

# Work Placement – A Best Practice Guide for Employers



Association of  
Higher Education  
Careers Services

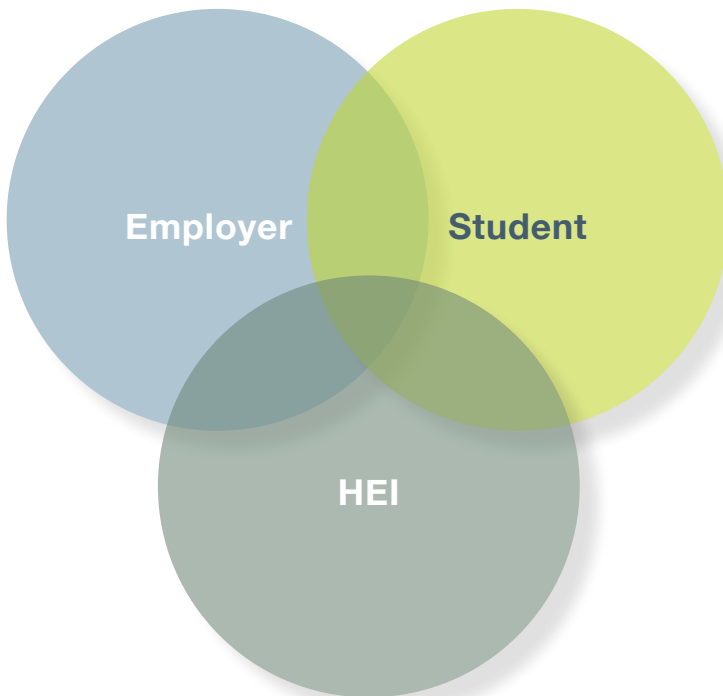
## AIM

The aim of this document is to provide a guide to best practice for employers who wish to provide a Work Placement learning opportunity to a student as part of a course of study in a Higher Education Institution (HEI).

While the term Work Placement is used, the information may be

applied and adapted to any work-based learning component of a HEI course, regardless of duration.

This Guide is intended to act as a reference document, to be used in conjunction with detailed, course-specific information from individual HEIs.



# BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYERS

It is important that all three parties involved – employer, student and HEI - work together before, during and after the Work Placement and that all are clear about their roles, responsibilities and entitlements at all stages.

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## BEFORE PLACEMENT

- Have clear reasons for recruiting a student and have realistic expectations of what a student can deliver.
- Contact your local HEI to find out which courses are most appropriate to the role to be filled. Get a clear understanding of the Placement process and the expectations of both student and HEI.
- Consider availability of a budget to pay the student, where appropriate.
- Prepare a job and person specification for the role and actively engage in the selection process by interviewing students.
- Consider how you can meet the student's course learning outcomes.
- Appoint and prepare a mentor in your organisation who will support the student in the workplace.

## DURING PLACEMENT

- Provide induction and training, including Health & Safety, to help the student transition to the world of work.
- Allow the student every opportunity to learn and develop skills, as well as to work.
- Provide the student with support and guidance appropriate to the role.
- Treat the student with the same duty of care as all other employees.
- Keep the student active, engaged and motivated to ensure they have a positive experience in your workplace.
- Co-operate with the HEI in all course requirements such as documentation for assessment of student performance.
- Make provision for the HEI to visit the student, where required.
- Communicate any issues of concern to the contact person in the HEI in a timely manner and jointly agree ways to resolve the situation.
- Provide appropriate performance feedback to the student and HEI.

## AFTER PLACEMENT

- Provide feedback on the student's performance as part of the assessment process.
- Agree to provide the student with a reference for future employers.
- Organise a meeting with the student to review the experience for both student and employer.
- Implement suggestions for changes identified in discussions with the student or HEI.
- Provide feedback and suggestions to the HEI for improvements to the Placement process.
- Consider further engagement opportunities with the HEI.

## WHAT IS WORK PLACEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

Work Placement is a planned period of professional learning or experience, which may be accredited, where the learning outcomes are part of a Higher Education programme or module.

It is a three-way partnership between an employer, a student and a HEI, where a student is given the opportunity to work and learn in a professional environment relevant to their studies, in order to achieve set goals.

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## REASONS EMPLOYERS RECRUIT STUDENTS

- Organisational need.
- Develop talent and skills for the future.
- Desire to support a local HEI.
- Help to up-skill the next generation.

## BENEFITS OF WORK PLACEMENT TO EMPLOYERS

- Students offer a source of skilled labour and an insight into new practices being taught in HEIs.
- Students provide a flexible and cost-effective solution to recruitment needs and help ease staff workload at busy times.
- They bring new ideas and new perspectives into the workplace.
- Employers can recruit an additional resource to undertake projects.
- Employers can identify potential new recruits and create a feeder pool for future graduate recruitment.
- It provides people management development opportunities for staff.
- It develops links with HEIs for a range of purposes, such as R&D.

## ABOUT AHECS

*Association of Higher Education Careers Services (AHECS) is the representative body for Careers Advisory and Work Placement Professionals in Higher Education in Ireland.*

*Its mission is to lead, support and facilitate collaboration among Higher Education Careers Services throughout Ireland and be the recognised authority on graduate career development, learning and employability.*

*All 27 Universities and Institutes of Technology in Ireland, North and South, are members.*

## ABOUT THE AHECS WORK PLACEMENT TASK GROUP

*The Group promotes the concept of Work Placement and its policy development through engagement with all stakeholders involved: students in Higher Education, Work Placement staff, academic staff and management in Higher Education, employers and their representative professional bodies, statutory regulatory bodies and Government departments.*

*It is committed to developing best practice policy and guidelines for Work Placement learning, producing relevant research publications and creating a forum for the sharing of expertise and experience among Work Placement professionals.*

### **Produced by the AHECS Work Placement Task Group:**

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) | National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) | National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM) | Trinity College Dublin (TCD) | University College Cork (UCC) | University College Dublin (UCD) | University of Limerick (UL) | Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)

### **AHECS**

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