

## Types of student placement

This document summarises the different types of student placement that our partner organisations could consider hosting.

Generally speaking, student placements be taken at any point whilst engaged in further/higher education (typically 15+). Some schemes (i.e. work placements as part of a degree program) connect organisations with students with specific skillsets whilst others, offer opportunities to students at a specific stage of their education (i.e., sandwich years / graduate schemes). There are many different options to consider.

With many organisations looking to recruit new starters with existing ‘work experience’, offering a placement to a student could greatly enhance their employment prospects. Work placements offer students insight into working life and specific roles / organisations / industries and can play a major role in shaping a student’s future career direction.

Students can offer organisations a fresh perspective and new ideas, including how to make use of social media and technology and how to reach a younger demographic. Offering a student placement can also enable organisations to meet potential future job candidates and assess how well potential candidates work within their team. Students can offer specialist skills at minimal cost to the organisation, (however we would encourage organisations to pay students fairly for their work, to reduce barriers to access. One of the major questions relating to student placement is access to opportunity for unpaid placements. For further information, see [Unpaid, Unadvertised, Unfair.](#))

Advantages and disadvantages of the different types of student placements are summarised below and examples/useful links have been provided.

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Examples / Useful Links
<b>Work shadowing/Job shadowing</b> <i>Observing a professional for a couple of days to gain a better understanding of a role.</i>	- Can help students narrow down their future direction by providing an <b>insight</b> into an industry, role or organisation	- Unpaid work experience can present <b>access barriers</b> to low-income students - Not all jobs are suitable for shadowing / sensitive topics - may restrict activities due to constraints e.g. health and safety	<a href="#">What Is Job Shadowing?   Indeed</a>  <a href="#">Work shadowing   Prospects</a>
<b>Insight Days (&amp; Insight Weeks)</b>	- Can set the scene for potential future job candidates and help rule in/out options	- Advanced planning needed to run an effective insight day/week	<a href="#">Insight Days and Spring Week Internships   RateMyPlacement</a>

<p><i>A short program to introduce groups of students to a specific role / organisation / industry.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enables multiple students to gain insight simultaneously</li> <li>- Can be combined with an assessment centre to provide insight to job candidates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students not able to contribute to any live projects/work</li> <li>- Geographical barriers to access</li> </ul>	<p>Examples:  <a href="#">Institute of Water / Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water Student Careers Event   EPWales/Welsh Water/IOW</a>  <a href="#">Brighton Students spend a day at Southern Water's Head Office doing law</a></p>
<p><b>Work Experience</b>  <i>A short-term placement where students can experience working life and learn about a particular role, organisation or career path.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides training, education and insight into possible careers</li> <li>- More in-depth than work shadowing; students can experience doing the type of work they are interested in</li> <li>- Great networking opportunity for students and prospective employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access barriers for unpaid work</li> <li>- Finding work experience can be highly competitive in some fields</li> <li>- Bureaucratic requirements for recruitment and onboarding for work experience</li> <li>- Limited opportunities available within a specific organisation; highly competitive</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Work experience   Careers Wales</a></p> <p>Examples:  <a href="#">Environmental Work Experience and Placements   EPWales</a></p>
<p><b>Work Placements</b>  <i>A type of work experience that can be taken as part of a degree/program of study.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can help students to develop skills, expand networks and clarify career goals</li> <li>- Students can receive academic credit for their work</li> <li>- Companies can be guaranteed a student with expertise in a specific area (e.g. GIS/Remote sensing)</li> <li>- Can be repeated i.e. annually once relationship established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disadvantages those not enrolled on a specific degree program with a specific university</li> <li>- Some students will be 'sent' on a placement and may not be as committed as those who arrange work experience independently</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Work placements   Prospects</a></p> <p>Example:  <a href="#">Aberystwyth University - Remote Sensing and GIS</a>  <i>includes 'a 20 day work placement (agreed in advance between the Department, the work placement partner and the student).'</i></p>
<p><b>Virtual Experience Programs (VEPs)</b>  <i>VEPs can be completed remotely and typically include a short industry challenge project or a series of simple exercises</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students do not need access to transport to access these opportunities</li> <li>- A VEP placement can be offered to multiple students interested in a particular role or industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students do not get a face-to-face introduction to the workplace</li> <li>- Networking remotely poses more challenges for students</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Virtual work experience   Prospects</a></p> <p>Examples:</p>

