

# The TMI David Hughes Memorial Award

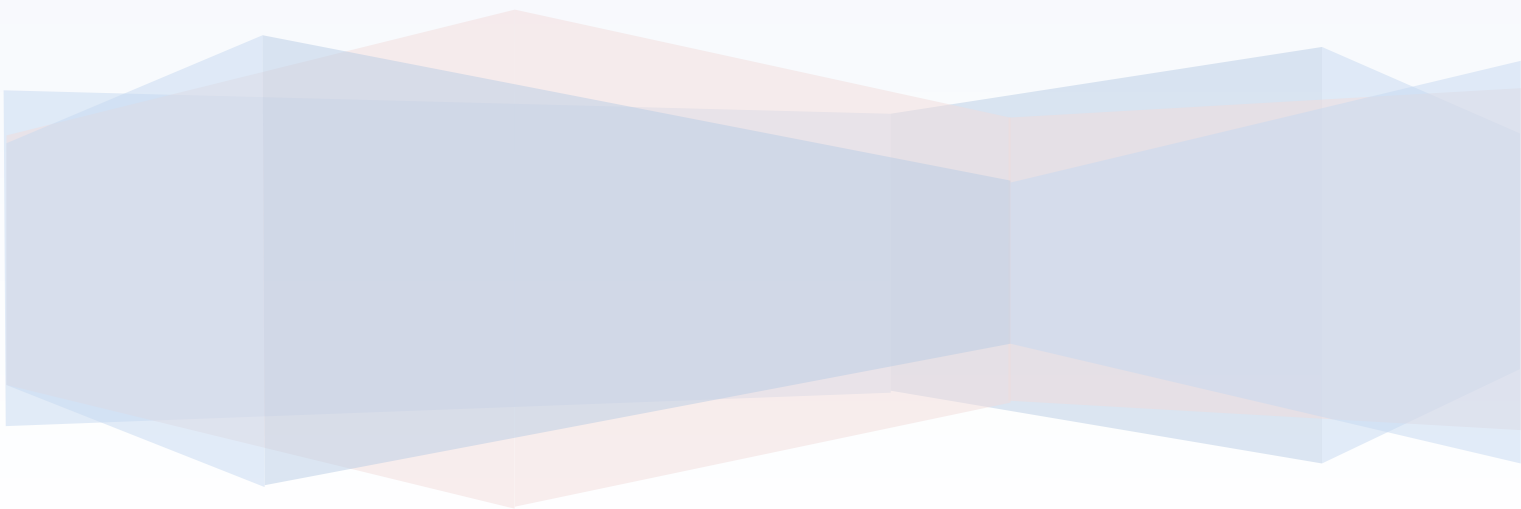
## An Analysis Of My Student Placement Experience

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University Name: Sheffield Hallam

Course Name: Bsc (Hon) Tourism Management

Course Leader: Ray Nolan



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## **1.0 Introduction**

This report will aim to reflect and critique my experience gained during my placement year as part of my tourism management sandwich degree. This is important as Stella Cottrell (2010) “states personal development planning or (PDP)” will benefit students both in professional and personal life, by “being in a better position to compete for jobs and discuss their skills and competences with employers;” as well as “developing a positive and forward looking approach.”

During 2013 and 2014 I undertook a 48-week working placement within the Isle of Man department of tourism. The Isle of Man department of tourism is a destination management organisation; it consists of five teams including events, motorsport, quality & service, marketing communications and product development. During the year I worked within the product development division, my specific role as business development assistant was to assist with the development of tourism initiatives, assist with undertaking market research, assist the cruise consultant to build the cruise market and assist with the group travel market. However I was also given the opportunity to collaborate with various other teams including quality & service, events and marketing communications.

## **2.0 Reasons and Expectations**

I chose to undertake a placement year at the Isle of Man department of tourism, as living on the Isle of Man my entire life, I've have had a strong interest in the Isle of Man tourism industry and was enthusiastic to assist in helping the industry to grow further and to encourage positive benefits to the Islands visitor economy.

