



**University of Brighton**

**CETLD Student Placement Programme  
Evaluation Report**

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Royal College of Art  
Postgraduate Art & Design

RIBA 

**V&A**

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## **Executive Summary**

The aim of this final report is to reflect on findings generated by the evaluation of the Co-learning with Museums and Archives: Student Placement Programme (November 07 to 08). This paper will report on findings from the student and project supervisor evaluation and will make recommendations for future use of the work.

### **Findings from Student Evaluation**

- Students that took part in the CETLD Student Placement Programme were frequent museum visitors and interested in museums and archives. They visited museums for project work or as part of self-directed study.
- Cataloguing placements helped students to understand more about collections and the way information about objects is managed and stored in museums.
- The experience of behind the scenes access and the placement itself had a transformative effect on students' understanding of museums and archives.
- For many students, an understanding of museum and archive practices such as cataloguing and documentation changed their perceptions on what they thought museums and archives were about.
- Students' understanding of these processes was assisted by the insight that working with a museum or archive professional offered.
- For many students the best thing about the placements had been the chance to work behind the scenes and the chance to get up close to objects and even handle them on occasion.
- Students positively reported on the management of the programme, with the majority of the students 'strongly agreeing' that the placement was managed efficiently by the CETLD coordinators and project supervisors.
- All students strongly agreed that they felt supported by the CETLD coordinators during the programme.
- All students strongly agreed that they felt part of a positive and welcoming environment accepted as a member of the team with an adequate level of responsibility.

### **Findings from Project Supervisor Evaluation**

- Some project supervisors found the amount of paperwork related to the programme unnecessary.
- A formalised system for the delivery of student placements does not exist in or across CETLD partner institutions.
- Learning about museum and archive processes can improve students' understanding and approaches to research in their own subject.
- Barriers to offering student placements generally include lack of time and support and commitment from staff, finding the right kind of project for the right individual, limited office space and continuation funding. These are general rather than specific issues related to museum-based placements.

- Initiatives between museums and universities can be difficult to arrange because of different timetables and demands made of staff. Museum work can be reactive and led by other people's demands.
- Student placements can provide valuable opportunities for future employment and can help students make personal contacts. It can provide students with an awareness of the different types of environment they can work in with an art and design qualification.
- Project supervisors strongly agreed that the management of the programme was efficient and timely throughout and that the CETLD coordinators were helpful and knowledgeable about the scheme.
- The majority of project supervisors strongly agreed that students had a positive bearing on the placement although one supervisor was indifferent about the enthusiasm and insight of one student.
- All project supervisors would recommend the CETLD Student Placement Programme to colleagues and would host a placement again.

### **Recommendations**

- The benefits of the Placement Programme should be widely publicised to the student community and supported by academic programme leaders with help from the University of Brighton and the RCA's marketing departments and student unions.
- To offer students a general tour and wider induction especially for students at the V&A if possible.
- Offer more placements designed for two or more students.
- Attempt to schedule placements with the needs of project supervisors.
- Level 3 undergraduates or postgraduate students are better suited to work placements. They show a greater level of maturity to their degree subject and the wider world of work.

## **Background**

Co-learning with Museums and Archives (CETLD Student Placement Programme) was a pilot project conducted from November 2007 to November 2008. The programme provided 10 work placements for students in a museum or archive at one of the CETLD partner institutions - the V&A, the University of Brighton, the Royal College of Art (RCA) and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). The aim of the programme was to encourage students to conduct research and pursue academic interests outside their elected disciplines. A further aim was to provide a workable interface for the delivery of placements across the CETLD partnership. This report addresses some of the issues that have been encountered in the development of the programme and reports on findings from the student and project supervisor evaluation.

The CETLD Student Placement Programme was designed to support three overarching research areas:

- Use and application of collections
- Innovative pedagogic research and evaluation
- Student voice and student-centred approach

## **The Project**

In 2006, the CETLD team conducted baseline research into how HE Design students and tutors learn from museums and their collections (Fisher, 2007). It identified a desire from both groups for behind the scenes access, knowledge of curatorial expertise and exposure to work in a museum or archive environment. Research into student and tutor interest in behind the scenes access is the subject of a complementary research project led by CETLD Research Fellow Beth Cook. As Cook describes, 'behind the scenes access is frequently desired but the form this access takes, and what it consists of and achieves, is not clearly defined within the research' (Cook, 2009:3).

The CETLD Student Placement Programme sought to build on findings from the baseline research and to complement the research undertaken by Cook in her project. A joint research strategy was designed that underpinned the research conducted by Cook in the 'Behind the Scenes' research project and the evaluation of the CETLD Student Placement Programme.

Intended project outcomes included the following

- i) The creation of 10 student placements across the CETLD partnership
- ii) A contribution by students to project work in the host institution
- iii) Behind the scenes student film
- iv) Creation of a workable student placement toolkit for CETLD partners
- v) Evaluation of project supervisors and students' experiences of the CETLD Student Placement Programme leading to enhanced knowledge and understanding about the ways in which students learn from and about museum collections and archives.

The CETLD Student Placement Programme used the term 'work placement' as defined by London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise to define a period of work in industry, which is recognised as a structured period of learning by the respective higher education and host institution of the student (LCACE 2008).

## **The Development, Design and Delivery of Student Placements**

From June 2007 to April 2008, the CETLD Research Fellow and Project Manager for the Student Placement Programme, Catherine Speight, brokered 10 student placements across the CETLD partnership. This involved meeting representatives from the V&A, University of Brighton, RCA and the RIBA, presenting ideas and discussing the challenges of developing such a programme. Findings from this initial phase of the project fed into the design of the programme and scoping report (see Speight, 2008).

The Project Manager also devised a framework for the delivery of placements. This included the establishment of a Project Advisory Board (see below for further information) and the management of an administrative programme to support the delivery of placements. It was supported by a research and evaluation strategy (Cook and Speight 2008).

### **Programme Format**

The CETLD Student Placement Programme is a modification of the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP) developed by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Applied Undergraduate Research Skills (CETL-AURS) at the University of Reading. Originally conceived by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the UROP scheme offers second year undergraduate students the opportunity to undertake paid work experience alongside academic staff.

Second year undergraduate Design students and postgraduate students from the University of Brighton and the RCA were eligible to apply for the CETLD Student Placement Programme.

Project supervisors submitted project proposals to the V&A CETLD team outlining the nature of their project and tasks involved. Supervisors selected whether they wanted to work with undergraduate or postgraduate students.

Students registered their interest in the project by submitting a CV and application form. There was a competitive bidding process for all student placements. The CETLD Project Advisory Board (see below) met to discuss applications, match students to an appropriate placement, and approve successful applications and candidates. The process is described in more detail below.

### **Length of Placement**

The original aim of the CETLD Student Placement Programme was to offer students a full-time placement for six weeks over the summer vacation period. However, it was recommended by supervisors that student placements should be designed to meet the needs of individual projects and 'fit-in' with each institution's annual cycle. Consequently projects were offered on a part-time and full-time basis to coincide with the timescales of the four institutions. Each student placement adhered to the

University of Brighton's rules on the number of hours students could work during term time (10 hours per week maximum for undergraduate students).

### Role of Project Supervisors

The role of the project supervisor was to outline the nature of the placement and the field of research that the project would contribute to, as well as desired project outcomes and activities. The project supervisor was responsible for the day-to-day management of the student while on placement.

### Role of the CETLD Project Advisory Board

A CETLD Project Advisory Board was established to monitor the Placement Programme. It consisted of CETLD staff including the CETLD Manager, Higher Education Officer, Research Fellows, Project Support Officer and the V&A HE Officer and University of Brighton Industrial Placement Coordinator.

The board met on two occasions during the project, providing feedback on project progress, short-listing successful placements and skills-matching students to placements. The Project Advisory Board was an invaluable source of help, providing much needed guidance at critical stages of the programme's development.

### Student Placements

10 student placements were created:

1. *Digitisation Assistant, Royal College of Art*

*At the time of the placement, the RCA was undertaking selective digitisation of their slide record of student work. The placement consisted of researching individual departments and their notable alumni, scanning slides and cataloguing the images.*

Undergraduate or Postgraduate

2. *HE Programmes Student Officer, V&A+RIBA Architecture Partnership*

*This placement involved the creation of a set of online resources that would ensure that students and tutors could more easily access the V&A +RIBA Architecture Partnership Archive collections on site and remotely.*

Postgraduate

3. *Research Assistant, ABK Archive: British Architectural Library, V&A*

*This placement consisted of sorting, researching and cataloguing the archives of ABK (Ahrends, Burton and Koralek) onto the Library's online catalogue*

Undergraduate or Postgraduate



[www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com).

4. *Research Assistant, Fry and Drew Archive, British Architectural Library, V&A*

*This placement involved the processing, listing and placing into archive storage the papers and letters of Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry, as well as writing the catalogue descriptions to be uploaded onto the Library's online catalogue [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com), thus making them available to the general public.*

Undergraduate or Postgraduate

5. *Research Assistant, Online Exhibitions Project, CETLD, University of Brighton*

*The Research Assistant worked on the development of the online exhibition by identifying and retrieving books, articles, research papers and other material required for the online exhibitions bibliography and literature review.*

Undergraduate or Postgraduate

6. *Design Excellence and Archive Routines: Making Processes Visible, Design Archives, University of Brighton*

*Working alongside the curators and digitising team, the student carried out a number of different archival tasks; gained familiarity with routines and practices; and took on significant responsibility for shaping the catalogue and presentation of this collection.*

Postgraduate

7. & 8. *Textile Sample Books, Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department, V&A*

*This placement was for two students to work as a team (30 days in total) to organise a group of 80 textile sample books, spanning from 1900 to the 1970s.*

Undergraduate

9. *John Cornforth: Offprints and Papers, Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department, V&A*

*This placement was for one student to work one day a week (30 days in total) to sort offprints of published articles and typescript notes of the Decorative Arts Historian, John Cornforth.*

Undergraduate or Postgraduate

10. *Design Assistant: Colour Reference Library*

*The Colour Reference Library at the RCA is the second largest library in the world dedicated solely to colour. Despite its uniqueness, the CRL has a low profile among the external research community. The aim of the placement was to address this issue by creating a new 'identity' for the CRL, including logo, branding, web pages and leaflet.*

Ten placements were advertised for four weeks in March 2008 at the University of Brighton and the Royal College of Art. Placements were advertised through staff and student intranet sites, university-wide email addresses, posters and direct marketing with students and tutors at both institutions. A presentation about the programme was also given to students at the University of Brighton.

A total of 23 applications were received from 14 students (students were invited to apply for more than one placement and to submit separate applications for each placement). The Project Advisory Board as detailed above skills-matched candidates to each of the 10 placements. Details of selected candidates were forwarded to project supervisors. Project supervisors invited candidates for interview. Successful candidates were appointed.

### Changes to the Programme

The *Design Assistant: Colour Reference Library* placement at the RCA was withdrawn because of a lack of suitable applicants. It was agreed with CETLD that the RCA could re-advertise this position internally. The RCA provided additional funding to support it.

A further placement, *Textile Sample Books (Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department, V&A)* proved difficult to fill because of the conditions attached (part-time, one day a week for 7 months). It had originally been designed for two people. One student outside the CETLD partnership was appointed and the other vacancy was later filled by a Fashion and Dress History undergraduate from the University of Brighton.

## **Evaluation of the CETLD Student Placement Programme**

An important strand of CETLD's work at the V&A is to understand how design students' learn from museum collections. The Student Placement Programme offered students the chance to learn more about museum and archive practices, and by doing so, enhance their own understanding of their subject and practice.

A joint research and evaluation strategy was developed for the CETLD Student Placement Programme and the Behind the Scenes Research project (Cook and Speight, 2008). The aim of the strategy was to explore the pedagogic implications of behind the scenes access and the impact of the placement on students' understanding of museums. It aimed to coordinate findings from both projects using a form of grounded theory. Grounded theory is a process whereby 'we gain an understanding about how persons or organisations or communities experience and respond to events that occur' (Corbin and Holt, 2004:49). Both Research Fellows worked closely together on this process.

The strategy was designed so that stages of the Behind the Scenes research and Student Placement evaluation would alternate so that findings from each stage of the programme would help the other. In practice it was difficult to schedule the programme according to this approach. Results from the first phase of interviews with museum education and curatorial staff informed the questions used in the Student Placement Programme evaluation questionnaire. To have used grounded theory comprehensively, both projects would need to alternate and coordinate stages of data collection and analysis to a point where new ideas could not emerge. As stated in the Behind the Scenes project report: 'being aware of the methodology, and even just using the beginnings of the process helped to frame and guide the research in a productive manner and the collaboration proved useful to both projects' (Cook, 2009: 3).

### **Student Placement Programme Evaluation**

Evaluation can be defined as 'investigation into a certain issue, part or full project, query, which makes use of a variety of data collection methods. Unlike research, it does not take place within a wider academic methodology or epistemology...' (Fritsch, 2007). It also determines how far proposed outcomes of a project have been met. The evaluation of the Student Placement Programme formed a major part of the initiative. Research conducted as part of the initial scoping report identified limited research conducted into the evaluation of placement schemes and an absence of procedures for exploring the long term impact of placements on students' career aspirations and destinations. It is the intention of the Project Manager for the CETLD Student Placement Programme to conduct an online destination survey of students that participated in the programme. Results from this questionnaire will be included as an addendum to this report. This may also be compared with results from the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Applied Undergraduate Research Skills' (CETL-AURS)' UROP scheme. They have developed an impact study and have documented students' skills through Personal Development Plans (PDPS).

There were three stages to the evaluation of the Student Placement Programme. This included:

### Stage 1: Appraisal of student by project supervisor

The appraisal took the form of a 30-minute discussion with the student.

