most regions during the autumn – usually advertised via CIEH Regions and also on www.ehnewprofessionals.com.
- ◆ Has the student accessed the free ELP Mentoring Scheme?
 - ◇ Students are strongly advised to make use of this scheme – further details are given in the ‘Available Support’ section below.
- ◆ Has the student set themselves a goal/target date for submission of ELP?
 - ◇ There are usually five assessment sessions every year – details are published on the CIEH website. Students must apply at least 6 weeks in advance – setting a clear target date for submission at the beginning of the process provides a useful deadline to measure progress against. Despite popular belief/rumour to the contrary, it is entirely possible to complete ELP in around 9-10 months.
- ◆ Has the student visited the discussion forums on ehnewprofessionals.com?
 - ◇ Most of the discussion on the forums relates to various aspects of the EHRB qualification process, and in particular ELP. If a student has a question or problem, there’s a pretty good chance that someone else has either already asked it or has an idea of what the answer will be.
- ◆ Has the student made arrangements to gain experience in other organisations or departments?
 - ◇ e.g. the Local Health Board/Primary Care Trust; NPHS/Health Protection Agency, voluntary sector, Communities First/regeneration project, local business etc. There are excellent opportunities for undertaking ELP interventions in non-LA settings (or non-EH LA departments).

Available support (for Students)

CIEH Wales Directory of Student Training Opportunities

The Directory of Student Training Opportunities has been collated by the CIEH Wales Directorate and the Recruitment, Training and Development Group of the Wales Heads of Environmental Health. Its purpose is to assist student EHPs to fulfil the requirements of the work-based experiential learning programme.

The Directory contains a wide range of training opportunities to allow students to demonstrate that they have achieved learning and developed skills within the interventions areas of the ELP. Some of the training opportunities are for a period of one day or one week, whilst others may span a period of time. It is not intended that each student will take up every training opportunity, but that individual students will select those opportunities that they either require to complete their Experiential Learning Programme or feel would be useful in ensuring that their Work-Based Learning is as rounded as possible. The Directory is regularly updated and new entries are sent to all local authority student training officers. The most up-to-date information can always be found on the CIEH Cymru Wales Region website.

How to use the Directory

- ◆ Identify an intervention area that you have not experienced, or have experienced but wish to revisit to further or broaden your experience. Refer to the relevant chapter in the Student Training Opportunities Directory and identify the training opportunity that most closely matches your requirements.
- ◆ Where the training opportunity offered is for a single student, contact the host training provider through the contact officer name given, and make a mutually convenient appointment. Where a group visit is indicated students should not make individual contact with the host training provider, but should instead contact UWIC (029 2020 1528), who will make the necessary arrangements for a group visit to take place.

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)

Students are advised to take up student membership of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. Student membership is free, and entitles students to student member rates for EHRB registration and assessment. Once you become a member you will receive a copy of Environmental Health News each week and a copy of Environmental Health Practitioner each month. You will also be entitled to attend various meetings, study groups, training sessions etc. These are all good ways of keeping abreast of developments in environmental health.

- ◆ The CIEH library at Chadwick Court specialises in environmental health materials. The library is open, by appointment, to members of the CIEH and to those engaged in environmental health research. The opening hours are 2.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m., Mondays to Fridays (exc. Bank Holidays). Lending facilities are not available but there are facilities for photocopying. The library does not offer Internet access.

The ELP Mentoring Scheme

Many ELP Assessors have indicated their willingness to participate in the ELP Mentoring scheme. Students can therefore obtain advice and guidance from trained ELP Assessors on how they are progressing during completion of the ELP. Usually the initial correspondence is by email, with the student sending a few (not all!) narratives to the mentor, who will consider them and come back with comments. Some mentors are also willing to meet up with students to discuss and give feedback face-to-face.

To access the mentoring scheme, contact Peter Wright on p.n.wright@btinternet.com. You will then be put in touch with a local ELP mentor (or as local as possible).

Support from the university

Universities have no formal role to play in the student placement in relation to the completion of ELP. However, some university programmes may offer support to placement students as part of the degree, particularly where students are undertaking an integrated programme. If this is the case, students will receive specific advice and information from the university, which will outline the support available, and give details of any university assessments that may relate to the placement period. Universities may also undertake visits to students who are on placement, and it is strongly advised that the training officer is available at the time of this visit to discuss the performance of the student and any issues arising.

