

Internships & Work Experience

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What are internships and work experience?

Work experience is an umbrella term that may include:

- A formal internship (not all companies will use this term)
- A summer job
- A few days/weeks working with a business to get hands on experience
- A placement as part of your course
- Part-time work
- Volunteering for a charity/not-for-profit organisation
- Work shadowing
- A course related project working with a company

Why is getting experience important?

A good degree is important to employers but organisations also want graduates to demonstrate that they have undertaken some work experience. Internships and other forms of work experience (such as a one year industrial placement) give you an insight into the working environment and help you develop skills that you can use within your degree studies and once you graduate.

If you want to break into a particular career, relevant work experience can give you a competitive edge. Some careers such as teaching, journalism and the environment require you to have gained work experience to prove your skills and commitment.

A successful internship can sometimes lead to a graduate job with the same organisation, as many organisations use them as a way of 'talent spotting' for their graduate roles.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/workwhilestudy/internships

Internships

Internships are short periods of professional experience. During an internship, you will be doing similar work to a normal employee of the organisation. They give you a taste of what graduate work is like and can help you make industry contacts. Many employers use internships as a fast track onto their graduate programmes. Perform well, and you might be offered a full-time job.

Sometimes employers use different names for their internship schemes. Law firms describe their summer opportunities as Vacation Schemes. Some organisations also call their 12 month opportunities internships, which can be confusing.

Summer internships

Often open to 2nd or prefinal year students and provide a brief exposure to what it's like working for an organisation, and are a great way to get relevant experience of a particular occupation or industry. Summer internships are typically 8-10 weeks, though some can be as short as 4 weeks, and during this time you will work as a regular employee of that company, taking on work tasks and responsibilities as part of a team. Look for them from autumn onwards.

Some employers will allow you to do a summer internship after your undergraduate degree, if you are going straight on to a short taught Master's degree. This is because it will be only 1 year until you graduate and could join their graduate programme. The same would not apply if you were planning to do a PhD.

Student Experience Summer Internships for prefinal year students

The scheme offers second or prefinal year undergraduates the opportunity to undertake a paid internship within the University of Manchester.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/workwhilestudy/internships/studentexperienceinternshipsforpre-finalyears

Internships for 1st year students

Some organisations also offer short internships over Easter or Christmas vacations. (often called spring weeks or insight weeks/days) Internships are typically paid at a similar rate to industrial placements, but pro-rata to reflect the shorter length of time.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/workwhilestudy/internships/springinternships

Graduate internships

Manchester Graduate Talent (MGT) offers graduate internships based within The University of Manchester for students about to finish their programme. These are usually 4-12 months long. Opportunities may also exist in external organisations although these are less common.

www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/graduatejobs/mgt/

You can find details of a range of other graduate internships schemes on www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findingworkaftergraduation

What are placements?

Some degree courses offer the chance to spend 9-12 months in industry between your pre-final and final years. These provide an opportunity to gain experience and put your academic skills into practice. If you are registered on a “With Industrial Experience” degree programme then an industrial placement is compulsory and you must find a placement. Each School or Faculty will provide support for students seeking industrial placements so ensure you seek out the relevant member of staff in your school.

If your degree does not include a formal industrial placement, you may still ask to undertake one. You need permission from the University to do this, so discuss it with someone in your School before taking any action. International students must also seek advice from the International

Advice Team as taking a year out without still being registered on your degree programme will affect your visa status.

You can find opportunities for placements on www.manchester.ac.uk/careerslink

Summer jobs

Summer work can be a valuable addition to your CV and a good way to earn money, even if it isn't related to your ideal career. Employers like to see evidence of working in teams, using your communication skills, problem solving, and other transferrable skills.

Casual summer jobs could be in tourism, hospitality, children's summer camps, assisting at conferences or festivals, or fruit picking. You can often find these opportunities abroad, which can help you to develop your foreign language skills. Salaries vary a great deal and may include benefits like accommodation and meals instead of a full salary.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/workwhilestudy/vacationwork

Apply to small to medium size companies

Rather than using internships as a part of their graduate recruitment programme, smaller businesses usually have a more immediate need for your help in their business. These won't necessarily come labelled as internships but rather as paid work experience. You might be the only student there, helping them with a new website, social media strategy or completing a project they just don't have time to deliver. This means that having the right skills and attitude is more important than what year of study you are in. Smaller companies usually advertise between January and summer, and you can find their vacancies in CareersLink.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careerslink

Internships abroad

Whether your course includes a formal year abroad or you are considering a shorter period of work experience in another country, working abroad can develop your language skills and understanding of other cultures. Some organisations advertise directly with the Careers Service, and there are a large number of websites and organisations that can help you find work experience abroad.

Unlike in the UK, internship students are not necessarily paid a salary, so you need to evaluate the benefits of the experience and think carefully about how you can support yourself. You should also be aware that there is no regulation of international work experience opportunities and some companies charge high fees to help you arrange your visa, find opportunities and plan your experience. Ensure you shop around, research the organisation and ask lots of questions before committing yourself. Try to find independent reviews by people that have used the organisation before.

If you are undertaking a placement in another EU country as part of your course, which is 3-12 months, you may qualify for a maintenance grant through the Erasmus Work programme.

International internships, placements and casual summer jobs can also be found via the Careers Service website, with information about Erasmus Work grants at:

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/workwhilestudy/internationalplacements

Work shadowing

Work shadowing is an informal type of work experience where you observe someone in their role to understand how they do their job. This is usually a short term activity (a few days at most) aimed at providing an

insight rather than hands on experience. This can be useful experience to gain in careers where few formal internships exist, or where the role is not one an intern or placement student can do with their level of experience, e.g. solicitor.

Work shadowing is rarely advertised and you will need to make speculative approaches to an individual or organisation to request this. See our advice on 'finding hidden opportunities' later in this guide, and our Jobsearch Guide, which you can also download at:

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/startingpoints>

Other types of work experience

Part-time work

Build transferrable skills like customer service and communication skills, team work and problem solving. You can also get relevant experience for some occupations like IT, translation, teaching or marketing. Brand ambassador jobs for big employers also exist and can be a good way to get official experience of the firm. See our guide for more information: 'Part-time jobs'.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/workwhilestudy/parttime

Volunteering for a charity/not-for-profit

A useful source of transferrable skills, as well as helping a good cause. Some volunteer roles can provide valuable career related skills, for example: event management; environmental work, administration, marketing, or retail experience. Some occupations require applicants to have undertaken considerable voluntary work, e.g. teaching, social work, working with people with disabilities.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/experience/volunteering

Funding for work experience

The University of Manchester work experience bursary

The Careers Service has a limited bursary fund which is open to full time undergraduate students to help you with the costs of undertaking career related work experience. This might be unpaid, a low paid role or where there are additional costs associated with taking up the opportunity.

This bursary can only be used to cover related travel, accommodation, and/or dependent care costs incurred as a result of undertaking your work experience.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/workwhilestudy/bursaries

A small number of companies offer scholarships, sponsorships or bursaries to students that are interested in a career with them. Whilst you have to commit to working for that organisation after graduation, these provide you with extra cash and guaranteed work each summer (possibly an industrial placement too if it's an option on your degree).

Other charitable funds and options for finding funding for non-study purposes are listed here:

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/study/nonstudy

Additional opportunities to gain skills, experience or knowledge at University

- Get a mentor to help you
www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/experience/mentoring
- Involvement in clubs, sports, societies and hobbies.
Sports: www.sport.manchester.ac.uk
Societies: <http://manchesterstudentsunion.com>
- University schemes like Peer mentoring or Pass
www.peersupport.manchester.ac.uk

- Through your course or additional modules at University College
e.g. Manchester Leadership Scheme www.college.manchester.ac.uk
- Talking to employers on campus
www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/events
- Representing your course or hall.
Student Reps <http://manchesterstudentsunion.com/rep>
Halls Environment representatives
www.sustainability.manchester.ac.uk/get-involved/students/rep
Residents association rep for your Hall.
www.volunteers.manchester.ac.uk/find-opportunities/get-involved-in-halls
- Gaining international experience
Study abroad www.goabroad.manchester.ac.uk
Global graduates
www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/experience/globalgraduates

Finding internships and work experience

Treat your search for an internship the same way you would approach getting a graduate job. For many organisations, internships are the first stage in their graduate recruitment process. There can be a lot of competition for internships with big companies and in most cases the selection process is similar to graduate jobs.

Maximise your chance of being offered an interview by getting advice on your application at the Careers Service.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/services/applicationsadvice

Remember not all experience is called an internship, look out for vacation work that offers an extended period (e.g. 8+ weeks) as this can be your internship.

