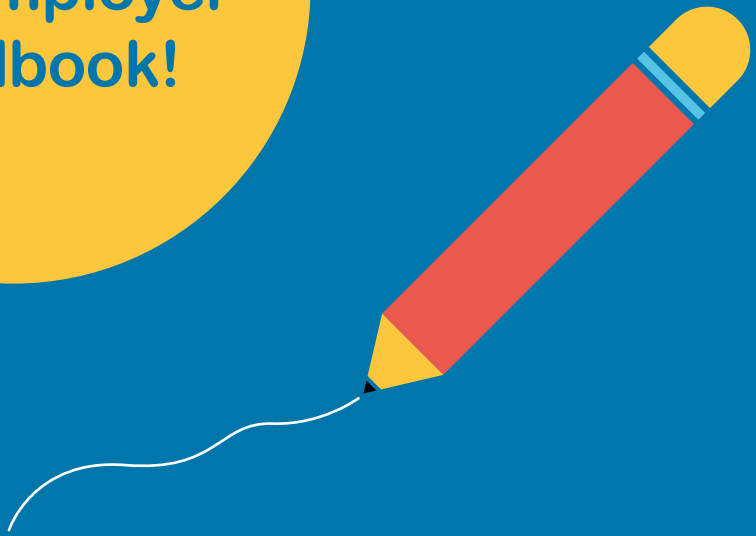


**Welcome to
your Employer
Handbook!**



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Introduction

This handbook is designed to aid you in planning and providing high quality work experience projects for school students. Alongside this handbook there are also mentor handbooks and student handbooks. Together these documents provide guidance and structures, whilst allowing for tailoring and flexibility so that you can provide work experiences relevant to your business needs.

It should be noted that this document focusses on providing work experience for young people under the age of 18.

To find out more about providing placements for university students visit <http://www.cogentskills.com/new-talent/employers/industrial-placements-for-science-students-and-graduates/> or contact info@cogentskills.com.



Why take work experience students?

There are many benefits to taking on work experience students.

The overarching aim of work experience is to enable young people to gain understanding of the scientific industries, introducing them to the types of activities that are involved in science and manufacturing. Students can gain vital insights from which they can develop and make career decisions.

Employers can also benefit. By educating young people on careers in the science industry employers build a network of potential future employees, form relationships with local schools and develop their corporate social responsibility.

These benefits can only be harnessed however if the work experience is of a high quality. An unsuccessful work experience placement can be detrimental to both the employer and the student.

Outlined in this guide are the information, structures, supervision mechanisms and materials enabling you to provide high quality work experience.





Apprentices as Mentors

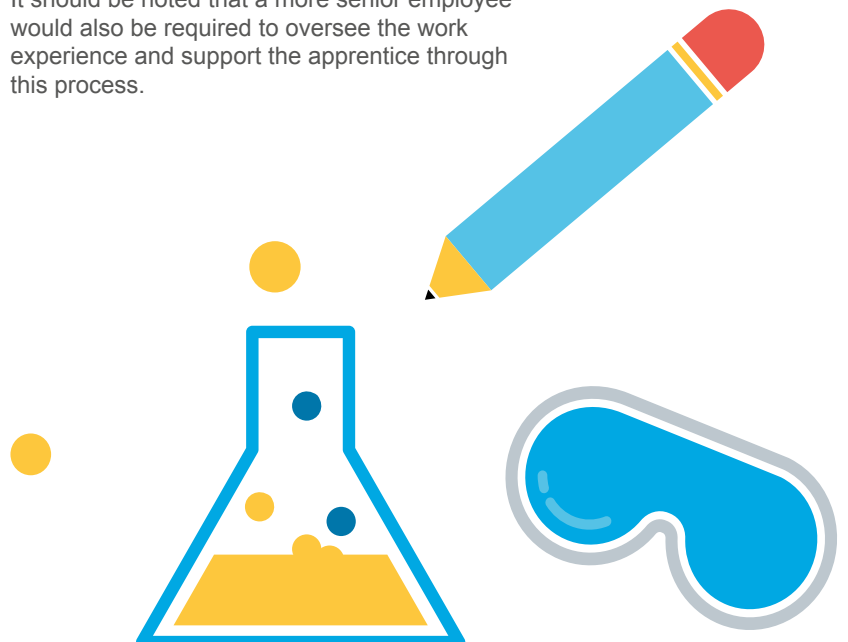
In this guide we advocate using apprentices as supervisors/mentors.