<i>that provide an insight into a particular role within an organisation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Once set up, a VEP can be replicated for different cohorts of students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access barriers for students who do not have access to a computer</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Get work experience without leaving your laptop!   University of South Wales</a>
<p><b>Sandwich Year / Year in Industry / Placement Year</b></p> <p><i>A sandwich year is a nine to 12 month full time placement in industry, usually taken after two years of study</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gives students good exposure to work life and enables them to take an active role in projects</li> <li>- Some companies pay students for their work, reducing access barriers</li> <li>- Can be repeated i.e. annually once relationship established</li> <li>- Allows organisations inexpensive access to students with specialisms in relevant areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not all programs offer an option of a sandwich year</li> <li>- Taking a sandwich year can add extra time and expense to students university experience</li> <li>- Not all employers offer students a living wage for their work</li> <li>- Disadvantages those not enrolled on a specific degree program with a specific university</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Work placements (inc. Sandwich Years)   Prospects</a>  Examples: <a href="#">What is a Year in Industry?   Swansea University</a> <a href="#">Work Experience During your Degree   Bangor University</a>
<p><b>Internship</b></p> <p><i>a period of work experience lasting from one week to a year, in which a student can work on real projects and network within an organisation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases a student's employment prospects within the host organisation and boosts their CV</li> <li>- Can help students to gain work experience related to their degree</li> <li>- Can help organisations to pre-assess potential job candidates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interns are not entitled to pay if the internship is part of their degree or classed as a voluntary placement &gt; access barriers</li> <li>- Access to internships can be highly competitive in some fields</li> <li>- Many students/graduates lost out on internships during COVID</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Internships   Careers Wales</a>  <a href="#">Internships   Prospects</a>  Examples: <a href="#">Internships in Conservation, Wildlife and Nature - The RSPB</a> (voluntary)
<p><b>Summer Internship</b></p> <p><i>tend to last the length of the university summer break - typically for two or three months</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can be taken at a quiet time in a student's year, enabling focus</li> <li>- Last long enough to get a taste of the job and gain valuable skills but don't require the commitment of longer programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access barriers; some students will need to a paid summer job</li> <li>- Key members of staff at the host organisation are more likely to be on holiday during the summer, especially in August!</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Summer Jobs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enable students to gain paid work experience during a natural break from their academic studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff absences during summer holiday may make networking more challenging</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Summer jobs   Prospects</a>
<p><b>Research Placement</b></p> <p><i>enables students to complete a defined piece of research to meet</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helps to provide high quality research to meet evidence needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The placement topic may not be directly relevant to students' research</li> </ul>	Examples: <a href="#">Doctoral placements are a thing!   Doctoral College</a>

<p><i>an organisations evidence needs.</i></p> <p><b>Research Placement   PhD placement/Doctoral Training</b> <i>offers a doctoral student the opportunity to carry out research/projects within a relevant organisation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brings valuable skills and experience into an organisation</li> <li>- Enables the student to apply their research skills</li> <li>- Develops new links and opportunities within the research community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May require a very specialist skillset / recruitment challenges</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Doctoral Training   EPWales</a></p> <p><a href="#">Researcher Exchange Programme   HydroJules</a></p>
<p><b>Research Placement   Pick-a-project</b> <i>offers students (undergraduates and above) the chance to focus their research on real-life evidence needs and to network with relevant personnel</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enables students to contribute towards evidence needs through their research</li> <li>- Excellent networking opportunity and looks great on a student's CV</li> <li>- Organisations get access to research on key questions for free</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting up pick-a-project collaborations is posing some challenges as NRW resources are currently very stretched</li> <li>- Quality of research not verified or peer reviewed</li> </ul>	<p>See <a href="#">Pick-a-Project   EPWales</a> for examples</p>
<p><b>Volunteering</b> <i>provides an opportunity to work with organisations to achieve their goals. The duration of volunteer placements depends on the opportunity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enables students to contribute towards social goals</li> <li>- Enables students to develop skills and networks within an area of interest</li> <li>- Different opportunities available to match student schedules and needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access barriers for unpaid work</li> <li>- It's not possible to carry out voluntary placements in all organisations, i.e. topics of a sensitive nature</li> <li>- Loophole to avoid paying students fair wages for 'voluntary work'</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Volunteering   Prospects</a></p> <p>Examples:</p> <p><a href="#">Volunteering   DoFE</a></p> <p><a href="#">Volunteering Wales</a></p> <p><a href="#">Natural Resources Wales / NRW</a></p> <p><a href="#">Gower Volunteer</a></p>
<p><b>Part time work</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enables students to gain experience and earn a wage alongside their studies</li> <li>- Students can work remotely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students do not get exposure to the consistency of a full-time job</li> <li>- Part time jobs are not always relevant to a students preferred career direction</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Student jobs at university   Prospects</a></p>
<p><b>Apprenticeships / Traineeships</b> <i>combine practical training in a job with study, whilst getting paid</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students can gain hands-on work experience, learn new skills and gain a nationally recognised qualification.</li> <li>- Apprenticeships are paid the Real Living Wage (NRW)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can be competitive</li> <li>- Not available in all fields</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Apprenticeships   Careers Wales</a></p> <p><a href="#">Apply for a Forestry Apprenticeship   UK Gov</a></p>