Additionally I believed it would be an excellent opportunity to practically apply the academic knowledge I had gained during my first and second year of university studying a tourism management degree, where I studied various destination management tools such as market research into niche tourisms and trends. It would also be hugely beneficial as a resource tool for my final year of university, which has proven correct, as I'm utilising my resources gained within my dissertation.

Furthermore the placement was a great chance to gain first hand experience into the operations of a DMO, which as a career I was strongly considering to follow upon graduation.

However the most significant reason for undertaking a placement year with the Isle of Man tourism board was to enhance my professional work experience, in order to assist within my career path after graduation, as I believed academic knowledge alone was insufficient, this is supported by Martin Birchall, managing director of High Fliers Research who said "In this highly-competitive graduate jobs market, new graduates who've not had any work experience during their time at university have little or no chance of landing a well-paid job with a leading employer, irrespective of the university they've attended or the academic results they achieve," this is further backed up by a study undertaken by internships.com in 2012, which through interviewing over 300 human resources and recruitment professionals found that "66% of employers believe interview performance and relevant work experience are the most important factors in their hiring decisions—far more significant than strong academic performance." Highlighting the importance of work experience.

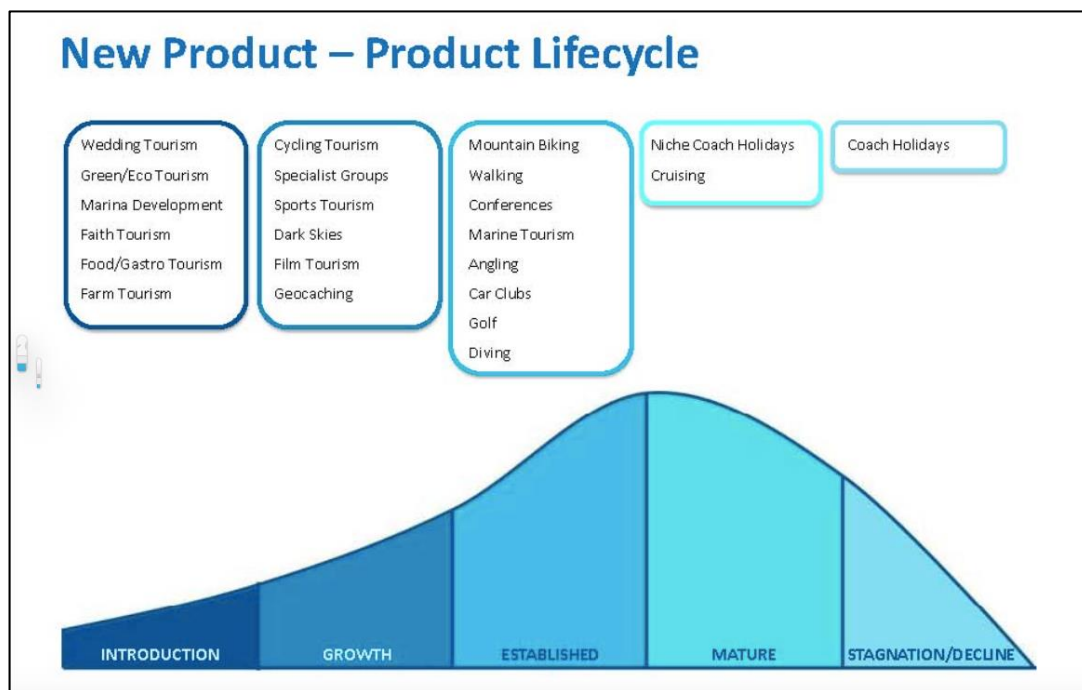
In order to ensure I gained the most out of my placement year experience, I attended numerous team meetings with my team leaders to discuss the main skills I was hoping to gain during my time, I informed them I hoped to gain as much hands on experience of professional skills as possible. We created an initial plan, that I undertake at least one independent project task to improve tourism on the Island to use as an example of 'commercial awareness', 'computer literacy', 'team work', 'problem solving' and 'communication', we also identified that I would be able to improve my leadership skills through my major role in organising a small voluntary team for cruise arrivals.

### **3.0 Skills Processes And Practice Acquired During Placement**

The most significant aspect of learning I have gained during my year in industry, which will be of huge benefit to my overall degree, is gaining the knowledge of how a tourism trade body operates, living on the Isle of Man my entire life I already had a fairly good knowledge base of tourism products on the island, however whilst employed I was able to see how these products were managed and how new opportunities were targeted, working within a government department also gave me an insight into how a public company works, as the structure and running of the company is very different of that of a private business, especially with the involvement of political members.

Through effective establishment of work colleague relationships I was able to acquire an in-depth overview of the overall management of the Isle of Man tourism board, and

not just refined to my work within business development such as; accommodation and events welcome and funding schemes, and the systems required in the development of tourism products. This is of benefit towards my academic learning as I was able to implement some of the learning I have acquired over the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of my course, for instance I was required to assist with the creation of a Raymond Vernon (1966) product life cycle of the Isle of Man tourism products, to identify which products were in there maturity and which were in development as shown in figure 1 below:



Figure

1: Isle of Man Tourism Product Lifecycle 2014

Through all my job roles within the Isle of Man tourism board, I have been able to gain a greater insight into the markets of various niche forms of tourism and how they are managed, which will later be of huge benefit to my academic and professional knowledge. An example of this is my observation and input into the development of walking tourism on the Island, during the placement I was able to sit on various walking stake holder meetings, and was assigned the task of gathering market research on UK walking tourism, I produced the report and made recommendations for improvement, the experience taught me the importance of networking & cooperation between organisations as well as market research in creating a quality product. Below in figure 3 is an example of one of the self-guided Isle of Man walks I helped to improve, by researching appropriate transport links and available facilities.

### 1 Maughold, Port Moor and Port e Vullen

This outstanding coastal walk in the north of the Island provides spectacular views and the opportunity to spot plenty of wildlife, returning via a quiet country lane through rolling farmland.

Grading:	Moderate (very steep in places)	<b>2 MODERATE</b>
Distance:	4.5 miles	
Start:	Port Lewaigue Car Park	
Map Ref:	470 530	
By Car:	Take the A2 from Douglas towards Ramsey and then Maughold road, parking available by Maughold church and Boilushag.	
By Rail:	Take the electric train north to Ramsey from Douglas on Looe and alight at Lewaigue or Balle Via (request stop). Port Lewaigue is a short stroll down the hill.	
By Bus:	Services 3, 3A, 3B and 3D connect Douglas to Ramsey; services 14, 14A and 14B connect Ramsey to Maughold.	

#### Route

- From Port Lewaigue head south, following the *Road Ny Foillan* footpath signs around the Gob ny Rona headland and onto the beach at Port e Vullen.
- Please note that access to the foreshore is restricted at high tide. Walking on the road will take you to the same point at Port e Vullen.
- Leave the shore via the slipway at Port e Vullen, turn left onto the quiet road.
- After about 100 yards follow the *Road Ny Foillan* footpath sign on the left.
- You are now on Maughold Brooghs, heading towards Maughold Head lighthouse.
- After 1.5 miles you will reach a track on the left which leads down to St Maughold's Well.
- The coastal footpath leads behind the St Maughold's Church. If you wish to view the Celtic and Manx crosses they are on display in the churchyard in the cross house to the right.
- Continue following the coastal footpath behind the church as it leads to the hidden cove of Port Moor.
- Follow the lane from Port Moor to the quiet road and turn right back towards Maughold.
- Continue on this road, through the hamlet of Maughold and back to Port Lewaigue.

**TOP TIP** Take a short diversion to St Maughold's Church in the village to view the large collection of wonderful ancient crosses.

#### Route Map

#### Facilities (subject to opening hours)

- Public Toilets are located outside the grounds of St Maughold's Church.

