Employer’s Guide to Student Work Placements
Home to the curious, brave and bold.
We’re a university where curiosity prevails, and where exploring new ways of thinking and pushing boundaries, isn’t just encouraged, it’s expected.

Our students are members of a unique, transformational living and learning community which empowers them with the skills to make a difference to the world around them.
What is a work placement?

The University of Essex is passionate about developing strong relationships with businesses across the globe. Our work placement schemes are a great way to facilitate collaboration between employers, students and the University to benefit all involved.

All students at Essex have the opportunity to undertake high quality work-based learning as part of their degree course; we call these 'work placements'. These are designed to offer our students a development opportunity, to put theoretical learning into practice and make a valuable contribution to your business.

We know it’s a tough job market out there and with increasing competition for jobs, students need to stand out from the crowd. That’s why, at Essex, we prepare our students for their future by providing an excellent academic education and an environment in which they can thrive.

However, we know it’s not all about qualifications. Practical experience is just as important; through work placements our students can practically apply their learning in a real workplace and provide you with high quality skills and expertise.

Types of work placements

Placements can vary in length, and a minimum number of hours may need to be completed, dependent on the specific course. Students are often required to write a reflective report or assignment to complement their learning whilst on placement.

There are multiple routes across the University that you can use to recruit students on a work placement. These can range from small projects up to a full year of work:

Projects
Negotiated pieces of work, either group based or individual, or usually carried out in the final year of undergraduate study, or midway through postgraduate study. These are often flexible and do not necessarily require attendance in the workplace to complete a project.

Termly Placements
Some degree modules include a work-based learning element where students will go out on placement during the academic term. These can range from 5 to 15 weeks and are often part-time where a student combines working one to two days a week alongside their academic study. They may also take place outside of term time in the Christmas, Easter or summer vacation period.

Placement Year
A placement year is equivalent to a year’s academic study and becomes an additional year in an undergraduate degree course. Students apply for a placement year during their second year and will start in the penultimate year of their degree course.

Students may be able to undertake more than one placement during a placement year, depending on which department they are in. All placements must be of a junior professional level and last between 30-62 weeks to be approved by the University.

“I was very impressed with Marisa’s ability and wish her all the best in the future. We were not sure what to expect when we took on a student from this scheme but Marisa has done outstandingly well in the time she had. I would be very happy to host another student next year based on the success of this year”

Dr Andrew Holding, Senior Research Associate at Cancer Research MSc Molecular Medicine Postgraduate Project
**Tasks and projects suitable for a work placement**

A work placement is more than work experience, shadowing or a temping role. It offers a student the opportunity to develop their skills, but also offers you, as an employer, a focussed and talented resource on a particular project or job role.

Students can undertake a wide range of tasks on work placements, for example, previous placement students have developed software at top technology companies, undertaken quantitative research for government, managed high risk financial products, provided care and support in mental health hospitals and taught English in schools across the world.

We recognise that each business is unique and we'll work with you to develop a suitable professional opportunity, whatever project or job role you have in mind.

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**Why work with our students?**

We believe a person’s potential is not simply defined by grades or background but by an attitude of mind: a willingness to question, to collaborate and to push at the frontiers of knowledge.

Time at university should do more than equip students to pass exams. By living and learning in our global academic community, our students enjoy a richness of experience that extends far beyond the lecture theatre. By contributing to their own and others’ Essex experience, they discover who they are and how they can realise their full potential and opportunities throughout their lives.

We equip our students with the skills to research, stimulate their curiosity to question conventional wisdom and nurture their desire to pursue new ideas; developing enduring life skills which prepare our students for personal and professional success.

