

**NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN WORK BASED LEARNING
AND VOLUNTEERING WITHIN CRIMINOLOGY AND
CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDIES AT
THE PLYMOUTH LAW SCHOOL**

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Introduction

This update highlights two new initiatives developed by the Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies Team based in Plymouth Law School (University of Plymouth) to provide opportunities for, and encourage, more final year students to engage in practical work based learning and volunteering experiences with a range of criminal justice agencies in the South West including a subject specific police studies work based learning option.

**1 Work Experience and Volunteering with Criminal Justice Agencies:
Lesley Simmonds**

In September 2006 the Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies Team, introduced a new BSc(Hons) Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies programme. This provided a single honours pathway for students in addition to the existing major/minor pathways. Part of this new programme was the introduction of work based learning as an optional third (final) year module for single honours students.

Final Year Placements

Final year students go into a range of criminal justice and related agencies in order to carry out a short work based learning placement (80 hours minimum). The agencies which have hosted students so far are mainly located in Devon and Cornwall, with several local to Plymouth itself. They include the Probation Service, Youth Offending Services, HMP Channings Wood and HMP Dartmoor, Devon and Cornwall Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit in Plymouth City Council, Shekinah Mission (Plymouth), Exeter Drug and Alcohol Project, HM Courts Service, Choices Consultancy Service (in HMP Channings Wood, Dartmoor, and Exeter), Victim Support and Equality

South West. As can be seen, the range of agencies which students enter into is diverse, and includes statutory as well as non statutory organisations.

The students are Criminal Records Bureau checked by the University Placements Office, and in some cases have to undergo further security checking by the agencies themselves. The placement is typically carried out as a one day per week for 10 weeks model, although some placement providers prefer students to block their time. Students go into placement and observe/shadow practitioners/ask questions/and do appropriate tasks where this can be arranged. The placement typically begins in November, allowing some preparation sessions for students as they return to university in September for the new academic year.

Students have to produce a poster presentation and an analytical report which identifies an issue that is significant for the placement organisation and/or its service users. In this way students link their practical experiences gained in placement with criminological literature. In order to do this, students are advised to maintain a reflective diary on which to draw for their assignments. They also have to collect a portfolio of work related documents, which includes feedback on their performance from the employer, evidence that they have noted health and safety issues, and corroboration of the time spent in the workplace/doing work related activities.

Since first introducing this module, further changes have been added in order to introduce greater flexibility for students and placement providers. Criminology and Criminal Justice students have a history of volunteering within agencies such as the Probation Service, Youth Offending Services, Victim Support and other organisations. This activity now provides students with the ideal opportunity for undertaking the work based learning placement, alongside their volunteering. The agencies benefit by knowing that they have the students for a longer period of time, such that investment in training and administrative costs will be recouped. Additionally, agencies do value the contribution that students make. For students also the option to base work based learning on volunteering means that they receive academic credit based upon time in the work place, and this resonates with the move within Higher Education to produce graduates who can show a range of transferable skills which translate to employability.

Online Resources and Access

In order to smooth this process online resources have been developed to support students wishing to undertake work based learning via volunteering, given that the latter will often commence before the student enters their final year work based learning module. Students

can access the range of assessment materials, as well as information on what work based learning is about and the way in which this can be aligned to their volunteering activities. In addition a list of organisations with contact details and further information is provided so that students can see which organisations they may like to contact in order to become a criminal justice volunteer. This resource can be accessed by students who are at the first, second and third year of their degree studies.

The online resource also provides information for students who wish to undertake the 10 day placement as a 'stand alone' activity (ie not relating this to volunteering); that is a list of agencies who typically have offered to host criminology/criminal justice students on the short 10 day placement. The initial information is more generalised, however this allows students to look at the agencies and decide which agency they would like to find a placement in. This can be based upon their interest in a particular organisation as well as more practical concerns such as transport/geographical location. As the time approaches for students to make firm decisions as to a placement, staff provide more detailed information as to what placements are available and where. Students must then make their own application to agencies. Again, because this information is online, students can access this in year one and two and so make a more considered decision about where they wish to undertake their work based learning placement in year three of the single honours programme.

Work based learning and volunteering is considered to be an important element of criminology and criminal justice students' experience at the University of Plymouth. The work based learning module has proved to be a great success with the students who undertake it, and continues to attract interest from prospective students at university open days. Criminal justice and related agencies have also supported the notion of students undertaking work based learning, either as a stand alone ten day placement or as part of longer term volunteering. Criminology staff are constantly developing work based learning and volunteering opportunities, not only as a means of supporting the academic work that students undertake and promoting employability, but also as part of their public engagement with the wider criminal justice community.

