

Session J: Enterprise Placements

Presenter: Brian Clements University of Wolverhampton

Following his presentation Brian posed 5 questions/issues which the group discussed. Below are the questions followed by the key issues raised in discussion:

1. Originally conceived as an alternative for the 3rd year placement of a 4 year sandwich degree, now also offered as part-time, postgraduate, foundation or other options.

Is it acceptable to fund equally each of these options and might some be considered as more valuable experiences than others?

Need to retain flexibility

Needs of the students should be the focus rather than their 'status'

Funding should be equal

2. The student will be supported by academic supervisors, enterprise mentors and other professional advisors.

Should these mentors be subject to specialised training or standardised programmes, or should they be encouraged to exercise the diversity of the delivering HEIs?

May be able to standardise documentation but this is as far as it should go

Mentors need to have a set of core values

Need balance between academic and business mentors who understand business

Students should have the flexibility to choose their business mentor as in the 'real' world this would sort the good from the bad

3. As a pedagogic process, it should be equally possible to assess success or failure of the student failure.

Should success merit higher grades than failure, or should either be considered solely on the basis of the student's project dissertation?

The assessment should be based on the learning not the success or otherwise of the business

Need to make sure there is time for a period of reflection

There is a risk for the student as opposed to undertaking a normal placement. Are they likely to accept this?

4. Identified risk factors include:

- Withdrawal from SPEED before completion

- Failure of SPEED businesses

- Success of enterprises truncating studies

- Possible student stress from managing their businesses

Are all these risk factors acceptable?

Yes!

Need to change the attitudes of society to risk

A learning not a business development programme therefore failure in itself not a problem

Treat as you would any other placement

Mustn't use any concern about the possibility of the business failing as a reason for becoming very selective in the recruitment of students

5. A programme of longitudinal research has been initiated and it is hoped to expand the programme in the future.

What are the pros and cons of the current SPEED programme that are likely to effect future sustainability?

Should provide very interesting data which is essential to judge the success or otherwise of the programme and secure its future