Our students can benefit your organisation by:

- Undertaking specialist projects and increasing productivity
- Bringing fresh ideas and new expertise
- Providing modern professional skills, including IT, languages and research methods
- Offering a cost-effective solution to recruitment needs

Not only do we want your organisation to thrive from our talented students, but also for our students to learn from you. Your placement can benefit our students by:

- Helping them apply their academic knowledge in the workplace
- Enhancing their professional skills
- Enabling them to learn more about a particular sector, business or job role
- Preparing them for their future career

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**“This placement has helped me gain some invaluable skills that I would not have been able to acquire anywhere else. Because of this, I feel like I have more options in terms of employment at the end of my studies.”**

Elena Dirstaru, PhD Film Studies
CHASE Placement at the British Universities Film & Video Council (BUFVC)

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**“My placement so far has been very enjoyable! Every day that I’m in work I can feel myself growing as a scientist and as a person. I have learned so much, I now know that I want to do a PhD (hopefully one in industry) and then go on to work for a company like AstraZeneca.”**

Megan Cowan, BSc Biochemistry
Student Placement Year at AstraZeneca
Placement year case study

**Employer**

“GE gives IT students starting out in their career 12 months within a working environment. This benefits students in developing softer skills like project management, communication skills and by interacting with different characters at various levels of the business.

Our placement student from Essex, Andleeb, was a pleasure to work with; she showed great technical knowledge in IT and a great willingness to learn. She brought enthusiasm, a good grasp of the business and took the lead training the team on a new tool.

At all stages of the placement communication with the University of Essex was regular and the impression was that they really care that their student is attending, working well, learning new skills and enjoying their time with GE.

The main benefit to GE is that we have an opportunity to recruit the students for graduate roles. We have had interns join our leadership programme and quickly become senior leaders within the company.”

Kenny Richardson, Digital Technology, GE

**Student**

“I’ve always been interested in a sandwich degree because I wanted to get a feel of the IT industry and apply all the skills I had learnt in my university to a professional environment.

During my placement I was part of the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) team implementing Oracle systems across various regions. Seeing how my work at GE impacted the business was probably the best part of this placement. For example, I designed the architecture and layout of a new initiative application, Integrated Project Planning, and was able to see the benefit of this for customers in real time. This made me feel valued because I directly contributed to the development of the company.

I did not expect to be responsible for work that would have an actual monetary impact on the business, but this was great as it made me feel like a valued employee rather than an intern.

Throughout the year I received tremendous support from my academic tutor as well as the placements team. I look forward to using the skills and experience gained in my future professional career and in my final year at university.”

Andleeb Nusrat, IT Placement Year Student at GE
BSc Computer Games

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**Step by step process - employing a placement year student**

1. **Get in Touch:** Whether you’re considering taking on a placement student or need support with any of the following steps, we’re able to help.

2. **Developing and Advertising Your Placement Year Opportunity:** We’ll help develop your opportunity and can offer advice on a wide range of topics. We’ll advertise on our jobs board and promote your vacancy to students wherever possible.

3. **Interviews:** These are usually at the employers’ premises, but we are happy to host and facilitate the recruitment stages on campus too.

4. **Employment Offer:** Once a student has accepted your offer, we’ll make sure the placement is set up and complete an agreement between you, the student and the student’s academic supervisor.

5. **Placement Preparation by the University:** All placement students receive pre-departure training to support them as they adjust from University life to professional employment.

6. **Placement Start and Induction/Training by the Employer:** The first week of a placement should involve an induction and relevant training for the student.

7. **During the Placement – Employer:** It’s recommended you hold regular meetings with the student to review progress and set objectives, with a final review at the end of the placement.

8. **During the Placement – University:** Students are required to complete some academic work which is set out before they start. The Academic Supervisor and/or Faculty Placements Team will be in touch throughout the year to support this process.

9. **Post Placement:** We welcome your feedback on the experience and we can move to arrange and support your next placements!
Supporting the placement

Induction
Prior to the start of the placement we recommend the student is provided with a contract which includes the terms of employment, details about pay, start date, duration and types of leave. Whilst on placement we ask that the student is treated as an employee of the organisation, they should be allocated a line manager and undertake appropriate induction and training for the role.

A typical induction might include:
- Overview of the organisation
- Introduction on the use of equipment
- Meeting members of the team
- Expectations on sickness/absence reporting
- Overview of policies such as equal opportunities, health and safety, disability

You should inform students about health and safety regulations that apply to your premises and any accidents that occur should be reported in accordance with your organisation’s procedures. We will send a health and safety checklist to be completed by you prior to the start of the placement.

Attendance
We need to know in all cases if a student’s attendance or engagement is unsatisfactory and would ask you to contact us or the Academic Supervisor if the student:
- Has an unexplained absence from work
- Does not return from pre-arranged leave
- Is making unsatisfactory progress
- You wish to end the placement early

This is especially important if they are an international student on a Tier 4 General Student Visa. The University has an education sponsor licence and is required to notify the Home Office if a student’s attendance or engagement is unsatisfactory.

“Victoria’s brief time with us shows she has what it takes to be a great journalist and I have probably never come across another work experience student with as much enthusiasm!”
Andrea Collitt, Chief Reporter at Daily Gazette (Colchester)
BA Multimedia Journalism Termly Placement

Responsibilities - employer

Prior to placement:
- Sign our Tri-Partite Agreement between you, the student and the University
- Understand how the student’s placement contributes to their learning outcomes
- Complete and return the Health and Safety Checklist.
- Ensure you have an appropriate work space and supervision for the student
- Complete any necessary pre-employment checks (such as DBS check)

During the placement:
- Provide an induction for the student at the start of the placement
- Provide reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities if disclosed
- Assign student with professional tasks and responsibilities
- Provide suitable training for relevant aspects of the role
- Ensure line manager meets regularly with the student to review progress and set goals
- Respond to contacts from the Faculty Placements Team or Academic Supervisor and report issues promptly
- Report issues promptly to the Faculty Placements Team or Academic Supervisor

End of placement:
- Complete the work placement feedback form
- Arrange an exit interview or final review meeting with the student
- Discuss graduate employment opportunities for the student, if relevant

“Atlas’ first placement student (but definitely not last) is studying a BSc Computer Science with the University of Essex. Atlas was founded out of the University of Essex, and has always had close ties with them. So when the opportunity arose to take Sebastian on a placement it was one we grasped with both hands.”
Simon Swords, Director at Atlas
BSc Computer Science Placement Year
Responsibilities - the University

Prior to placement:
- Support recruitment process for both you and the student candidates
- Provide pre-departure training to student
- Sign our Tri-Partite Agreement between you, the student and the University
- Approve the Health and Safety Checklist
- Allocate an Academic Supervisor to support and assess the student
- Inform the student how they can pass their academic placement work

During the placement:
- Maintain regular contact with the student and you, through the Academic Supervisor and Faculty Placements Team
- Ensure students have access to the necessary learning opportunities to meet the academic requirements of the placement
- Deal with issues or queries promptly and professionally

End of placement:
- Assess student’s work completed to pass academic placement year
- Welcome the student back to University
- Discuss future placement opportunities and collaboration

Responsibilities - student

Prior to placement:
- Undertake pre-departure training from the University
- Sign our Tri-Partite Agreement between you, the student and the University
- Understand how to pass the academic components of the placement
- If an international student with a Tier 4 Visa - comply with regulations set by the Home Office

During the placement:
- Undertake suitable training for relevant aspects of the role and attend induction
- Understand workplace polices and regulations
- Undertake tasks and responsibilities professionally and appropriately
- Respond to contacts from the Faculty Placements Team or Academic Supervisor and report any concerns or issues
- Inform the University of any change of circumstances

End of placement:
- Attend exit interview or final review meeting with employer
- Complete placement feedback form

“My work placement gave me a fantastic opportunity to get high calibre work experience. It taught me analytical skills which are in high demand in this sector. I got involved in all aspects of the company including commercial endeavours, charity press releases and post-election analysis. I was also able to run my own questionnaire on the funding of the public sector and used this data to write my dissertation.”

Madeleine Leathley, BA Politics
Termly Placement at YouGov

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Does a placement have to be paid?
Most employers pay a salary, this amount is up to you and often depends on the sector. For example, in business or technology placements usually range from £15,000-£23,000 per annum, however we appreciate that it can be difficult for some organisations such as charities to afford paying a salary. Students can undertake an unpaid placement but we recommend you pay expenses or an allowance wherever possible.

How many hours per week should the placement be?
Most placements are full-time between 36-40 hours per week. It is possible for the placement to be less than this if it suits your business, and we recommend that unpaid placements are between 24-30 hours to enable students to find other paid work.

Essex is a long way away from our office, is it still worth advertising?
We have students from all over the world who are interested in placement opportunities! It is always worth advertising your placements with us, wherever they are, we have students every year who are willing to move away for the right type of placement.

How can I make my placement advert stand out?
As well as advertising on our jobs board, you are more than welcome to come to campus to highlight your placement in a lecture or event. We will do all we can to promote your placement and will keep you up to date with applications.

Can we employ more than one placement student?
Yes, it is common to employ more than one student. However, you’ll need to ensure that each student is undertaking professional tasks and responsibilities.

If I advertise a placement, is there an obligation to employ someone?
There is absolutely no obligation - the recruitment process is totally up to you.

Can I employ the student permanently after the placement year finishes?
You can certainly employ the student in a full time role once they graduate. Students must return to University to complete their final year after the placement finishes. However, it may be possible for students to undertake a piece of work as part of a project in their final year.

Are there any fees to your services?
There are no fees to the services we provide. We’re happy to help you advertise, provide advice, host interviews on campus and provide support throughout. We are committed to seeing our students engage in placements and work based learning.

Interested in a short-term placement or project, not placement year?
Great! These are quite different in each Department or School, therefore it’s best to contact the relevant faculty team to find out how your opportunity could work.
We have three faculties at the University of Essex: Science and Health, Social Sciences and Humanities. Each faculty has a dedicated team to support and advise you on the work placements available in each area.

The table below may help you decide which Faculty Placements Team is most appropriate for you to contact in the first instance.

### DEPARTMENTS AND SCHOOLS

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<th>Science and Health</th>
<th>Social Sciences</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Biological Sciences (School of)</td>
<td>Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies</td>
<td>East 16 Acting School</td>
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<td>Computer Science &amp; Electronic Engineering (School of)</td>
<td>Economics (Department of)</td>
<td>History (Department of)</td>
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<td>Health and Social Care (School of)</td>
<td>Essex Business School</td>
<td>Human Rights Centre</td>
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<td>Mathematical Sciences (Department of)</td>
<td>Government (Department of)</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Studies Centre</td>
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<td>Psychology (Department of)</td>
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<td>Law (School of)</td>
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<td>Sport, Rehabilitation and Exercise Sciences (School of)</td>
<td>Language and Linguistics (Department of)</td>
<td>Literature, Film and Theatre Studies (Department of)</td>
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<td>UK Data Archive</td>
<td>Sociology (Department of)</td>
<td>Philosophy and Art History (School of)</td>
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**Science and Health Placements Team**
sh-placements@essex.ac.uk

**Social Sciences Placements Team**
ss-placements@essex.ac.uk

**Humanities Placements Team**
hum-placements@essex.ac.uk

Alternatively, if you’re not sure who to contact you can call our Employability and Careers Centre on 01206 872494 and they will put you through to a relevant member of the placements teams.

You can also visit [www.essex.ac.uk/see/work-placements](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/work-placements) for more information about working with the University of Essex.
We look forward to working with you...

Science and Health: sh-placements@essex.ac.uk
Social Sciences: ss-placements@essex.ac.uk
Humanities: hum-placements@essex.ac.uk

T 01206 872494
www.essex.ac.uk/see/work-placements

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Southend Campus
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Essex, SS1 1LW

Loughton Campus
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