### Stage 2: Completion of student and tutor evaluation form

Students and project supervisors completed evaluation forms, which included questions about students' understanding of museum and archives processes, clarification of future career goals including a desire to work in the museum sector and overall satisfaction with the programme (see student evaluation form, appendix 1). Project supervisors were asked to review their experience of the placement and questioned about the process of skills-matching students, barriers to placements and overall impact of the placement on the student and host institution (see project supervisor evaluation form, appendix 2).

### Stage: 3 Qualitative semi-structured interviews

Finally, the project leader interviewed students and project supervisors about their experience of the programme. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted of around 30-minutes each. Comments from student and project supervisors' evaluation forms were discussed.

Evaluation findings from stage 2 and 3 of the programme were collated and analysed using a process of concept identification and re-reading of data. Concept identification is a useful technique for identifying initial concepts. It is 'sometimes referred to as 'open coding' as the text is opened up and broken apart for intensive scrutiny' (Corbin and Holt, 2004:50). Themes emerged through systematic readings that were used to categorise the data.

The CETLD Student Placement Programme was not credit bearing, students participated in the programme outside their formal course commitments. Students contributed to a blog (a web-based diary) while on placement as a way of capturing their experiences. It was also a useful way for students to keep in contact. Findings from the student blog are detailed in appendix 3.

### Proposed Evaluation Timetable

The joint research strategy originally proposed that students' experiences of the placement would form part of a detailed case-study approach for four of the participating students. Pre-placement interviews were conducted with two students prior to the programme commencing. It was difficult to find time to schedule two further interviews when placements had began. Findings from the two pre-placement interviews have been incorporated with findings from stage 2 and 3 of the evaluation programme.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Evaluation Method</b>	<b>Proposed Sample</b>
Stage 1: Pre-placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative semi-structured interviews</li> </ul>	4 Students (one student from each of the four partner institutions)
Stage 2: End of Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation questionnaires</li> </ul>	8 Students 8 Project Supervisors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative semi-structured interviews</li> </ul>	8 Students 8 Project Supervisors
Stage 3: Student destination research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student destination questionnaire</li> </ul>	8 Students

#### Actual Evaluation Timetable

The actual sample size for post placement questionnaires and interviews differed from the intended sample. This was because one project supervisor failed to complete the evaluation questionnaire after several reminders and one student was ill when evaluation interviews were conducted.

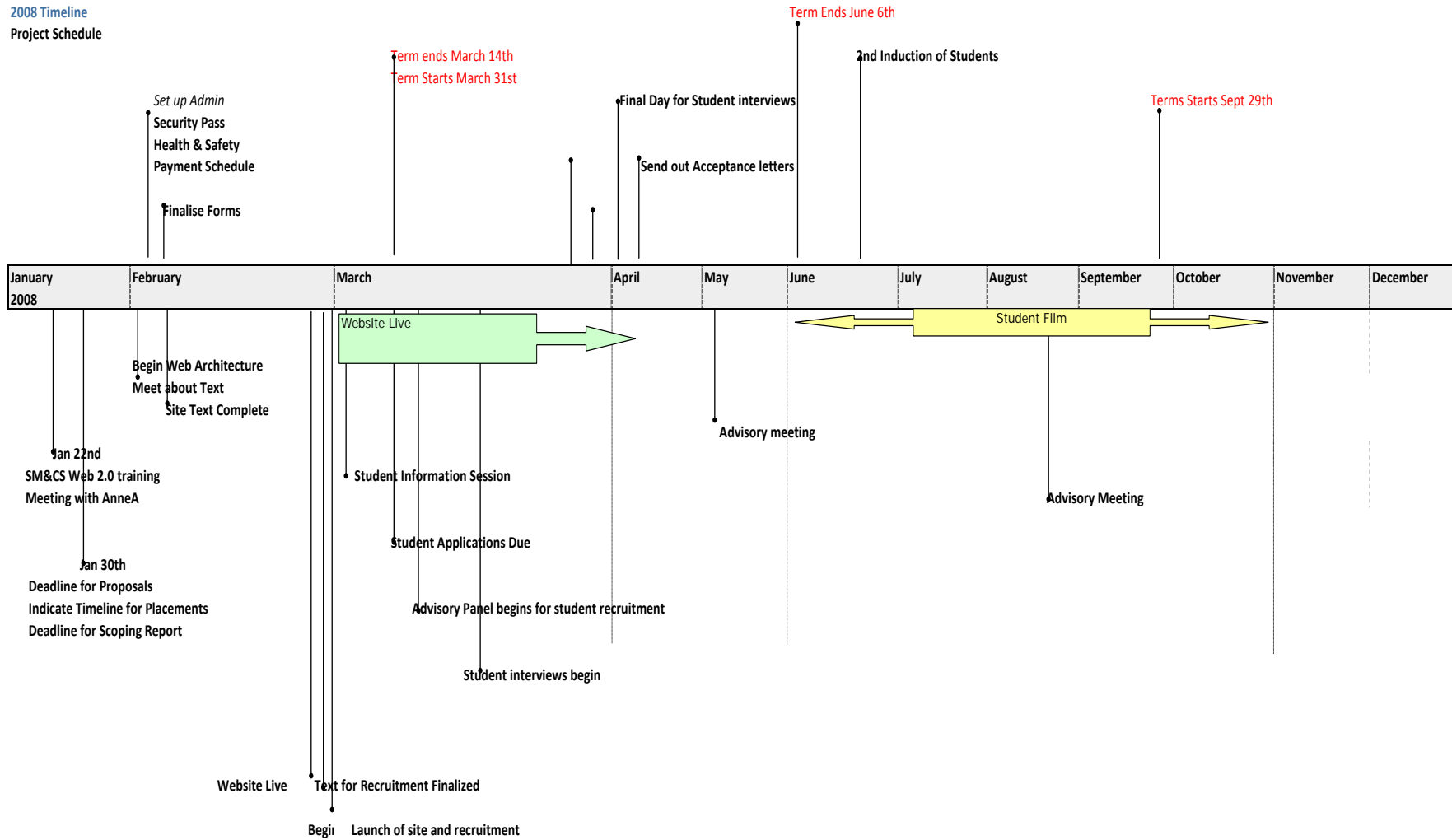
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Evaluation Method</b>	<b>Proposed Sample</b>	<b>Actual Sample</b>
Stage 1: Pre-placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative semi-structured interviews</li> </ul>	4 Students (one student from each of the four partner institutions)	2 Students
Stage 2: End of Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation questionnaires</li> </ul>	8 Students 8 Project Supervisors	8 Students 7 Project Supervisors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative semi-structured interviews</li> </ul>	8 Students 8 Project Supervisors	7 Students 8 Project Supervisors
Stage 3: Student destination research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student destination questionnaire</li> </ul>	8 Students	To be confirmed

## Project Timeline

CETLD project funding was applied for in May 2007, with an initial timescale of September 2007-September 2008. The initial start date was postponed because of delays in recruiting a 0.8 Project Support Officer. The project finally commenced in November 2007. Staff interviews were conducted prior to this date, which helped to establish a framework for the programme. The timetable for the project was as follows:

- Proposal
- Research existing work placement schemes/opportunities
- Interview contacts/colleagues interested in the development of the project – staff from V&A, University of Brighton and Museum of English Rural Life, Reading
- Draft proposal
- Bid accepted
- Write scoping report
- Present ideas for project to representatives from University of Brighton, RCA, V&A and RIBA
- Identify potential project supervisors
- Broker placements with project supervisors
- Establish Project Advisory Board
- Project supervisors submit Project Proposal forms
- Creation of Student Placement Programme ‘microsite’
- Placements are advertised at the University of Brighton and RCA
- Student applications received
- Project Advisory Board reviews applications
- Candidates allocated to placements by Project Advisory Board
- Selected applications are forwarded to project supervisors
- Project supervisor selects candidates for interview
- Candidates approved and start dates confirmed
- Processing of security forms and completion of research ethic forms
- Student begins placement
- Blog is launched
- Interview schedule drafted
- Appraisal conducted with student by project supervisor
- Student and project supervisor evaluation interviews and questionnaires

Student Placement Programme  
 2008 Timeline  
 Project Schedule



## **Student Placement Research Background**

*“The message for the (UK Research) Councils is that vacation bursary schemes offer added-value in the promotion and support of research careers, particularly through:*

- *Giving students a more realistic experience of a research position and research employment.*
- *Helping students make more informed career choices – even when the decision is that a research career does not suit them.*
- *Creating an excitement around research careers in the student body, when vacation bursaries are seen as attractive and prestigious opportunities.*
- *Motivating research staff with renewed enthusiasm about research careers, and providing them with opportunities to communicate this to a student audience.”*

EPSRC Vacation Bursary Good Practice Event, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2006<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, the significance of industry to the economic and social well being of the UK has been the major driver of reforms for work-based learning. The work placement is useful way of supporting knowledge transfer between academia and industry and is actively supported by the UK government as a way of closing the gap between education and training. Coupled with the economic success of the UK's creative and cultural industries, which museums and archives are part, the work placement offers many benefits to the student, university and the host institution:

### *The student perspective*

- Contributing to students' employment prospects through gaining work experience, skills, knowledge of the industry and personal networks and contacts
- Support the development of students' research skills related to their own discipline
- Supportive training from both the HEI and the host institution can build students personal and professional skills
- Clarification of future career goals
- Reinforce or increase students' desire to continue postgraduate education

### *The higher education institution*

- Support the research output of staff, advancing the development of existing projects and providing initial funding to support the development of research bids (CETL-AURS, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> EPSRC (2007) Vacation Bursary Good Practice Event, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 IN JENKINS, A. & HEALY, M. (Eds.) *UK Based Undergraduate Research Programmes*



### The host institution

- Host organisations can provide access to professional experience and networks and may even offer employment to a select number of placement students

There has been a growing concern in the museums and heritage sector about the way in which people can obtain work experience. Competition is very high for a limited number of spaces and there is a lack of guidance given on how to obtain work experience or strategies for developing a career in the sector. Maurice Davies, the Museums Association's Director working with the University of East Anglia (UEA) conducted research exploring entry to the museum workforce amongst concerns about low pay, lack of workforce diversity and fears that there are too many applicants for some jobs and barely enough for others. He identified that the work placement although a potentially rich resource for museums, was offered in an ad-hoc and fragmentary way with many museums seeing work placements as a problem rather than an opportunity (Davies, 2007). He argued that the current system focuses too much on individuals sourcing their own funding and gaining training. A key outcome of Davies' research was to support a movement away from the individual, towards the higher education institution and the employer. He argues in his report *The Tomorrow People: Entry to the Museum Workforce* that HEIs and employers need to share responsibility and encourage relevant support for new entrants.

London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise (LCACE), a consortium of eight universities, commissioned a scoping report funded by the Arts Council of England to research London based higher education institutions work placement practices in the creative and cultural industries (LCACE, 2008). This included a series of recommendations about the success and practice of work placements, which has since led to the production of a TOOLKIT designed for students, universities and host organisations. The aim of the toolkit is to provide formal and meaningful relationships for knowledge transfer and cultural exchange between all three parties. It provides information, templates and case studies that are designed to promote employability, accountability, high performance and fairness in work placement provision. The TOOLKIT also includes guidelines and examples, which will help higher education institutions, the host organisations and students to more easily manage work placement processes (LCACE, 2008).

### **Situated Learning and Communities of Practice**

The idea of situated learning and the communities of practice model are of great relevance to the delivery of student placements. Cope et al (2000) argue that the placement is a complex social and cognitive experience in which there are elements of situated learning (Cope et al., 2000). Situated learning is of great interest to pedagogy because it emphasises the importance of contextualised learning (Brown et al., 1989). Brown et al (1989) also argue that the context and the environment in which learning takes place is an integral part of what is learned.

Acceptance by the host institution's community of practice is another significant issue, which may impose certain difficulties for students unfamiliar with work-based culture. The term 'community of practice' was created by Lave and Wenger as a means of exploring the notion of situated learning within a particular domain of social practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). It seeks to define how we are each grouped into communities by our interests, skills and areas of knowledge. Wenger also argues that a community of practice is different from a community of interest or a geographical community because they do not imply a shared practice. He defines community of practice along three lines:

- What it is about - A joint enterprise, which is understood and continually renegotiated by its members
- How it functions – Mutual engagement that binds members together in a social entity
- What capability it has produced – the shared repertoire of communal resources (such as routines, sensibilities, language etc) that members have shared over time (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger (1989) also argues that learners learn by participating in a community of practice, they undertake tasks that contribute to the overall productivity of the group. The newcomer is not just an observer but a participant too, contributing to the productive activity of the community. These new apprentices begin with new tasks and gradually take on increased responsibility and become more accepted into the community. It is hoped over the course of a placement that students become 'legitimate participants' and develop a whole view about what it is they are learning and doing.

Drever and Cope (1999) recommend introducing students to the communities of practice model as a way of helping students recognise and relate their theoretical and conceptual understanding of the work placement experience (Drever and Cope, 1999). Students that have part-time jobs may be more familiar with this concept or better equipped to deal with the culture of the workplace.

## **Student Placement Evaluation Findings**

The CETLD Student Placement Programme provided an opportunity for students to work in a museum or archive and to clarify career aspirations and future research or study directions. What follows is a detailed analysis of findings from the programme based on themes raised.

### **Motivations for visiting museums**

Students were asked a series of questions about their existing knowledge and experience of museums and archives and reasons for visiting them. Unsurprisingly all students that took part in the programme were regular museum visitors and/or very interested in museums. They were less familiar with archives. Some had been behind the scenes on organised visits with their courses:

*I've only been backstage, just in very small museums like Worthing before but not really...I suppose that was going into an archive a bit but not at all in the same way that I experienced at the V&A, other than that just going as a visitor. Student [Interview]*

Other students were encouraged to visit museums and exhibitions as part of self-directed study. It was not a mandatory requirement of their course.

