

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

Training Officer Guidance Notes

These few notes have been put together to assist you, as a training officer, to give the best opportunity to your student(s) to get the best out of their practical training whilst 'employed' within your organisation.

They are guidance notes – and should not be regarded as hard and fast rules. Please feel free to use them as you see fit – that includes ignoring them, amending them etc. but if you choose so to do please feed information back to Peter Wright, on behalf of CIEH Education Unit, in order that improvements can be made to future versions.

For the purpose of these notes it is assumed that you are a newly appointed training officer – so please don't feel patronised if you've had many years of success as a training officer. It is also assumed that you are familiar with the method of education and assessment of EHPs.

It is worth mentioning that the present (spring 2004) assessment of student EHPs consists of five elements – a successful accredited degree, a successful practical training logbook, five written papers, a Risk Audit and a Professional Interview, the latter four being the responsibility of CIEH. The notes are based on the present examination and training regime. Changes are currently under way via the new core curriculum and examination process so for the moment it's 'watch this space!' The main change, which may affect you as a training officer, is the replacement of the logbook with the 'new' Experiential Learning scheme. It is likely to be up to two years before all students move to the new Experiential Learning scheme but the first group to obtain this scheme are now in the pipeline. Bear in mind that although things will change in the near future your training officer role should remain essentially the same or similar.

Whilst all areas of assessment are of importance the practical training 'year' and successful completion of the logbook will be the major issue of concern to yourself and these notes therefore concentrate on that aspect.

The training 'year' is not necessarily a period of twelve months! The minimum requirement is that a student should have completed 48 weeks (or equivalent – there are some minor variations for technical officers etc.) of practical training before submission of the logbook for assessment. At least 24 of those weeks must be with a local authority (or local authorities – you can 'share' a student!). The other 24 (or part thereof) can be with another training organisation (e.g. private industry) provided that specific environmental health training can be obtained. Evidence of training periods should be shown in the appropriate section of appendix B of the logbook – and you have a responsibility for ensuring that is completed accurately.

Most students will undertake their practical training as a 'third year out' from university studies (this is the preferred route) – others will complete all three academic years consecutively and then undertake practical training 'end on'

whilst some may undertake practical training on a part time basis. Whichever route is followed may depend upon the personal circumstances of the student and also the university course attended.

(NOTE: With the new Experiential Learning scheme there is no specified minimum training period nor any requirement to attend at a local authority. It is however believed that students will continue to gain knowledge along the 'traditional' path – at least for the foreseeable future)

University tutors will visit the student, sometimes more than once, at his/her placement organisation to ensure all is running smoothly and also to provide details of the university's practice for assessment of the practical training year. The university are obliged by the accreditation rules to undertake their assessment of practical training – this is distinct from the CIEH assessment of the logbook. It is worthwhile therefore for you to find out who the visiting tutor is likely to be and when the visit is likely to take place. Any difficulties met with in practice should be openly discussed with the tutor at any time.

So – your student has now arrived on day one to start his/her (hereinafter referred to as s/he) practical training period with you.

The chances are s/he will be a stranger in a strange land and will be looking to you to look after him/her for the next 'year' – or at least until s/he finds her/his way to the toilet and the kettle (not necessarily in that order). It is useful to find a quiet place for a 'finding out' chat and to run through a series of 'induction' issues, not least of which will be health and safety. (The guidance notes in the logbook have some information on health and safety) It is also useful to spend some time introducing him/her to appropriate people, particularly the person with whom s/he will be working during the first few days.

Check that the student has registered with EHRB and obtained his/her logbook – many authorities provide financial assistance towards registration. (NOTE: The new Experiential Learning scheme can be commenced prior to registration so long as the fee being paid before submission for assessment)

It is also useful to check that s/he is a member of CIEH - membership is free to all students.

