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Abstract

Placements have the potential to contribute more effectively to the quality of higher education. The aim of this article is to discuss how placements can be made more worthwhile for individual students, while also contributing to the overall quality of teaching and learning at HEIs as well as to the development of workplace cultures that are conducive to learning. Work experience opportunities help students to build substantive relationships and apply what they are learning. Students' overall view of their learning experience becomes more positive, their identification with their intended profession strengthens and academic performance improves, as do graduate employment rates. Introducing placements in the curriculum does not, however, guarantee these positive effects. Learning is likely to be greater if the experience is 'intentional and recognised' and tightly knit into the curriculum. Using evidence from research on workplace learning is one way to improve the quality of placements, as exemplified by a scholarly approach to the development of placements for pharmacy students at Uppsala University. HEIs' interaction with employers through placements

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enriches both parties. Academics gain insights into practice which may inspire teaching on campus, e.g. by generating real life examples that trigger students' motivation and by informing curriculum design. Practitioners supervising students on placements are often excellent educational development partners. Placements may also contribute to organisational development. Developing a reflective, deliberate approach to learning in the workplace may be as useful for the employees as for the students. Also, students may carry out projects of value to the employer, while also keeping the university informed of current practice. An increased engagement in students' work experience opportunities may improve the student experience, and contribute to bridging the academy-practice divide in a way that is as much about influencing the rest of society as being influenced by it. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)