

Work Placement – A Best Practice Guide for Students



Association of
Higher Education
Careers Services

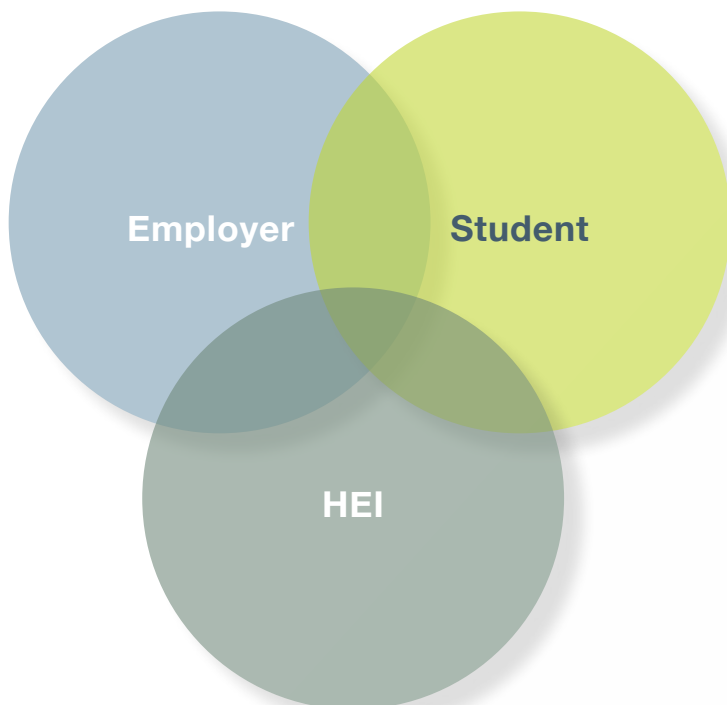
AIM

The aim of this document is to provide a guide to best practice for students who are undertaking Work Placement learning 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 the detailed, course-specific requirements of the student's programme of study.

It is important that each student checks with their own HEI for specific course-related requirements.



BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

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.

BEFORE PLACEMENT

- Have a clear understanding of the Placement element of your course and accept its implications in terms of preparation and commitment.
- Attend all relevant information sessions organised by your HEI.
- Write a great CV, highlighting your skills and achievements as well as membership of clubs and societies.
- Make full use of the support available in your Careers / Placement Service, go to practice interviews and attend employer talks.
- Where you are active in seeking Placement beyond the HEI system, make sure to advise your Placement representative.
- Be proactive in identifying suitable opportunities as ultimately it is your responsibility to succeed in Placement!

DURING PLACEMENT

- Be aware of and comply with all HEI requirements, including assessment.
- Provide your HEI with any requested information such as your work contact details and keep in regular contact as required.
- Be professional in the workplace and recognise that you are representing your course and your HEI.
- Co-operate with arrangements for your HEI to visit, where required.
- Ideally, and certainly where required for assessment, keep a journal evidencing your learning and skills development.
- Most importantly, take every opportunity to make the most of your learning experience.

AFTER PLACEMENT

- Visit your Careers / Placement Service to update your CV with your Placement learning experience, highlighting skills developed and your achievements.
- Apply and integrate what you have learned into your academic studies.
- Share your experience with fellow classmates, next year's Placement students and HEI staff.
- Use the experience as a basis for focusing on your career plans.
- Keep in contact with your employer to explore the opportunity for a graduate job or to source a work reference.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR WORK PLACEMENT

- Set yourself goals at the start
- Be eager and enthusiastic to learn
- Be positive and proactive
- Ask questions, be curious
- Build good relationships
- Enjoy the experience!
- Request feedback throughout your placement
- Keep a diary listing new skills, achievements and training

EMPLOYERS WHO RECRUIT STUDENTS

- Multi-national organisations from all industry sectors.
- Small and medium-sized enterprises and family businesses.
- Community and voluntary groups.
- Government departments, public and semi-state organisations.

WHAT IS WORK PLACEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

Work Placement is a planned period of professional learning or experience, which may be accredited and 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.

REASONS EMPLOYERS RECRUIT STUDENTS

- 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.

BENEFITS OF WORK PLACEMENT TO STUDENTS

- Provides you with the opportunity to put course theory into practice.
- You learn new knowledge and skills, course-related and personal.
- Gives an insight into working life, develops self-awareness and supports you in making career decisions.
- Builds your CV, highlighting your new skills and achievements.
- Enhances your employability and job prospects after graduation.
- Creates a network of potential contacts for the future.

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)

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