It is worth emphasising to your student that s/he should make local contacts through a student network at Centre or Branch level (and you may have to help with initial arrangements). Not only does this help guard against any feeling of isolation it is a very valuable resource for picking up issues which are common to most students – and it is likely that other local students will be from different universities.

Planning of the training year is essential.

It is beneficial at this early stage, though not necessarily on day one, to run through a training plan with the student. The detail of that plan will be to some extent dependant on the 'layout' of your authority but it should be based broadly on the requirements of the logbook and devised so as to ensure that

the student will have knowledge of where s/he is likely to be at any time during the 'year.' It is necessary, however, to allow for some flexibility within the plan so that opportunities (e.g. a food poisoning outbreak) can be seized by the student as and when (and if) they occur.

You will need to make some provision for your student to spend time with council services which will not be within the remit of your department – e.g. Planning, Building Control, Public Cleansing, PCT, CCDC etc. A check through the logbook should help identify these areas.

It is useful to plan to meet with your student on a regular basis – e.g. every alternate Monday morning from 9 – 10 a.m. - in order to go over what progress has been made, how the logbook and the evidence is shaping up, any difficulties etc.

Planning should also include advising your colleagues of the requirement of the logbook and how they are able to assist the student in getting the right result and experience.

A few logbook thoughts

Do familiarise yourself with the logbook – it's not necessary to know every learning outcome in detail (although you do need to understand the requirements), but it will help in devising a training plan and assist in knowing what can, and what cannot, be found within the geographical area of your organisation. You may need to help the student in looking 'outside' for some learning outcomes.

Do read the Guidance Notes – they will answer a lot of questions and/or save difficulties later.

In respect of planning it is useful to identify specific locations which will suit certain learning outcomes (e.g. Bloggs Dairy for F1) and it may be possible to 'tie up' a student visit with a planned inspection.

Make sure your student starts on the logbook early. Getting the first entry is the most difficult so it is important to break the ice. His/her first entry should be in within the first week of obtaining the logbook or starting placement and you may need to 'badger' him/her to get those first words down! The first entry will probably be a fairly simple entry, supported by a 'light' narrative.

Despite popular rumour there is no logbook requirement for students to attend any specific courses although many students are under the impression "I must attend a shellfish course, I must attend an area renewal course etc." If the opportunities for completing a learning outcome cannot be found in your area – and there are likely to be some – it is useful to investigate whether an adjoining or nearby authority can provide such facilities. Some courses may be of great benefit but you should be aware that a course, although providing some knowledge, would not necessarily provide all the information/activity (e.g. an inspection) to satisfy the logbook requirement.

Try to ensure that your student writes his/her narratives so as to show the assessor that s/he has done the work. The first person (I inspected, I talked to, I considered the options, I decided the most appropriate course of action was....etc.) is OK. Some technical officers (and EHOs) have difficulty with this aspect having become used to writing reports etc. in the third person.

Steer the student towards finishing the logbook within 6 – 9 months – it can be done (it doesn't have to take all of the 48 weeks). S/he can then get on with her/his life!

Impress upon the student to make logbook entries as soon as possible after the event (visit, inspection etc.) – evidence can be built up later – also to get signatures and comments as soon as possible after each event and to ensure that each signatory enters his/her details in Appendix A when first signing the logbook. Comments in the fourth column of the logbook are useful and will assist the assessor in getting a clear picture of the student. Comments should be open – that may mean adverse on occasion, but they will assist a student to do 'better next time!' Far better to be honest and steer the student in the right direction rather than to leave him/her to make the same error on future occasions for lack of understanding!

Anybody can 'sign off' a logbook entry – it doesn't always have to be the training officer, or a senior officer or a qualified EHP etc. The main criterion for signing is that the person signing feels comfortable for that which s/he is signing and is competent so to do. One of the main reasons for the signature is to confirm that the student has actually undertaken the work – the signatory is not being asked to assess the work although s/he may wish to see adequate evidence before feeling able to sign.