Mentoring a work experience student is an excellent opportunity for professional development for your apprentice. Supervising and mentoring a work experience student will help the apprentice develop skills which they can embed in their own day to day practice. Apprentices following the new Apprenticeship Standards are assessed for behavioural competencies at the end of their apprenticeship. Supervision or mentoring of work experience students provides an opportunity to develop multitude of these competencies (highlighted in the apprentice handbook.)

The materials provided for apprentices may also be used by non-apprentice employees who are keen to develop skills in mentoring and supervision.

Work experience students supervised/ mentored by apprentices or more junior members of staff will gain a clearer picture of the entry routes into the industry and a more realistic view of the opportunities available to them.

It should be noted that a more senior employee would also be required to oversee the work experience and support the apprentice through this process.



Types of Work Experience

There are many different ways to deliver work experience with variations in duration, target age range, selection methods and business focus.

This guide largely focusses on 1-2 week work experiences targeted at students in the age range of 16-18, however there are many ways work experience may be organised and some factors for consideration are outlined below.

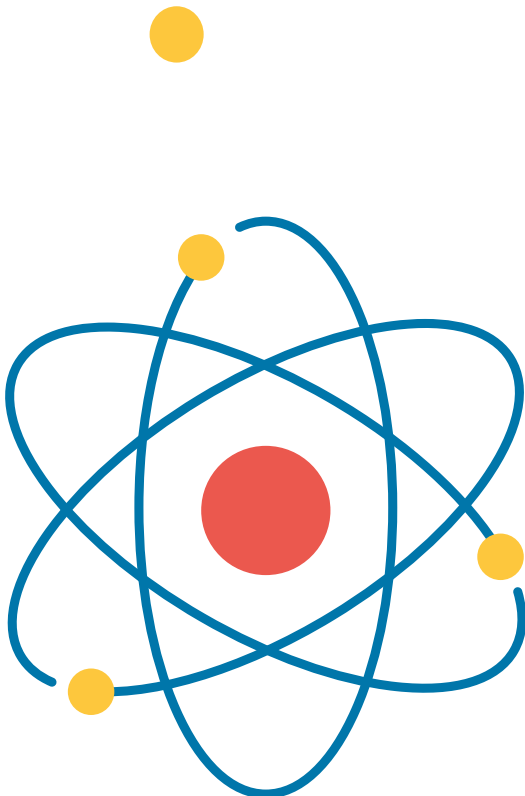
Ad hoc vs Planned

Whilst it is beneficial for employers to provide work experience, some companies find themselves doing so in an ad hoc fashion, for example it is not uncommon for employees to request work experience for their children. Whilst this approach can be seen as a benefit to employees, and offers easy access to students, there are also some drawbacks to selecting students in this way:

- Employees children may not be interested in a career in your industry or company
- Other young people who may be more interested in a career in your sector or company may not get the opportunity to gain relevant experience
- As such, your company may miss out on an opportunity to offer work experience to potential future employees
- Organising work experience ad hoc for employees children can be very time consuming

Planned work experience provides the employer with the opportunity to:

- select students with a genuine interest in the industry,
- determine activities that engage young people,
- creatively think about how students can access the more regulated parts of the industry, e.g. through tours, shadowing, themes etc.
- engage as many staff as possible in a timely fashion leading to the student gaining a breadth of insight,
- manage the workload of hosting a work experience student,
- ensure vital health and safety and safeguarding requirements covered.



Activity vs Observation

People like to have a clear aim - young people are no different. Wherever possible work experience should involve some activities; however in the science industries it may not always be practical to have hands on activity as part of the experience. Where students are observing or work shadowing they should have a defined activity, be it analysing a certain aspect of a process, completing calculations, interviewing a member of staff on their job role. By ensuring that students have an activity, even when completing a task that is observation based, high level subject matter can often be made accessible and interesting.