Universities will also provide students with information regarding the development and completion of a research project or dissertation. Each university will have its own criteria and guidance; but where an organisation has students from more than one university it may be useful for the training officer to ensure that they are aware of the different requirements.

Websites

There are a number of websites that students may find helpful.

CIEH (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health)

<http://www.cieh.org/>

- ◆ The CIEH website has a number of useful documents that will aid students in the completion of the ELP. There are a number of important documents that you will need to download or print off such as “Success in Experiential Learning” and the ELP Matrix which will help you understand what the ELP is about and exactly what the CIEH expect from you and your ELP:
http://www.cieh.org/professional_development/work_based_learning.html
- ◆ The CIEH website contains a section aimed towards students. The section contains various topics ranging from Careers in Environmental Health, events that students can get involved in and details of further career development opportunities
http://www.cieh.org/professional_development/students.html

CIEH Cymru Wales

<http://www.cieh-cymruwales.org/>

- ◆ The CIEH Cymru Wales website contains the definitive version of ‘The Directory of Student Training Opportunities’. The student section of the web site also carries advertisements for training placements and various opportunities that students may wish to take up, such as stewarding at conferences as well as details of training days and tailored ELP sessions.

Environmental Health New Professionals

<http://www.ehnewprofessionals.com/>

- ◆ The Environmental Health New Professionals website is a discussion site for ‘new professionals’ – environmental health students and recently qualified EHPs. It is free to register and contains a huge volume of information, covering a range of topics related to the ELP, professional examinations and other environmental health issues. It allows students to help each other, to share experiences, highlight good training opportunities and to make and maintain links. There are also regular posters who are ELP assessors/mentors.

Social Networking Websites

- ◆ There are a number of different social networking websites that can be used (e.g. Facebook etc.). They are very useful for contacting fellow students when on placement particularly where students have moved away and are struggling with adapting to life in your new area or to being on placement generally. These sites can also be used for blogging conversations between fellow professionals and so questions can be asked and answered.

Available support (for Training Officers)

The Wales Heads of Environmental Health Recruitment, Training and Development Group runs Training days for Training Officers where information relevant to the training of students is provided and Training officers are able to raise issues of concern or of interest.

Additionally, for those local authorities with students studying at UWIC, the academic team at UWIC hold ad hoc days for training officers, to appraise them of issues relevant to the UWIC students on placement.

Training Officers are also encouraged to attend the ELP and Professional Examinations day, run annually by the CIEH Cymru Wales Region. Although these days are primarily for students, Training Officers may find them helpful since there is a considerable amount of information provided regarding completion of the ELP and how this can best be achieved as well as information on the professional examinations, and Training Officers will find such information invaluable in assisting their students in completing the ELP and preparing for the professional examinations.

Practical issues for training organisations to consider

Indemnity & insurance

Is your student covered by the authority's professional indemnity scheme? Are they covered under other areas of insurance, for example Employer's Liability Insurance? This is important both in terms of incidents that may happen to or affect the student – for example, an injury received whilst undertaking a placement activity (in the office or on site). Or it may relate to incidents that occur as a result of acts or omissions by the student themselves – e.g. car accident, damage to a piece of Council equipment, damage to property of another, incorrect advice given, etc.

It is particularly important to clarify these issues where an unpaid placement is being undertaken – is the student being considered as an employee of the authority? Discuss these issues with your Human Resources, Finance and/or Legal departments as appropriate.

Health & Safety

Like other employees and members of the public, training organisations will have obligations under health and safety legislation towards students on placement. In most situations, the existing risk assessments in place for other members of staff should provide sufficient detail to provide for the student. Part of the student's induction should be to draw their attention to relevant health and safety issues, appropriate risk assessments, and to arrange for any necessary Personal Protective Equipment to be made available.

In addition, where students are still enrolled on their university degree programme, the university may also require information in relation to the health, safety and welfare of the student, in discharging their responsibilities towards students enrolled on their programme.