

What would be great is...

A national system which combines continuing personal, professional and employment development for learners who have left education and are already in the work place. This learning in work place settings should differ markedly from the settings of formal compulsory education by recognising learning achieved through work as being of equal value.

Processes which support work based learning (WBL) already exist in higher education institutions and some employers.

The process is not universally available, so we have some suggestions to improve the system for the benefit of a socially inclusive and economically prosperous society.

What is needed?

UK Government should consider a sustainable funding model for WBL, including tax incentives for employers who actively encourage and invest in WBL and financial incentives for WBL students.

We need a set of national quality assurance guidelines for companies or education establishments to follow, which are properly and appropriately resourced with roles clearly defined by accredited qualifications.

We need to know more about the benefits of WBL for the individual learner (through direct consultation with groups who have used WBL processes), and have accurate, reliable and annual data on national WBL participation rates.

We need those in or with responsibility for higher education to think of WBL as an explicit strategy to widen participation and enhance social mobility rather than as an alternative method of programme delivery.

Additionally we need to see WBL used as a way of addressing the high undergraduate dropout rate, by using WBL as an explicit "return to study" strategy.

