

Creating a placement opportunity

Offering a work placement is an excellent way to utilise the knowledge and expertise of current students to complete a task, project or bring fresh ideas to your organisation. In addition, a growing number of employers are now offering placements to create a talent pipeline for their organisation in a cost-effective, tried and tested manner. They do this by offering successful placement students the opportunity to return to the organisation upon graduation, often a full year before students are due to graduate and several months ahead of employers who only recruit graduates during their final year of study.

The key to a successful work placement is the identification and planning of an opportunity that provides mutual benefits and positive outcomes for both the student and employer.

Many of the most effective placements are based upon project work and this type of work experience has the greatest pay-off when both the employer and the student are meeting tangible objectives and needs. The student also needs to be able to reflect on what they have learned during their placement.

Ideas for projects

Students can contribute to, or undertake, a piece of work that will benefit you, your colleagues and your business as a whole. Examples include:

- Conducting surveys, analysing data and producing reports
- Investigating efficiency and cost-saving activity
- Developing new products or services
- Managing or delivering a particular service for a period of time
- Joining specific teams to assist in the delivery of their activities and projects

Placement duration

You can offer a placement on a full or part-time basis from as little as two weeks up to 12 months duration. Clearly the project or the volume of work you have available may dictate this to a large extent.

Students are available to work part-time alongside their studies, or full-time for a fixed period. Some students are studying on Year in Industry courses at the University of Sheffield, which incorporate a 12 month placement with an organisation of their choice. Other students may choose to take a year out to gain work experience before their final year. Summer placements lasting c8-12 weeks are becoming increasingly popular with students who wish to remain with their cohort whilst gaining work experience and earning a wage during the vacation.

Developing the placement

When considering offering a placement, it is useful to think about the following key factors:

The purpose of the placement

Consider what the individual will be working on. Clearly identified desired outcomes or results will provide the student with clarity; enabling them to plan their work and set objectives. It can also provide an important frame of reference to help them reflect on their experience.

Person requirements

In order to be successful, it is important that the student's knowledge, skills and expertise match the project requirements. There may be situations where technical capabilities or subject-specific knowledge are essential for effectiveness in the role. However, don't be tempted to focus on particular disciplines unnecessarily, as this can reduce the number of potential applicants and you may miss out on candidates who may bring something quite different to your organisation.

Operational details for the placement

Duration, preferred start date, location and salary are important to address and include in your advert. Before the placement commences, you will need to identify an appropriate line manager that the student will report to and you may also like to consider assigning them a mentor.

Advertising your placement

You can advertise your placement free of charge to University of Sheffield students and graduates on our online vacancy system – [Career Connect](#). This easy to use system guides you through creating an advert and managing your organisation's profile.

If you need further support

Our dedicated team is on hand to talk to you about creating, implementing and managing a placement opportunity and can provide assistance and support throughout the placement. For more information telephone: 0114 222 0900 or email: employers@sheffield.ac.uk