



Department  
for Education

# **Post-16 work experience as a part of 16 to 19 study programmes and traineeships**

**Departmental advice for post-16  
education and training providers**

**March 2015**

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# Summary

## About this departmental advice

This is non-statutory advice from the Department for Education to help schools, colleges and other training providers deliver work experience as a part of 16 to 19 study programmes and traineeships for 16 to 24 year olds (and up to age 25 for students with LDD who have a learning difficulty assessment (LDA) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan). It brings together existing guidance on the provision of post-16 work experience from the EFA, Ofsted and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

## Expiry or review date

This advice applies to academic years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 and will be reviewed again in autumn 2016.

## Who is this advice for?

This advice is for anyone involved in the planning or delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes and in particular the work experience element including curriculum planners, coordinators, teachers and trainers. It is also relevant to organisations delivering traineeships.

This guide should be read alongside the [16 to 19 Funding Study Programmes: work experience fact sheet](#) (March 2015) and the [Study Programmes Guidance](#) (March 2015).

## Key points

This advice covers:

- Providing high quality work experience
- Employer engagement and how to get the best out of employer partnerships
- Planning work experience into study programmes and traineeships
- Ofsted inspections of work experience in study programmes and traineeships
- Health and safety requirements for employers and providers

## Introduction

### Rationale for providing work experience opportunities to 16 to 19 year olds

In her review of vocational education (2011), Professor Alison Wolf described the unique role that work experience can have in helping young people develop employability skills and the value that employers place on this when they are assessing young people for employment. Wolf recommended increasing work-related provision for students aged 16 years and older. This is a critical stage for every young person because they are close to entering the labour market. Many young people appreciate the importance of improving their work-related skills in order to pursue their career aspirations.

- **Relevant work experience was rated by 66% of recruiting employers as being a critical or significant factor looked for in candidates**  
*(UKCES Employer Perspectives Survey 2014)*
- **31% of young people starting their working lives do not feel they have the appropriate skills, citing a lack of work experience (71%) as being their main weakness**  
*(CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2013)*

The Department aims to ensure that students are offered the opportunity to undertake high quality and meaningful work experience as part of their post-16 education. We are committed to supporting schools, colleges and training providers achieve this aim.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

DfE introduced 16 to 19 study programmes in August 2013. All post 16 students follow a study programme tailored to their prior attainment by age 16 and to their career aspirations. For a full definition of study programmes, please visit the webpage: [16 to 19 Funding Study Programmes: work experience](#).

Work experience is a key component of 16 to 19 study programmes and all students are expected to undertake work experience or some form of work-related training as part of their study programme 'non-qualification activity'. This applies to academic, vocational and mixed pathways. The time spent by schools, colleges and training providers in planning, organising and supervising work experience for students is funded at the same level as qualifications taught in the classroom. This provides schools and colleges with the flexibility to assign staff to engage employers and secure high quality work experience placements for their students.

The [study programme principles](#) are intended to enable all students to take a programme that helps them progress to their next stage whether it be employment with training, an apprenticeship or further study including entry into higher education.

## Traineeships

Traineeships are an education and training programme for motivated young people aged 16 to 24 who do not have a level 3 qualification. They consist of work preparation training, a high quality work placement, and English and maths provision where appropriate, designed to equip young people with the skills and experience they need to progress onto an apprenticeship or other sustainable employment.

Traineeships for 16 to 18 year olds are a type of study programme and they provide another option for young people who are motivated to work but lack the skills, experience and behaviours sought by employers. Traineeships can last a maximum of 6 months with the aim of getting the young person into an apprenticeship or other sustainable employment as quickly as possible.

## Supported internships

Another strand of study programmes, the [supported internships programme](#), is designed to support young people with complex needs who need a higher level of support to access employment. The programme is for young people with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan). A supported internship provides a structured study programme, based at an employer's premises, that is tailored to the individual needs of the young person and equips them with the skills they need for the workplace. This includes on-the-job training, backed by expert 'job coaches', to support interns and employers, and the give the opportunity to study for relevant qualifications – where appropriate. The supported internship normally lasts for a year and includes an unpaid work experience placement of at least six months.

## Recording work experience

The [16 to 19 Funding Study Programmes: work experience](#) provides guidance for recording work experience in the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and school census based on the length of the placement and whether it is external to the educational environment.

## High quality work experience

### Work experience within study programmes

The common principles of a high quality work experience placement are that it:

- is purposeful, substantial, offers challenge and is relevant to the young person's study programme and career aspirations;
- is managed under the direction of a supervisor to ensure the young person obtains a genuine learning experience suited to their needs;
- has a structured plan for the duration of the placement which provides tangible outcomes for the student and employer;
- focuses on the skills required for that occupational sector;
- has clear roles, responsibilities and expectations for the student and employer;
- is followed by some form of reference or feedback from the employer based on the young person's performance.

