

the centre for
excellence in
media practice

cemp

Work Experience Guide for Employers

CAM 1



Using this guide

Work experience comes in all shapes and sizes including part-time jobs, vacation work and voluntary work. This guide offers advice to employers who would like to offer work experience placements to higher education students on practice based media courses. It is intended to be used alongside guidelines provided by individual universities.

What's in it for employers?

As an employer in the media industry you probably receive many speculative enquiries about work experience placements, and taking on a student can seem like just one more thing for which you don't have time. However, there are very good reasons for offering placements to students and, with some preparation, they can be very rewarding for employers.

First and foremost, placements play an important role in developing the industry's future skills' base. While they are on placement students have opportunities to develop the skills that you, as an employer, look for in future recruits: specialist industry skills as well as generic competencies like team working, problem solving and communication skills. In addition students coming from practice based media courses bring with them an understanding of the production process, technical skills like editing and camera and general skills like administration and research. Although students on placement should never be relied on to fulfil jobs which would otherwise be undertaken by paid staff or crew, their skills will enable them to make a positive contribution to your organisation while they are with you.

Other benefits for employers include:

- A chance to spot new talent and assess an individual's potential with a view to possible future employment.
- A source of new ideas and enthusiasm.
- Development opportunities for staff by giving them the chance to act as a supervisor or mentor.
- Openings into the expertise and resources that exist in universities and which might benefit the business.

Planning a placement

In early 2007 new guidelines were published to promote the fair treatment of work experience placements in television. Although developed for and with the television industry, these guidelines have resonance and relevance across the media industry. They can be viewed in full on the DTT's website www.dti.gov.uk/employment/pay/national-minimum-wage/Further-Guidance/page21693.html and on the Skillset website www.skillset.org/tv/article_5541_1.asp. The Pact Work Experience Guide, which is also based on these guidelines, can be found at www.pact.co.uk/training/information/detail.asp?id=2665

Outlined below are key questions to consider in relation to placements. You are also advised to read the full guidelines referred to above.



What can we do to ensure fair recruitment?

Many media employers receive so many speculative enquires that they decide not to advertise work experience opportunities. However, you will access a much wider talent pool if you make information about how to approach your organisation for a placement openly available. You might choose to do this by posting information on your website or by advertising specific placement opportunities. Appendix 1 contains Sample Application/Enquiry Forms which you may find helpful.

If you have a specific placement opportunity to offer, draw up a description including:

- The department or production with which it will be.
- Typical activities in which the placement student can expect to be involved.
- The knowledge and skills they can expect to develop.
- What you are looking for from a placement student in terms of skills, experience and personal attributes.

To avoid discriminatory selection, make sure that the applications you receive are considered in line with a proper equal opportunities policy.

How can we make sure that a placement provides a genuine learning opportunity?

A placement needs to provide the student with the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom; learn about working life and the working environment; meet challenges; and broaden their horizons. For the student to get the most out of a placement they need to have clearly defined and realistic learning objectives; they should only be expected to undertake activities which help them to achieve those objectives.

Who will supervise the student?

Although placement students may bring some useful skills, nevertheless they are inexperienced and will require support. You will need to nominate a responsible member of staff to supervise and mentor the student. The supervisor/mentor will probably also be the person who agrees learning objectives, carries out the induction and provides feedback at the end of the placement.



How will we ensure that the placement is safe?

The student's university has a duty of care towards them in relation to their placement and should provide them with essential information on health and safety. However, under the law it is the employer who has the primary duty to safeguard, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of placement students. You will need to:

- Carry out a thorough risk assessment before the placement begins.
- Brief the student about health and safety issues on the first day of their placement.
- Provide appropriate training for all activities students are asked to undertake that have health and safety implications.

You must also have Employer Liability and Public Liability insurances in place which cover students for the duration of the placement. Check with your insurer before you make any placement offers.

How long should a placement last?