*On my Art Foundation course my tutor encouraged us to go to exhibitions that were on and at university I suppose there was more general encouragement. There was one project that was set in a museum, a drawing project, we just had to spend as much time as possible sketching in there but otherwise we weren't directly told you must go to specific museums. [Interview]*

Students also recalled visiting museums as children:

*My experience of mainly museums actually is going to visit them, the Science Museum, Natural History, so as a tourist I suppose, as a visitor, as opposed to behind the scenes. I had actually visited two archives before coming here but this one I had been to once and I went to the National Gallery, they have a print archive. [Interview]*

As part of the evaluation interview, students were asked to identify what a visit to the museum offered them and how they benefited from the experience:

*Prior to this placement...I go to museums a lot to get ideas, for research for projects and that kind of thing. [Interview]*

*...when I was on a previous course...I was researching 'spacesuits' for example, so I went to, I think it was the Science Museum and just went and looked at what they had on display...[Interview]*

## **Finding**

*Students that took part in the CETLD Student Placement Programme were frequent museum visitors and interested in museums and archives. They visited museums for project work or as part of self-directed study.*

## **Expectations of the placement**

One aim of the evaluation was to identify how the programme met the expectations created by the job description and the CETLD project team. Each placement was advertised on the CETLD website and publicised through the University of Brighton and RCA email as well as through posters, leaflets and a presentation given to students. An example of a job description is detailed below:

The V&A+RIBA Architecture Partnership Programme and RIBA Architecture Education programme activities are being actively developed. Excitingly, the number of HE students and tutors visiting the architecture collections at the RIBA British Architectural Library and the Victoria and Albert Museum is increasing significantly. This student placement would enable us to support this growing demand, by contributing to the development of a set of online resources that will ensure that students and tutors can more easily access the V&A+RIBA Architecture Partnership archive collections on site and remotely.

The student will

- Source collection materials at both the V&A and RIBA sites – archives, drawings, photographs and texts – to develop themed packages that meet HE course requirements and interests.
- Collate themed packages – lists of materials with supporting text and case studies - that explore the collections at the V&A and RIBA.
- Facilitate online access, by uploading digital images, supporting texts and downloadable pdfs on [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)
- Write-up online case studies using an existing template describing how HE students have used the collections.

The themes and content of the ‘packages’ will be developed from existing lists of archive material collated from previous HE visits, the student adding additional relevant content where appropriate. They will also analyse research data collated from consultation with HE tutors and students. They will lead on this development phase of the project with support and guidance from the V&A+RIBA Architecture Education Officer, the RIBA British Architectural Library Education Curator and access to the V&A and RIBA curators’ expertise. They will work to standard V&A and RIBA frameworks for developing online resources.

Evaluation feedback confirmed that advertised placements met students’ expectations:

*The experience was more valuable and enjoyable than the advertisements presented however the description was accurate, detailed and was very helpful in preparing me for the experience. [Questionnaire]*

*The placement went beyond all expectation derived from the description. The placement was very rich in information regarding archives and museum collections so it certainly met its advertised description of 'awareness of the uses of museum and archive collections'. [Questionnaire]*

*The description gave me a good idea of the tasks I have undertaken – if anything it could have sold the placement it bit more by emphasising what a great opportunity it was. [Questionnaire]*

It was felt that the descriptions of the placements were accurate but did not go far enough in describing the potential benefits that the programme would offer. If the programme were to be repeated in the future, I would recommend that the benefits were widely publicised to the student community and supported by academic programme leaders.

### **Recommendation**

The benefits of the Placement Programme should be widely publicised to the student community and supported by academic programme leaders with help from the University of Brighton and the RCA's marketing departments and student unions.

Students were also asked to comment on their own expectations of the placement and incidentally what surprised them most about working in a museum or archive:

*I suppose I didn't really know what I was going to be doing and what to expect, because I've never done it before and I've never worked in that environment, which I have found...unusual because it's quite quiet...and you can't eat and drink, and I'm used to working in a design environment where I drink water all day and you're always eating something. [Interview]*

Despite the unfamiliar work environment, the student later commented '*it's exceeded my expectations because I didn't really know what to expect, although I thought something good would come of it*'. The 'unfamiliar' and 'unexpected' featured in many student responses:

*So I knew that I was going to be looking at these sample books, textile sample books but I had imagined that they might be more varied than they were...they were pretty much all the same...but that's a good experience in itself because I know what to expect in a sample book and it totally makes sense... [Interview]*

In this example, the student had greater expectations of what the programme would deliver:

*Well. I suppose, all in all, it wasn't as interesting as I'd hoped it would be...I suppose I did spend a few sessions at the V&A where I was copying previously accessioned items into the computer because they hadn't been put in the database...but I found it quite slow and laborious at the same time.*  
[Interview]

The student was surprised about the nature of some curatorial processes, which she describes as 'slow' and 'laborious' but at the same time necessary when managing a collection. The student commented later in the interview that the placement had clarified her own expectations about wanting to work in museums:

*I'm still interested in working in museums but it's just made me realise how much paperwork is involved...it hasn't put me off working in museum but that would be very dependent on what role it was requiring. Because, as I said, I definitely wouldn't want to be sitting down doing admin all day.* [Interview]

Research has pointed to the pivotal role of preparing students for placements. This includes helping students to think carefully, and with guidance about what they will gain from the placement as well as what is expected of them. Each student has a responsibility to make sure they have read the programme description thoroughly as well as asking questions of the programme supervisor before accepting the position. Work placements expose students to real life situations that can serve to reinforce or dispel students' motivations for wanting to work in a particular career. It is closely tied to the idea of situated learning where knowledge is presented in an authentic context and where learning requires social interaction and collaboration. Despite the student's expectations of the placement, it helped her to make a more informed career choice about working in museums, even when the decision was that a museum career may not be what she expected.

### **Knowledge/skills gained**

As well as exposing students to the nuances of a museums or archives career, the programme provided students with the opportunity to learn new skills and to reflect on what they had achieved during this time:

*...how and what to note, when cataloguing items, how to handle these items, although that will vary from one to the next, depending on age, construction, condition and so on...*[Questionnaires]

*Organisation and thorough cataloguing of documents, communication, time keeping, computer skills...*[Questionnaires]

*Familiarity with slide scanners and with cataloguing computer programmes and knowledge of how to catalogue slides...*[Questionnaires]

The process of cataloguing objects helped students understand more about museum objects and collections and the way that information is managed and stored. Research conducted by the Research Information Network (2008) called *Discovering physical objects: Meeting researchers' needs* identified the significance of accessing

information in museums with help from curatorial staff, the wider literature about objects and the usefulness of online catalogues in helping researchers build a bigger picture and wider understanding of collections (RIN, 2008).

### **Finding**

Catalogue-based placements help students understand how object information is managed and stored in museums.

For other students, beyond listing the skills they had acquired, the experience of working behind the scenes and immersing themselves in a new environment helped them to understand more about the work of museums and archives as well as the task in hand:

*It's kind of given me...almost like osmosis of the kind of understanding of quite a lot of historic houses...I feel that I 'absorbed' it as it were. I was particularly struck by the sheer quantity of material, which the Furniture, Textiles and Fashion department keep about in the Information Section.*  
[Interview]

The student uses the words 'osmosis' and 'absorbed' to describe the transformative effect the placement has had on her understanding of historic houses. It is interesting to reflect here on Wenger's 'Community of Practice' model (Wenger, 1998). Wenger argues that learners learn by participating in a community of practice and by undertaking tasks they contribute to the overall productivity of the group. The newcomer is not just an observer but a participant who contributes to the productive activity of the community. Overtime they come to be accepted by the new community, beginning with new tasks and gradually take on more responsibility. For this student, the placement had a transformative effect on her understanding of the task at hand. Over the course of the placement, the student becomes a 'legitimate' participant and develops a 'whole' view about what it is she is doing and how she is contributing to the new community she belongs to.

### **Finding**

The experience of being behind the scenes and the placement itself had a transformative effect on students' experience and understanding of museums and archives.

For other students, the transformative effect of the placement was felt in other ways. One student described the process of cataloguing the Design archives at the University of Brighton as a form of investigation:

*...in 1957 I've a Robin Day bed settee which won one of the awards but there's no colour slide for it, then I look in the black and white photographs. I know what the bed looks like but because there's a brochure for each year...there's a 1957/58 brochure and a picture of the bed in it.* [Interview]

For this student, the experience helped her to consider the approach she takes to her own practice:

*I think it's made me consider what I do and how I do it and why I do it, and it's just fascinating really...so I've learned about different types of research and how you evaluate, how you can find information in different places I suppose... [Interview]*

Other placements provided students' with the opportunity to extend and perfect their research and professional skills:

*The placement has given me invaluable time to develop skills in research and writing to tight deadlines with specific objectives. This has been with the assistance and under the guidance of professionals whose experience has given me perspectives on architecture, architectural history and the cultural sector which I could not get elsewhere...alongside this I have developed my skills which are less easy to define such as time management and dealing with colleagues in the museum/work environment. [Questionnaire]*

## **Understanding museums and archives**

The main aim of the programme was to help students understand museum and archive processes. This desire was clearly articulated by students in the CETLD baseline research programme (Fisher, 2007). For students and their tutors, museum and archive practices such as object cataloguing and documentation remain hidden from view, disassociated from the museum's public arena. Many students were surprised at how an understanding of these practices changed their perceptions of museums more generally:

*Just strange because I don't think I'll be able to look at anything now without thinking about what's gone into it, before it has been put on show for the public to see...[Interview]*

*...it's made me realise that there's much more to it, I suppose I hadn't given a huge amount of thought to how a museum or archive is set up really...I suppose I've considered it more...I think it's fantastic that these documents are preserved and you can learn a hell of a lot of information from them. [Interview]*

### **Finding**

Museum and archive practices such as cataloguing and documentation are hidden from the public face of the museum. For many students, an understanding of these practices changed their perceptions of museums more generally.

The opportunity to work with an archive was very revealing; many students had never visited or used one before. As terms, museums and archives are sometimes



used interchangeably by students with little explanation given to their exact meaning or difference. The experience of working in an archive helped students understand some of these differences:

*I didn't really think of archives as something that would be of interest to me before, you just imagine there are lots of old things in boxes that no one sees...now I've seen what the archives hold I have realised that actually they are really interesting and it would be really good to see what archives have because they show you things that you would never ordinarily see. The experience has made me understand more about the work of the museum and its community...having completed the placement I realise the museum and its community work for the public good. [Interview]*

Again this resonates with findings from the Research Information Network (2008) about the importance of seeing and handling information as a method of research in museums:

*I think especially if you are doing some visual arts things, you need to be able to see stuff and maybe people respond to that better. If I had known what was in the archives at Brighton University I might have thought, oh that will be really interesting to go and have a look at or find something...just looking through things in the archive can just generate new ideas even if it doesn't seem directly related to start with. [Interview]*

*The one thing I had never thought of in any great detail was the sheer volume of stuff if you like, whatever word...That museums are receiving all the time, so it's almost like, sort of with archaeological kind of top soil that's arriving. [Interview]*

In addition to the demands of object documentation and cataloguing, museums and archives have to deal with public enquiries and research requests, demanding exhibition programmes and collections research. It was not only the experience of being behind the scenes that contributed to students' understanding of these processes but the insight that working with a museum or archive professional offered:

*I accompanied [my project supervisor] to look at a bed which was being photographed and the way she analysed the construction of the bed was fascinating. Getting a glimpse of the knowledge she has about period furniture was fascinating. [Interview]*

### **Finding**

Students' understanding of museum and archive processes was assisted by the insight that working with a museum or archive professional offered.

It also helped students to understand what demands would be made of them in a similar role:

*...the placement also allowed for an overview of RIBA as an organisation. My placement leaders were very keen on enabling me to make contacts through RIBA so that I could gain access to any information that may help to aid my study. [Questionnaire]*

*I guess it has been a revelation on how this great big thing called the V&A is patched together from different departments and so on and how that works and I think how the partnership works with RIBA...because it is something different...how does that work, and yes, I guess meeting new people in different roles, finding out about what they do day to day, really, it has given me a completely new perspective on how the culture setting works. [Interview]*

Work placements contribute to students' employment prospects by helping them gain work experience, skills, knowledge of the industry and personal networks and contacts. It can also help clarify their ideas for personal research and dissertations and desire to continue in further study:

*I really enjoyed it: it gave me a new lease of ideas. I'm now thinking of moving away from Interior Architecture at the University of Brighton because it is not RIBA certified. I now think I would like to study for the full Architectural diploma. [Questionnaire]*

*I have two pieces left to submit for my MA, one is an oral presentation and then there's the 20,000 word based research and the oral presentation has to be a critical reflection on a museum or a conference...I was ideally set up in a way to carry that out...I chose to look at something obviously in the V&A to familiarise myself with it and I'd already done some work on the MA on the use of fiction as a research method. [Interview]*

For others, the placement provided an opportunity to broaden their existing work experience and the possibility of gaining paid work in the cultural sector:

*I'm really glad that I did it because it is really useful when you are a student to be in the workplace and have that experience and be able to write it on your CV...the reason you usually get rejected from a job is because you don't have the right experience...I'm so glad that I did do it. [Interview]*

### **Best thing about the placement**

Students were asked to comment on what they had achieved and what the best thing about their placement had been. In terms of students' achievements, many detailed aspects of the work they had completed as part of this process such as cataloguing objects and working with archives:

*I feel very proud of having sorted half of this archive or maybe two thirds of it, so actually the volume of material I got through... [Interview]*

*I've created this whole document which is about 70 pages long, which is basically counting all these photographs and slides and cross-referencing to make sure that the listing of the award is correct...I got this 72 page document which is full of all the Design Award winners' descriptions and it's something that can be used, it's something that's useful. [Interview]*

*Feeling that I was contributing to providing information for future researchers to assess and use. When I see mention of historic houses in the media...I will now think of the resources I looked through for this project and all the houses from A to N that I read about. [Interview]*

By the end of the placement, students were able to see how their work contributed to the needs of a department. Participating students were highly motivated and felt a sense of achievement when completing the placement. For many students the best thing about the programme had been the chance to work behind the scenes and get up close to objects, even to handle them on occasion:

*The experience of going 'back stage' in a major museum and going to Blythe House [the museum store] and participating in the cataloguing process of items so far unseen by the public. [Questionnaire]*

*Having such close contact with so many pieces of valuable history... [Interview]*

*Being at the V&A – I loved going through the museum in the mornings before it was open and having a moment where you could just be amongst all these amazing objects and creations... [Interview]*

For students, access behind the scenes remains as pertinent now as it did when CETLD baseline research was conducted in 2006. What it means for students is less frequently described apart from the sense of belonging it created for students especially for those based at the V&A.

## **Finding**

For many students the best thing about their placements was the chance to work behind the scenes and get up close to objects.

## **Recommendations**

Finally students were asked to suggest areas where the programme could have been improved. Responses varied. Students based at the V&A would like to have had more of an extensive induction:

*It would have been enjoyable, interesting and useful to have been given a guided tour back stage within the museum...I realise that I have seen only a very small aspect of working at the V&A and this would add positively to the whole experience. [Interview]*

*A little bit more of an induction would have been helpful... [Interview]*

*I think a general tour would be quite good because I had the opportunity to go to Blythe House and see some of the theatre collections there and that was really interesting because you suddenly realised what was available. [Interview]*

The difficulty with any placement is that it only offers a snapshot of the host institution and one profession in any detail. For students based at the V&A, the curiosity for all things 'back stage' extended to other departments, collections and stores. For an institution the size of the V&A, departmental tours are an infrequent and ad hoc occurrence, available to new staff rather than students on internships or placements.

### **Recommendation**

To offer students a general tour and wider induction especially for students at the V&A if possible.

Some students said they felt isolated on their placement because they didn't know anyone or were one of a few interns or volunteers working in a department or on their own in an archive or catalogue room:

*An opportunity for volunteers to meet up... [Interview]*

*If I had to improve anything about the placement I would perhaps suggest that students may benefit from working in pairs or small teams – in this way developing their own learning between themselves as well as from other members of staff. [Interview]*

### **Recommendation**

To offer placements designed for two or more students.

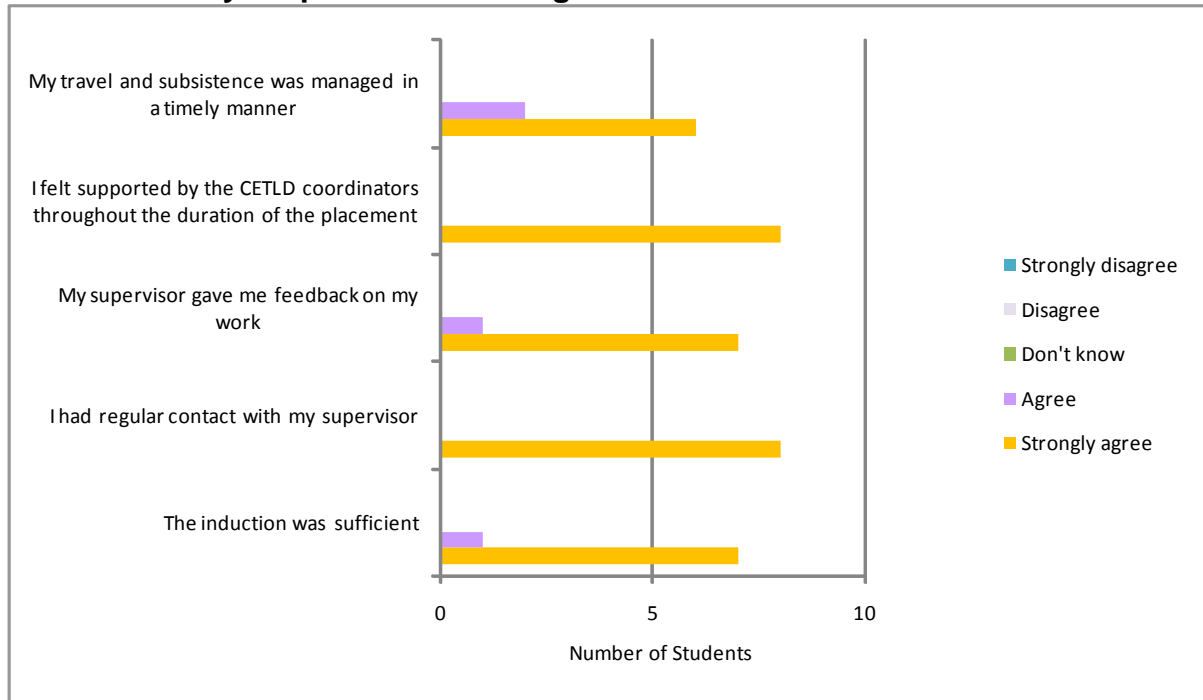
This was a concern that had initially been identified in the Student Placement Programme Scoping Report (Speight, 2008). The Placement Programme was designed so that the majority of students would be on placement at the same time but in different locations. The CETLD coordinators arranged a social event for students to meet each other at the V&A and a blog was launched so that students would keep in touch with each other even when based in different locations (see appendix 3 for findings from the student blog).

The success of individual placements is attributed to the care and support of project supervisors and the time they invested in the programme and to the student. This was greatly appreciated by the CETLD coordinators and students involved in the initiative.

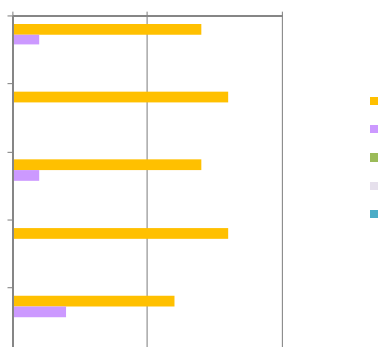
## Student Questionnaires

Students were asked a series of questions about the management of the programme, how well it was organised and what skills they had learnt from the placement.

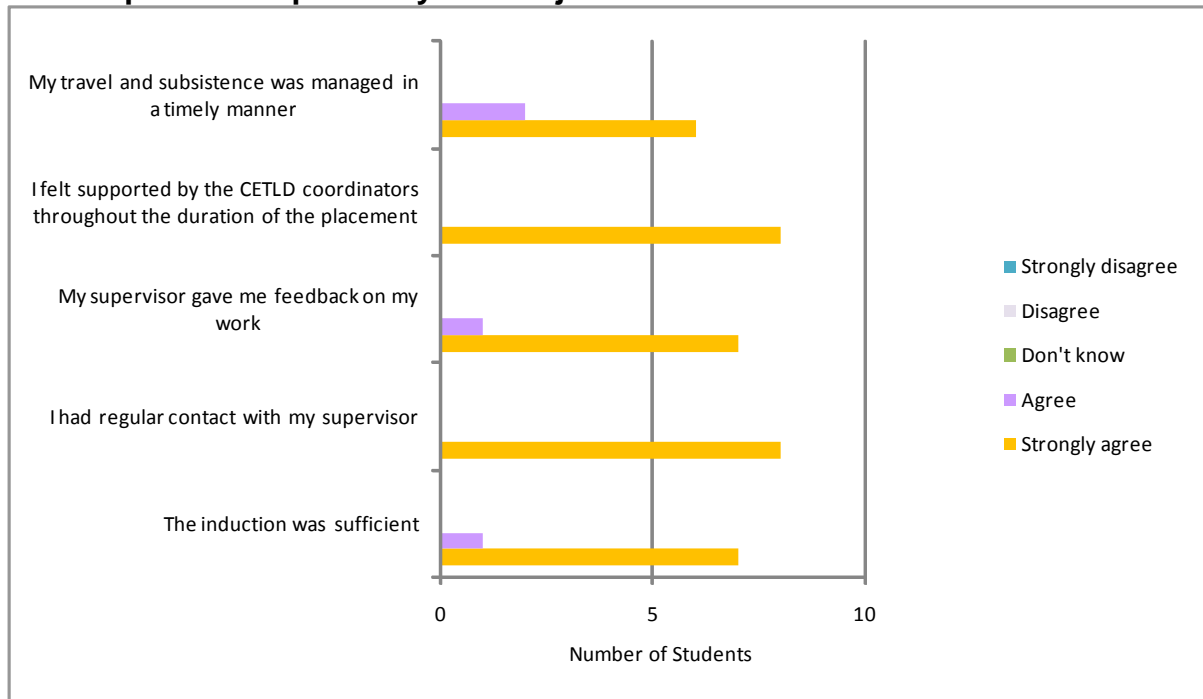
### How well was your placement managed?



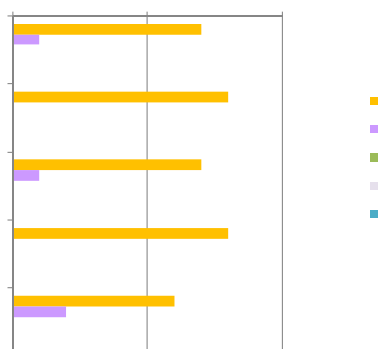
Students reported positively on the management of the placement, with the majority of students 'strongly agreeing' that the placement was managed efficiently by the CETLD coordinators and project supervisors. The induction was deemed sufficient despite earlier comments from students wanting a more thorough tour, especially for those based at the V&A. Project Supervisors provided students with regular contact and regular feedback on their work. All students strongly agreed that they felt supported by the CETLD coordinators throughout the duration of the programme.



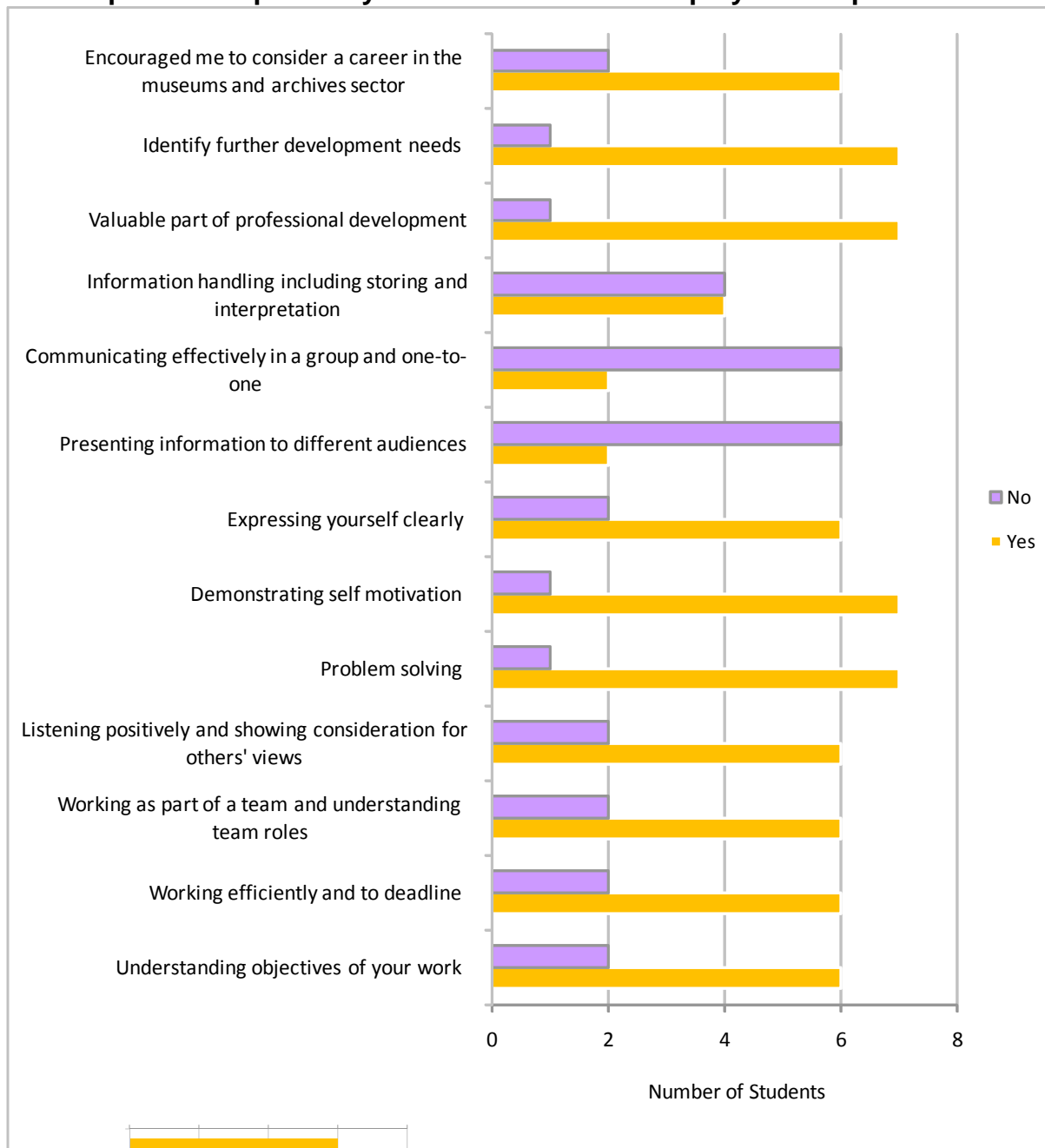
## Did the placement provide you with job satisfaction?



In addition to the management of the programme, students were asked to rate the level of their experience whilst on placement and if the programme provided them with a level of job satisfaction. The majority of students strongly agreed that they felt part of a positive and welcoming environment when on placement and were accepted as a member of the team with an adequate level of responsibility. Students agreed (rather than strongly agreed) that the work was sufficiently varied but it did provide them with intellectual stimulation.



## Did the placement provide you with other useful employment experience?



Most importantly students were asked to agree or disagree whether the programme provided them with a useful employment experience.

The majority of students agreed that the placement programme:

- Encouraged them to consider a career in the museums and archives sector
- Helped to identify further development needs in their career or studies
- Usefully contributed to their professional development
- Helped them to express themselves clearly in a professional context

- Allowed them to demonstrate their level of self motivation, problem-solving and time management skills
- Provided them with the opportunity to listen to others and work as part of a team
- Allowed them to understand the objectives of their work

The majority of students agreed that the placement programme:

- Did not help them communicate effectively in a group or one-to-one
- Did not help their presentation skills to different audiences.

There was a mixed response from students on whether the programme provided them with opportunities to handle and interpret information. The majority of placements that were catalogue-based required students to handle and interpret different sources of information relating to documents and objects that would be entered into a collections management database.



## **Evaluation Findings: The Project Supervisor's Experience**

Project Supervisors were asked to complete a questionnaire prior to the student's review and completion of the evaluation programme. The aim of the subsequent interview was to explore in more detail issues that were raised in the students' review and evaluation forms.

Project Supervisors were asked a series of questions about the management and coordination of the programme, their experience with the students, previous experience of conducting work placements and overall comments about the CETLD Student Placement Programme.

### **Skills matching students to placements**

Supervisors were asked to feedback their comments surrounding the process of skills-matching students to placement programmes. The number of applications received was lower than anticipated but with the careful guidance of the Student Placement Advisory Board, students were skills matched to placements. Copies of students' CVs were then forwarded to the relevant supervisor.

The 'Online Exhibition' placement attracted the highest number of applicants compared to other placements. Students found the exhibition component of this placement most appealing:

*I recall we had quite a few applicants to our placement...it was a question of finding which one had the best matched qualifications, and for me, I think it worked very well because the student had a background in information architecture and virtual media...she had the kind of experience and curiosity and set of skills that matched very well with the project. [Interview]*

For others, the experience was different:

*I don't think I have any particular qualms about the procedure but of course nobody came forward for this placement in the first place... [Interview]*

*One of the major difficulties was that we did not receive a high number of responses...I changed the timetable of the placement. [Interview]*

Overall this was a set back for the programme, despite every effort made to organise placements around the needs of students and tutors. The programme was advertised four weeks before the Easter holiday in March 2008. A total of 23 applications were received in total from 14 students. It was difficult to ensure that an equal number of applications were received for each placement. The Advisory Board's decision to match students to individual placements meant one supervisor felt cut off from the process:

*...I mean, we have no complaints with the result at all, but I think we imagined that we might be part of the deliberating process. Now in fact that might have been your intention too, and volume of applicants might have played a part in*

*this...I recognise that could be a problem, but were it possible it would be lovely to feel some sense of their involvement. [Interview]*

For other supervisors, the process was marred by the administration of the programme:

*I think it was fairly well, it seemed to take a long time to get going but once you actually came up with the students then that seemed to go very smoothly...it just somewhat bureaucratic ...but that may reflect the fact that we normally recruit students directly and don't go through that amount of paperwork...there did seem to be a lot of stages to it. [Interview]*

### **Finding**

Some project supervisors found the amount of paperwork related to the programme unnecessary.

One difficulty in managing the programme was the inter-institutional aspect of the initiative, and the need to document and administer the scheme in line with CETLD funding conditions and those of individual institutions. On occasion, it was difficult to convince some supervisors about the need to complete forms and elements of paperwork that they saw as unnecessary. Some supervisors were more positive about this process:

*...it entirely matched the frame that you described and was defined in the literature, but that wasn't in many respects seismically different to other versions of, except I suppose one had a sense of partnership and there was a more formalised administratively led engagement. [Interview]*

*When it came to writing up the document for you, from my perspective that was straightforward because it's like writing a course document. And, if you're used to doing that...I would automatically find myself building in some form of research into it so that the student was coming away with something that was beyond what they were doing for us. [Interview]*

The comment above was from a curator based at the V&A, who prior to this position had worked as a textiles lecturer in higher education. Her experience of working with design students in higher education positively influenced her approach to the programme and the management of students.

### **Existing Systems or Procedures for the Delivery of Placements**

Internships for students are a valuable way in which museums and universities can collaborate. The University of Brighton, the V&A, RIBA and the Royal College of Art all offer placements or internships to students. This is often ad hoc although some formal arrangements do exist. Many project supervisors had managed student placements or volunteers prior to their involvement in the CETLD Student Placement Programme. As part of the evaluation, the CETLD team were keen to identify how

the programme differed from existing initiatives and if supervisors had experience of an initiative that offered placements across institutions. The University of Brighton and the V&A offered similar programmes for students:

*We have a system for volunteers and the department has taken on placement students from other institutions. They work with an individual supervisor (or line manager) who guides their work. Some times this is project-based, at other times it is routine filing work. [Interview]*

*The University of Brighton Design Archives have had volunteer and student placement programme in place since its inception in 1996...The University of Brighton has clearly developed and defined policies relating to health and safety, harassment etc in placement scenarios. The delivery of placements is not 'systematised' because of the great variety of scope and duration within the institution. [Questionnaire]*

The RIBA placement supervisor had experience of working with two overseas internship schemes:

*I have been responsible for overseeing the training and management of several student placements, most of which have been organised through established internship schemes with Boston University (EUSA) and Yale University (British Bulldogs) set up between the institution and RIBA. I have also been responsible for managing volunteers who have carried out voluntary work for RIBA Drawings and Archives. [Questionnaire]*

Despite the host institutions' experience of similar initiatives, the aim of the CETLD Student Placement Programme was to offer a formalised inter-institutional framework for the delivery of student placements. For one supervisor, originally from Canada, it was a surprise that placements or internships in the UK are not as common or as organised as they are in Canada and the States:

*I was actually surprised, coming from an outsider perspective because what are referred to as internships in North America are very common and so it's very common to have student interns in museums...usually on a paid basis, so I was surprised that there wasn't a student placement programme already...I would have expected that they would have internships and they would have a whole area including students in the museum's activities whether it's in a curatorial department or in teaching and learning... [Interview]*

It is frequently the case that placements are offered by the host institution on an informal basis although the Furniture, Fashion and Textiles department at the V&A have an internal system for dealing with student requests for placements:

*We have a very large number of people applying to do voluntary work in the department and we have a very developed system for dealing with that...we consistently have students from the MA in History of Dress and the MA here [RCA MA History of Design course] and Central St Martin's etc....We have a particular person that deals with all of those...If anybody sends me*

*something, it goes straight to the person who is our central point and she does a monthly cull in the sense that she talks to the fashion and textiles curators once a month about their needs and suggests people. [Interview]*

The experience of this department is an anomaly. A formalised system for the delivery of placements across the institution does not exist. Students and volunteers interested in voluntary work must make enquiries through the V&A's Human Resources department.

### **Finding**

A formalised system for the delivery of student placements does not exist in or across CETLD partner institutions.

### **Contribution of Placement to Department/Host Institution's Needs**

As well as providing an interesting and varied experience for the student, one of the major aims of the programme was to provide support for the needs of a department or project supervisor. Placements were designed by project supervisors and were project-based. For some cataloguing-based projects, students contributed what they could within a particular time period:

*We have several large and important archives that have recently been received into the RIBA Drawings and Archives collection. Although these archives are already catalogued at inventory level, it is very difficult for these archives to be fully sorted, housed and catalogued due to lack of resources and staff time. Therefore, by having the placement, it has enabled at least part of the ABK archive (the most significant projects) to be fully catalogued onto the online catalogue and made accessible for the public to come and view. [Questionnaire]*

The placement is a useful way of supporting the needs of a department at busy times of the academic or museum year:

*At one of our busiest times of the year [recording and cataloguing the graduate show] X was able to step in and maintain momentum on one of our key backroom projects that would otherwise have fallen by the wayside. We have a slow-burning task to digitise about 20 per cent of our slides of student work and can only do this when all other pressing tasks have been taken care of. X was able to advance the project considerably, tackling three departments' worth of images in eight days. This was a great help and moves us closer to completion and launch of a pilot resource within a year. [Questionnaire]*

For others the benefits of hosting student placements are the fresh insights that students bring to projects. This can help motivate staff and renew their enthusiasm for a project as well as provide them with the opportunity to communicate this to a student audience:

*We always enjoy working more closely with particular individuals from the student body. There are many reasons for this. Naturally it is helpful to have their assistance but more importantly from their responses to the tasks and the environment we gain new insights into the work we are engaged in. There is the opportunity to deal in greater depth with research and other queries and to build constructive relationships that may bear fruit in longer-term research projects... [Questionnaire]*

This experience was not shared by all Placement Supervisors. One in particular was wary of offering placements generally:

*I find that they often come in straight from education where they're actually much more spoon-fed than we were at university and they expect that someone's actually going to provide them with something rather than that they are going to provide somebody with something...you're not in a situation any longer in which the grown-ups as it were are paid to educate you. [Interview]*

The candidness of this remark raises particular issues about the value of placements to host institutions and some project supervisors. It demonstrates that placements on occasion can be viewed as a hindrance rather than a benefit. However with careful planning including the identification of project needs and timeframe some of these problems can be negated:

*I think we are very wary of taking people on short-term placements unless we have a very strong idea that they're going to be able to contribute very soon because there's too much input. The very good thing about X was that it was a part-time thing...it was only one day a week but it also meant for us that it was possible to think that I must glean sometime on Thursday...[Interview]*

For busy departments, students have to be ready and able to hit the ground running. Despite this there is often a high level of demand and competition for placements:

*...can be quite difficult unless we have a particular project which the person is a good fit...but for those posts we probably would take someone with some experience, like a museum studies, someone who is more directly skilled...they're, as it were, at quite a high pitch of education already and in the specialism of the department. We also regularly have museum studies students from ... Paris who are very highly motivated. [Interview]*

Placement opportunities are highly valued. It is important to acknowledge the benefits that such experiences offer students especially in their future careers.

### **Skills generated by students**

Similar to the feedback received from students, project supervisors reported in the evaluation some of the new skills that students had gained from participating in the programme. This included:

*...organising and handling of a paper archive, often dealing with fragile or awkward material. They will have learnt about having to adhere to museum conservation standards on the housing and storing of material as well as the RIBA Library cataloguing system and procedures. Concise and accurate data inputting skills...and overall appreciation of the amount of work involved in the cataloguing of an archive. [Questionnaire]*

*She will have learned how to make judgements in the case of ambiguous copyright issues, which may impact on her own professional practice. [Questionnaire]*

*Further knowledge of how museum collections can be made accessible to different audiences e.g., writing styles, positioning. [Questionnaire]*

Students may need extra support when learning some skills, and on occasion it may mean going over tasks several times and sometimes identifying gaps in students' level of understanding or competence in particular areas:

*...she learned very quickly, but I realised that I should have spent a bit more time concentrating on things...we had to do a bit of backtracking to compensate for things that I hadn't explained sufficiently. [Interview]*

*...it's always a situation with students that they don't necessarily understand the difference between scholarly databases that are only available to a university community...so it broadened the array of research material. [Interview]*

## **Students' Understanding of Museum and Archives**

Project Supervisors were asked to comment on how the placement contributed to students' understanding of museums and archives. Many supervisors commented that placements offer students exposure to primary sources and the chance to experience objects and museum documents in close proximity, something that is remote to the experience of many students:

*...the primary search material that many of them, depending on their level of study, have probably not encountered before, or encountered in a very limited way...using a research library, unless they were using special collections or archival material there...kind of privileged access and...an insider's view of how professionals work in that context. [Interview]*

Similarly, the way research is conducted in museums and archives may also be very different to the way a student understands or conducts research in his or her own subject:

*I think a lot is fed to them for quite a long time, they don't actually do research, they do gathering of information and I think dealing with, whether it's objects or information raw, does give them an understanding of how archives and libraries are developed...if you're really going to do research seriously it*

*means trawling through a hundred pieces of dud information to find the one...I think one of the things you offer a student is the glimpse of the real world.*  
[Interview]

## **Finding**

Exposure to museum and archive processes can improve students' understanding of and approaches to research in their own subject.