Education and training providers will want to assess the individual needs of their students and arrange suitably relevant and stretching work experience for them. The study programme flexibilities allow providers to make a judgement as to how much time the student spends on the placement and how this is integrated into the student's timetable.

### Work experience placements with external employers

The key to making work experience effective, relevant and useful in the long-term for students is to ensure that it takes place with an external employer, external to the place where they study, where they can experience the real demands of the working environment, independent from their peers and their tutors.

### Simulated working environments

Work experience provided within a simulated working environment is not the same as external work experience because it does not take place within a real workplace. Training in a simulated work environment can support progression into an external working environment and can be of value for developing employability skills. Wherever possible all young people should have the opportunity to spend time in an external workplace.

### Traineeship work experience placements

Work experience within a traineeship needs to be a high quality learning experience tailored to the needs of the individual. It's important that the work experience gives the young person exposure to a real workplace so they can develop the skills, knowledge, confidence, attitudes and behaviours they need to succeed at work. Ideally this should be

with an external employer, external to the learning environment and at an external site. Simulated activity in an artificial environment may well form a helpful part of work preparation training but does not count as work experience for traineeships.

Traineeship providers will want to see the principles for good quality work placements in the [Traineeship Framework for Delivery](#).

## Employer involvement

### Schools, colleges and other study programmes providers

Many schools, colleges and private training providers already have links with employers. Education Business Partnerships (EBP) have traditionally kept a list of local employers who have offered work experience in the past, which providers can pay to access. Other potential sources of information about employers include the Local Education Partnerships (LEP) and Jobcentre Plus (JCP).

Education and training providers that are taking full advantage of the increased freedom and flexibilities, facilitated by the study programme principles and funding arrangements are seeing the most benefit. Many have recruited staff and/or have teams of staff dedicated to engaging local employers, selling the benefits of involving young people in their business and securing work experience placements for their students. As a result, these providers are seeing a rapid increase in work experience opportunities that are benefitting their students.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) hosted '[Study Programme Central](#)' provides examples of how other providers are successfully sourcing work experience placements.

### Traineeship providers

Traineeship providers may also have developed employer networks through their existing apprenticeship schemes and it's common for providers to target these employers, as well as engage new employer contacts to serve all their sector requirements. It is important trainees are matched appropriately to an employer in a sector that interests them so that the trainee gets the most out of their placement.

The willingness of employers to offer work experience placements, or to run traineeship programmes is key to the success of traineeships. Over 1,600 workplaces have been engaged in the traineeship programme and very few providers are reporting problems securing work experience placements with local employers.

BIS, DfE and DWP have worked together to ensure a more flexible model of delivery for benefit claimants undertaking traineeships. This gives providers and employers greater flexibility to design programmes which enable work experience to take place alongside the other training elements of the traineeship rather than in a single block. For example, DWP removed the 16-hour rule which restricted the number of hours young people on Jobseekers Allowance could undertake the training elements that form part of their traineeship.



## National Minimum Wage

### **Students undertaking work experience as a part of a study programme or traineeships are exempt from receiving the National Minimum Wage**

Employers are not required to pay young people for work experience undertaken as part of a study programme or traineeship. Young people doing such work experience are not in employment and are therefore not entitled to the National Minimum Wage. We encourage, but do not require, employers to consider providing young people with support to meet their expenses such as travel or meal costs.

For work experience being undertaken as part of study programmes, education institutions could agree with both the student and employer:

- the education and training goals of the placement;
- reasonable expectations on student conduct; and
- the role of the employer in providing supervision and training.

This agreement can take the form of a short note or email from the education institution to the student and the employer. This is in line with good practice in the provision of work experience as part of a 16 to 19 study programme and to meet EFA audit requirements for the provision of work experience.

## Planning for work experience

### Integrating work experience into study programmes

There is no single 'correct' way of planning placements – much of this will depend on employers' capacity and could vary considerably. Employers are more likely to respond favourably to providers that are willing to be flexible and work with them to organise work experience placements to suit their requirements. Therefore, work experience placements could follow a pattern of once a week for the duration of the term, longer block placements, or a rotation of shorter placements at different employers, so students can experience different aspects of a sector.

The length of the work experience placement will depend on the providers' assessment of students and what level of work experience will adequately develop them for progression into employment, taking into account their abilities, prior attainment, career goals and work readiness. Students who have work experience as the core aim for their study programme must spend a large proportion of their time with an external employer to ensure that they develop the employability skills, attitudes and behaviours that are expected in the workplace to enable them to make that successful transition into paid employment after their study programme.

### Work experience element of traineeships

Work experience placements within a traineeship should last between 100 to 240 hours. These do not have to be taken consecutively. In some cases, where young people are undertaking their work experience in small or medium sized businesses, it may be appropriate for them to undertake multiple shorter placements in different organisations.

Providers and employers are free to agree how the placement fits best with the other components. In some cases, it may be better for young people to undertake work experience at the end of their traineeship; in others to begin this from early in the programme, with the other components sitting alongside it.

