

# WORK EXPERIENCE PORTFOLIO

## Part C

The aim of this portfolio is to test your ability to document a detailed description of the work that was actually undertaken by you while on work experience. Day-to-day experiences, both positive and negative, should be outlined. New learning outcomes and evidence of the ability to learn from negative as well as positive experiences and challenges should be shown.

The portfolio should be based on the work experience diary located in the pages that follow. You should fill in one page of your diary for every day of your work experience.

The contents of the portfolio will be examined under the following headings:

1. Portfolio introduction
2. Planning and preparation
3. Work description and Skills gained (Diary Summary)
4. Challenges encountered
5. Positive learning from challenges
6. Review and Evaluation

### 1. PORTFOLIO INTRODUCTION

In the report introduction, you should outline the following:

- Name, Class, Tutor
- Job title, e.g. trainee hairdresser, trainee programmer, trainee farmer.
- Place of work
- Branch in country/world (if applicable)
- Section (if applicable), e.g. hotel restaurant, office, bar
- Department (if applicable), e.g. sales or accounts department
- Dates and Times of work
- Name and title of superior(s)

### 2. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

The aim of this section is to document the appropriate planning that must take place in advance of a student getting work experience. You should write it up under the following headings:

- Skills audit
- Learning goals
- Document preparation

#### (a) SKILLS AUDIT

This involves identifying which skills you have already learned and where you learned them. Skills can be divided into three categories:

- 1 Knowing how to use equipment, e.g. computer and telephone. These skills will be referred to as *practical skills*.
- 2 Organisational and leadership skills, e.g. rostering in a youth club, babysitting, part-time work at a swimming pool. These skills will be referred to as *personal skills*.
- 3 Being able to deal with people, e.g. with teachers or with the manager of a sports team on which you participate. These skills will be referred to as *interpersonal skills*.

You may have acquired many of these skills at home, in school or through previous work situations. You can use the following checklists to identify which skills you wish to improve on and where you learned them.

### 1 Practical Skills.

Practical skills can be broadly defined as “doing skills”, e.g. being able to perform certain physical tasks.

<b>Practical Skills Checklist</b>	
Existing practical skills I hope to improve on from this work experience	Where I originally learned these practical skills.
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

### 2 Personal Skills.

Personal skills can be broadly defined as “individual skills”, e.g. being able to work on one’s own initiative and to meet deadlines, possessing a good dress sense, speaking clearly and being able to work under pressure.

<b>Personal Skills Checklist</b>	
Existing personal skills I hope to improve on from this work experience	Where I originally learned these personal skills.
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

### 3 Interpersonal Skills.

Interpersonal skills can be broadly defined as “people skills”, e.g. being able to deal effectively with efficiently with people and work as part of a team. In the work place there are three types of interaction:

- I. Dealing with customers
- II. Dealing with work colleagues/partners
- III. Dealing with employers/managers

When dealing with customers, there are two types of professional interaction:

Face-to-face interaction

Telephone interaction

The following will help you identify what kind of skills you possess in this area:

- Are you good with people?
- Have you a likeable personality?
- Are you a good listener?
- Are you a respectful person?
- Are you obliging?
- Do you always put the customer first?
- If possible would you offer a customer a cup of tea/coffee while waiting to see a manager?
- How do you answer the phone in a work situation?
- Do you check with your superior or colleague to see if they are free to take the call?
- Do you always get the message immediately to the person that it's intended for?

Dealing with work colleagues/partners.

Along with the qualities already outlined, the following are desirable when dealing with work colleagues:

- To be a good communicator
- To possess the ability to work effectively and efficiently as part of a team
- To be supportive of colleagues
- Are you even tempered?
- Do you always make the greatest effort to get on well with work colleagues generally?
- Would you cover for a colleague when it's impossible for them to work?

Dealing with employers/managers.

An employee should always:

- Portray a bright, cheery and positive image
- Be trustworthy
- Be confident regarding their abilities
- Work on his/her own initiative
- Be adaptable
- Be flexible regarding work hours
- Be committed
- Carry out instructions efficiently
- Accept constructive criticism about his/her appearance, punctuality and general work conduct
- Report back to management effectively and efficiently

<b>Interpersonal Skills Checklist</b>	
Existing interpersonal skills I hope to improve on from this work experience	Where I originally learned these interpersonal skills.
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

**(b) LEARNING GOALS**

Apart from the skills you already possess but hope to improve on during your work experience, you should also try learning new skills that are linked to the job you are doing. These are your learning goals and they must be clearly identified. They fall into the same three categories – practical, personal and interpersonal.

