

How to get work experience and internships

Why is experience of the world of work valuable for you?

- To help formulate or clarify career goals
- To develop valuable skills and competencies
- To gain an understanding of the working world
- To apply your knowledge/skills in a real life situation
- To earn money and a good reference
- To have real experience to discuss on an application form, CV or at interview
- To develop networks
- To get a job – 20% of graduates obtain work through their work experience

...and for the employer?

- To help potential employees to develop the skills and capabilities required
- To help potential employees be sure that they are making the right career choice
- To begin to assess possible future candidates
- To promote a good image of the company and raise their profile among the student population
- To use the expertise and skills of students

Ways to gain experience

There are many ways to gain experience – some opportunities are very structured and formal, others less so. They can be found in practically all sectors, from major business consultancies to small charities, from government departments to manufacturing. Many of these opportunities are advertised, but a speculative approach to employers can also lead to some very valuable experiences. Download the [Temp work in the UK](#) and the [Successful networking](#) information sheets from our website for details of vacancy sources for the local area and for more information: (www.york.ac.uk/careers/infosheets).

Types of experience include:

Internships/placements

These are usually highly structured, sometimes project-based and may form part of an extended selection process. They are widely available, but are particularly popular with major multinationals, business consultancies and large 'blue chip' employers in the financial sector.

They are advertised either as 'summer internships' for up to two or three months or as more extended (one year) placements. They are very competitive and you need to apply early (often in the autumn of your penultimate year for the following summer vacation). Some are reserved for students in particular years of their degree or even for postgraduates only.

Some graduate roles may only be open to those candidates who have completed some form of work experience with that particular employer.

Placement Year/Year in industry

Similar to the internships described above, placement years are often available with large companies and typically last 9-12 months. These offer a prolonged piece of structured work experience and are usually intended for undergraduates to complete at the end of their second year.

Some degree programmes have a placement (sandwich) year built in. For York students not on such a course may still be able to complete a placement year through Careers and Placements. See www.york.ac.uk/students/work-volunteering-careers/skills/placement-year/ for details.

Work experience

This is a much less clearly defined term and it is used by employers to describe a variety of opportunities from very short (one week) placements to longer periods of employment. Some companies or organisations plan their work experience opportunities well in advance, but others work on a more ad hoc basis and may respond to speculative applications. Short placements are popular in the legal profession. Work experience opportunities may be paid or unpaid.

Step programmes www.step.org.uk/graduates-students

Step is a successful and long running scheme. It offers two types of paid opportunities to students and graduates: Short term work experience is usually around 8-24 weeks, and longer term internships between 6-12 months. Smaller businesses often find this arrangement very attractive for project based assignments.

Work shadowing

Some employers take part in work shadowing schemes whereby you can observe an employee for a short period, attending meetings and briefings and observing the day-to-day activities that make up the job. This can give you a good insight into the nature of the work and the experience can be used in CVs as evidence of interest and commitment. You will need to approach organisations that interest you either speculatively or through any contacts you may have. See our information sheet [Successful Networking](http://www.york.ac.uk/careers/infosheets) at www.york.ac.uk/careers/infosheets

Insight days

Some larger employers offer these short workshops during vacations. The aim is to develop your knowledge about a particular industry through presentations and business games. Some insight days are aimed specifically at first year or penultimate year students. Check the employer's website for eligibility and the application process.

Target events

Unique experiences and a wide range of opportunities to meet employers, network, build your skills and find out about employment opportunities with the chance to take part in workshops, business challenges and competitions <http://target-events.co.uk>

Student enterprise

Develop your enterprise skills and creativity while you are at university - for details visit www.york.ac.uk/careers/enterprise

Voluntary work

There is no shortage of not-for-profit organisations which welcome volunteers. Opportunities exist in many sectors. Working on a voluntary basis will be valuable in demonstrating your commitment and help you in your career decision making. Some employers, for example, in social or community work, conservation, the cultural and heritage sector, would expect you to have some practical experience before applying for jobs.

Voluntary work can also help you to develop skills which will be useful in any future employment. Voluntary opportunities may help you to get experience or responsibility which you may not be able to secure in the paid sector. Opportunities for voluntary work at York can be found through:

- *York Students in Communities*, which offers individual placements, team projects and group programmes www.york.ac.uk/careers/communities
- *York Students in Schools* offers you a chance to become involved in tutoring and mentoring in a local school www.york.ac.uk/careers/ysis
- The Students' Union offers its own volunteering opportunities, ranging from one-off activities to on-going projects www.yusu.org/student-life/clubs-socs/volunteering

Vacation/part time work

Do not underestimate the value of any part-time/summer work. You may have new experiences and develop new skills which are transferable to other types of work. Our website has details of local vacancies and can be accessed via Careers Gateway www.york.ac.uk/careers/gateway and the information sheet, *Finding part-time and temporary work in the UK*, details other vacancy sources for the local area.