It is worth talking to colleagues who may be asked to sign in order to agree a common approach to the task.

The majority of the work to be assessed goes into the portfolio of evidence and the logbook can be loosely regarded as a 'route map' to finding the evidence. Referencing (and cross referencing) must therefore be clear and accurate.

It is useful for you to have a copy of the assessors marking sheet and your own logbook to help (both are on the CIEH website - www.cieh.org.uk - look under Student Resources). Your student should also have a copy and could well use it as a tick box check sheet to ensure completion of all learning outcomes.

Although the 48 weeks training period will not start until the student is registered s/he can use evidence obtained prior to registration (from previous work experience) provided it is relevant and can be signed off by the training officer.

Your student is invited (it's his/her choice) to include a personal statement with his/her logbook – it's his/her chance to tell the assessor about his/her training period – the goods, the bads (and the uglies!). Whilst you should

encourage your student to include such a statement bear in mind that it is confidential and s/he may not want to share it with his/her training officer!

Encourage your student to talk to others – Students, EHPs, academics etc. – and also to use the logbook mentoring scheme (see below)

Ensure that your student undertakes his/her required attendance at a red meat slaughterhouse (do you know where the nearest or most convenient slaughterhouse is? The FSA hold a list of licensed red and white meat slaughterhouses.) The minimum CIEH requirement is 50 hours. Students who complete 200 hours will be entitled to the 'Veterinary Auxiliary' status on obtaining their certificate of Registration. Check that the student has completed his/her meat inspection form – MI 50 or MI 200 – this will be required by CIEH when the logbook is assessed.

(NOTE: Students on the new Experiential Learning route are not required to attend at a slaughterhouse - although you may feel that such attendance will benefit your student)

Don't allow the logbook take over your student's life – it is an important part of the training period, but it's only a part; and there's a lot more to see and do! This is an area you may need to stress regularly – some students are tempted to become purely 'tickers of logbooks!'

Be mindful that there are a number of activities which the student will engage in which cannot be recorded in the logbook – tough!

Don't allow your student to wait for the perfect opportunity – it won't arrive!

It shouldn't happen but in the past there have been cases of cheating – forging signatures, copying reports etc. They will be found! Don't let your student fall to temptation!

Don't allow your student to write the logbook in pencil first. It does happen sometimes and what a waste of time and effort having to 'go over' the pencil entry in pen before submission – once an entry is in s/he must leave it in. It's quite acceptable for the logbook to be handwritten –it's a PRACTICAL training logbook. In some areas it is essential (e.g. inspection notes, draft notices etc.).

The logbook is set out in four sections – stages A, B, C and Key Skills. Stage A and stage B learning outcomes are major and critical ones and students should put their best efforts into these areas. They are designed generally to test the depth of understanding by the student. Stage C learning outcomes are designed generally to test the breadth of understanding so the student can be a little more relaxed when completing stage C evidence – although s/he still needs to do the work! Of the 20 Stage C learning outcomes only 7 (chosen at random by CIEH) will be assessed and only 4 need to pass.

Key Skills are those overarching skills which are likely to be applied or learnt whilst undertaking stages A, B or C activities – Key Skills will therefore, in the

main, be able to be cross referenced from those activities without the need for undertaking further inspections, investigations etc.

It is worth bearing in mind that the logbook system is really seeking to assess candidates in terms of their understanding of an issue and not necessarily in terms of their competence

Logbook Assessment

Logbook assessment venues and dates are published on the CIEH website under 'student resources.'

The mentoring scheme

Peter Wright runs the voluntary logbook mentoring scheme on behalf of CIEH (01706 223671 or 07831 740452 – p.n.wright@btinternet.com)

It is recommended that your student access the scheme (it's free) fairly early in their placement in order to obtain details of his/her nearest mentor(s).

Mentors are assessors who are prepared to give time to assisting students with logbook entries but it should be stressed that the mentor is not there to replace the training officer!