Placements, Internships & Work Experience
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Part 1

Why is getting work experience important?

Having the opportunity to undertake work experience whilst at University or getting involved in voluntary work enhances your University experience and helps you stand out in a competitive graduate job market.

Most employers will look for evidence of work experience, voluntary work or extra-curricular activities in addition to high academic performance.

Gaining work experience has the added benefit of helping you decide the type of work you might like to do after you graduate. It can also develop and build your skills, create opportunities to apply your knowledge in practice and help you to start to build a professional network.

What are placements, internships and work experience?

Work experience can range from formal internships and placements to vacation work, part-time work, volunteering for a charity/not-for-profit organisation, or completing a course related project working with a company.

Work experience can also include work shadowing and Insight days (a few days working with a business to get hands on experience).

Placements

Whilst the term Placement can be used by companies to refer to opportunities ranging from one week opportunity up to and including 12-months, the most common type of Placement refers to a 12-month opportunity which is part of a degree programme. These placements may also be referred to as a: Year-In-Industry, Sandwich Year, Industrial Placement, Professional Experience or Placement Year.
A Placement Year will allow you to experience the ‘World of Work’ and gain invaluable work experience before returning to University for the final year of your studies.

Each School or Faculty will provide support for students seeking industrial/professional placements, so ensure you seek out the relevant member of staff in your school or faculty.

www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/placement

Internships
Internships are short periods of professional experience. This can range from one week to 12 months. They are offered over holiday periods. Internships from large employers are often advertised early, in autumn for a summer start so you will need to apply in advance.

Internships offer an excellent opportunity to gain insight into a job, company and industry. During an internship, you will be doing similar work to a normal employee of the organisation. Many employers use internships to fast track candidates into their graduate schemes so if this is a career area of interest to you we recommend trying to secure an internship as soon as possible.

Sometimes employers use different names for their internship schemes. Law firms describe their summer opportunities as Vacation Schemes so you may need to search under different descriptions.

Eligibility: Often internships are available only to 2nd year or pre-final year students so check before you apply. Some employers will allow you to do a summer internship after your undergraduate degree, if you are going straight onto a full time, taught Masters 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.
Sign up to the University of Manchester’s Summer Internship’s Facebook group. [www.facebook.com/groups/summerinternships2019](http://www.facebook.com/groups/summerinternships2019)

**Spring weeks, insight days and 1st year internships**

Spring Weeks are becoming more common amongst large employers, typically aimed at offering work experience to 1st year students. This is usually 1-2 weeks of paid work experience offered over holidays to give students an insight into a company. You may also find insight days, typically one day or less than a week where you visit a company’s office or participate in a particular event.

[http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/internships/1styearopps](http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/internships/1styearopps)

**Work shadowing**

Work shadowing is open to anyone, and 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 Job Search Guide, which you can also download at: [www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/startingpoints](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/startingpoints)

**Work Experience schemes exclusive to The University of Manchester students**

Building up your work experience is vital in your journey to achieve the graduate job of your choice. The University of Manchester understands that internships are a great way to do this and therefore runs a number of schemes to support this.
First insights - Autumn Take place during reading week. Last up to 5 days, open to any undergraduate student. Opens October.

First insights – Spring Take place during Easter vacation. Lasts one or two weeks, open to first year undergraduates only. Opens February.

Both offer unpaid work experience/work shadowing and an opportunity to gain exposure to a work environment. Employers are based in Greater Manchester. Information will be available when schemes are live for applications. [http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/internships](http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/internships)

Travel expenses may be recoverable through the work experience bursary scheme: [www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/bursaries](http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/bursaries)

Student Experience Internships (SEI) for penultimate year undergraduates
The scheme offers penultimate year undergraduates the opportunity to undertake an internship either within the University, in a charity/not-for-profit organization or a small business. All SEI internships will be paid, full-time and last up to eight weeks. Applications open in January/February with most internships starting late June/early July.

What types of opportunities are available?

1. **Student Experience Internships within the University**
   Internships will be based within Schools or centralised university divisions undertaking project work.

2. **Student Experience Internships within charities and not-for-profit organisations (Greater Manchester)**
   Previous projects have included developing a fundraising campaign, writing a social media strategy, launching a new initiative for the charity and writing a bid for funding.
3. Learning Through Research Internships within the University
   Working alongside an academic member of staff and/or other researchers undertaking a very specific research orientated project.

4. Internships for Disabled Students
   Internships designed to give students with a disability, long term health condition or learning difficulty the opportunity to undertake an internship in Greater Manchester.

Please check eligibility criteria for SEI opportunities:
www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/internships/studentexperiencointernshipsforpenultimateyears

Graduate internships with Manchester Graduate Talent (MGT)
Manchester Graduate Talent (MGT) offers graduate internships based within The University of Manchester for students about to finish their degree programme. These are usually 12 months long but can be as little as six months in duration.

Manchester Graduate Talent also sources permanent jobs and internships for graduates in Greater Manchester:
www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/graduatejobs/mgt

Other opportunities to find work experience

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.

Summer jobs could be in: tourism, hospitality, retail, children’s summer camps, assisting at conferences or festivals, or fruit picking. You can often find these opportunities abroad, which could 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

**Internships and summer jobs 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.

Internships abroad are not necessarily paid, 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.

International internships, placements and casual summer jobs can also be found via the Careers Service website, with information about Erasmus Work grants at:
www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/placement/internationalplacements

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

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: http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/paytax/unpaid

Funding your work experience
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. 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.careers.manchester.ac.uk/findjobs/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.careers.manchester.ac.uk/study/nonstudy

Finding placements, internships and work experience

Your search for an internship is similar to finding a graduate job, you will be using the same approaches and in many cases the same application methods. 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 or taking part in employability events. www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/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. Find opportunities:

- **CareersLink** has the latest vacancies both in the UK and internationally www.manchester.ac.uk/careerslink
- **Graduate employer directories** provide details for many large organisations. Some sectors like engineering, finance and law have their own directories. Often they have internships as well as graduate vacancies. These are free from the Careers Service.
- **Sector specific job sites** 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
- **Exhibitors at our Careers Fairs** advertise placements, internships, insight days as well as graduate jobs www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/fairs
Prospects and Target Jobs websites
These sites list many placement and internship providers with articles giving tips and advice.
www.prospects.ac.uk/work_experience.htm
www.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

Internships
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 placements, 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

Making applications for all types of work experience

Each recruitment process is different. Some employers will expect a professional CV with covering letter others will require an online applications and others will ask you to complete online tests before submitting an application. You will need to tailor your CV and application specifically for the role, so doing some research is essential.

Video, recorded and skype interviews are also 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 one year so you won’t have much time to get additional experience. Also, you will not have a summer vacation in which to do an internship or other full time employment as you will be completing your dissertation. 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 and after course completion. [www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/graduatejobs/mgt](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/findjobs/graduatejobs/mgt)

International students and work experience

Most students on a Tier 4 visa can work part-time, for up to 20 hours per week, while they study. Restrictions may apply, so please check your visa before applying for any work.

Most undergraduates can work full time during Summer, Easter and Christmas vacation periods, internships and 9-12 month industrial placements (as long as they are accredited and a compulsory part of the degree).

- Students should not work more than 20 hours per week during term-time including volunteering (except where the placement is a necessary part of your studies).
- Students should not engage in:
  - Self-employment or freelancing.
  - Professional sportsman / entertainer services.

For Masters and PhD Students different rules apply, make sure you know how these apply to you. Check with the student immigration team: [www.manchester.ac.uk/study/international/why-manchester/student-support/immigration/](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/international/why-manchester/student-support/immigration/)
You can find out more information on how 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. UK citizens should already have a NI number but international students will need to get one. To apply for your NI number you will need to ring the NI allocation number which you can find here: www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number

**Additional opportunities to gain skills, experience or knowledge at University**

- **Stellify Award** - Achieve the prestigious extra-curricular accolade for undergraduate students: www.stellify.manchester.ac.uk/stellify-award
- Take a module outside of your programme at University College (UCIL) and work with students from different degree programmes: www.college.manchester.ac.uk
- Get involved in clubs, sports, societies and hobbies. Sports: www.sport.manchester.ac.uk
  Societies: www.manchesterstudentsunion.com
- Become a University peer or pass mentor: www.peersupport.manchester.ac.uk
- Gain international experience: Study abroad www.goabroad.manchester.ac.uk
- Talk to employers on campus: www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/events
- Represent your course or hall.
  Student Reps: www.manchesterstudentsunion.com/reps
  Halls Environment representatives: www.sustainability.manchester.ac.uk/get-involved/students/reps

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Residents association rep for your Hall:
www.volunteers.manchester.ac.uk/find-opportunities/get-involved-in-halls

- Apply to Global Graduates and meet alumni from across different countries:
  www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/experience/globalgraduates
- Connect with alumni who can mentor you:
  www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/experience/mentoring

Get 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. Call the Careers Service on 0161 275 2829.

Guides covering different sectors, industries, part-time jobs and work experience are available in the Careers Library and online at www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/startingpoints

Get 1-2-1 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

Make a good impression
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 and who’s talking to whom. Get to know your workplace. If people tend to arrive into work before 9.00am, maybe you should too? If your manager or other team members are busy, 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.

References
Potential employers will contact references to ask questions and get an insight into your skills and work ethic. When leaving an internship or placement ask your employer if they would be willing to provide a reference when you apply for other jobs. 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 learnt from that situation.

- It can be in any format you wish.
- It should include both situations that went well, and those which 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 and 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 and interviews:
www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/applicationsinterviews