



Work Based Learning, Placements and Work Experience



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Introduction

Work Based Learning can provide you with a valuable opportunity to develop your employability skills and gain vital professional experience, which will give you an advantage when you apply for jobs.

So why do work-based **experience**, the clue is in the question?

- Graduate recruiters warn that graduates who have had no previous work experience at all are unlikely to be successful during the selection process and have little or no chance of receiving a job offer for their organisations' graduate programmes.
- Graduate recruitment at the country's leading employers is expected to rise substantially, with employers in eleven out of fifteen key industries and business sectors planning to recruit more new graduates this year.
- Three-quarters of employers provide paid vacation internships for penultimate year students and at least half offer industrial placements for undergraduates.
- Substantial numbers of employers now also have work experience places for first year undergraduates over a quarter of organisations offer paid internships and two-fifths of employers run introductory courses, open days, and other taster experiences for first year students.

This guide is split into 5 sections:

1. Different Types of Work Based Learning
2. Where to Look for Work Based Learning opportunities
3. Useful Websites
4. Information for International Students
5. Applying for Placements and other forms of Work Based Learning

Different Types of Work Based Learning

The clusters of Work Based Learning outlined below are designed to offer work based and professional learner experiences in real world situations. Models are for guidance and examples not exhaustive.

Insight Visits

Examples: Work shadowing, site visits, company visits, field trips.

Students gain access to the workplace over a short period of time, gaining knowledge and insight into the working environment and associated practices. Students will likely be visitors to the company, engaging with the employer in groups with all students enabled to engage equally. The experience focuses on observation and recognition of aspects of the workplace.

Work-Related Projects

Example: Live Brief, Extended Employer Project.

Students work to address real challenges faced by organisations in negotiated pieces of work, (either group based or individual) that may be sourced by the University or the student and can be located at the employers' premises., or remotely on and off campus, outside of the workplace environment.

Short Placement (Recommended duration 1– 12 weeks)

Examples: Practice placements, trimester placements, study & work abroad, Internships /Vacation placements

During activities in the short placement cluster students gain access to the workplace to develop their understanding and experience of the working environment.

A short-term placement opportunity usually offered and advertised by employers although may also be secured through a speculative application. Taken by students at any level of study in a vacation time or during an academic year.

Elsewhere, the term “internships” is used in another context to describe opportunities for new graduates.

Semester or Year Abroad

When a student opts to study at an overseas Higher Education provider which has collaborative / reciprocal agreement with their home Higher Education provider, this could include a period of work or may be study only. This may be part of, or additional to, their degree e.g. [Erasmus](#) or [Turing](#).

Practice placements

Governed by a formal agreement between the Higher Education provider and employers, these placements are usually undertaken on programmes where qualification leads to a license to practice such as in health or education. Students will often do multiple practice placements as part of their programme of study and employers may be involved in the assessment of students.

Long Placement

(Recommended duration 3 – 12 months)

Examples: Placement Module, Sandwich Year, Internship

During a long placement you will gain access to the workplace over an extended period to develop your technical (what you have learnt on your course) employability skills, knowledge and experience in a working environment and associated practices. School based Work Based Learning teams and placement tutors can help you gain experience(s) with industry partners or help you search for Work Based Learning opportunities that suit you and your learning needs and current situation.

There may be a formal application process. During the work-based learning you will work with employers and organisations to address real challenges to the enterprise through day-to-day projects and extended tasks.

Long Placement experiences are typically taken by undergraduate students in your penultimate or after the second year of your programme.

Where to Look for Placements

Your Placement Tutor

Your course may have a member of staff who has responsibility for work placements. They are usually known as the 'Placements Tutor'. Their role is to provide support and information about placements. If you do not know who they are, ask a member of staff in your department/ school office.

On-line Placement Opportunities

Careers and Enterprise advertise undergraduate and graduate placements, vacation placements, internships and voluntary placements on-line through [Advantage](#).

Employer Directories

You can also pick up a free copy of Prospects Graduate employer directory and sector specific publications from Careers and Enterprise. These mostly contain adverts for graduate jobs but are a good way of getting contact details for the major companies in your sector.

Occupational Information

There are lots of useful websites relating to [different industries](#), which may help you search for a placement.

Meet Employers on Campus

Careers and Enterprise work with Schools to organise several school-specific placement fairs throughout the academic year. We also organise presentations by employers throughout the year. Details of upcoming fairs and presentations can found on Advantage [Employer Events](#). Your placement tutor should also know about any upcoming placement-related events.

You can also find out information about placement opportunities and events on your school web pages and Blackboard

You might find it useful to book onto a Careers and Enterprise [Masterclasses](#) which looks at key areas.

Useful websites

The following are a selection of useful websites which will help you get started in your search for a placement:

[Prospects](#)

You can use the Prospects website to research types of job and find employer information, and search for details of Careers Fairs.

[Target jobs](#)

You can find sector specific advice on placements, research employers and find placement opportunities on this site.

[The National Association of Student Employment Services \(NASES\)](#)

Employment advice for students.

[Rate My Placement](#)

The UK's leading website for undergraduate work experience. Receiving 2 million student visitors each year and working with over 350 clients across a wide range of industries to promote their opportunities.

[Shell STEP](#)

Shell STEP organise 8-week placements in small and medium sized businesses. You must be a second or penultimate year student to take part

Overseas placements

[AIESEC](#)

AIESEC arrange work abroad programmes for students lasting between 2 and 18 months in a wide range of countries.

[Council in International Educational Exchange \(CIEE\)](#) Internships and Work & Travel programmes around the world for students.

[International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience \(IAESTE\)](#) provides paid course related summer placements abroad for science, engineering and applied arts.

Other Placements

[Windsor Fellowship](#)

Two-year leadership programme for Black and Asian undergraduates which includes a six-week work placement.

[Employ-ability](#)

Opportunities for disabled and dyslexic students & graduates.

Information for International Students

There are specific regulations relating to international students taking up sandwich placements and internships. Detailed guidance is available on the [UKCISA website](#).

If you have a 'prohibition' passport stamp or visa sticker, it is important that you check your status with an authorised University Adviser.

Applying for Work Based Learning

Application for work-based learning is usually formal and can be very competitive. Make sure you are organised and meet any deadlines given. By using Careers & Enterprise in the ways detailed below, you can make sure that you are prepared and make the best application you possibly can. These include:

- *Creating your CV,*
- *Writing a Covering Letter*
- *Successful Application*
- *Forms, Preparing for Interviews.*

Book a Work Based Learning Appointment with a Careers Adviser

If you would like to discuss your options in more detail you can book a confidential 40-minute [Careers Advice](#) appointment with a Careers Adviser. Appointments can be booked online.