(What’s out there, things to consider on placement, Health and Safety, Finance)

Employers are looking for students and graduates who possess a range of skills and abilities. Through work experience you can:

- demonstrate your skills to future employers
- support your postgraduate application - in some cases it is essential
- secure a graduate job early - many employers recruit directly from their internship students

**Types of work experience**

Work experience is a great opportunity to see what the sector you want to go into is like and to gain the skills that employers want.

There are diverse types of work experience, usually dependent on the sector, which will be attractive to employers. For example, there are many paid internships available in the finance or engineering sectors, but routes into the charity sector usually involve voluntary work.

The term 'work experience', can refer to:

- structured internships
- studentships for science students
- finding your own work placement
- work shadowing
- industrial or sandwich year placements
- part-time or summer casual work
- graduate internships
- voluntary work

You can search for vacancies online at the [The Job Station](#)
Types of work experience

Structured internships
Many large companies offer paid summer internships, which last between six and twelve weeks, predominantly targeted at penultimate year students. However, some companies will consider students from other years if they demonstrate the right skills and aptitude. Spring internships or insight days for first years, are increasingly common within the financial, banking and IT sectors.
In some career sectors, companies offer unpaid work experience placements, for example within the advertising and fashion sectors. Opportunities are advertised at The Job Station.

Studentships for science students
There are multiple organisations which offer funding to work in a research laboratory over summer. Society of Biology, UK Centre for Bioscience and the Institute of Physics are some useful places to begin your search.

Finding your own work placement
You may want to search for a placement yourself, as some companies won't advertise vacancies but may want a student for a specific project. Contact companies directly to find out if they can offer you a period of work experience - perhaps for a couple of weeks or longer. These work placements are less likely to be structured.

Work shadowing
Work shadowing involves spending some time; perhaps a day or two, observing someone at work to gain a flavour of their responsibilities and job activities. Networking and contacting companies directly will help you identify possible people you could shadow.

Graduate internships
Over the recent years the number of graduate placements available to graduates has increased. Some companies will take on a graduate for one to 12 months to work on a discreet project.

Part-time jobs and casual summer work
Part-time jobs during term time or summer casual work can also offer you the chance to gain experience and develop your skills whatever you do. Find out more about part-time vacancies online at The Job Station.

Industrial and sandwich year placements
These placements, usually lasting between 12-15 months normally take place between the third and fourth year of your course, so it would take you an additional year to complete your degree. They are normally integral to your degree, are assessed and count to your final degree classification. You should contact your individual department for details.
Guidance for when you are on a work placement

Congratulations you have successfully found yourself an internship/placement – you now have to make the most of the opportunity you have been given.

Making the most of your experience

There are a number of things you can do to help you make the most of your time on an internship/placement. Some things you’d probably do without thinking but others may not come naturally so you need to plan them into your time with your host. Feedback from returning interns indicates all these can help in future career planning.

- **Career choice** - take time to reflect on what you are getting involved with and work out if you enjoy what you are doing and whether you have the necessary skills to make things successful. Do you think you could work in this environment in the long term?

- **Get involved** - the more involved with the work and your colleagues you become, the more you will get from the whole experience

- **Networking** - ensure you get to know lots of people in the host organisation as you never know when you might need to contact them after you the placement

- **Shadowing and visits** - ask those in slightly more senior positions if you could shadow them for a day or attend one of their client visits so you can see how other parts of the organisation operate

- **Skills Development** - consider looking at the skills you have before you start the internship/placement and rank them out of one to ten. Half way through revisit the list so see if there is anything you can add and re-evaluate your ranking to see where you've improved. If you find any gaps or low scores, ask your host for their views and see if they can help you through training or a mentor.

- **Training** - make the most of any training opportunities that arise and if they don't arise, why not ask if things could be made available to you.
Health and Safety at work

This is a very important aspect of an internship/placement so please take time to consider this and make note of your responsibilities as an intern. Ask for a briefing from your employer on the first day of your internship if they don’t automatically provide one to ensure you have all the relevant information for working within your host employer.

Emergency Procedures

Because of the wide variety of placements available, it is not possible to produce a set of detailed emergency instructions to cover every situation that might arise. Each Placement Provider will have its own specific emergency instructions. For example, there should be a notice in every building setting out the procedure to adopt during a fire. This instruction and any others should be studied and committed to memory.

There are, however, certain points that apply to all emergency situations:

- You should commit emergency actions to memory as there will be no time to read them in an emergency.
- You are expected to act in the spirit of the instructions – there is no substitute for common sense.
- The most important consideration at all times is human safety.
- Don’t take chances. If you become a casualty someone must rescue you, possibly at personal risk to themselves.
- You should act quietly and calmly. You should not rush or attempt to pass others when leaving an area in an emergency.

If you have to telephone for assistance in an emergency, the following information must always be given:

- Who you are
- Where you are – i.e. the location and telephone extension from which you are telephoning.
- The exact location where assistance is required.
- The nature of the emergency and what services are required.