Places to look

- CareersLink has the latest vacancies both in the UK and internationally www.manchester.ac.uk/careerslink

- Vacancies and news are posted on our Summer Internships and Work Experience Facebook group and Twitter. You can also join a Facebook group for your School to receive updates. Find these at: www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/services/socialmedia
- Graduate employer directories provide details for many large organisations. Often they have internships as well as graduate vacancies. These are free from the Careers Service.
- Some sectors like engineering, finance and law have their own directories that are available in the Careers Service.
- Exhibitors at our Autumn Fairs advertise internships as well as graduate jobs www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/fairs
- Some sectors/occupations may have specific sources of jobs such as websites, professional bodies or you may need to do more proactive job-hunting. See our Which Career? pages for more information: www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/sectors

Websites for internship and work experience vacancies include:

- **Prospects and Target Jobs websites**
These sites list many internship providers with articles giving tips and advice.
www.prospects.ac.uk/work_experience.htm
<http://targetjobs.co.uk/work-experience>
- **Rate My Placement**
Internship and placement opportunities with a range of employers, including student reviews.
www.ratemyplacement.co.uk
- **STEP**
Offers a range of opportunities for students in their second or penultimate year. Projects typically take place over eight weeks in the summer, but are also available as a 12 month sandwich year or graduate internship.
www.step.org.uk

- **Grad Cracker**
Internships with science, engineering and technology employers.
www.gradcracker.com
- **Enternships**
Internships for students with an entrepreneurial flair, working for exciting small and startup businesses. Mostly paid.
www.enternships.com

Finding hidden opportunities

Not all employers offering internships and work experience widely advertise their opportunities. Work shadowing and very short work experience opportunities are not usually advertised and a more proactive approach is required to find these.

- Start by researching the sector/location you are interested in and trying to identify other companies. You will need to be resourceful, try our “Which career” pages for suggested job and professional body sites. www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/whichcareer
- Check their websites for vacancies or send a tailored speculative application.
- Target your CV and cover letter to the organisation and position you are applying for and ensure you highlight why you are interested in their organisation, and what **you** can offer them: your key strengths, skills, suitability and enthusiasm. If they can't provide a placement or internship you could try to negotiate a few days' work or some work-shadowing, all of which can help your CV.
- Read news articles for that sector and let friends, family and contacts know you are looking for advice and work experience for that area so they can help you. They may have a chance conversation with an engineer, buying manager or IT professional in a company you are interested in.
- Use LinkedIn, The Manchester Network and Twitter to help you make contacts (there are several Manchester alumni groups on

LinkedIn). Use LinkedIn sector or profession related groups to find out more about the sector you are interested in, follow and get involved in discussions.

You can find more advice on finding hidden opportunities, making new contacts and using social media on our Job Search Guide www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/startingpoints

Unpaid experience

The Careers Service does not endorse working unpaid unless it is a voluntary role for a charity. Many unpaid internships are illegal and should be paid. We include some suggestions on our website so that you can consider some of the issues, understand your rights better, and know where to draw the line if you do decide to take any unpaid experience: www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/paytax/unpaid

If you do decide to take a short period of unpaid or low paid experience while you study you may be able to apply for a bursary www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/workwhilestudy/bursaries

Applying for internships and work experience

Employers will expect a professional CV with covering letter, or application form, and many large organisations require online applications. You will need to tailor your CV and application specifically for the role, so doing some research is essential.

Some employers may use psychometric tests as part of the selection process. Video, recorded and skype interviews are also increasingly common as a first stage in the recruitment process.

For more information, guides and advice
www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/applicationsinterviews

Masters students and work experience

Masters level courses are often just 1 year so you don't have much time to get additional experience to contribute to your future goals.

Additionally, you will not have a summer vacation in which to do an internship or other full time employment. Consider:

- Volunteering roles that contribute to skills or knowledge required for your course or future.
- Part time roles where you can gain particular skills or experience for a future career.
- Manchester Graduate Talent internships are open to Masters students for start dates in September & beyond after course completion.

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/graduatejobs/mgt

International students and work experience

Non-EEA students with a Work Restriction Stamp in their passport do not need to obtain permission before working while they are registered as a student at a UK institution. For Undergraduates this includes summer work, internships and 9-12 month industrial placements (as long as they are accredited and a compulsory part of the degree).

- Students must not have a prohibition stamp in their passport.
- Students should not work more than 20 hours per week during term-time (except where the placement is a necessary part of your studies).
- Students should not engage in
 - Self-employment.
 - Professional sportsman / entertainer services.

For Masters & PhD students different rules apply, make sure you know how these apply to you.

You can find out more information on work permits and your right to work in the UK during your studies on our website:

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/international/workduringstudy

National Insurance and Income Tax

Everybody who works in the UK has to pay National Insurance and give their employer a National Insurance (NI) number. If you get a job in the UK, you will need to get a NI number too.

To get your NI number, you need to ring the **National Insurance Number Allocation Service** <https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>.

For further information on National Insurance, go to www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/paytax/tax

Get some advice

If you are not sure what experience is right for you or where to find it, get in touch: www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/services 0161 275 2829.

Guides covering different sectors and industries and options for looking for part-time jobs and work experience are available in the Careers Library and online at

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/startingpoints

Get 1-1 feedback on your CV or application

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/services/applicationsadvice

Part 2 - During and after your experience

Make the most of the opportunity

Whether you are captaining a team, chairing a society or out on placement, make a good impression, make contacts and make the most of opportunities.

Make contacts

Joining a new organisation will bring you into contact with a wide range of new people. All of these colleagues and acquaintances will become your network – a very valuable resource. See our advice on building your contacts and networking at: www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/networking

Try to impress

Even if your work experience isn't related to what you want to do in the future, you should always aim to make a good impression with your manager and colleagues. For many of you, this will be the first non-academic reference you can obtain which will be vital for future job applications. It's a small world out there – you never know who knows who, who's talking to whom and who is watching you. Get to know your workplace. If people tend to arrive into work before 9.00am, maybe you should too? If your manager is tied up see if there is anything you can do to help with their workload. Small gestures can have a big impact.

Build your knowledge

Throughout your work experience, try to learn about what's happening in your organisation and its sector. Take an interest beyond your day-to-day role; ask questions about the organisation and how it works. This will help you develop your commercial awareness.

If appropriate, access training courses or conferences. Your CV will be improved if you can include specific details of how you've developed your skills and knowledge, but they can be expensive to fund yourself.

Is there an opportunity for future work or experience?

If your work experience went well, and you might be interested in working for the employer again it's worth keeping the door open by reaffirming that you enjoyed working there and asking about future opportunities to return. Some larger employers use internships as a talent pipeline into their graduate roles, which can provide a reassuring offer of a job after graduation if you would like to return to that organisation.

Ask for a reference

A reference from the employer acts as a confirmation of the work experience you have on your CV, so it's always worth asking when you leave if your employer will provide one. A good reference can be a way to assure a future employer that you will do a good job for them too. You can get more advice on references and how to use them here:

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/applicationsinterviews/faqs/references

Record your achievements

Record your activities, responsibilities and achievements on a regular basis so that when you start to update your CV or prepare for an interview, you will have a set of relevant, up to date and clear examples of how you've progressed since starting your degree.

A skills log will help you record significant events that take place during your work experience, and provide a format to remember the key points and draw out what you really learnt from that situation.

- It can be in any format you wish
- It should include both situations that went well, and those which perhaps didn't go so well.
- Pay attention to times when you use the skills you particularly want to develop.

- Review your log a few days or weeks after writing it as you may be more objective.

Suggested format:

- Date
- The situation that occurred and what you did
- What skills you employed
- What did you *learn* (about yourself, how you performed, how you felt about it)
- What would you do differently in future?

Assess your skills

- Do you feel you achieved your aims and learnt what you expected?
- Review your skills log and see if any trends emerge.
- What might you need to work on in future? How you might tackle different situations?

Use your experience to stand out

When applying for your next role – don't be shy, tell the reader the story of your experience so far.

1. Identify the skills required for the role you are applying for.
2. Use your skills log to find relevant examples you can use.
3. Look at examples from a range of settings, education, work & extracurricular activities.
4. Use the STAR formula to explain these situations in a way which makes sense and provides the information an employer will want to see.

S Situation (the context, background, why)

T Task (what were you doing/working on?)

A Action (what did YOU do to resolve the problem - not 'we'/'the team')

R Result (what actually happened, and how do you know it worked)

Advice on preparing for applications & interviews

www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/applicationsinterviews

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