The length of a placement will be determined partly by the requirements of a student's course and their individual learning objectives, and partly by the capacity of your organisation. The TV industry guidelines on work experience advise that "two weeks is an appropriate period for an unpaid placement, but where, for it to be a genuine learning experience, it is appropriate for it to be longer, it should run for no more than four weeks". Those guidelines also suggest limiting attendance to 40 hours per week, including meal breaks.

Should the placement be paid?

You should always strive to pay placement students a fair sum for the work that they undertake and to cover travelling and other associated expenses. However, employers are not required to pay national minimum wage rates to students studying certain UK based higher education courses who are undertaking a placement as part of their course and where the placement does not exceed one year.

If you are considering offering an unpaid placement to a student on an exempt course, bear in mind that some people, because of their personal circumstances, are simply not in a position to work for no or low pay. Offering unpaid work experience will limit the kind of people you attract and may mean that you miss out on new talent.

For further advice on any aspect of the national minimum wage contact the NWM Helpline on 0845 6000 678.

How will we deal with issues of confidentiality?

If your company requires protection for confidential information relating to customers, clients or suppliers, make sure that you communicate this clearly to the placement student.



Do we need to consider intellectual property rights?

In most cases placement students will not be involved in activities which attract copyright protection. However, if the individual is to be involved with a piece of work which attracts copyright you will not necessarily own the material, unless you enter into a legal agreement to acquire the copyright or the individual is an employee. In such circumstances, specific legal advice should be sought.

What should the induction cover?

You should provide an induction on the first day of a placement covering issues such as health and safety, introductions to other staff and break times. Appendix 2 contains a Sample Induction Checklist which you may find useful.

How will we provide feedback?

Ideally feedback should be given in a one to one meeting between the student and their supervisor/mentor. Appendix 3 contains a Sample Feedback Form which you may find useful.

The student's university may also require written feedback from you in a particular format. This will usually form part of the student's overall assessment, so it's important that you complete it when requested.

Paperwork

When you offer a placement to a student, their university should provide you with the paperwork required to make everyone's responsibilities and expectations clear. At a minimum this paperwork should cover:

- A description of the placement specifying which department or production it will be with and what activities the student will be involved in.
- Name of the supervisor/mentor.
- Start and end dates.
- Start and finish times for the working day, including arrangements for meal breaks.
- The work location.
- Arrangements for pay and expenses.
- Confirmation that you have adequate insurance cover for the student, including Employers' Liability and Public Liability insurance.
- Confirmation that you will safeguard the health, safety and welfare at work of the student.

The university is not generally party to the contract of employment between the student and the employer, so any formal employment agreement should be negotiated directly with the student.



Appendix 1:

Sample application/enquiry forms

These forms are reproduced from the Guidelines for Television Employers Offering Work Experience Placements to Individuals, co-ordinated by Skillset and published by the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Sample enquiry form

This sample enquiry form is intended for use by individuals making general enquiries about work experience opportunities.

Section A: personal details

First name:
Last name:
Preferred title:
Address:
Postcode:
Telephone number:
Email:

Section B: Placement details

Please give a brief description of the type of placement you are interested in:

.....
.....

Please specify the exact dates when you require a work experience placement:

.....
.....

Section C: Your reasons for wanting this placement

Why do you want a work experience placement with this company/firm/organisation?

.....
.....

What do you hope to achieve from this work experience placement?

.....
.....

Section D: Your interests and experience

Please tell us about your interests, including details of any previous/current activities that you believe are relevant to the placement you require:

.....
.....

What are your future career plans?

.....
.....



Section E: Equal opportunities

This section should be on a separate detachable page

Applicants will be considered on the basis of their suitability for the placement regardless of race, gender, religious or non-religious belief, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, pregnancy or any other basis protected by law.

This form assists us in monitoring who is applying for work experience placements with us, our adherence to equal opportunities best practice and our progress towards identifying any barriers to diversity amongst our workforce. We also ask some question regarding disability which may assist us in determining whether any reasonable adjustments are necessary to facilitate an interview or work experience placement.

The following information will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used and retained only for statistical monitoring. You are not obliged to answer any or all of the questions, but the more information you supply, the more effective our monitoring will be. This section will be separated from your application upon receipt and the information it contains will not influence your application in any way.