Comments such as these correspond with students' earlier remarks, in particular the way that exposure to museum and archives processes change the way students see and understand them:

*Just strange because I don't think I'll be able to look at anything now without thinking about what's gone into it, before it has been put on show for the public to see...*[Interview]

It may also be the case that a placement can lead the transition from one level of understanding to another, a threshold moment:

*...this can be the moment where a lot of words previously uttered suddenly begins to make sense about the nature of primary sources, about what history really is, about the difference between them going to the library and getting the book off the shelf and looking at the files in our collection, about the absolute primacy of a piece of research they might conduct there that can add entirely to the body of knowledge...suddenly it sort of makes sense...there does seem to be a sort of moment when the light goes on...well maybe to be more ambitious for their dissertations or for their future courses.* [Interview]

## **Barriers to student placements**

Planning and delivering student placements takes a great deal of time. For busy professionals, there is a need to define a project, to select a timeframe, to make sure the programme is manageable and to ensure that right candidate is appointed. The role of the CETLD team was to support the coordination of placements and to help with the recruitment of the right candidate. It was difficult to provide additional support beyond this. Barriers encountered when designing student placements included the following remarks:

*...the challenge is finding the right kind of project where they can make a real contribution and where it is satisfying to them...finding a physical space where they can work, we had the problem of access to a computer...So time, training and finding the right fit...* [Interview]

*Time, staff time, to actually manage them. Space, we've got a major issue with space, where we actually put them.* [Interview]

Beyond space and the right kind of project, other concerns were made about the level of supervision students require:

*...one of the problems is that it's very difficult to take on students who expect very close supervision because we don't have time to do that... [Interview]*

This can be a major difficulty for project supervisors and would need to be fully considered before a placement is offered. Despite a readiness and commitment by some supervisors, there is a concern too that the time and planning involved in preparing a placement and hosting a student can be a hindrance:

*...what is very difficult is if we get a scheme sent back and people saying...it's not very interesting for the student. I think well so what? ...it's the generalist question of we're not here to serve the students, we serve the students when they come to us for appointments...when they want to look at a particular object...but we can't devise a kind of student-centred attachment...it has to be something the department needs. [Interview]*

A further barrier that was raised by one of the project supervisors was that of continuation or sustainability. In practice this was by far the greatest impediment to the Student Placement Programme:

*I think continuation is a very important thing, which would be more difficult for you in an institution this size, because you're likely to get projects from lots of different people and lots of different departments. Whereas, if you're in a smaller museum, it'll be the same people who need students over and over again. [Interview]*

As the above comment suggests, designing a placement scheme for an institution the size of the V&A can be difficult without a formalised system of agreement and commitment from curatorial departments. Without funding and a co-ordinating team, a sustainable project that exists beyond CETLD's funding term is unlikely.

## **Finding**

Barriers to placement include lack of time and support, finding the right kind of project for the right individual, limited office space and continuation funding.

## **Museum and University Collaboration**

Research conducted by CETLD into the value of museum and university collaboration has identified the wider benefits of both sectors working together. Exciting initiatives do exist but these tend to be based on opportunistic arrangements between museum curators and educators and university lecturers. There are many barriers that have deterred both sectors from working together more effectively:

*I think the timetables we work on and the demands are completely different. And that's even noticeable in the difference between the research department*



*in the V&A and the tutorial...so while a friend of mine, who has a museum service in Hampshire said to me: 'The difference you will find in being in a museum rather than at the university is that it's a reactive job. 80% of your time is reacting in response to other people's demands, 20% is actually taking positive action yourself to get things done'. There is an element of that...the demands that come from outside that have to be dealt with immediately.*  
[Interview]

This comment highlights some of the nuances of working in a museum environment where work and activity is frequently reactive and led by other people's demands. The supervisor reflects here on the internal differences between the V&A's research and curatorial departments. This is further complicated when working with an outside organisation such as a university, where the 'timetables' and 'demands' are also different. Along with the insight this comment provides about inter-institutional barriers, other supervisors commented on the lack of understanding or appreciation about the role of the curator. A perceived 'misconception' included the following comment from one curator and supervisor:

*There's also a perception that in national museums, curators spend a lot of their time doing research and I can tell you, quite forcefully, from a perspective of our department that very few people are getting research done. Research is tied to public programme...I think this is where university lecturers who think they would have more access to curators will find that curators don't have time to respond instantly...[Interview]*

This comment reflects the personal experience of one curator that was generally at odds with positive comments made by other supervisors especially those with an understanding of how the higher education sector works and the needs of HE students:

*...As the supervisor of a student, I'm likely to be more teacher-led and I'm also likely to be more tolerant of students, seeing what they want to get out of it. [Interview]*

### **Finding**

Initiatives between museums and universities can be difficult to arrange because of different timetables and demands made of staff. Museum work can be reactive and led by other people's demands.

### **Benefits of Placements**

Supervisors were asked to outline the benefits that student placements offer students and the host organisation:

*I think they're fundamental...in my own experience, of course, people have gone on and written dissertations as a result of placements they did and others have found that the placement has acted as the way into a temporary*

*job that came up just after they graduated because they're a known quantity, it gives them the little edge over their competitors. [Interview]*

The value of the work placement in providing students with future work and research opportunities is widely acknowledged in the literature and from students' own reflections. The long term impact of the programme on future career destinations was outside the formal evaluation of the programme.

One significant benefit was the importance of exposing students to the professional context of a busy museum or archive. It can provide students with an awareness of the different types of environment they can work in with an art and design qualification:

*And I've always thought very strongly that art and design education in many ways, makes people who don't become practitioners in that area feel like they're inferior citizens, 'well, look: there are plenty of people here who've come from the creative arts and this is how they're applying what they do'. [Interview]*

For theory-based art and design students, *'it's an obvious place...where you can practice the history of art and design: one of the few places you can practice it professionally'*. Placements can support practice-based students in other ways:

*Placements in archives can help to inform practice, draw inspiration when making their own work. Also practice students with a strong theoretical background who may be interested in archival processes. [Interview]*

The exposure to methods and ways of working in a professional context was also highlighted:

*I think the other thing that students can get if they plug in seriously is the sense that you have to be methodical about things and painstaking...If they don't like doing that kind of work, then work in a museum is not for them. I think the CETLD is an excellent idea not least because it brought the funding for bringing students here, which opens up the students we can take because lots of people can't afford the luxury of being in London to work in a museum. [Interview]*

### **Finding**

Student placements can provide valuable opportunities for future employment and can help students make personal contacts that will inform their future careers. It can provide students with an awareness of the different types of environment they can work in with an art and design qualification.

### **Subsistence costs**

One of the major benefits of the CETLD programme was the financial provision it made towards students' transport and subsistence costs while on placement. This meant students based in Brighton could travel to London for placements at the V&A and RIBA. The original idea for remuneration was to pay students a fixed stipend, similar to the model established by the UROP. However, financial regulations that govern CETLD meant payment could only be made for travel and subsistence costs. This was not entirely welcomed by supervisors:

*I was concerned by the lack of remuneration available for students, which I hadn't realised was the case until quite late into the process. Perhaps I was being naïve to assume there would funds available for payment of a sort, and perhaps I should have valued the experience of working at the RCA which has its own rewards for interested students. [Interview]*

## **Recommendations**

Like students, tutors were asked to feedback their ideas on how the programme could be improved. One of the key problems that arose was the small number of student applications received for each placement. Supervisors' recommendations included ways in which the publicity for the programme could have been improved:

*I think the publicity side of it, I remember you saying that it was difficult to attract students and to get their attention and whether taking a more promotional angle...this is a chance for you to get experience in a major institution and to put it on your CV and so on, whether that elicited more applications. [Interview]*

One supervisor explained the direct benefits that placements offer students:

*For the RIBA, it is offering the student an insight into the type of work curators often carry out as well as exposure to archival material that may (or may not) be accessible by the public. It also gives students a chance to learn about different architects, architectural practices and their work. All if this could be considered valuable experience for a student who might be contemplating pursuing a career in museum curatorship, librarianship or architectural history. [Questionnaire]*

Other recommendations included suggestions for when to host placements, particularly when scheduling them around supervisors existing workloads and holidays:

*We originally hoped for a more compact placement period, timed to avoid the greater part of the summer vacation. This was because with two members of curatorial staff, annual leave to be taken, and an often busy schedule of visiting researchers, we felt concerned about continuity of supervision. [Interview]*

A recommendation for scheduling a placement for two students was also suggested:

*I would say that if we had two placement students again, I would ask that we could stagger their start time so that they started a week apart. That way we can manage their initial training much more efficiently and affectively as trying to train up two students at the same time who are working on different projects is demanding and time consuming. However, having two placements together has been good as they keep each other company and have supported each other in their respective projects.[Interview]*

### **Recommendations**

Improve the publicity of the programme and advertise its wider benefits to students directly.

Attempt to schedule placements according to the needs of project supervisors.

While many of the comments and recommendations were made about the management of the programme, a concern was made about the 'readiness' of one student for the placement:

*...vetting the student's actual previous knowledge and ability to research independently is again, something that I miscalculated as much as anybody ...I think it was only, of course, once we got onto that phase that I realised at the end of the first year on the Design History course, despite the fact that X was a mature student, he/she didn't yet have an idea about how to research logically or the importance of recording everything you do so the process is visible. [Interview]*

The student's lack of awareness as the supervisor suggests was due to the stage of the student in his or her course. The same supervisor suggested if you had someone '*finishing their third year, you could have expected more*'. The programme was designed for second year undergraduate and postgraduate students. This example was an exception because we had found it difficult to recruit students for a part time placement that was term-based. Supervisors were asked to select the appropriate year group for the placement. In most cases, we were able to meet this criterion. However, feedback suggests that level 3 or postgraduate students would be better suited.

### **Recommendation**

Level 3 undergraduates or postgraduate students are better suited to work placements. They show a greater level of maturity to their degree subject and the wider world of work.

Comments were also made about the difficulty of managing similar student-placement programmes:

*When we set off, the first couple of years, there were ropey moments with institutions where we had to go in and kind of smooth the waters...I think it takes a good five years for any relationship to bed down satisfactorily...very often curators forget that students are individuals that you can't tar with the same brush of being 'bad' because you had one bad student. [Interview]*

This project supervisor (and curator) acknowledges some of the difficulties encountered. Interestingly her attitude is very different to that of her colleague and the value of such schemes to an institution's needs (see discussion below).

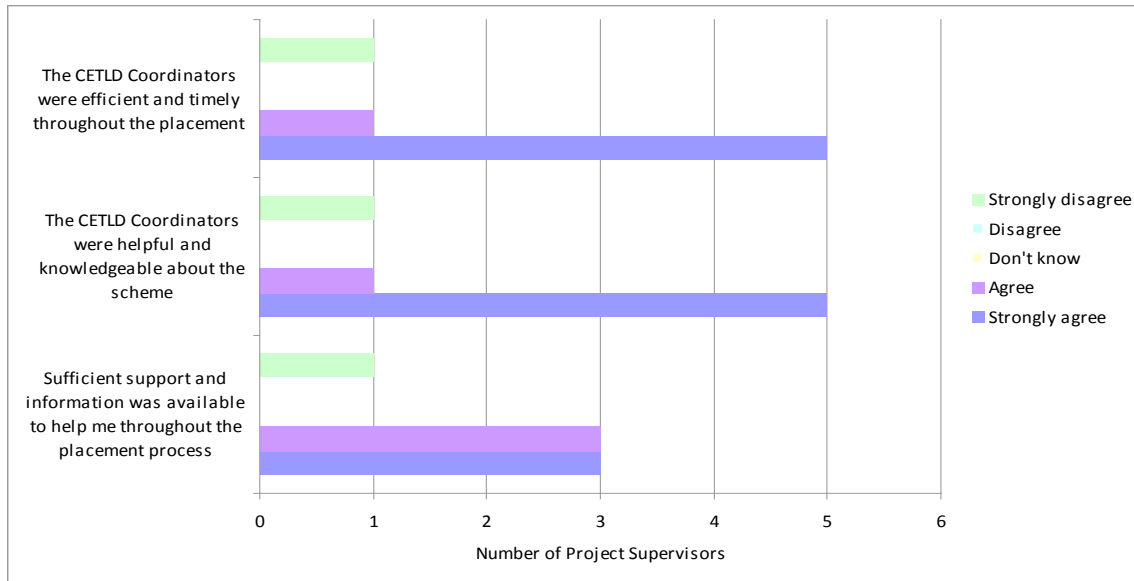
One Project Supervisor, who had recently moved into the museums' sector having worked as a university lecturer for twenty years gave an interesting account of this:

*...until I came here, three years ago, I was a university lecturer for twenty years. So I've placed students, rather than supervising them as placements. So I'm well aware of what can be a tug-of-war between the institution and the university's expectations. And we were always very clear with students that we were setting up something that had to be useful to the museum as to them. And so the ideal placement was the type of placement where the curator would say something along the lines of, 'Well, you'll be covering coat hangers on Tuesday, and then on Wednesday, you'll do this more demanding task that will help with our documentation'. So from that point-of-view, as the supervisor of the student, I'm likely to be more teacher-led and I'm also likely to be more tolerant of students, seeing what they want to get out of it. [Interview]*

This supervisor demonstrates an understanding of both sectors' needs, which are sometimes difficult to articulate for example, managing the expectations of partner institutions and those of the curator or supervisor. She suggests that work placements that offer structure and an indication of day-to-day outcomes are better suited to undergraduate students.

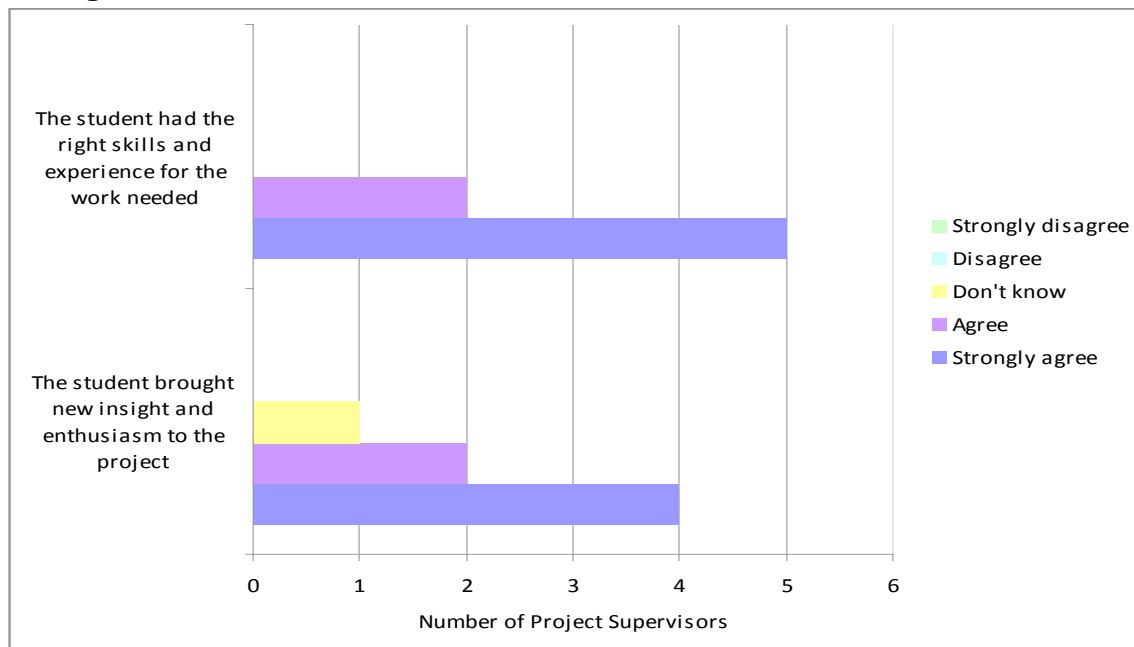
## Project Supervisor Evaluation

### Placement Management



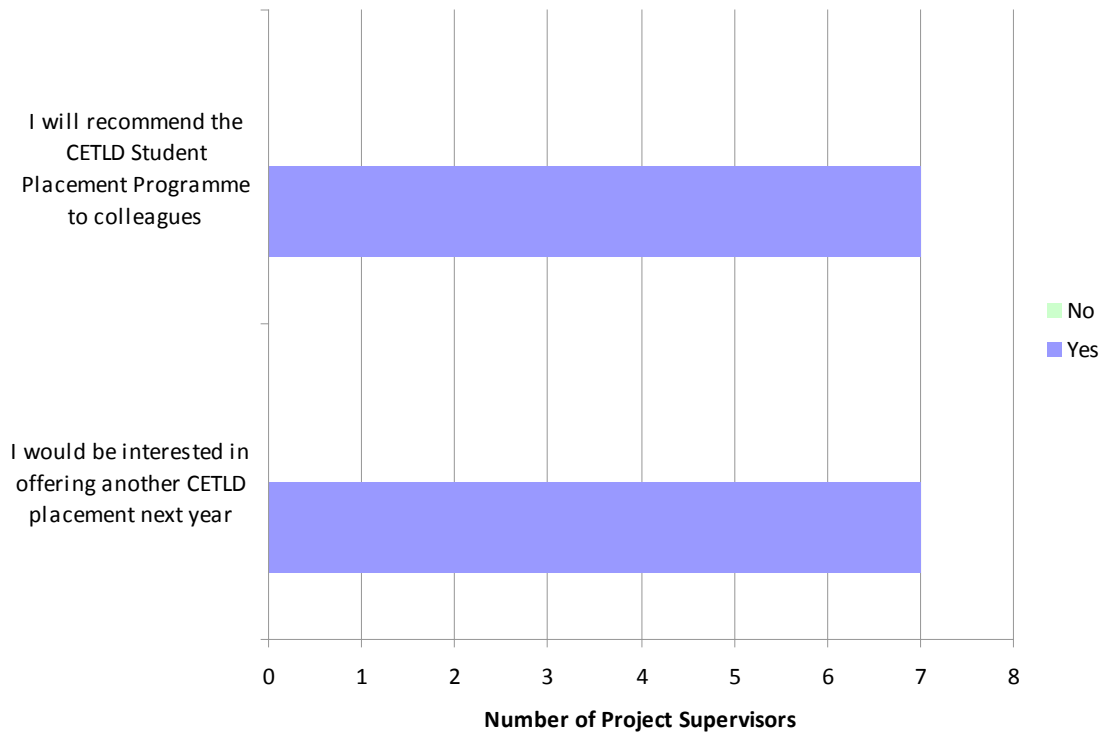
The majority of project supervisors strongly agreed that the management of the placement was efficient and timely throughout and the CETLD coordinators were helpful and knowledgeable about the scheme. They were less definite but still positive that sufficient support and information had been made available to them throughout the process.

### During the Placement



Supervisors were invited to comment on the contribution that students made to the programme, what skills and experience they had brought to the project as well as enthusiasm and insight. The majority of project supervisors strongly agreed that students had a positive bearing on the placement although one supervisor was not sure about the enthusiasm and insight of one student.

### Summary



Project supervisors were finally asked whether they would recommend the CETLD student placement programme to colleagues and if they would host a placement again. All agreed they would.

## Conclusion

Work placements in museums and archives can offer HE students unique insights into the work and practice of museum and archive professionals. They can also provide students with the opportunity to increase their subject knowledge and develop observational, practical and other transferable work-based skills. The CETLD Student Placement Programme was designed to facilitate the sharing and embedding of knowledge about museums and their collections through the experience of the HE Design student. It supported three of CETLD's overarching research areas:

- i) Use and application of collections
- ii) Innovative pedagogic research and evaluation
- iii) Student voice and student centred approach

### *Use and application of collections*

An aim of the CETLD Student Placement Programme was to support students' and tutors' desire for behind the scenes access and knowledge of curatorial expertise. For participating students, understanding the use and application of collections was a positive and affirming experience. This included learning about object documentation, cataloguing procedures and developing research and writing skills. Practices such as object documentation and cataloguing are hidden from view. Students were often struck by the quantity of information and paperwork that curators and archives had to deal with, described by one student as the 'archaeological kind of top soil that's arriving'. For some students immersing themselves in the work placement had a transformative effect on their understanding of the work they were doing and the department they were working for. They were amazed at how an understanding of the use and application of collections changed their perceptions of museums and archives generally.

### *Innovative pedagogic research and evaluation*

The evaluation of the CETLD Student Placement Programme was an integrated part of the scheme. The joint research strategy with the Behind the Scenes research programme offered an innovative approach to pedagogic research and the evaluation of students' learning from museum collections. In practice it was difficult to administer. An awareness of grounded theory and even just the beginnings of this process was a useful experience that helped to guide the research in a productive and collaborative manner. The evaluation programme included an appraisal of the student by the project supervisor, completion of an evaluation form and semi structured interviews with staff and students involved.

### *Student voice and student centred approach*

The Student Placement Programme was designed to offer students first hand experience of working in a museum or archive at one of the CETLD partner



institutions. As a pilot initiative the programme offered ten placements to students from the University of Brighton and RCA<sup>2</sup>. For participating students, the programme helped to instil a sense of confidence about their subject knowledge and research skills and transformed their understanding of museum and archives. The opportunity to work closely with a museum or archive professional helped them to understand the knowledge and expertise demanded of such posts as well as clarifying students' desire to continue further work or study in the cultural sector.

The success of the CETLD Student Placement Programme can be attributed to the students and project supervisors that participated. The programme was not accredited or credit bearing. Students that participated did so in their free time and in addition to their university courses and paid employment. The successful management of the programme lead to a resounding endorsement by all project supervisors who said they would recommend the Student Placement Programme to other colleagues and students.

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<sup>2</sup> Only eight students participated because of problems at the recruitment stage of the programme.

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# Appendices

Appendix 1



**CETLD Student Placement Programme – Student Application Form**

Please submit this form along with a CV and Cover Letter to [s.mann@vam.ac.uk](mailto:s.mann@vam.ac.uk) by 5pm on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2008. If needed you may use a separate sheet to complete your form.

**A) Details**

1. Placement organisation

2. Post applied

3. Surname

4. Forename(s)

5. Telephone numbers

Day:

Evening:

6. Address

Postal Code:

7. Subject, year of study and name of tutor.

Subject:

Year:

Tutor

**B) THE PLACEMENT**

8. What do you hope to gain from this placement?

--

**9. Why do you think you are the right candidate for this placement?**

--

**10. Please explain all relevant skills, knowledge, and experience that would contribute to and enhance the placement.**

--

**11. Please outline your IT skills and level of knowledge for each one listed.**

--

**12. Further information in support of your application.  
(continue on a separate sheet if necessary)**

**13. Please state any special requirements we should be aware of.**

**11. Please indicate availability for interview dates. These will be scheduled during the first half of April.**

From (dd/mm/yy):

Until (dd/mm/yy):

Available days of the week:

I certify that the above information is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Date:

Signature

**CETLD Student Placement Program – Student Application**

Thank you for completing the Student Application form for the CETLD Student Placement Programme. Please submit your completed application form along with your CV and covering letter to [s.mann@vam.ac.uk](mailto:s.mann@vam.ac.uk) by **5pm Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.**

If you have any questions or would like further information please do not hesitate to contact Catherine Speight on 0207 042 2821 [cspeight@vam.ac.uk](mailto:cspeight@vam.ac.uk) or Sharla Mann on 0207 942 2827 [smann@vam.ac.uk](mailto:smann@vam.ac.uk).

Catherine Speight, CETLD Research Fellow  
Sharla Mann, Project Support Officer

## Appendix 2



### Placement Supervisor Evaluation Form

To be completed by the Placement Supervisor. We would like you to tell us about your experience participating in the piloted CETLD Student Placement Programme.

Name of Placement Supervisor	<input type="text"/>
Placement Title	<input type="text"/>
Name of Student	<input type="text"/>

#### 1 Overall Placement Objective

1.1 What has been your experience of managing placements prior to this post?

Please explain:

1.2 Does your institution have a system for managing the delivery of placements?

Please explain:



1.3 How did the placement make a contribution to your projects needs?

Please explain:

1 – Strongly agree      2 – Agree      3 – Don't Know disagree      4 – Disagree      5 – Strongly

<b>2 Placement Management</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Sufficient support and information was available to help me throughout the placement process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The CETLD Coordinators were helpful and knowledgeable about the scheme.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The CETLD Coordinators were efficient and timely throughout the placement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Further comments:					

<b>3 During the Placement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
The student brought new insight and enthusiasm to the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The student had the right skills and experience for the work needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4 General Comments.**  
Please provide as much information as possible as it would help with the provision of future CETLD placements.

Overall, what comments would you make about your student's contribution?

Please describe the skills the student gained from participating in the Student Placement Programme?

What would you do again (or change) if offering another CETLD placement?

**5 In Conclusion**

I would be interested in offering another CETLD placement next year. **Yes**  **No**

Please explain:

I will recommend the CETLD Student Placement Programme to colleagues. **Yes**  **No**

Please explain:

Further comments.

Signed  Date DD/MM/YY

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## **CETLD Student Placement Programme – Placement Supervisor Evaluation Form**

Thank you for completing the Placement Supervisor Evaluation form for the CETLD Student Placement Programme.

Please email your completed form as an attachment to [s.mann@vam.ac.uk](mailto:s.mann@vam.ac.uk) within one week of the placement's end date.

If you have any questions or would like further information please contact Catherine Speight on 0207 942 2821 [cspeight@vam.ac.uk](mailto:cspeight@vam.ac.uk) or Sharla Mann on 0207 942 2827 [smann@vam.ac.uk](mailto:smann@vam.ac.uk).

Catherine Speight, CETLD Research Fellow  
Sharla Mann, Project Support Officer



## **CETLD Student Placement Blog Analysis**

### ***Why did we do it?***

The CETLD Student Placement Programme provided eight students from the University of Brighton and the RCA, the opportunity to engage in project work at the V&A, RIBA, the 'Design Archives' at the University of Brighton and RCA. A primary goal of the CETLD student placement programme was to provide opportunities for students to work with academic staff, museum and archival experts, where they would learn, contribute to and create new knowledge. We felt it an important factor to gain evidence on how students learnt from their experience during the placement. We wanted them to be able to respond freely and truthfully without external factors impressing upon their response and assessed that a student blog was the best route for this. This was supported through CETLD's Web 2.0 service hosted through the University of Brighton.

Through the student's engagement with the blog we aimed to achieve the following results:

- To have the students use the blog as a diary of their experience
- To have the students illustrate their experience through either text, visual and/or an audio format
- To use the space as a tool for communication with other students and connect together on a personal and professional level
- To allow for the space to create a sense of community and for the students to feel supported through that community
- To gain valuable evidence that students learnt from their experience during the placement

### ***Outcomes***

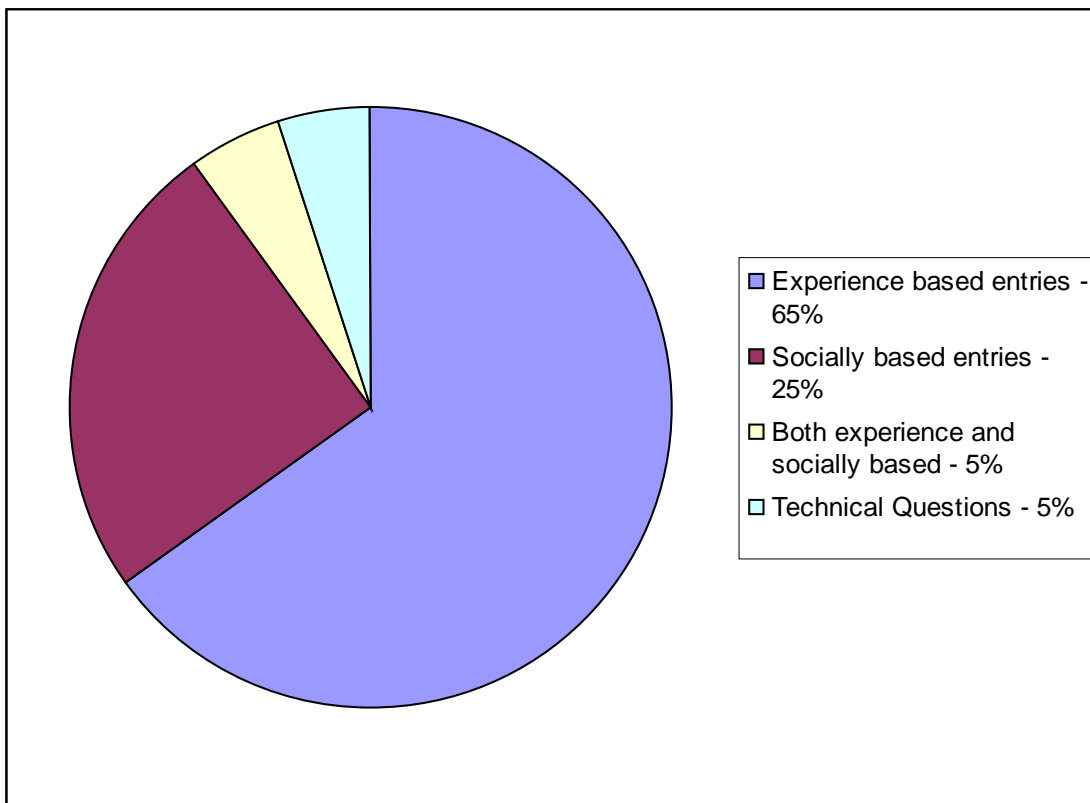
The CETLD Research Fellow Catherine Speight launched the blog on June 13th, 2008. Catherine began by submitting the first entry summarising our expectations of the blog and how we would like the students to utilise the space. The initial entry also aimed to engage the students by personalising the direct experience of the research fellow within the sector and by posing reflective questions. These questions asked them to compare their experience against Catherine's and also questioned what their first impressions were of their experience on placement.

