

What helps to improve partnerships between employers and training providers?

Independent evidence

According to the lecturers in one study ⁱ, partnerships with employers improved when they:

- forged relationships with employers and allowed them to tweak courses to their needs or develop new bespoke courses
- took time to understand employers' businesses and needs
- gained current experience in the industry and used the opportunity to build commitment from employers, and
- up-dated their equipment to create realistic working environments ⁱ.

Your evidence and reflections

You could assess the quality of your relationship with employers by making this a focus in a team meeting. Write notes on how you feel the relationships are between you and the employers in the partnership. You could use these questions as a starting point:

- What ideas and feedback provided by employers have you incorporated into existing programmes/used to develop new programmes? Reference to meeting notes and schemes of work might help your reflections.
- Are you up to date with current working practices within local companies? Who from your team has visited which businesses when, and what did they find out?
- How does the equipment you use compare with that used by local employers? What are the implications for students when they complete your course and start work?

Putting the evidence to work

Your responses will help you plan next steps in employer engagement. Are there questions concerning programme design, for example, that are best answered in collaboration with employers? These might be based on employers' development plans and the skills they need for the future.

Does your current level of contact with employers and visits provide you and your team with sufficient intelligence about current practice? Could you do more to draw on the knowledge of local business gained by tutors/assessors who visit companies for on-site work?

What does your assessment of your current stock of equipment tell you about future acquisition needs? What opportunities exist for:

- your students accessing equipment owned by local businesses,
- sponsorship by local companies for the acquisition of new equipment?

ⁱ Find out more about views of college lecturers available in:

<http://www.qia.org.uk/library/pdf/news%20and%20publications/qia%20journal%20issue%203.pdf>

This study investigates employer engagement and delivery:

http://excellence.qia.org.uk/pdf/CoVE_Final%20Full%20Rept_re_1.0_20080107.pdf

For a study of excellent practice in employer responsiveness, follow this link:

<http://excellence.qia.org.uk/161516>