

A work placement report provides a description of, and justification for your role in an organisation over a specific period of time. A good work placement report, however, should primarily be aimed at documenting *what you have learned* from the work placement. An effective work placement report includes a lot of analysis. But unlike most essays, papers, case studies or your thesis, this analysis also includes your own function in the project. This makes a work placement report, as well as being a writing experience, into a self-assessment experience (⊕G3). Including a self-assessment in the analysis means that the work placement report is difficult to write: you have to distinguish between subjective impressions and more objective analysis. As is the case with many research projects, part of this problem can be solved by asking the right questions in the right part of your work placement report.

This Skill Sheet lists the outline and the basic questions for an (ideal) work placement report, which should help you to maximise your learning experience. If your training institute has already supplied detailed *instructions* on how to write a work placement report, follow them. But it may still be worthwhile to compare the contents as envisaged in this Skill Sheet with the contents required by your university. If this Skill Sheet offers *additional ideas* that increase your learning experience, consider it to be a bonus, and try to integrate the information. If this Skill Sheet offers contradictory *advice*, take half an hour to make up your own mind about what kind of advice best suits your learning goals, and make a choice that you will be able to justify to your work placement coach(es).

1 Preface

What was the reason for the work placement?:

- Was it your own initiative? What did you have in mind when you approached the organisation?
- Was it a pre-decided work placement requested by the organisation? What was the problem definition?
- Did you have to compete with other applicants? Why did you get the work placement?

2 Description

- Describe the organisation and the products or services it offers.
- Describe the environment of the organisation and the department that you have been working with.
- Give a short description of your activities. Include the report(s) and/or memos that you have written as an annex. What organisational problem(s) did you address and how?

Tip: describe part of your activities *chronologically*. In support of your description (point 2) as well as to provide input for an analysis which is as unbiased as possible (point 3), it can very useful to keep a **diary** on a daily basis. To put it more adventurously: this diary could function as your **work placement log** on your exciting exploratory expedition in the *terra incognita* of social organisations!

3 Analysis

The most useful part of your work placement report should reveal what you have learned from the work placement experience. There are several aspects to consider.

- **Operational skills.** What did you learn about the level at which you master relevant skills? Make a personal skill profile based on (1) a selection of the appropriate skills included in this Skill Sheet collection. (2) Assess *your strengths and weaknesses* for the following categories:

- *Writing*: for example, ask yourself whether it was easy to write the reports that were requested.
- *Speech*: did you give presentations? Were they effective? How could you tell?
- *Reading*: did you have difficulty collecting and digesting the information you needed?
- *Listening*: did you have difficulties collecting information from oral sources inside and outside the organisation?
- *Self-management*: what did you learn about your own discipline, work routines and effective time management (amongst others)?
- *Management*: were you effective in handling conflicts (if they occurred)? Did you chair any meetings and how effective were you? How could you tell? How were you involved in the organisation, and how did the involvement affect the way in which you operated on a day-to-day basis?

Make an overall assessment of the skill profile, on the basis of the analysis above:

- Were your strong points more relevant and dominant than your weaknesses or *vice versa*?
- What have you achieved in the organisation?

Note that your work placement coach is not likely to grade you on the basis of your weaknesses, but on your ability to critically assess your own functioning. So do not be afraid to be honest and critical about yourself, it can only have a positive influence on your grade, providing that you tried hard enough.

- **General analytical/research skills.** What have you discovered about your own analytical skills and the relevance of the concepts and ideas that you have learned at your training institute?
- **Specific diagnosis.** What have you learned about the organisation and the people that you worked with?
 - What was your advice to the organisation, and how was it used: where they adopted by the organisation? Why or why not?
 - What was the function of your organisation-internal coach?
 - What have you learned about your training institute: were they effective in supporting you in your practical learning experience?
- **Expectation.** What have you learned about the *kind of research professional* you want to be(come): conceptualiser, diagnost, designer, implementer or involved evaluator (⊕A4)?
 - What were your expectations *before* you started the work placement?
 - Have your expectations been *altered* due to your work placement experience? Why?

4 Personal consequences

Work placements rarely come at the end of your training. So there is room for continued learning on the basis of your experiences during the work placement.

- Try to design an *implementation strategy for continued learning* in the future:
- Which skills do you think you should work on in particular, during the remainder of your education?
- Which strengths should you develop, which weaknesses should you correct?
- What *consequences* (if any) do you see for your post-graduation future?
- What kind of feedback will you try to obtain, and from whom, during the remainder of your education?

- Does/should the work placement experience have an impact on the topic and the approach of your *thesis*?
- Discuss the relationship between work placement and thesis with your tutor. Do this in good time: preferably *before* you start the work placement.

5 Advice

Finally you will probably have advice for the two organisations involved in the work placement project. It is a sign of professionalism if you write down the advice you have. This will improve the learning experience for future generations of students. Write this advice on a separate page that can also be sent to the work placement organisation. By doing this you show loyalty to both organisations, even if you are extremely critical.

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