Single department (role based) vs Breadth of the business

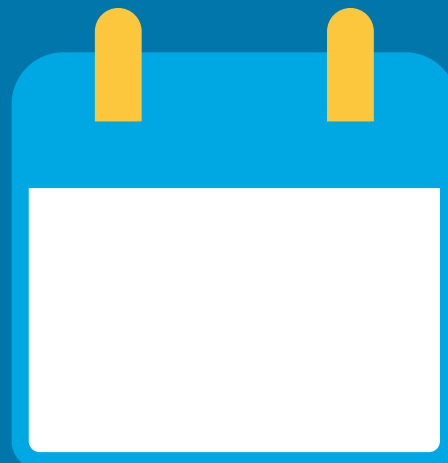
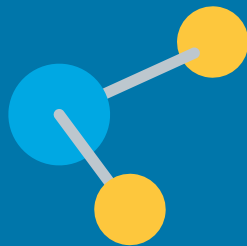
There are advantages and disadvantages to a role based or a breadth of the business approach. A young person will have limited experience of the industry and will not know all of the future career paths open to them. A breadth of the business work experience will help the student to discover what roles appeal to them. A role based work experience can provide a more in depth work experience, giving the student an overarching view of the tasks and activities required for a particular role and an understanding of how that role fits into a particular team or department. This type of work experience is useful if the young person has a clear idea of the career they are pursuing.

Week work experience vs Longer work experiences

Whilst work experience is often associated with 1-2 week placements, this is not the only structure available. There are opportunities to provide longer experiences over summer breaks or to provide regular experiences over a longer time frame e.g. one afternoon a week over the course of a school year. This allows the student to gain a more in depth knowledge of the business and the employer to assess whether they would want to offer the student any further opportunities with the company.

High Quality

To ensure mutual benefit for student and employer (for all types of work experience) there should be a focus on delivering high quality experiences with planned activities and clearly communicated aims. Both the work experience student and the employer hosts should understand why the work experience is taking place, understand what the organisation and the student are to achieve in the timeframe and there should be an opportunity for summing up and feedback (both student to employer and employer to student.)





Example Structure

Below is an example structure of a high quality work experience:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM	Welcome	Mentor catch up	Mentor catch up	Mentor catch up	Mentor catch up
	Induction	Work shadowing <i>Focus: Maths and analytical skills.</i>	Work shadowing <i>Focus: Identifying the skills in a role.</i>	Office based mini project continued	Presentation skills session Presentation preparation time
Lunch					
PM	Tour with observation activity	Work shadowing <i>Focus: Health and Safety</i>	Office based mini project <i>eg. competitor research for a new project</i>	Exploring career: Q&A with a range of staff	Presentation <i>(observed by staff involved)</i>
	Mentor session – targets and week outline			CV and application session	Feedback and review with mentor

The example outline could be improved by adding a theme, perhaps focussed around a company product or service.

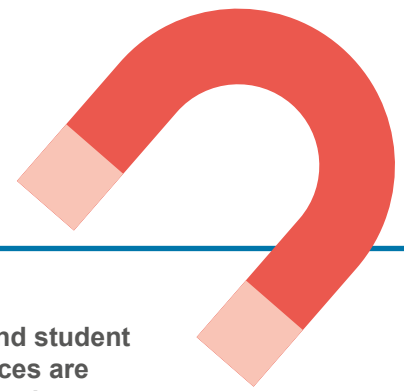
Work shadowing should always include some form of task; this could take the form of prompt questions, an outline of an investigation with a free form response or could use examples of the company’s own recording and monitoring paperwork.

The role of the mentor is very important in this structure; with regular checks to ensure that the student is OK and progressing well. On the final day the student should be given the opportunity to reflect on the experience through the presentation and final review of targets with their mentor.

Final presentations are often an effective way getting feedback from the work experience students and understanding how the student perceives their development as result of the work experience. It also gives the students a defined end point and an opportunity to develop their communication skills. In the student materials contained within this package the students have final reflection prompts which could be used as a stimulus for the presentation. It is important when asking a student to complete a presentation that the scope of the presentation is clearly communicated e.g. content, length, company templates, confidentiality etc.

