



A STAFF GUIDE TO ARRANGING WORK PLACEMENTS FOR STUDENTS

PART ONE: A general guide for work placements

PART TWO: A specific guide for potential medic work placements

Introduction:

All students should be encouraged to undertake some kind of work experience prior to leaving school. A recent survey of 100 top HR managers and recruiters found that many candidates lack a solid foundation in soft skills, such as the ability to work in a professional manner or as part of a team.

Work placements are an excellent way to demonstrate to young people the kinds of general skills they are likely to require whatever job they undertake in the future. OFSTED recognises this and recommends that everyone leaving school should already have had a taste of life in the workplace.

The student might choose a placement which is directly related to a course they hope to go on to study. Alternatively they may want experience of a particular career or job they hope to pursue once leaving school. Many young people struggle to arrange work placements for themselves and the process can appear very daunting, especially if they do not have much support from home. However the experience they gain in arranging the placement will stand them in good stead for job applications and so on in the future.

The following guide is split into two parts and designed to help teachers advise their students on the best way to proceed, firstly for general work experience placements and secondly for those who wish to have a career in medicine or a medical field.

PART ONE: A general guide for work placements

How to arrange a work placement: Getting started

1. **Personal contacts:** Think about what contacts the school or the family of the student might have. Sometimes members of the staff body might know people who could offer relevant work experience. Encourage the young person to take the initiative and to ask around!
2. **Local businesses:** Employers often welcome the opportunity to have an extra pair of hands, even for a short amount of time such as a week or a fortnight, especially during busy times of the year. The local Chamber of Commerce may be able to put you in touch with interested bodies or you could consider making an appeal in the local paper. Once you have found an employer who is willing to help, it is possible they will be happy to consider doing so again in the future. Your school could create a work placement data base for the careers department.
3. **Direct approach:** If the student has a specific job in mind and you do not have any relevant contacts, they will need to approach potential employers directly. Think about businesses and organisations which are related to the desired field of study or which would give the student transferable skills. Some companies prefer to receive the initial approach by letter, whereas others respond better to an email or phone call.

By letter: The student will need to draft a letter or email introducing themselves and requesting a work placement (see suggested template below). They might need to phone beforehand to check which person they should address the enquiry to and the best way to do this.

By telephone: If the student phones the company remind them to introduce themselves clearly at the start of the conversation, before asking to be put through to someone who can deal with a work experience enquiry. If they get to speak to the relevant member of staff in person they should be prepared to give their home or email address in case they are required to complete a work placement form. Companies often ask students to fill this in prior to work placements. It covers health and safety issues and will ask for name age, medical conditions (if any) and emergency contacts of the student etc.

A note about emails: Do remind students that professional emails are not the same as personal ones. Whilst they should attempt to be friendly, they should still address the recipient formally and they should watch both spelling and grammar. NB. Emoticons are not appropriate for work experience applications!

In person: If the student has a particular interest and the company is open to the public (such as a hair salon, retail outlet or local radio station) they might want to go

in person to make the request. They should prepare a short CV and covering letter to leave with the reception if no one is available to speak to them.

4. **Prepare to be persistent:** It is also worth warning students that they might not hear from employers immediately or that the answer could be “no”. This is not a reflection on them personally and they shouldn’t give up. There will always be alternatives they can try.

The following template could be used as a starting point to help when composing an initial approach letter. It will look more professional if typed and set out neatly. Plain, conservative writing paper is usually preferable to patterned or coloured (unless of course the student is applying to an art or photography studio and wants to present something a little more funky!)

Student’s name and home or school address

*Phil Smith
1, Smith Terrace
Anytown.
SM1 2TH*

Business name and address

*The General Manager
Work PLC
Anytown
W10 PLC*

Date

Dear Mr/Ms... try to use specific name and title if possible

My name is (full name). I am (age) years old and am currently studying (subjects) at (school). I am hoping to *study/ work in retail/ business/construction/hairdressing (as relevant!)* and would greatly appreciate it if you would consider offering me a work placement.