2 Work Experience and Volunteering within Policing Studies: Paul Richards

In September 2009 the Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies Team introduced a new elective module for stage 3 students; Police, Law and Community (CCJS 3120). This module has been specifically designed to provide an understanding of the law for prospective police

officers. Traditionally, this has been provided as part of police 'in house' training for new recruits. A number of police forces are recognizing this module and the subsequent certificate of completion as accredited prior learning, whereas others have made it a mandatory pre-join requirement.

The member of staff teaching CCJS 3120 is an ex-police officer with Devon and Cornwall Police; providing context based on 30 years experience, whilst affording a network of existing contacts within the police service. Many of the students enrolled on this module have a great interest in the police; either as a preferred career choice, or to gain an understanding of the role of the service within the criminal justice system and wider society. Through using existing contacts, links are being continually developed to improve students' employability and preparation for the professional world.

Insight Patrol

Collaboration between the University and the Police in Plymouth has led to opportunities for students to join local Police Officers on patrol. The local Neighbourhood Police Team have provided a series of dates for students to accompany both Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) on a 'one to one' basis as they patrol the City Centre in the evenings. This has been very well received by the students; they gain an insight into the workings of the police 'on the front line', providing context to the application of the theory of law to practice. For example, witnessing how antisocial behaviour is managed firsthand during late night shopping foot patrol in Drake Circus, which is the main shopping mall within the city centre.

Independent Custody Visitors

This is a scheme which operates across Devon and Cornwall; members of the local community visit police stations unannounced to check on the welfare of people in police custody. This is a chance for our students to offer protection to both detainees and the police and reassurance to the community at large. They will gain an insight into the criminal justice system by checking on the treatment of people in police custody, the conditions in which they are held, and that their rights and entitlements are being observed. A number of students have volunteered to take part in the selection process to be part of this scheme; if successful they will be given suitable training and mentoring.

Work Experience Opportunities linked to the 3rd Year Work Based Learning Module

Volunteering in the Police Service

Early last year Devon and Cornwall Police opened up a Volunteering Programme. There are a number of police volunteers now placed in Plymouth who are about to start the induction and training process. They will be given an official Identification card, access to the Police IT system, and be fully involved in a wide range of activities linked to neighbourhood engagement. Arrangements are in place to ensure the volunteers accrue the necessary 80 hours together with the evidence needed to build their portfolios for the Work Based Learning Module. The students are in charge of this process, their working time arranged to the mutual convenience to both organization and student. This places the student at the heart of their learning, encouraging them to take the initiative; developing an independent, self-directed approach. This will provide the Neighbourhood Policing team with a valuable resource to form an integral part of public engagement activities over the longer term. It is envisioned the students will be involved in street surveys, community safety work, such as crime prevention and planned public reassurance events. Also, they will be able to assist the response to more dynamic issues, such as crimes or incidents. They will provide a valuable extra resource to work with the Neighbourhood Team over the longer term. Working with the local Neighbourhood Policing team manager in Plymouth we are providing opportunities for students to be 'attached' to a member of this team; such as a Police Officer or a PCSO. Again, the students will liaise with their contact to organize working time convenient to both whilst accruing the necessary 80 hours for the Work Based Learning Module. The policing activities will complement the work of the Police Volunteers.

Future ongoing volunteering opportunities

The collaboration work with the police service has resulted in a number of important 'spin offs'; creating links with other organizations who have offered a range of volunteering opportunities. These include the Community Advice and Support Service; a number of students will be offered the chance to work with this organization based in the Magistrates Courts at Plymouth and Bodmin. This will have a similar structure as the police volunteering scheme. It is envisioned the students will be engaged as volunteers over a long period allowing suitable training and development. They will then be able to support the work of the organization; for example, joining the duty Rota. There are also other exciting openings at an early stage of development with organizations such as the Black Minority Police Association and Devon BME Domestic Violence Action Group.

These organisations and groups have also expressed an interest in students being engaged in research into issues which directly affect them. This raises the exciting possibility of future 'real world' research for our students. In addition, they will be able to link volunteering opportunities with these organisations to the final year Work Based Learning Module.

Interdisciplinary collaboration

Criminology and Criminal Justice (CCJS) are located within Plymouth Law School. Increasingly, Law as well as CCJS students are expressing an interest in undertaking volunteering work with Criminal Justice and related agencies. In this way the ongoing developmental work is benefiting a wider range of students.