In term time work experience placements, a representative from the school may be required to visit, if so ensure that time for this visit is scheduled into the timetable.

Recruitment / Selection



To ensure that the work experience is mutually beneficial to both employer and student it is important to have the right selection procedures in place. Work experiences are traditionally short week-long experiences and therefore it would not be appropriate to have an involved, resource intensive recruitment process, however insufficient assessment of interest, character and ability of potential work experience students could lead to a situation where the benefits of work experience are lost for both employer and student.

It is important to consult with your own HR department when undertaking recruitment and selection.

Recruitment Methods

There are many ways to complete selection and recruitment, below are a few suggestions:

Engaging Students

- **School engagement** – School engagement is a good way, and probably the simplest way, of accessing motivated and interested students as teachers will be able to identify the most appropriate students. Continued good relationships with schools can provide a reliable source of high quality work experience students. The best relationships are built on mutual benefit, a good way of ensuring your selection of students is also of benefit to the school is to provide in school sessions including careers advice or engaging with STEM lessons.

The beginning of term (September, January and April) is often a good time to set up visits and engagement. When contacting individuals within schools you should consider work experience leads, heads of year groups and heads of departments (e.g. Science, Mathematics, and Design and Technology.) If you do not have a direct contact, make contact with the main office. You should also consider the workload involved in this process for both parties as additional administrative burden may prevent the schools from engaging.

If you are intending to offer work experience during term time it is essential that you liaise with the student's school to gain permission for this.

- **Social media engagement and recruitment websites** – Social media is a good way of engaging young people whilst promoting the company generally. A drawback of using social media to engage potential work experience students is that the geographical scope is potentially too wide and extensive filtering of applications may be required. Likewise recruitment websites may also have a wide geographical scope which may return a large number of responses. It may be more practical to focus interactions with students in the local area.
- **Work Experience Companies** – There are companies that will manage the recruitment and selection of work experience students for you and may also undertake the design and management of the experience. Using these companies will reduce the administrative burden of hosting work experience, however in doing so you may lose some control of the process. These companies will charge a fee for this service.
- **Employees' children** – Some companies like to offer work experience opportunities to their employees' children but it is recommended that this be through a structured programme and not through ad hoc requests. In order to gain maximum benefit from offering work experience it is recommended that all students (including employees' children) should participate in the recruitment and selection process your company has chosen. This will allow you to:
 - select the students most interested in careers relevant to your company,
 - offer students the experience of a recruitment process
 - offer equal opportunities to young people in your local area to access work experience



Selection

- **Selection competitions** – videos applications, essays, application forms, CVs etc.

Selection competitions are an effective way to assess potential work experience students against a defined set of criteria, particularly when trying to assess the level of the students' interest in the work experience. However, it should be noted that once applications are collected they require significant resource to assess.

- **Selection days- training, task and challenge based business tasks etc.** – Challenge days or selection days are a more active way of assessing potential work experience students and can be a good way of assessing teamwork and problem solving skills- splitting students up into teams, completing challenge tasks and then awarding the winning team work experience opportunities. Involvement of senior employees in the process will add to the engagement of the students, particularly where tasks relate to real business challenges. This has the dual benefit of making the students feel engaged and providing the employer an opportunity to utilise fresh thinking and different perspectives.

When designing your selection process it is also important to consider the following:

- Linking your selection activities to your company values and real world company examples. In this way you ensure that you get the right students for you and the students gain an understanding of your organisation through the selection process.
- Focus your recruitment on motivations of the student and gaining a picture of the “whole person” wider than academic achievements e.g. do they play sport, volunteer etc.? Why do they want to complete work experience? Why with you?
- Ensure that you are not biasing against disadvantaged students, e.g. by placing significant focus on academic achievement (of the student or school) or requirements for access to IT equipment/ smartphones. Consider whether your selection process provides an unfair advantage to students who have an existing understanding of your business via parents or social connections.
- Ensure that your recruitment and selection processes are in line with your company's recruitment policies, for example ensuring that work experience is accessible for all and reasonable adjustments have been made for individuals with disabilities.