#### Points of Interest (subject to opening hours and admission charges)

- The Island's largest display of Celtic and Manx crosses are found at St Maughold's Church.
- St Maughold's Well (via a steep path).

#### Nature - Watch

Maughold Brooghs is an excellent area for observing marine and bird life. Many wild flowers grow here, including orchids. Grey Seals can easily be spotted in the waters off Maughold Head and around Port Moor.

Figure 2: Isle of Man Self-Guided Walks

### Kolb Theory of learning styles

Through my involvement within the walking tourism development, I was able to apply Kolb's (1984) 'learning styles' model (see figure 3).

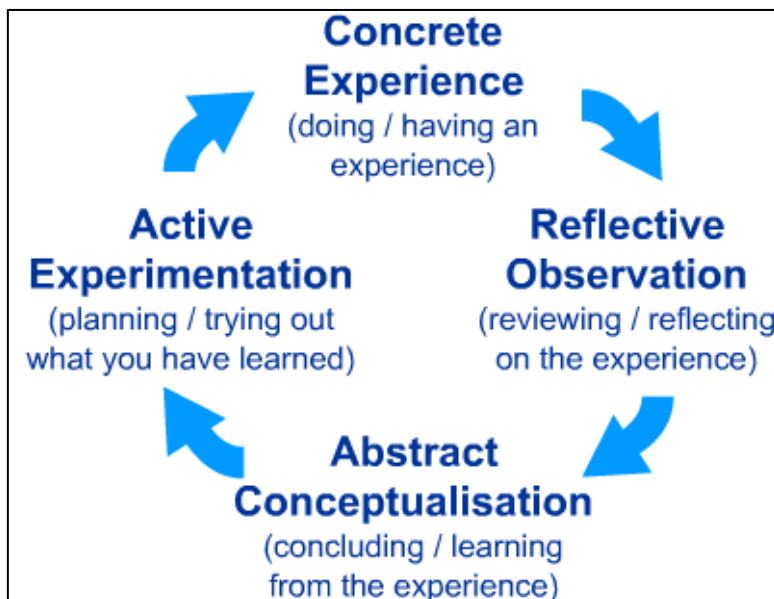


Figure 3: Kolb (1984) learning styles

I was able to observe how my team leader organised the walking stakeholder meetings for footpath development on the island. My team leader established an agenda of topics to address, managed the flow of the meeting and finally at the end she created an action list to follow. This was a concrete learning experience of which I reflected and made note of her process, from the experience I concluded it was a highly effective way of managing a meeting, especially when multiple opinions and topics are involved, I applied the same system with my meeting in the events management team, where I was tasked to review the way they target motorsport clubs, I created the same format agenda and created actions to follow.

### **Leadership**

During my placement I was able to demonstrate and learn the ability to effectively lead and manage a small team, this was achieved as a key job role I was required to perform was to organise and manage a group of volunteers who helped on cruise arrival days, named 'Cruise Welcomers'. I achieved this by staying in direct communication with each of the volunteers on the lead up towards the cruise arrival dates, in order to confirm which dates and times each volunteer would be available, I sent a cruise schedule in which they were required to fill in their availability, I then placed the details within an excel spread sheet, and created a work rota for each volunteer in order to ensure workload was divided evenly. I then managed the volunteers on the cruise days, ensuring they were in their correct positions and fully informed of all information required. Throughout the placement I assisted with nine cruise ship pre-arrivals as seen in the schedule in figure 4 below:



