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 which the employer is actively seeking to have carried out – 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 provide direct benefit to you, colleagues and the business in general. Examples include:

- Conducting surveys, analysing data and producing reports
- Investigating efficiency and cost-saving activity
- Managing, 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

The template Placement Proposal form, available via our website, will help generate the information required to enable your work placement opportunity to be promoted and filled by students who are suitably qualified for them. The form contains the following sections based around the key factors associated with creating a work placement opportunity:

A brief description of the work or the project
This should outline what the individual will be working on, what colleagues they will encounter and their specialisms, what the work environment will be, and identifying the responsible line manager.
The key objective for the placement
If a desired outcome or set of results is spelt out, the work experience benefits from the clarity that this provides. It can also provide an important frame of reference for the work-based learning which the student will be acquiring through the placement.

Desirable and essential skills
All placements will benefit if the student’s skills-mix matches the project requirements. In addition there will be situations where technical capabilities are essential for effectiveness in the role, such as knowledge of specific programming languages or familiarity with dealing with the public.

Operational details for the placement
Clarification on such factors as duration, preferred start date, location, any essential pre-placement training etc are important to address some of the first questions that students will have. The name and details of a contact person and/or line manager they will report to within the business should also be provided.

Advertising your placement
You can advertise your placement free of charge on our online vacancy system – Career Connect, accessible at: http://careerconnect.sheffield.ac.uk This easy to use system guides you through creating an advert and managing your organisation’s profile.

If you need further support
Our dedicated Placements 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