Finding vacancies:

Careers and Placements website

All internship or work experience vacancies we receive from employers throughout the UK and overseas are advertised through our Careers Gateway (www.york.ac.uk/careers/gateway), including those offered by the **Student Internship Bureau** which works with employers from York and around the UK to identify suitable projects. Open to current students, most projects run during the summer vacation. Find out more at: www.york.ac.uk/careers/sib

Useful websites - general

- www.york.ac.uk/careers/work information about internships, work experience, applications/interviews
- www.prospects.ac.uk/work_experience.htm Prospects' work experience pages include case studies of how others have benefited from work experience
- <http://targetjobs.co.uk/first> useful information about work experience from first year onwards
- <http://targetjobs.co.uk/graduate-jobs/work-experience> graduate employers who offer work experience and internship opportunities
- www.milkround.com/ for internships
- www.instantimpactinterns.com/ for internships
- www.inspiringinterns.com – mainly focus on graduate internships, but useful to look at what's available for summer vacation as these positions may suit current students
- www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/ advertises internships and placements and publishes company reviews
- www.e4s.co.uk/internship-jobs/first-year-internships.htm first year internships
- www.anyintern.co.uk – internships in the UK and overseas
- www.studentladder.co.uk/Work-Placement/undergraduate-schemes-for-1st-years.html first year internships (searchable by other year groups too), searchable by occupational area

Volunteering

- www.york.ac.uk/careers/volunteering for voluntary opportunities through the University
- www.charityjob.co.uk/volunteer-jobs
- www.do-it.org useful database of UK voluntary opportunities searchable by location
- www.volunteerics.org International Citizen Service programme for 18-25 year olds who want to do voluntary development work abroad.
- www.timebank.org.uk

Working outside the UK

If you are thinking about working overseas, please see our [Working outside the UK](#) information sheet for useful information and links to online resources/vacancy sites: www.york.ac.uk/careers/infosheets under the *Job hunting* tab.

Making your application

Whatever kind of opportunity you are applying for, there's likely to be a lot of competition for the position, so you need to make sure your application is of a high standard. If you are applying for an advertised position make sure you read the job advert carefully so you understand what the employer is looking for. Do your research and target your application to the employer and the role. Have your CV/covering letter/application form reviewed by a member of staff in Careers and Placements and use the wide range of resources and information we have available to help you make a strong application. Check out www.york.ac.uk/careers/applications.

Sending hundreds of poorly targeted applications in the hope of "getting lucky" will not get you the job.

Unpaid internships

If you are undertaking an unpaid opportunity please consider the following:

- Who is the opportunity with? Rate my placement www.ratemyplacement.co.uk may have reviews of the organisation
- What value does the placement offer you? Will it provide insight, contacts, training, skills or experience that would be difficult to find elsewhere?
- Is it clear what you are expected to do throughout the placement? How will you be supported? How will the organisation ensure it is a learning experience for you?
- Discuss the financial arrangements with the employer. Are any expenses (such as travel or lunch) covered? What is the likelihood of paid work being available in the future?
- Is there a clear end date? We recommend that unpaid opportunities should last no longer than eight weeks.

Your rights

- If you are not being paid, then under National Minimum Wage law you may be classed as a volunteer if you have no actual or implied contract to perform the work or be available for certain hours. Check the government's guidelines on national minimum wage www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage/who-gets-the-minimum-wage
- International students should be aware that unpaid work may count towards the 20 hours of work they are entitled to do under their immigration permission and should check the conditions of any opportunity carefully, with advice from the [Immigration Advice Service](#), if necessary.
- If something goes wrong or you are unhappy with your experience – please let us know, as it will affect how we work with that employer in the future. You can also write a review or share your experience with others www.york.ac.uk/careers/profiles or www.ratemyplacement.co.uk.
- We ask all employers who advertise on Careers Gateway to abide by our Terms and Conditions www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/careers/employers/employer-terms-conditions/.

Helping to fund unpaid opportunities:

- **Hot Courses Student Money:** Online database search of funding available to students www.scholarshipsearch.org.uk which tends to focus more on courses but it is worth exploring to see if there is anything that may help
- **Local Councils:** Try your Local Education Authority or district council for any local grants available. Rotary/Lions clubs in your home town may also be a source of funding

- **British Council:** www.britishcouncil.org/study-work-abroad schemes for UK students to study, work or volunteer abroad
- **Turn2us** www.turn2us.org.uk has a search facility for benefits and grants. These are usually only small pots of money that you may be eligible for depending on your personal circumstances and background
- **Your department** – talk to your department to see if they have any money available that you would be able to access
- **University of York Travel Bursary:** the University offers a travel bursary for international volunteering projects – check out the annual closing date www.york.ac.uk/students/study-abroad/travel-awards/
- **Fund raising:** You may be able to work for part of the summer or in term time to raise money to do an unpaid internship or voluntary work. There are lots of sites with ideas to raise money to fund these sorts of opportunities. See www.gapyear.com/articles/travel-tips/a-to-z-of-fundraising-ideas and www.how2fundraise.org/
- **Careers funding:** In the past Careers and Placements has been able to provide funding to support a number of students undertaking unpaid summer internships in the UK. Please check our website or call in to speak to staff to see if any funding is currently available
- Some major companies may have funding available for those doing unpaid charitable work – check their websites or get in contact with them directly to find out more
- Check the news section of our website and our [social media feeds](#) for up to date information.

Note: some internships offered in this sector may be unpaid. Before starting an internship you should be clear about the length of the internship, pay and conditions, what you will be expected to do, and what you will gain from the experience.

Please note: The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. Careers and Placements cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites

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