# Cruise Ship Schedule 2014

VESSEL	LOA	DFT	ETA	ETD	FROM	TO	PAX	CREW	GRT	Port of Arrival
<b>THOMSON SPIRIT</b>	214.7	7.5	08:00 13 <sup>th</sup> May	18:00 13 <sup>th</sup> May	...	...	1254	520	33930	Douglas
<b>HEBRIDEAN PRINCESS</b>	72	3	14 <sup>th</sup> June	14 <sup>th</sup> June	...	...	50	36	2112	Peel
<b>ADONIA</b>	180.5	6	08:00 21 <sup>st</sup> June	18:00 21 <sup>st</sup> June	Greenock	Barrow	710	373	30277	Anchor Douglas
<b>WIND SURF</b>	187	5.2	08:00 13 <sup>th</sup> July	16:00 13 <sup>th</sup> July	Dublin	Portrush	312	191	14,745	Anchor Douglas
<b>AMADEA</b>	192.8	7.1	07:00 17 <sup>th</sup> Aug	13:00 17 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Belfast	Dublin	620	260	29,008	Anchor Douglas
<b>BLACK WATCH</b>	205.5	7.5	08:30 29 <sup>th</sup> Aug	20:00 29 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Isle of Staffa	Belfast	...	...	...	Anchor Douglas
<b>WIND SURF</b>	187	5.2	09:00 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	17:00 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	Portrush	Dublin	312	191	14,745	Anchor Douglas
<b>SEABOURN LEGEND</b>	135	5.2	07:00 06 <sup>th</sup> Sept	15:00 06 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Greenock	Milford Haven	208	164	9,961	Douglas
<b>BREMEN</b>	111.5	4.8	08:30 12 <sup>th</sup> Sept	13:30 12 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Iona	Dublin	164	94	6,752	Douglas

Figure 4: Isle of Man 2014 Cruise Ship Arrivals

The task was highly beneficial for me in seeing the importance of planning and effective communication within destination management, as prior to the cruise ship arrivals a regular meeting was required between the various stakeholders, to discuss planning and possible issues that may occur such as weather and coach parking, which was substantial towards the preparation.

### *Douglas McGregor Theory X & Y*

During the placement I was also able to apply Douglas McGregor (1960) 'theory X & Y' to determine the type of management style adopted by my team leaders and myself. An example of McGregor's theory can be seen in figure 5 below:



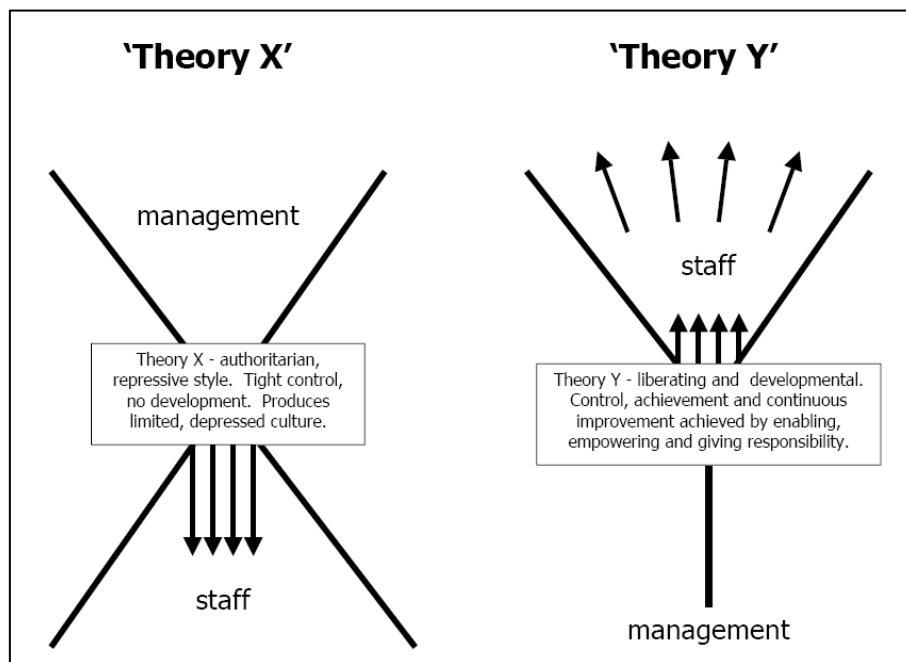


Figure 5: McGregor (1960) Theory X & Y

During my placement year I had two team leaders, and I found both had somewhat different management approaches, My primary team leader adopted a slight more theory Y approach, as she often would delegate more responsibility to me as I developed within my role, and took a flexible approach in the way I worked. Whereas my secondary team leader adopted a slightly more theory X approach, as she often encouraged me to complete work in the set systems already established, and was reluctant to delegate responsibility to me, as a result of my lack of experience. However I found none of my team leaders adopted an extreme X or Y management style but rather a middle approach. I found within my role organising the Cruise Welcomers that I undertook a slight theory X approach, delegating specific roles and procedures, however I found this leadership style to be difficult, as being unpaid volunteers I was very conscious of over stepping my boundary and causing a lack of motivation to return.

### 3.4 Research Skills

Throughout the placement year I have undertaken numerous market research reports, which have in turn hugely benefited my academic skills and desirability for graduate employment. Before undertaking my placement role I was already efficient in drafting an appropriate market research report, however my placement provider taught me how to transfer this research into a proposition document, which outlines the key findings and recommendations for improvement, and then into an action plan for

development. For example I was given the task of researching into the domestic UK golf tourism market and what the Isle of Man currently offers for golf tourism, my findings showed that the island already had a strong golf product, however the issue was a lack of knowledge about these products within the UK, a key suggestion I made was to further develop the golf section of the visit Isle of Man website and with the cooperation of the marketing team the suggestions were implemented. Below in figure 6 is a copy of the golf development plan I created:

<b>Golf Development Plan</b>					
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Current Stage of Development</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Expected Completion Date</b>
<b>Golf Development</b>					
Secondary Research into golf tourism market	Golf market research collected	High	SG	13/02/2014	15/01/2014
<b>Website Development</b>					
Meeting with Marketing team to go through changes to golf webpages	Meeting Set	High	SG, RQ & Marketing Team	19/02/2014	18/02/2014
<b>Literature Development</b>					
Meeting with Marketing team to go through initial literature ideas	Meeting Set	High	SG, RQ & Marketing Team	19/02/2014	18/02/2014
Develop Ideas into a 1 <sup>st</sup> Draft of literature		Medium	SG & Marketing Team		03/03/2014
Meeting with Marketing team to review literature and where improvement can be made		Medium	SG & Marketing		06/03/2014
<b>Communication Development</b>					
Develop Survey Monkey questionnaire to establish golf stakeholder interest.		High	SG	27/02/2014	20/02/2014
Begin communication of ideas and review feedback		High	SG	10/03/2014	03/03/2014

Figure 6: Golf Development Plan

Towards the end of my placement year I was given the task to gather market research into the caravan and motorhome tourism market within the UK, in order to establish the positive and negative benefits of encourage this form of niche tourism within the Isle of Man. I was given a strict deadline date in order to assist within a governmental debate taking place on whether to alter the current laws on caravan & motorhome travel within the Isle of Man. The experience showed me process required to change government policies and again the importance of research within this process and destination management, as well as the layers of cross collaboration required. An email from Angela Byrne head of Isle of Man tourism, thanking me for the research can be seen below in figure 7:

**From:** Byrne, Angela  
**Sent:** 16 July 2014 14:53  
**To:** Games, Sam  
**Cc:** Quayle, Rachele  
**Subject:** Research Paper Caravans & Motorhomes

Sam

I wanted to thank you for a good piece of research work for the Caravan and Motorhome report that you have produced. The information contained within it will potentially be used tomorrow at a Tynwald Select Committee Private Hearing following a motion approved in Tynwald 17<sup>th</sup> June.

So as part of your college work I think you should use this to show the work that you have completed and how it has been used.

Well done and thank you.

Best wishes  
Angela

**Angela Byrne** MIH, MInstLM, Cert Ed FAHE  
Head of Tourism

Figure 7: Angela Byrne Email

### Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

During my time in placement, I was able to apply Maslow's (1943) 'hierarchy of needs' (as seen in figure 8 below) to my own experience within my employment.