Safeguarding Young People

The safeguarding advice outlined in this document relates to the minimum requirements. Prior to recruiting work experience students please check your own company policies on Safeguarding Young People.

Policies and procedures should be in place to protect children from harm, including risk assessments.

Enhanced barred list checks by the DBS may be required for individuals who are to supervise a child under the age of 16 (DBS checks are not essential for staff supervising young people aged 16-17.)

The level, length and frequency of the supervision should be taken into account when deciding which members of staff should undergo DBS checks. If members of staff are unsupervised and in contact with the work experience student frequently i.e. for more than three days in a 30 day period, they should undergo enhanced barred list checks by DBS.

Young people aged 16-17 (for example apprentices) who are supervising an under 16 (and meet the criteria specified above) would also be required to undergo enhanced barred list checks by DBS.

Further information can be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2016), paragraphs 139-143.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550511/Keeping_children_safe_in_education.pdf





Risk Assessments

To keep young people safe in the work environment it is important to consider how the inexperience of the young person will affect their risk.

Completing risk assessments specifically for young people should take into account their lack of experience and consider their understanding of risks.

Understanding of risk is often developed by experiencing environments of similar risk. Young people will most likely have fewer experiences of the work place to draw on than more experienced workers and this should be considered putting together a young person's risk assessment.

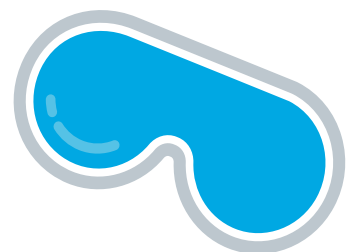
It is a legal requirement to complete a risk assessment for young people in the workplace; however young person risk assessments for existing apprentices or previous work experience students can be amended.

The risks must be discussed with the young person and the parent or legal guardian and be signed by the parent and/or legal guardian to confirm that they accept the assessment of risk.

It is also important to check that the employer is insured to have young people on site.

Inductions

Most employers already have site inductions, including health and safety. Work experience students should complete an induction, although it may be appropriate to reduce the scope and content of the induction for work experience.



Following up with work experience students

Many companies offer work experience as a precursor for recruitment activities. Companies can develop a network of past work experience students to advertise vacancies. There is an opportunity at a later date to complete destination surveys to identify what, having completed work experience in your industry, did the students go on to do? To ensure these aims are successful it is important to maintain contact with previous work experience students.

Firstly, consider the contact method- e.g. emails, social media groups and mobile phone numbers and how effective these methods are at maintaining contact with your target group. Consideration should be taken when sharing contact details and engaging in social media contact with young people. It may be preferable, depending on the age of the young person, to interact with parents.

Whilst email is the preferred method for professional communication, email addresses change and are often not a high priority method of communication for young people. Mobile phone numbers are less likely to change but are limited by the content that can be delivered. Social media streams can foster high levels of engagement; however the popularity of social media can rise and fall dramatically. It is also important to consider the demographics that engage with a particular form of social media. A mixed strategy could be advantageous, but may also come with a higher workload.

There are many ways to maximise the impact of a work experience network: provide updates via newsletters, put on networking events, provide career resources or set up mentoring or careers coaching.

Whatever method is chosen, it is important to not lose the benefits of taking on work experience students by losing contact.

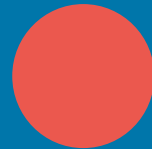


Employer Checklist

When planning work experience it is important to consider the timings. Will the work experience be in school holidays? When does the process need to be initiated? Who needs to be involved and when? Below is a checklist with approximate timings for you to use as a guide.

Action	Timing	Completed?
Employee engagement (getting support of people within the company, senior employees and key departments e.g. HR, Health and Safety, departments to host)	6- 12 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apprentice mentor selection	6 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apprentice- line manager meetings	From apprentice selection to end of work experience. Frequency may vary throughout the process.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safeguarding/ DBS	4-6 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student engagement (e.g. via schools)	4 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student selection/recruitment process	3 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk Assessments and parental signatures	2- 3 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan induction session	2-3 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrange attendees at final presentation	2-3 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan and initiate method for maintaining contact with student	2-3 months before and ongoing from the end of the experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finalise timetable and final details	3 weeks before work experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>





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