

CASE STUDY

Teaching Experience

Host Employer: Ysgol Friars, Bangor

What is GO Wales?

The 'GO Wales' project based within Skills and Employability at Bangor University helps students to develop their employability skills and increase their chances of obtaining graduate level employment upon leaving university.

About the student

The student was in his third year studying Marine Biology in Oceanography and was planning to apply for a PGCE following his degree. In order to do this he needed to gain some classroom experience to help with the PGCE application. The placement also needed to take in a different school from where he had previously attended.

Please describe why you felt you needed the support from GO Wales to find work experience?

I am currently studying a degree in Marine Biology in Oceanography, with the aim of doing a PGCE in Geography after graduation. When applying for a PGCE it is required that you have experience in a school environment before you apply, so that you can confirm it is the career path you want. With the university I want to apply to, it states that the work experience should not be in a school you have previously attended. This meant that I would not be able to get the relevant experience in my school back home and with my lack of knowledge of Welsh I did not know where to ask for experience whilst studying in Wales. This was when I was pointed in the direction of GO Wales.

What type of work did you carry out during your placement?

I shadowed a variety of teachers within the Geography department, following classes from year 7 to 13. During this time, I observed different teaching techniques and how the language would change not only through the different year groups but also with the different ability groups. When possible, I would input my knowledge and experience in order to add extra information either to the class as a whole or one to one with a student who required help.

How has this placement helped you with the career path you wish to take?

Doing the work experience, especially in a school different to the one I attended, helped to confirm that this is the career path that I would like to take. Although it will be a hard and tiring job, as I found just doing one weeks' work experience, I would say it is definitely a rewarding career – and not just a job.

Do you feel you have achieved any of the objectives you set yourself before starting the placement?

I managed to achieve all of the goals I set out. Despite being incredibly nervous before entering the school, I became panicked as to whether I would do well being back in a classroom environment for the first time in 5 years, but I was surprised with how confident I felt. I was able to ask many questions about what it takes to be a teacher such as how many working hours in a week, how often training would take place and how long individual lesson planning takes. I also managed to ask about more modern issues such as how trained schools were in taking care of LGBT issues, mental health issues and learning difficulties – all of which are becoming more recognised.

How would you describe the experience of working in this role?

The experience of being in a classroom and teaching environment was thoroughly enjoyable and confirmed my goal of training to become a teacher.

Can you describe any new skills which you have learnt which you did not expect?

I did learn a few skills that I did not think I would achieve, especially in such a short period of time. I learnt how to change language and interaction with different age and ability groups. This included interaction with a nurture group (students who have learning difficulties) how varied/tailored teaching can be do these individuals. Moreover, I learnt how to show students answers by pointing them in the right direction without specifically giving them answers but showing them how to find the answers themselves.

Do you feel that this work opportunity has helped you overcome any barriers to finding work experience?

The placement helped me gain contacts within a school which I would not have gotten without the help of GO Wales. Since this opportunity, I have also completed a further week of Teacher shadowing work experience.

What are/have been the highlights of working at this placement?

I enjoyed the entire work experience as a whole, so it becomes difficult to pick out individual highlights.

What advice would you give to students who are thinking about applying to GO Wales?

I would recommend GO Wales to anyone who is already thinking about applying, as without them I would not have been able to have gained the relevant experience I needed. For me, I was already confident in the career path I wanted to take, but for those unsure it is possible to gain a wide range of placements.

How have you found the support of the GO Wales team? How has this helped you?

The support from the GO Wales team is second to none. They have kept in touch and from the moment the application process initiated and throughout my placement to make sure everything was going well, up to the end of the process when it was time to end and do my reflection and feedback.

The Host Employer stated: *“the student was open to all experiences and happy to integrate into staff situations and in particular to relate to pupils in the classes he was observing. He presented a professional attitude throughout the work experience, was given a timetable and found who and where he needed to be, very able to work on his own initiative. I do feel he will be an asset to education”.*

The GO Wales advisor stated: *“We are very grateful to Ysgol Friars for supporting this work placement and allowing the student to experience first-hand what the classroom and teaching environment is like. We feel this opportunity has been a great insight into the role of teaching and helped the student to feel more confident in taking this career path forward. We wish him every success with his PGCE application and look forward to hearing how he progresses”.*