In total, we had eight students on placement. There were 34 blog entries. Twenty were student generated and the remaining fourteen were entries made by the CETLD research fellow and the CETLD project support officer. Student response was slow but consistent. The majority of students only submitted one or two blog entries during their placement. Only one student chose this platform to use primarily as a social tool trying to connect externally with other students. Five out of seven of this one student's entries were socially based.

*"Hi (omitted), the other!"*

*Your placement sounds interesting; are you a Brighton Uni student? Which course are you doing? I noticed the name 'Ness' on a list somewhere in Student Central, so maybe that was you. Anyway, I'm at V&A again on Thursday and really looking forward to it. Bye for now and look forward to meeting up. As you're in Brighton we could catch up for coffee? I'm at Brighton Museum tomorrow, Tuesday, and probably Friday, both days till 1pm, so maybe 1.15/1.30 one of those days?  
My mobile no. is: (omitted)  
Bye bye"*

What was the most interesting from these socially based entries, were that although the students had yet to meet, they felt comfortable giving out personal information and safe to arrange a meeting with a stranger. It seems that the acknowledgment that the students were participating in similar activities was security enough within the virtual world. This also provides further evidence that the students created a feeling of community in relatively a short period of time.



- *Experience based entries: These are entries by students that directly respond to their placement experience*
- *Socially based entries: These are entries by students that only contain personal comments not directly linked to their placement*
- *Both: These are entries that contain both personal comments and comments on their placement experience.*
- *Technical questions: These are entries from students that had technical difficulty with the blog.*

A method used for student engagement was the introduction of reflective questions. These questions began with the first entry and further questions were posed by the research fellow in following blog posts. Only one student responded to the reflective questions posed to them directly. The other student blog entries did not respond to the questions, but acted as an introduction and guide to their responsibilities while on placement. There existed only one reflection to how the placement has altered their perception of the sector. This response was generated by a student who had completed their placement two weeks prior to the blog's launch and was able to reflect actively on her experience.

Our initial objectives for the use of the blog were not fully addressed. The students did not respond on a weekly basis as requested and they used the blog primarily to inform the other students of their initial response to their placement as opposed to keeping a diary of their experiences.

*"I began my RIBA placement last Tuesday at the V&A. I'm currently cataloguing the collection of drawings by ABK for the Royal Opera House competition and the 7 phases of development of Templeton College, Oxford. Once completed I had chosen to work on the Whitworth Art Gallery, as research shows it's a interesting Interior Space and won the RIBA award in 1996, and finally the East London line proposal, as I thought this would be generate a lot of interest from the public as the line is currently under construction.*

*It's great to see the drawings first hand and the variety of mediums used to create the drawings (although some are a bit smelly) and the research side of the placement is providing the basis of my dissertation research. All the staff are being more than helpful with the development of my dissertation planning and the resources available to me whilst on placement are invaluable."*

The above quote is a perfect example of the way in which the students utilised the blog as a tool of introduction. The students generally only posted an initial entry and no students used it as a weekly diary of experience as anticipated.

Only one student responded to their experience through a visual addition to their text and no student responded with audio or video uploads. The visual entry from the student remains ambiguous and one cannot be certain if the image had any correlation to the text or to their placement.

*"Hi there other student CETLD bloggers!*

*I'm in the Design Archives at Brighton and started there on May 15th! I was thrilled to get the placement and its proving to be very enjoyable. I feel lucky to be surrounded by all the design history that the archive is made up of and it's even more exciting to see some of it eg Design magazines from 1960's, photographs of Design Council Award winners since 1957 and some beautiful hand made boxes by designer Natascha Kroll! The staff in the archive are super friendly and helpful and so its going great!*

*I wanted to say hi to the other Ness, on one of the student placements - also from Brighton Uni - am sure we will meet at some point! the bubble gum pink suits sound fantastic!*



*That's all for now on my very first ever blog entry!!! “*



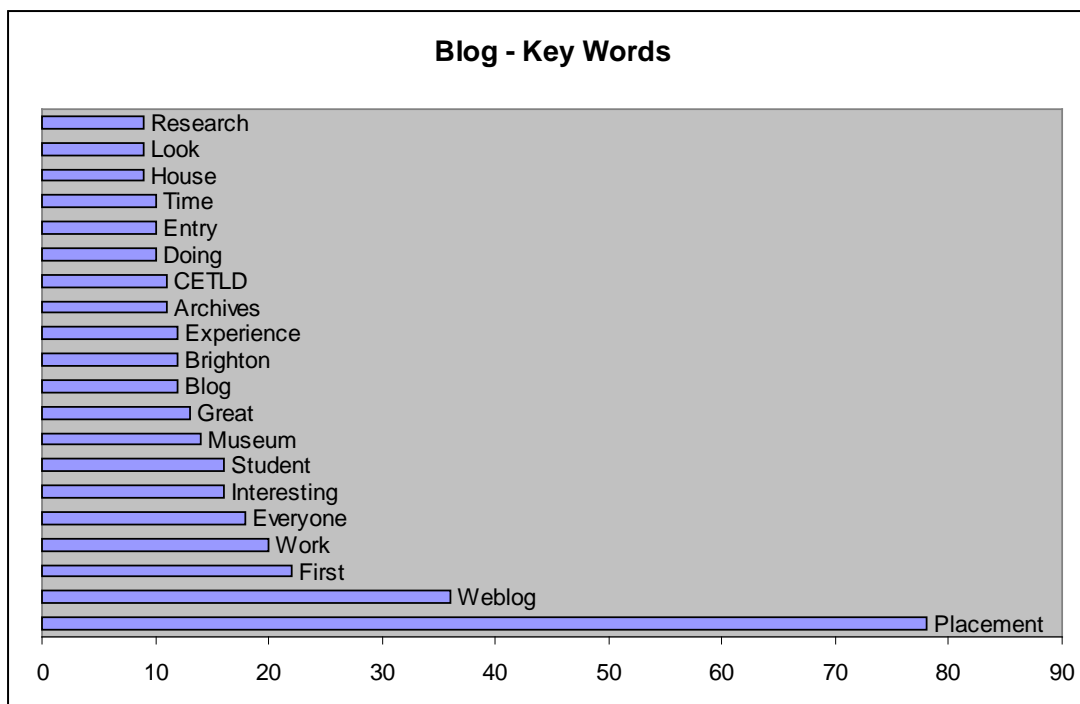
*Image submitted with text entry.*

As mentioned previously, one student in particular used the blog primarily to connect socially with other placement students. This social connection gives evidence that the students did use the blog as a tool for communication with other students and that they connected personally and professionally. This communication would also have had an effect on the creation of community within the virtual space.

One of our aims for the blog was to use it as a research tool, collecting valuable evidence that the student has learnt from their experience on placement. Based on the students' entries we gained awareness of their initial response to their placement and knowledge of the tasks that they were completing. We did gain evidence of learning through experience by a student who had already completed her placement. This student commented that she had learnt valuable lessons on copyright issues and computer cataloguing software. Having already had experience working within the museum sector, this student gained greater knowledge of future career choices. By having 'behind the scenes' access, she stated that it has changed her experience as a museum visitor.

*“In fact, combining my existing experience of working in a museum with what I learned at the RCA and with my MA studies, I have found that visiting museums and galleries as a 'customer' has become a far less passive experience to what it was before. I find that I question the exhibits more which encourages me to think about what I have seen more, and so even if my future career leads me in a completely different direction from what I am doing now, I have at least rediscovered an enthusiasm for visiting museums and galleries.”*

Furthermore, to gain a greater understanding of the student experience we extracted the top keywords used throughout the weblog. This was done by use of the website [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net). This website is used for generating word clouds based on text provided. It also provides word counts, and will generate how many times a particular word was used throughout the text. We extracted the top twenty words used minus commonly used words such as: and, to, the, it etc. The primary words used such as: great, interesting, everyone, experience, and first reflect a positive theme of the students experience while on placement. Words such as: placement, work, research, and archives directly relate to the students relationship to place, their responsibilities and describe the sector that they were engaged in.



### **Lessons Learnt**

Through the experience of the CETLD student placement programme blog, we have acknowledged ways in which we have succeeded with our set objectives and have experienced the obstacles that we would need to address if and when we are to proceed again with this initiative.

The primary obstacles that we can learn from were technical difficulties and timing. The technical issues were primarily due to unfriendly navigation that initiated confusion with the students. They had difficulties using the comment fields and also initially did not know where to post their entries. This directly could have affected one of our objectives, which was to have the students illustrate their experience through means other than text and also could have directly contributed to the lack of blog entries.

*["Comment on "Reviewing comments to posted entries"](#)*

*Hi Catherine, you sent me a message, but I replied with yours and Ness's answer together as I didn't know how to send two different ones - there was no Comment box under your question. Hope thats okay ta"*

The other obstacle that may have directly contributed to the lack of entries was the timing of the placements themselves. Initially all the placements were to run for 6 weeks during the summer, due to time tabling conflicts of the partner institutions this was not possible. The student placements all began and finished at different periods with some students working full time for six weeks and some working part time over the course of twenty-eight weeks. This created a fractured schedule that meant the blog could only successfully function during a short overlap. The blog began on June 13<sup>th</sup> and ceased to function as of September 5<sup>th</sup>. The last student entry was on July 28<sup>th</sup>.

In spite of this the CETLD student placement blog had strong successes. We can say that through this experience the students did in fact use the blog as a tool for communication with the other students. This communication led to the creation of community and through that community the students appeared to feel supported.

Another success is that we did gain evidence of the student's experience and through one student in particular that they also learnt from this experience. Finally and not one that everybody in HE can count on, is that all the students that participated in the student placement programme engaged with the blog. All eight students posted entries and most students responded to one another through a virtual conversation initiated through student engagement.

Through a small group of HE students, we can see the benefit of blogging within an academic environment. In the case of student work placements, this becomes a valuable tool in connecting the student body when the individual is taken out of the social context of the educational institute. The value of blogging can be heightened when the students have accepted international work placements or nationally are placed within another town or city. We can see that the usage of a blog becomes an essential part of peer to peer support, professional support and finally added educational knowledge.

Sharla Mann  
22.10.08

## Appendix 4

### Project Finance

#### Co Learning with Museums & Archives - Student Placement Project

E-VCE-S-xxx-0000-CSSP

1 October 2007 - 30 September 2008

		Budget Total	Budget Expenditure
Project Support Officer costs	UoB	11304	8711
Dissemination	V&A	3000	391
Hospitality/transport	V&A	2704	1523.58
Film	UoB	8000	0
		22304	10625.58
Student placement costs	V&A	9587.5	2964.17
		31891.5	13589.75

As reported in the interim project report there were two alterations made to the original budget plan:

- i) The Project Advisory Board recommended that a financial contribution should be made towards students' travel and subsistence costs. Additional funds were sourced from the 'iGuide' project's under spend (a total of £8711)
- ii) It was agreed that £8000, originally scheduled for the 'Behind the Scenes' student film would remain in CETLD's central funds. The Project Advisory Board recommended broadening the scope of the film to include the experiences of Project Supervisors and CETLD staff at the V&A. It was however, difficult to allocate time to the project as the same time as managing the programme, and this aspect of the project was eventually cancelled.

### Project Dissemination

There has been a significant delay to the writing of this report and subsequent dissemination of the CETLD Student Placement Programme because of concurring deadlines with the book manuscript 'Looking to Learn, Learning to See' and the 'Collecting Experiences' symposium held at the V&A in April 2009. This final report reflects on findings from the evaluation of the CETLD Student Placement Programme. It still remains my intention to disseminate the findings of this project both directly through conferences and journal articles but also to inform the context of wider research into museum and university collaborations. Results will be disseminated at the following events:

Speight, C. and R. Reynolds (2009). Museums and Higher Education: Rekindling the Romance From spark to flame: Creating and sustaining motivation and inspiration in our learning communities, Learning and Teaching Conference, University of Brighton  
Speight, C., Smith, R. and R. Reynolds (2009). Museums and Higher Education: Rekindling the Romance, Museum Association Annual Conference, October, Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London

The project has been disseminated as part of a Design Scholarship seminar held at the University of Brighton:

- Speight, C. Co-working with museums and archives CETLD Design Scholarship Seminar delivered as part of a series organised by and held at the CETLD, University of Brighton, May 2008.