# Work Experience Guidance

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This guidance document should be read in conjunction with the Work Experience Policy which outlines the University's approach to providing work experience opportunities.

## 1. Introduction

Work experience placements provide participants with a general understanding of a work setting over a short period of time and can

be a good way of helping young people make the transition from education into work.

The Open University is open to allowing young people of school-age (15-18 year olds) to take part in work experience placements of up to 2 weeks in duration, where it is feasible for a particular Unit or Department to support this.

Please contact Careers@open.ac.uk prior to confirming any work experience placements. Each Unit is responsible on behalf of The Open University for making its own arrangements prior to, during, and following any agreed work experience placement.

This document will assist Units in ensuring such arrangements are made in line with legislative and best practice guidelines. Where a Unit has been approached about hosting a work experience student, those staff involved in arranging the placement should read this guide fully, and contact Careers@open.ac.uk, before putting any arrangements in place.

## 2. Legal considerations

### Payment

There is no entitlement to payment for duties performed or expenses incurred. Employers are not obliged to pay a young person of compulsory school age undertaking a short-term work experience placement.

## Health and Safety

Although there are very few work activities a young person cannot do due to health and safety law, OU sites offering work experience placements to young people must provide them with at least the same health, safety and welfare standards as our own staff.

You, as the placement provider, have primary responsibility for the health and safety of the young person and should manage any risks. