



## Work-based learning in the South East

### What is work-based learning?

Not all colleges, universities or employers use the same terminology – but the idea is the same. Work-based learning covers any learning that takes place in the context of the workplace and may also be known as ‘work-related learning’, ‘vocational learning’, or ‘workforce development’.

Employers and their staff decide what training is needed to improve skills for the job and whether to take up formal learning that leads to a qualification. The learning may be at any level, up to and including university level, but it is based on the real needs of the job.

### If you are an employee

From 6 April 2010, if you are an employee and work in an organisation with 250 or more employees, you will have the right to request time for study or training. This right is known as **‘time to train’**. To qualify, you must have worked for your employer continuously for at least 26 weeks before you apply. The most important requirement is that the training you want will help improve business performance and your effectiveness in your employer's business.

To find out what types of training you can request under the new right and what will happen to your pay during training go to:

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Employees/Timeoffandholidays/DG\\_183635](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Employees/Timeoffandholidays/DG_183635)

### Who can benefit from work-based learning at higher education level?

The short answer is ‘everyone’!

- Employers benefit because the company or organisation becomes more competitive as their staff become more highly trained.
- Employees benefit by becoming more highly qualified, with formal accreditation of their learning increasing their prospects of promotion within the company. Employees who upgrade their skills wisely find it easier to move about the job market.
- Universities and further education colleges benefit from applying their knowledge to the real world and seeing their student numbers increase. Working together with employers they can play a useful part in identifying areas of skill shortage and can increase the abilities and qualities of key staff.

### How is this different from continuing professional development (CPD)?

In a sense work-based learning is the result of effective continuing professional development. Within the CPD process employees are encouraged to reach an agreement with their employer on the best way to extend and renew the skills they need for their work. CPD is an on-going process to enable employees to achieve their full potential through learning and experience.

### Does your employer offer a CPD programme?

Many employers have a CPD programme in place, often linked to an annual appraisal, where employees learning needs are identified together with any support the employer may be able

to offer. A CPD record could include a range of activities, anything from work-shadowing a colleague to reading a professional journal, or going on a course or to a conference.

Keeping this record might be a condition of membership of a professional body. It might also be part of formal accreditation (e.g. Investors in People, IIP) designed to assure the public of high standards.

You may find there is a system of mentoring at work that offers peer support from those with more experience. For this to be useful it is important to identify with your mentor the goals you wish to aim for and the best method of reaching them.

### What you can do if there is no CPD programme?

- Talk to colleagues to find out what they've done.
- Keep a record of training and development needs that you identify for yourself.
- Use your annual appraisal to identify training needs.

### Useful websites

**Accreditation of Prior Learning** or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (known as APL or APEL), gives you formal recognition for skills that you already have. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) sets standards and procedures for APL.

[www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/APL.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/APL.pdf)

**Foundation degrees** are degree level qualifications designed with employers and combine academic study with workplace learning to equip people with the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills to improve performance and productivity.

To find a foundation degree, HND and HNC courses in the South East visit:

[www.foundation-degrees-in-the-southeast.org.uk](http://www.foundation-degrees-in-the-southeast.org.uk)

**The Open University** has foundation degree and CPD courses. Select *Study at the OU* and *Continuing Professional Development* or search the subject areas at:

[www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

**Learn Direct**, in partnership with a range of universities and colleges, has a flexible distance learning scheme called '**Learning through Work**' which allows you to gain a university level qualification without leaving the workplace. To find out more visit:

[www.learningthroughwork.org](http://www.learningthroughwork.org)

### Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships give you the chance to learn and gain nationally recognised qualifications, while getting a weekly wage. There are more than 180 Apprenticeships available across more than 80 industry sectors including accountancy, business administration, construction, engineering, manufacturing and many more. For more information:

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/14To19/OptionsAt16/DG\\_4001327](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/14To19/OptionsAt16/DG_4001327)

and [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

Other useful websites which include information on work-base learning include:

[www.practicebasedlearning.org](http://www.practicebasedlearning.org)

[www.traintogain.gov.uk](http://www.traintogain.gov.uk)