Figure 8: Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs

Reviewing my own needs as an employee at Visit Isle of Man I could identify that I had reached the higher stages of Maslow's Theory, as identified within the stages below:

1. Physiological needs: I was earning a decent salary, the people I worked with were friendly to me and living at home meant I had great living conditions
2. Safety needs: I had strong job security; the offices required key card entry and my managers were always on hand if I required any assistance or help.
3. Social needs: the team I worked were extremely friendly and provided opportunity for socialising such as work nights and events, I had flexi-time, one

hour for lunch and almost all weekends off, so had plenty of time for personal life

4. Esteem needs: A strong job title, occasionally was given positive comments on my quality of work.
5. Self-Actualisation needs: allowed to work independently, could occasionally choose my own work and deadlines were flexible.

Although aspects of all my needs were met, I found certain aspects of the hierarchy could have benefited from further improvement, with the social aspects I found that as the office were split into teams there was a lack of communication among one another and often frustration arose, within the esteem needs, I found at the beginning of placement due to a lack of verbal appraisal I was unconfident whether I was meeting the expectations of my employers and finally from a self-actualisation view I found the work sometimes to be extremely repetitive and a lack of new work, especially at the beginning. By utilising Maslow's theory I could determine that my strongest motivation was Esteem needs as I grew more confident and happy within my role as I gained positive reviews and comments.

## 7.0 Conclusion

In conclusion this placement year has been enormously important to both my academic and professional development, by producing my own market research report on golf tourism on the Isle of Man and then a proposition document for improvement, I have been able to improve the tourism on the Isle of Man, which is a significant achievement I can include within my CV. By communicating with tourism stakeholders, organising the cruise volunteers and assisting on reception, I have hugely improved my communication skills, which was seriously lacking at the beginning of my placement year. And the 3<sup>rd</sup> most significant learning curve I found was the importance of market research and planning within the tourism industry, as these statistics give an insight on how to appropriately market & target consumer

## 8.0 Appendices

1. Isle of Man Government Personal Development Review Form

### **Interim Review – June 2014**

During year the quality of work that has been delivered by Sam has improved immensely

and I feel that he has benefitted from working within an office environment. Sam has developed a good understanding of how the fragmented tourism industry works on the Island and appreciates the sometimes-difficult relationships that exists between key stakeholders. I feel that through spending this last 9 months in the working environment has set Sam up for whatever he chooses to pursue once he graduates. Sam has been amenable to everything which has been asked of him and has not questioned any of the projects which he has been tasked with.

During the last 3 months Sam has undertaken a number of projects including:-

Answering enquiries from Group Travel Organisers

Updating literature – Douglas Things to See and Do

Providing information for the updated One Stop Guide

Producing itineraries for both the Group Travel Market and also Cruise Itinerary Planners

Making necessary arrangements for visiting Cruise Ships

#### **Quality of Work - Excellent**

The standard of Sam's work has been consistently of a high standard and he has developed very good attention to detail. He asks for clarification where he feels necessary and can take on a number of different projects at once with ease.

#### **Output - Excellent**

The level of output which Sam produces is high and delivers all projects on time. Once again Sam has assisted other areas of the Tourism Team with ease which is important due to the size of the team. If Sam is asked to find more information on an area he is more than happy to do so and as been the case this year revisit areas of research previously undertaken and update as required.

#### **Communication - Good**

Once again Sam's communication skills have improved both face to face and also verbally through telephone which has been assisted I feel by his additional reception duties. Sam listens to everything you ask him to do and will ask you to clarify where required and this is a very important skill to develop.

#### **Relationships - Good**

Sam has developed good relationships with all team members and the Cruise Welcomers which is very important and is liked by everyone. I receive positive feedback

about Sam all of the time from various levels within the Organisation and his is down to his character and nature.

**Attitude - Excellent**

Sam’s attitude is very good and once again acts in a professional manner, has a good attitude towards work and is happy to take on additional hours and duties. He asks for feedback and accepts it in a constructive manner and has good timekeeping. I would not hesitate it in recommending Sam for a position in the future.

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