I am passionate about joining the profession, and am keen to learn more about the reality of working in such an environment. I would welcome the opportunity to develop the skills required to be both a successful employee and colleague.

Work experience with (*name of organisation*) would greatly assist me with my preparations for *entrance to university/ job applications*. I hope that in return I would be able to be of genuine assistance to yourself and your team.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

*Name (hand written) **Phil Smith***

Name typed Phil Smith (Mr)

What to do next...

Work placements fill up quickly so students need to be organised and arrange it well in advance. If they are successful in arranging something it might be helpful to talk through some of the steps they can take to make the experience as beneficial as possible.

1. **Dress:** Remind the student to dress appropriately for the environment they will be working in. This will obviously depend on what they are doing, but as a rule they should be guided by what existing employees wear. If the work placement is in a professional setting (such as an office or school) it is worth dressing smartly (and it goes without saying that the student should take care to be clean and tidy!) Alternatively if a special uniform or certain kind of equipment is needed (such as a restaurant/kitchen or construction site setting) is perfectly fine to ring beforehand to check if there needs to be any special arrangements.
2. **Time Keeping:** Make sure that the student is aware of what time they are required to start work and look the address up properly in advance. If it is a complicated journey they might want to do a “dry run” so that they are well prepared for the first day. Being late will not give a positive message to any future employer!
3. **Communication Skills:** On arrival the student should be prepared to smile, make eye contact and offer a firm handshake. If they appear to be confident from the start, they are more likely to be given duties which stretch them and expand their experience. They might feel quite shy at first, but they should try to speak up and project themselves appropriately. At the same time, they should listen carefully to instructions and remember that those they are working with are more experienced and may follow procedures which do not appear to be immediately obvious. If they are unclear of their duties, it is fine to ask questions!
4. **Be civil:** Whatever their initial impression or private view, remind the student that the employer could be useful to them in the future, either offering them permanent work or at the very least providing them with a decent reference. They should at all times treat their colleagues with respect and that includes everyone from the security guard at the gate to the chairman of the company. Barring extraordinary circumstances, they should also aim to complete the assignment even if it seems boring or pointless! Everyone has to start at the bottom and this might include doing menial tasks.

Useful websites for young people looking for work experience:

Vinspired (UK's leading voluntary charity for 14 – 25 year olds)

www.vinspired.com

Duke of Edinburgh Awards

www.dofe.org

British Council

www.britishcouncil.org

Student Ladder

www.studentladder.co.uk

Law:

Law Society

www.lawsociety.org.uk/

The Lawyer Portal

www.thelawyerportal.com

LawCareers.Net

www.lawcareers.net

Banking and Finance:

Chartered Institute of Securities and Investment

www.cisi.org

CFA Society UK

www.cfauk.org

Barclays

www.home.barclays

Deutsche Bank

www.db.com

HSBC

www.hsbc.com

Lloyds

www.lloydsbankinggrouptalent.com

Accountancy:

Institute of Chartered Accountants

www.icas.com

PwC

www.pwc.co.uk

Deloitte

www.deloitte.com

KPMG

www.kpmgcareers.co.uk

Ernst and Young

www.ey.com

Engineering:

Engineering Council

www.engc.org.uk

Royal Academy of Engineering

www.raeng.org.uk

Institution of Civil Engineers

www.ice.org.uk

The Institute of Engineering and Technology

www.theiet.org

Construction:

Construction Industry Council

www.cic.org.uk

Go Construct

www.goconstruct.org

Build UK

www.builduk.org

Costain

www.costain.com

Plumbing:

Association of Plumbing and Heating Contractors

www.aphc.co.uk

Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineers

www.ciphe.org.uk

Electrical Industry:

Electrical Contractors Association

www.eca.co.uk

The Electrotechnical Skills Partnership

www.the-esp.org.uk

Electrical Careers

www.electricalcareers.co.uk

Television:

BBC

www.bbc.co.uk/careers/work-experience

Sky

www.jobs.sky.com

Marketing, Advertising and Public Relations:

Advertising Association

www.adassoc.org.uk

Institute of Practitioners of Advertising (IPA)

www.ipa.co.uk

Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA)

www.prca.org.uk

Institute of Public Relations (IPR)

www.ipr.org.uk

The Drum (Marketing news)

www.thedrum.com

Hairdressing:

Hair and Beauty Industry Authority (HABIA)

www.habia.org

HJi

www.hji.co.uk

Toni and Guy

www.toniandguy.com

Agriculture:

Agricultural Industries Confederation

www.agindustries.org.uk

The Royal Agricultural Society of England

www.rase.org.uk

Dairy UK

www.dairyuk.org

National Sheep Association

www.nationalsheep.org.uk

PART TWO: A specific guide for potential medic work placements

All medical schools in the UK now require applicants to have:

1. Experience in a caring or service role, either paid or voluntary.
2. Experience in a health or related field.
3. Direct observation of healthcare.

Work experience in a healthcare setting gives students a taste of medicine as a possible career and also an understanding of the emotional and physical demands of the profession. However, some hospital departments will not allow students to shadow staff if they are under 18 and most GP practices specify a minimum age of 16 for patient observations.

If the student is unable to secure a work placement in a healthcare setting due to age restrictions, they can still gain valuable experience for example, by working in a care home or volunteering with a charity.

Ideally it is best to get a broad range of experience. For example, as well as spending time at a GP surgery or in an NHS Trust (if possible), try to arrange a placement in another care setting such as a:

1. Community hospital
2. Hospice
3. Care home
4. Pharmacy
5. Physiotherapy practice

Work placements in areas other than medicine

Work experience in other fields is also valuable. Being a doctor requires a range of skills, not just expert knowledge of the sciences. There are many ways to develop these “soft” skills without working in a hospital. For example, being a waiter/waitress, fruit-picking on a farm, working in a shop. All of these types of work experience will help the student to develop vital skills such as teamwork, dealing with the public, empathy with others, problem-solving, communications, punctuality, meeting deadlines and the ability to take instructions.

Personal Statements:

In the student’s personal statement and in interviews work experience can be used to demonstrate ability to use the soft skills outlined above. Students can also take an active interest in their chosen future profession by reading medical journals, following news stories about the NHS, and trying to get an opportunity to speak with healthcare professionals about their roles.

General Advice:

1. If the student is in a healthcare setting, they must be sensitive to patients’ needs and preferences, for example a patient may wish to be seen by a doctor without a student present.
2. Respect patient confidentiality.
3. Suggest the student keeps a diary of what they do and learn – this will be helpful when it comes to writing their personal statement or in interviews for medical school.
4. Ask questions – about the work they are observing, but also (if in a healthcare setting) about what qualities make a good doctor, work patterns, lifestyle, and medicine as a career.
5. Remind students to be proactive, show enthusiasm and offer to help before they are asked.

Medicine:

BUSSATs Fit to be a Doctor?

<http://bussats.com/fit-to-be-a-doctor.html>

Royal Society of Medicine

www.rsm.ac.uk

British Medical Association

www.bma.org

Royal College of Surgeons

www.rcseng.ac.uk

Medical Projects (courses and placements for potential and current medical students)

www.medicalprojects.co.uk

Nursing:

Royal College of Nursing

www.rcn.org.uk

Nursing and Midwifery Council

www.nmc.org.uk

Health Careers

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk

Dentistry:

British Dental Association

www.bda.org

Royal College of Surgeons Dental Faculty

www.rcseng.ac.uk/dental-faculties/fds/

Veterinary:

British Veterinary Association

www.bva.co.uk

Royal Veterinary College

www.rvc.ac.uk

RSPCA

www.rspca.org.uk