<b>Practical Skills Checklist</b>
New practical skills I hope to learn from this work experience
1
2
3
4
5

<b>Personal Skills Checklist</b>
New personal skills I hope to learn from this work experience
1
2
3
4
5

<b>Interpersonal Skills Checklist</b>
New interpersonal skills I hope to learn from this work experience
1
2
3
4
5

**(c) DOCUMENT PREPARATION**

You should be able to produce evidence of your search for work experience:

- o Letters of application for work experience
- o Letter of invitation to interview (if applicable)
- o Personal account of your quest to find work experience with names of people you contacted and address/phone numbers
- o Any other supporting documentation

### 3. WORK DESCRIPTION AND SKILLS GAINED (DIARY SUMMARY)

Your work experience diary will help you to describe the variety of work undertaken and the skills learned or improved upon. It should give a detailed explanation of:

- The variety of work tasks carried out while on work experience
- How work was handled
- Existing skills improved upon
- New practical, personal or interpersonal skills learned
- Personal challenges encountered
- Work-related challenges encountered.

#### (a) Variety of work tasks – some examples.

Filing	Vegetable preparation	Graphic skills	Web design
Feeding babies	Games supervision	Word processing	Making coffee

#### (b) Skills gained

In order to identify the skills you gained during work experience, you should reflect on the day-to-day experiences from starting to finishing time and the tasks you undertook. Then you need to categorize your experiences as practical, personal or interpersonal skills you either improved upon or learned. Here are some examples aimed at explaining how the tasks you are given are categorized as practical, personal or interpersonal skills.

A placement in computers example.

Mary Ryan has gained work experience in Compumarket Ltd. Her supervisor requested of her, as part of an advertising campaign, to directly mail a variety of catalogues to potential customers. In completing this task the experience would have taught her the following skills:

- 1 Practical skills
  - (a) She learned how to sift through customer records from a database file in order to shortlist appropriate prospective customers.
  - (b) She gained experience using the mail merge facility in a word processing program.
- 2 Personal skills
  - (a) She learned how to work on her own initiative.
  - (b) She learned how to be more adaptable and flexible
- 3 Interpersonal skills
  - (a) She learned how to carry out supervisor instructions efficiently.
  - (b) She learned how to work efficiently with colleagues to complete the task.

A placement in tourism example.

Colm Downey on work experience at Going Places Travel Agency must deal with a client from the enquiry to the booking stage. In completing this task the experience would have taught Colm the following skills:

- 1 Practical skills
  - (a) How to use the computerized Galileo system efficiently. Colm was able to obtain booking information and to book a holiday confidently for the client.
  - (b) He learned administration skills, which consist of writing a receipt after the client pays by cheque (credit card, cash) and forwarding the receipt to the client.
- 2 Personal and interpersonal skills
  - (a) To be more punctual and improve on attendance
  - (b) To be more competent in dealing with awkward customers.

A placement in hairdressing example.

Siobhan McMahon, on work experience at the Wedge Styles Salon, learned the following skills:

- 1 Practical skills
  - (a) To wash, set and blow-dry
  - (b) To apply a semi-permanent colour and a conditioning treatment
- 2 Personal and interpersonal skills
  - (a) To acquire a high level of tolerance working in a busy working environment.
  - (b) To work efficiently as part of a multi-skilled team.

#### 4. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

There are two different types of challenges that a learner may encounter while on work experience:

(a) Personal challenges, e.g.

- Getting to work – good attendance
- Getting to work on time – punctuality
- Completing work tasks – ability to do the work
- Completing working tasks on time – meeting deadlines

(b) Work-related challenges, e.g.

- Dealing with awkward customers
- Dealing with uncooperative colleagues
- Dealing with a difficult employer/superior.

#### 5. POSITIVE LEARNING FROM CHALLENGES

Under this heading you should describe the positive things you learned both from negative and positive experiences during your work experience. To help you to identify them, you can use the following questions as a self-assessment guide.

(1) Personal Challenges

- Have you become more punctual and has your attendance improved?
- Do you get tasks completed on time?
- Do you attend to work tasks immediately or do you postpone them?

(2) Work-Related challenges

Awkward customers

- Did you learn to listen and take note of the problem?
- Did you apologise for any inconvenience (even though not your fault)?
- Was the problem resolved in a manner satisfactory to the customer?