Please tick where applicable.

Gender:

- Male
Female

If you are currently undergoing the process of gender reassignment, please indicate your future gender.

Cultural background:

Please choose ONE section and then tick the appropriate box to indicate your cultural background. This checklist contains the standard ethnic monitoring categories provided by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Any other Asian background,
please write in:

Black or Black British

- Caribbean
African
Any other Black background,
please write in:

Chinese or other ethnic group

- Chinese
Any other, please write in:

Mixed

- White and Black Caribbean
White and Black African
White and Asian
Any other Mixed background,
please write in:

White

- British
Irish
Any other White background,
please write in:



Religion:

Please write in your religion or tick the appropriate box.

My religion is:
I am not religious:

Sexual Orientation:

Please indicate your sexual orientation:

- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Other
- Disability

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, disability is defined as a “physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”. The term disability should be construed as including people with physical disabilities; people with learning difficulties; people suffering from mental illness; those with sensory disabilities (such as blind or sight impaired); people with ‘hidden disabilities’ (such as epilepsy or those suffering from chest or heart conditions).

In these terms, do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes
No

If yes, please give brief details regarding your condition and indicate whether you may require adjustments to be made to enable you to attend and participate in an interview or carry out a work experience placement. Disabled applicants are invited to contact us in confidence at any point to discuss steps that could be taken to facilitate attendance and participation at an interview or in order to overcome any operational difficulties presented by the job.

Brief details of condition (including whether mental or physical):

.....
.....

Adjustments required for interview:

.....
.....

Adjustments required for work experience placement:

.....
.....

Age

- 15 or under
- 16 – 24
- 25 – 29
- 30 – 39
- 40 – 49
- 50 – 59
- 60 or over

For the purposes of compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998, I hereby confirm that by completing this form, I give my consent to [NAME OF COMPANY/FIRM/ORGANISATION] processing the data supplied above in connection with monitoring compliance with its equal opportunities obligations and policy. I also agree to the storage of this information on manual and computerised files.

Signed

Dated



Appendix 2: Sample induction checklist

This checklist is reproduced from the Guidelines for Television Employers Offering Work Experience Placements to Individuals, co-ordinated by Skillset and published by the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Individual's name:

Supervisor/mentor's name:

Company/department:

Placement start date:

Placement end date:

Agreement signed and returned:

Yes

No

Temporary ID pass obtained:

Yes

No

Informed of who to call in case of sickness:

Yes

No

Given details of hours of work and meal breaks:

Yes

No

Given outline of placement programme:

Yes

No

Introduced to supervisor/mentor/point of contact:

Yes

No

Fire and evacuation procedure explained:

Yes

No

Other emergency procedures and health and safety information detailed:

Yes

No

Informed of prohibited areas/activities:

Yes

No

First Aid facilities explained:

Yes

No

Any significant risks associated with work placement explained:

Yes

No

Given instruction in safe use of any equipment including IT equipment, adjusting workstation and taking adequate screen breaks:

Yes

No

Any further information:

.....

I have been informed of the above/given the appropriate training.

Signature:

Name:

Date:



Appendix 3: Sample feedback form

This form is reproduced from the Guidelines for Television Employers Offering Work Experience Placements to Individuals, co-ordinated by Skillset and published by the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Individual's name:
Supervisor/mentor's name:
Company/department:
Placement start date:
Placement end date:

Section A: To be completed by the individual

Were the tasks you undertook or shadowed during the placement those indicated in the original placement description? If not, what tasks were you given the opportunity to carry out and/or observe?
.....
.....

Did the placement enable you to achieve your specific objectives?
.....
.....

Which aspects of the placement did you find most useful?
.....
.....

What, if anything, would you change about the placement?
.....
.....

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?
.....
.....

Signed:
Name:

Date:

Section B: To be completed by the supervisor/mentor

General evaluation:
.....

Strengths:
.....

Weaknesses:
.....

Recommendations:
.....

Signed:
Name:

Job title:

Date: