

EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO STUDENT WORK PLACEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION: 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 opportunities to undertake high quality work based learning as part of their degree course; we call these opportunities '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.

TYPES OF WORK PLACEMENTS:

Placements can range in length and generally need a minimum number of hours to be completed to be suitable. Students are often required to write a reflective report or assignment to complement their learning whilst on the 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:

Placement Year

A placement year is equivalent of 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, approved by the University, and add up to a total of 30-52 weeks.

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 vacation periods.

Projects and consultancy

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

Tasks and projects suitable for a work placement

A work placement is more than work experience, shadowing or a temping role. It offers students 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, as examples 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 will work with you to develop a suitable professional opportunity, whatever project or job role you have in mind.

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.

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

STEP BY STEP PROCESS: EMPLOYING A PLACEMENT YEAR STUDENT

STEP ONE:

Get in Touch: Whether you're considering taking on a placement student (or would like information about other types of work-based learning) or need support with any of the following steps, we're able to help.

STEP TWO:

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.

STEP THREE:

Applications and Shortlisting: If desired we can collate applications on your behalf before sending them to you to shortlist.

STEP FOUR:

Interviews: These are usually at the employers' premises, but we are happy to host and facilitate interviews and relevant stages on campus too.

STEP FIVE:

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.

STEP SIX:

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

STEP SEVEN:

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

STEP EIGHT:

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

STEP NINE:

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.

STEP TEN:

Post Placement: We welcome your feedback on the experience and we can move to support your next placements!

PLACEMENT YEAR FAQ'S

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 or NGOs 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.

I have an idea for a short term placement or project, not a placement year. Can you help?

Great! These are quite different in each Department or School so please contact us to find out how your opportunity could work.

CONTACT US

If you would like to find out more about our student work placements, then just email placements@essex.ac.uk and we will provide you with further information.

We look forward to working with you!