

## HERE TO HELP

# FIRST DAY PLACEMENT NERVES

Sometimes the first few weeks might be overwhelming for trainees, but they should be considered an investment in the future, writes **Jocelyn Pryce**, Head of Registration and Training at the IBMS.

**T**he work of the Education Team is not driven by either the seasonal or academic calendar but, as summer draws to a close, our thoughts turn to the thousands of students who are beginning their new academic year, especially those joining laboratories as placement students from our accredited universities and the training teams supporting them. Although not all begin their placement at the start of the academic year, a large proportion do and this influx of inexperienced trainees can place a strain on those delivering the training.

Many training teams have strong, well-coordinated training programmes in place, which provide framework support for both the laboratory staff and the trainees and such good organisation can go a long way to ensuring a successful outcome for the student at the end of the placement period. Preparation for the arrival of new trainees should trigger reflective thought in those of us who have been through this cycle before: Do we remember what it was like on our first day? Do we have a mentor who we look back on and thank for introducing us to this interesting career? Do we remember how it felt to learn about biomedical science for the first time, or were we just



born experts? Of course we weren't; we've all had first day nerves wondering what would greet us and whether we would love the career we were stepping into.

Thinking outside of the induction process to the wider introduction you give your trainees in their early days can make the process much more comfortable for them. We expect them to have been prepared in the practical sense in terms of what they can expect, but are they prepared mentally for what they are about to undertake? Sometimes the first few weeks can be overwhelming and progress may feel slow. Trainees can feel that they are failing to progress at the speed they expect and trainers may be frustrated by the reliance a trainee has on them. Consider trainees as an investment of your time in the next generation, one day you may be the scientist that they reflect

on as the mentor who introduced them to biomedical science.

Placement models are dependent on the ability of employers to provide them. A flexible approach has been taken to this aspect of degree accreditation and, as long as our standards are met, some placements may be shorter than the recommended year-long approach to the registration portfolio. These were agreed on the basis that elements of the portfolio are covered in the academic curriculum and that the placement period is an

intensive, accelerated training period provided jointly by the university and training team in the laboratory. This brings me nicely on to our myth-busting for this month. The registration portfolio should be an artefact of that period of training containing evidence that demonstrates an immersion in laboratory life and atmosphere, not a workbook where a trainee approaches it as a series of tasks to be undertaken. If it is approached in this way, the trainee loses a great deal of the experience that was so important in our own development. So, when reflecting, think carefully about being immersed in the atmosphere of the laboratory and try to provide your trainees with that experience too.

As trainers, your ability to reflect and put yourself back in their shoes might make all the difference. 