Mr Frank Hennessey, Principal Lecturer and Head of the Business Studies Department

HOST COMPANY AND ORGANISATION: W D Irwin & Sons Ltd, Portadown  www.irwinsbakery.com
Contact:  Ms Sheree Totton, Human Resources Manager
FOLD Housing Association, Holywood  www.foldgroup.co.uk
Contacts:  Mr John McLean, Chief Executive Officer and
Mrs Marie Pickles, Human Resources Director

THE PLACEMENT
In order to provide a placement experience to explore a variety of policies relevant to Human Resource Management and organisational behaviour it was arranged that Mr Frank Hennessey would spend a period of placement in two different organisations, namely, W D Irwin & Sons Ltd, Portadown and the FOLD Housing Association, Holywood. Being two very different organisations added interest to the exercise; one being a private sector and profit focused organisation, FOLD on the other hand, although formally a not-for-profit organisation, was found to be much more target and performance driven than would otherwise be expected.

W D Irwin & Sons Ltd is one of Northern Ireland’s leading bakeries situated in modern premises at Portadown and employing some 450 people. Apart from their own product lines, Irwins produce a wide variety of products under a number of brands ie Rankins, Tescos and Sainsburys.

While in Irwins, Frank helped develop training documentation and gave one-to-one advice and guidance to a newly appointed training officer. In doing so, Frank enhanced his own knowledge and understanding of some ICT techniques. Frank commented: “I found this a most interesting experience and produced a number of spreadsheet models which have been adopted.”

Frank was also placed in the Human Resources Department at the FOLD Housing Association, Holywood. FOLD is a not-for-profit voluntary housing association registered and regulated by the Department for Social Development. Established in 1976, FOLD endeavours to provide the best housing, care and support to those in need of such services.

Frank’s agreed consultancy remit was to review the appraisal scheme in place in FOLD with a view to making recommendations as to how the organisation might develop and enhance the appraisal process. In addition to a report, Frank also presented a step by step guide to appraisal for the line managers along with other supporting resources.

Frank commented: “This was a most challenging and interesting exercise. It is my hope to follow up on this process later this year.”

KEY LEARNING POINTS ON BUSINESS
• The practical application and development of corporate human resources policies, including the training and supervisory function and appraisal techniques.
• The implications of maintaining and developing a family business ethic with specific reference to the dual perspectives of ownership and control.
• Product development and innovation to secure and maintain competitive advantage including required licensing and branding.
• Practical considerations with regard to sales and marketing techniques.
• The changing nature of the not-for-profit sector with particular reference to Northern Ireland.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE BA (Hons) LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE PROGRAMME OF THE UNIVERSITY
Frank commented: “I have gained a wealth of experience and insights into the areas of Human Resource Management and organisational behaviour which I will specifically link into BA (Hons) Liberal Arts and BEd degree modules.”

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
Being linked with the Human Resource Departments in both organisations involved Frank in reading all the documentation, policies and observing the practical efforts made to promote equality of opportunity and a positive and harmonious working environment. Frank commented: “It was particularly interesting to note the efforts that Irwin’s Bakery were making to cater for the different ethnic groups that are increasingly coming to Northern Ireland.”

PERSONAL LEARNING
Frank commented: “I found the experience of matching business theory and practice most stimulating and enjoyable.”