Difficult Colleagues

- Do you realize the importance of not backbiting colleagues?
- Did you maintain courtesy towards colleagues at all times?
- Do you realize the importance of looking at the wider picture when it comes to a breakdown of relations between colleagues?

Difficult Employer/Superior

- Did you learn to accept constructive criticism with dignity?
- Did you articulate your viewpoints to your employer/superior in a calm and coherent manner?
- Have you learned how to work well with a difficult employer/superior?

## 6. REVIEW AND EVALUATION

Referring back to the other sections you should review and evaluate the experience you have had. You should reflect on whether learning goals were achieved, skills gained or improved upon and which experiences and challenges were encountered. Furthermore, you are encouraged to evaluate how you would now manage a similar work experience situation and what could have been done differently. The following questionnaire should be helpful as a guide to compiling the review and evaluation.

- Have my expectations regarding learning goals materialised?
- Have I gained the practical, personal and interpersonal skills I hoped to gain?
- What positive personal challenges did I learn from?
- What negative personal challenges did I learn from?
- What positive work-related challenges did I learn from?
- What negative work-related challenges did I learn from?
- What would I have done differently if I was starting work experience again?
- What are my future career plans in the light of my work experience?
- Has the work experience helped me gain a fuller understanding of the importance of certain subjects to be studied next year?
- What further education and qualifications are necessary to work in this area full time?
- Has this work experience improved me personally, e.g. has it made me more confident, punctual, etc.?
- Has this work experience improved my work and study skills, e.g. am I giving greater attention to detail, am I meeting deadlines, etc.?
- In what ways did this work experience match my expectations?

I realise that this is a lot to take in so here is a sample portfolio to give an idea of how you might put yours together.

### INTRODUCTION

Name: Craig Petrie  
Class: 4A4  
Tutor: Mr. Kirwan  
Place of work: O'Hara's Florists, Dundrum  
Dates: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February – Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010  
Time: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm  
Supervisor: Margaret O'Hara, owner.

### PLANNING AND PREPARATION

#### My Skills Audit

I think that I have:

- Good organizational skills gained from having done part time work in a shop last summer and from my baby-sitting jobs over the past three years.
- Good team-worker characteristics.
- The willingness to take initiative and responsibility.
- The ability to do some basic typing and a bit of word processing.

I have a good mixture of desirable attributes. I would like people to realize that I'm an honest, reliable and hard-working individual who is good with people.

### My Goals for Work Experience

My aims are:

- To get first hand experience of retail floristry
- To develop my floristry skills and techniques
- To learn how to deal efficiently with customers
- To learn how to offer appropriate advice to customers
- To learn how to use a cash register, handle cash, credit cards, laser cards and cheques
- To see if I am suited for this type of work
- To make contacts for possible future employment

### Evidence of my search for Work Experience

Any copies of documentation should be attached here, letters of application etc.

### My Quest to find Work Experience

Last summer I had applied to O'Hara's for a part time job but I was unsuccessful. Since I needed to get a work experience placement I applied again in the same place. They were happy to accept me this time and I was delighted to get the opportunity. I now realize that my experience here will make it easier to be employed in this type of work in the future.

### WORK DESCRIPTION AND SKILLS GAINED

I completed 5 days work experience. In addition I worked on the Saturday, as the shop needed extra help. I was paid for this day.

My usual routine was:

- To water and tidy the houseplants
- To keep the shop, especially the floor, tidy and free of debris
- To wrap customers' purchases and use the cash register
- To make ribbon bows for future use

As I became more familiar with the work I also

- Made "hand-tie" bouquets
- Advised customers on suitable bouquet combinations
- Took orders for delivery from the shop and through Interflora
- Answered the telephone

In addition I was allowed to watch and learn from the other workers and I was shown how to do various things, e.g. a buttonhole, greening a wreath and making up a basket of flowers.

My work experience diary contains various experiences that I had during my placement in O'Hara's. I will now reflect on some of these.

### Nervousness

I was very nervous on my first day. I was worried that I would be left on my own to carry out tasks that were beyond my capabilities. My nervousness soon went as I made new friends and got to know how the shop worked.

## Tiredness

At the start I found the early start very demanding. I was leaving home at 7:00 am and usually did not arrive back again until after 7:00 pm. I felt exhausted at the end of the day and found it much more demanding than school.

## Sense of Fun

On my second day, one of the girls asked me to go to Margaret's office to get a long stand for the flowers. When I went to Margaret and said what I was looking for she told me to wait for a while and then asked me if I had been standing long enough! They all got a laugh out of the new girl but they weren't being mean, just having fun.

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

### PERSONAL

I had to overcome an initial feeling of anxiety. I feared that I would be working with a group of professionals who would not tolerate somebody trying to learn the first steps and get in their way. I thought one of the girls was being mean to me when she asked if I had done any flower arranging before but by the end of the week I realized she was just trying to make conversation.

### WORK RELATED

I found the day quite long and felt under pressure at times to get things made up on time.

## POSITIVE LEARNING

### PERSONAL

I made a number of good friends and learned how to contribute to function as part of a team.

### WORK-RELATED

During the work experience, I learned a range of practical floristry skills. I now feel I am competent in putting together bouquets and also in handling money.

## THE REVIEW AND EVALUATION REPORT

The work experience caused me a lot trouble at the start. I was worried about finding a place and then on my first day I was very nervous. But as the week passed I gained confidence and began to enjoy the work. The people working with me were very helpful and tolerant. My supervisor, Margaret was very supportive and I was often complimented on work I had done and any correction was presented as advice rather than criticism.

I achieved most of the goals that I had set myself. I certainly did get a lot of experience in the day-to-day activity of a retail florist. I got to see what it was like on both quiet and hectic days. I learned how to assist customers, how to listen to their requests. I used a cash register and the credit and laser card machines every day that I was in the shop. I built up my self-confidence and improved my interpersonal skills that will be of benefit to me in any future work.

On the negative side, I didn't get much of an opportunity to arrange flowers in foam nor did I learn everything about running a retail business. That was too much to expect in such a short space of time. I feel I need to gain considerable experience yet before I am confident enough to produce full flower arrangements for sale but I now know that I could do it with training.

Overall, at the end of this work experience I felt that I had become a useful member of staff and that my work experience had been a success. This was confirmed by the fact that I was asked to come in on the Saturday and also if I would be interested in a summer job there this year!

The experience has confirmed for me that I would like to be involved in setting up my own business some time, though I am not sure that it would be in the florist sector. There are not many qualifications to work in this area, though if you want to be widely recognized you should do the Interflora exams.

**Work Experience Diary – Day 1**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Undertaken (List task):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Existing Skill; Improved Upon:**

- 1. Practical Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Personal Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Interpersonal Skills \_\_\_\_\_

**New Skill; Learned:**

- 1. Practical Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Personal Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Interpersonal Skills \_\_\_\_\_

**How Work Was Handled:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Challenges Encountered:**

- 1. Personal Challenges \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Work-Related Challenges \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Work Experience Diary – Day 2**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Undertaken (List task):**

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**Existing Skill; Improved Upon:**

1. Practical Skills

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2. Personal Skills

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3. Interpersonal Skills

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**New Skill; Learned:**

1. Practical Skills

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2. Personal Skills

---

3. Interpersonal Skills

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**How Work Was Handled:**

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**Challenges Encountered:**

1. Personal Challenges

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2. Work-Related Challenges

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**Other Comments:**

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**Work Experience Diary – Day 3**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Undertaken (List task):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Existing Skill; Improved Upon:**

- 1. Practical Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Personal Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Interpersonal Skills \_\_\_\_\_

**New Skill; Learned:**

- 1. Practical Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Personal Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Interpersonal Skills \_\_\_\_\_

**How Work Was Handled:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Challenges Encountered:**

- 1. Personal Challenges \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Work-Related Challenges \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Work Experience Diary – Day 4**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Undertaken (List task):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Existing Skill; Improved Upon:**

- 1. Practical Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Personal Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Interpersonal Skills \_\_\_\_\_

**New Skill; Learned:**

- 1. Practical Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Personal Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Interpersonal Skills \_\_\_\_\_

**How Work Was Handled:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Challenges Encountered:**

- 1. Personal Challenges \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Work-Related Challenges \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Work Experience Diary – Day 5**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Undertaken (List task):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Existing Skill; Improved Upon:**

- 1. Practical Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Personal Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Interpersonal Skills \_\_\_\_\_

**New Skill; Learned:**

- 1. Practical Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Personal Skills \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Interpersonal Skills \_\_\_\_\_

**How Work Was Handled:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Challenges Encountered:**

- 1. Personal Challenges \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Work-Related Challenges \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