You should ensure that the message has been correctly received by asking for it to be repeated back to you.
The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASWA)

This is the main piece of health and safety legislation in the UK. It places duties on employers, employees and manufacturers of industrial products as well as on the self-employed and occupiers of buildings where people work. As far as health and safety law is concerned the duties of “Employers” relate to “Placement Providers” and the duties of “Employees” relate to “Placement Students”.

General Duties of Employers

The Act states that “it is the duty of every employer, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all his employees”.

Employers are required to provide and maintain:

- Safe plant and systems of work.
- Safe handling, storage, maintenance and transport of articles and substances.
- Necessary information, instruction, training and supervision.
- Safe place of work with safe access and egress.
- Safe working environment with adequate welfare facilities.

Employers with five or more employees must prepare and revise as necessary a written statement of safety policy, which details the general policy and the particular organisation and arrangements for carrying it out. The policy must be brought to the notice of all the employees.

General Duties of Employees

Employees must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions. They must also co-operate with their employer. It is an offence for anyone to intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare.

General Safety

The prevention of accidents in offices, laboratories, stores, workshops and all other places of work is a duty of every individual using or entering them. Ensuring the safety of others is as important as the avoidance of personal injury and/or ill health. All employees should be aware of the hazards in their area of work and should know the steps to minimise the risks.

Everyone should become familiar with any special instructions issued for dealing with emergencies into the place in which they are working.
You should familiarise yourself with:

- The layout of the building, the location/operation of the fire-fighting appliances.
- Evacuation routes.
- Location of telephones.
- The siting of first aid facilities.

**Work outside normal hours**

Many companies have their own rules with regard to work outside normal hours. Evenings, Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and other official holidays are usually regarded as outside normal hours. This does not apply to all Students e.g. those working in hospitals, shift workers, or those who work in an organisation which operates on a 24 hour basis.

Extreme care should be exercised when working outside these times and then only with explicit authority. It should be forbidden to perform operations deemed hazardous by the employer, or his/her nominee, unless another person is within calling distance.

**Living in a New Location**

- **Safety** – if you living in a new location, we would advise you to talk to those locally about any areas that may not be safe to visit. This may include talking to your colleagues, the local police and tourist information centres

- **Accommodation and travel** - these might seem obvious but planning how you will arrange these elements in advance of starting the internship/placement will make life easier

**Handling Problems**

There will be a number of people who can help you with any problems that might occur during your internship/placement.

If you have a work-related problem, in the first instance we would advise you to talk to your line manager. If they can't help, talk to the person who helped you organise the placement.

Remember most things can be resolved so don't let things build up. There are people who will want to know what is going on and who will be happy to help.
The questions surrounding paid or unpaid internships/placements have been around a long time and are unlikely to disappear in near future.

So the aim of this page is to give you some insight into the current discussions, issues and guidance on internship salaries. We have also included information on the current legislation so you can come to a decision that’s right for your situation.

Paid internships and placements

Most hosts pay, on average, a salary of between £13,000 to £23,000 dependent on the sector and skills of the intern. However if the internship/placement is part of your course, salaries are not compulsory.

If you are classed as a 'worker' whilst on placement, you should be paid at least the National Minimum Wage (NMW) which for those aged 18 to 20 years would equate to £10,358 per annum based on a 40 hour week.

For more information about work experience and the NMW, visit the DirectGov website.

Unpaid internships and placements

In certain sectors such as advertising, the creative industries, fashion, journalism, politics etc there has been a tradition of internships being offered on an unpaid basis. For many students and graduates this can be the only way to get experience of working in their chosen career and successfully applying for full time work.

Some see this as discriminatory for those who do not have access to the resources to support themselves during an internship period and whilst some hosts are able to offer travel and maybe expenses you need to make sure that the opportunity offered won’t be detrimental to your financial stability.

Following some legal challenges, civil servants advise that internships that "do not breach minimum wage laws are likely to exist only in short-term placements normally classified as work experience which last a few weeks only".
Questions to consider

Ultimately the decision is yours but you may want to consider the following questions before making your mind up.

- How many weeks can you afford not to be paid?
- Do you have the status of a worker and are you entitled to payments of at least the National Minimum Wage? Is your host breaking the law?
- How will you cover the financial basics of accommodation, food, bills and local authority charges?
- Could you take on a paid part-time job and work-part time as an intern to help with your finances?
- What other opportunities could you make the most of in order to get the experience you’re looking for?
- What will you miss out on if you don’t take up the opportunity and do the benefits outweigh the risks?

Planning your finances

Try to save money well in advance through part-time or summer work, as covering funding is hard to find.

Research funding as soon as you start looking for work experience.

Organisations have set dates for the submission of applications and the allocation of funding, and you cannot usually apply retrospectively.

- Internships: Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services – policy statement