Providers sometimes need a short period of time to work with individual young people to assess their prior attainment and to identify their aspirations and areas of interest before confirming the employer who will offer their work experience placement. Therefore there is flexibility in place for providers to identify the lead employer for the work experience placement within four weeks of the traineeship starting rather than insisting this is at the outset. More information can be found in the latest [Traineeship Framework for Delivery](#).

## What Ofsted inspectors look for when they inspect work experience

Work experience is inspected and reported on as an integral part of the inspection of provision for 16 to 19 year olds (and up to age 24 for traineeships) against the Common Inspection Framework for FE and Skills 2012.

Ofsted state that work experience must be purposeful and planned. It should give young people the opportunity to develop vocational and employability skills in real working conditions.

Work experience should contribute to students' overall development. For example, when considering **outcomes for students**, inspectors will explore how well they can develop their employability and vocational skills and personal effectiveness (e.g. attendance, attitudes, punctuality, and behaviour) in relation to their starting points while on work experience.

Similarly, when inspecting **teaching, learning and assessment** inspectors will explore how well students on work experience have been prepared beforehand, the tasks they are set and whether they receive detailed feedback on their progress.

The inspection of **leadership and management** will evaluate the extent to which work experience is purposeful for each student, how well it fits into the other aspects of their study programme and that appropriate steps have been taken by the employers to provide a safe environment.

Work experience in providers' realistic working environments, such as college companies; provide good opportunities for students to develop initial vocational skills, knowledge and employability skills. However, this should not be seen as an alternative to external work experience, especially if work experience is a substantial part of their programme.

Students can often get employer references for their performance on work experience and realistic working environments do not provide this.

## Health & Safety

Providers should refer to the Health and Safety Executive guidance when organising work experience placements<sup>1</sup>.

The employer has the primary responsibility for the health and safety of students whilst on a work experience placement. Education or training providers must satisfy themselves that an employer has assessed the associated risks to workers under 18 on their premises and has suitable and sufficient risk management arrangements in place. Checks by education or training providers must be kept in proportion with the risk environment. For low risk environments, assurance can be gained through a conversation with the employer. A physical inspection by education providers or requiring the employer to complete lengthy forms should not take place.

There is no requirement for a separate risk assessment for work experience students where an employer already employs young workers under 18, as the risks should already have been considered. Where work experience students are the first young workers an employer takes on (or the first for some years), the employer should review the existing risk assessment. For some higher-risk environments, the employer will need to consider specific factors where relevant – these are described in the HSE guidance.

In the rare case where an accident may happen on an employer's premises, provided the education or training provider has taken appropriate steps to satisfy themselves that the employer has put in place measures to manage the associated risks in their work place, they will normally have done enough to comply with the law. These steps are described in [HSE's guidance](#).

## Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance

As part of the government's Red Tape Challenge, ministers have written to employers confirming that the insurance industry has committed to treat work experience students as employees so that they will be covered by existing Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance policies. If an employer has Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance cover already, they do not need to buy additional cover.

Providers can [download the letter](#) from the Department's website. The Association of British Insurers has also published guidance for employers planning to take on work experience students<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Education and training providers should refer to the [HSE health and safety guidance](#).

<sup>2</sup> Visit the [Association of British Insurers \(ABI\) guidance for employers](#).

## **Insurance requirements for the voluntary sector**

If the voluntary organisation employs staff, students on work experience placements will be covered by their existing Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance policy. If the voluntary organisation only has Public Liability Insurance, they will need to obtain temporary Employer Liability Compulsory Insurance for the duration of the placement.

## **Disclosure and Barring Service (formally CRB)**

From July 2012 providers are no longer required to carry out enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services checks on employers/staff supervising young people aged 16 to 17 on work experience.

For young people intending to undertake work experience in the Health Care and Early Years Sector, they will need to have an enhanced DBS check before starting on their placement. Providers will need to factor in these costs to the total programme cost and also plan for the time it takes to complete an application (which could be up to 4 weeks).

## Further sources of information

The AoC '[Study Programme Central](#)' website provides education and training providers with helpful resources, good practice examples and information on staff training days.

The Education & Training Foundation (ETF) launched its [Traineeships Staff Support Programme](#) (TSSP) in 2014 that supports both the development and dissemination of good practice.

### **Other departmental and external advice and guidance providers may be interested in:**

- [Advice on planning and delivering 16 to 19 study programmes](#)
- [Information on funding work experience in 16 to 19 study programmes](#)
- [Advice for supported internship providers](#)
- [Information about 16 to 19 study programmes](#)
- [HSE Health and safety guidance](#)
- [Ofsted and Health & Safety guidance](#)
- [Employers' liability compulsory insurance guidance](#)
- [Information about traineeships](#)
- [Evaluation of work experience placement trials](#)
- [Employer involvement in qualifications assessment](#)



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