

Carlie Jennings looks at the mutual benefits of work-related learning (WRL).

# engaging the workforce of tomorrow

■ **The UK's growing skills shortage is dramatically impacting on many businesses' ability to recruit young people with the right skills and attitude for work. Many students need to develop their key skills – communication, team working, IT skills, numerical competence and problem solving – which are essential for future employment and for the benefit of business and the economy.**

Through business and education links, students have the opportunity to develop these skills, increase their knowledge and academic achievement and help to promote life-long learning.

## developing skills

The critical importance of skill development is recognised within the school curriculum through the inclusion of work-related learning (WRL) elements. WRL is defined as 'planned activity designed to use the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work' (The Education Act 2002).

'Many students need to develop the key skills essential for future employment and for the benefit of business and the economy'

WRL encompasses a broad range of activities, including work experience placements, business simulations, mentoring and days in industry. The time and commitment required from you are dependent upon the activity.

Offering WRL provides you with a fantastic way to engage with schools and presents a host of benefits for you and your practice:

- an opportunity to look for potential recruits
- a learning opportunity for staff leading to increased motivation and personal development
- raises the profile of your practice and knowledge of the industry
- could contribute towards your verifiable CPD requirements.

Students also benefit from WRL:

- develops an awareness of the realities of working life and career options
- develops personal, social and employability skills
- develops knowledge of accountancy and/or your business sector/industry
- provides 'real-life' case studies and examples for coursework and exams.

## spreading the word

ACCA is active within the schools market – our presence encourages students to consider accountancy as a potential career route and promotes the ACCA brand. ACCA member support is fundamental in spreading the ACCA message. To assist members, ACCA:

- has developed an *Accountancy Resources for Schools* pack for use when discussing a career in accountancy. This free resource can be used with individual students and entire classes. To request a copy please email [schools@uk.accaglobal.com](mailto:schools@uk.accaglobal.com)

- is working with Career Academies UK to provide ACCA members with an opportunity to work with 16 to 19 year olds who are considering a career in accountancy and business.

Your involvement with WRL is crucial to the effective delivery of the school curriculum, benefiting you, your organisation and the students. To support you in this delivery ACCA has developed online resources. Visit [www.accaglobal.com/uk/employers/engage\\_schools](http://www.accaglobal.com/uk/employers/engage_schools) to find out more information and details of organisations who can assist in your local area. ■

Carlie Jennings –  
Business Development Adviser, ACCA UK

## CASE STUDY

Walker Thompson is a three partner general practice (with ACCA quality checked status and platinum training approval) with 13 finance staff based in Coventry. Its clients range from sole traders to medium sized companies, and it provides a full accounting service with the exception of insolvency work.

Walker Thompson has been offering work experience to school students in various guises for the past 20 years and does so in order to maintain strong community links with local schools, colleges and universities. One partner was formerly a director of the local careers service and a director of Young Enterprise and is currently a governor of City College.

Students engage in a variety of tasks: they start with simple accounts records and are encouraged to verify income and expenditure. Depending upon ability and aptitude they can work on controlling ledgers, extracting balances and in exceptional cases can, over a two week period, produce basic trial balance sheets and profit and loss accounts. Some students also ask to return following their placement.

The practice benefits from these placements because ultimately it may find future staff members. Its expectation is for students undertaking a placement to have core numeracy and literacy skills and a degree of common sense. It feels that too many of today's students are ill prepared by schools to enter the world of work.