<p><b>Graduate Schemes</b>  <i>Many of the UK's leading employers offer dedicated training programmes for those with a degree</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graduates are given responsibility from the outset</li> <li>- Graduates can gain hands-on experience and develop a broad understanding of their chosen profession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schemes are generally oversubscribed each year, with places limited</li> <li>- Barriers to access for those without a relevant degree</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Graduate schemes   Prospects</a></p> <p>Examples:  <a href="#">Dwr Cymru Graduates (dwrcymru.com)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Graduate Programme   Venture Wales</a></p>
<p><b>Entry Level Jobs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides an opportunity for recent graduates without much work experience to develop skills whilst in employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly competitive</li> </ul>	<p>Examples:  <a href="#">Six of the best entry-level jobs   Reed</a></p>
<p><b>Student Competition</b>  <i>A research competition where groups of students aim to solve real world challenges, often with a prize available for the winning team.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enables multiple students the opportunity to engage in a real-life problem and gain experience in a specific industry</li> <li>- Students gain the skills to form a team and work together to overcome challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not as much guidance or networking opportunities as other opportunities</li> <li>- Limited quality control over standards of work produced</li> <li>- Requirement to advertise opportunity within universities</li> </ul>	<p>Examples:  <a href="#">Winnovators   Employee Development Programme   WaterAid UK</a></p> <p><a href="#">South West Water Data Analysis Competition   £250 prize</a></p>
<p><b>Industry-Style Teaching Activities / Work-integrated Learning</b>  <i>Developing an exercise to provide students with exposure to an industry, organisation or challenge. Typically embedded within a program of teaching or multi-disciplinary across an academic institution.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Makes tuition more relevant to possible future careers</li> <li>- Once developed, can be repeated for multiple cohorts of students</li> <li>- Increased cooperation between academics and professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivering activities in a classroom is one step away from experiencing a workplace</li> <li>- Organisation has less to gain from this than other types of work placement</li> </ul>	<p>Examples:  <a href="#">Work-integrated learning - Learning and teaching   UWE Bristol</a></p> <p><a href="#">Grand Challenges   Grand Challenges   University of Exeter</a></p>

Other ideas: Mentoring, workshops, presentations, site visits, mock interviews, sponsored trips, protected work experience for disadvantaged students

## EPW Member Organisations: Links

[Work Experience During your Degree | Bangor University](#)

[Placements and internships | Cardiff University](#)

[Careers Placements | Cardiff Met](#)

[Work placements | Swansea University](#)

[Work Placements & Experience | University of South Wales](#)

[Careers | Wrexham Glyndwr University](#)

[Careers Service | University of Wales Trinity Saint David](#)

[Natural Resources Wales | Apprenticeships, volunteering, work experience and other placements](#)

[Work experience | Senedd, Welsh Government Internship Opportunities | ESRC Wales Doctoral Training Partnership](#)

[Careers | JNCC](#)

[Studentships | UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology](#)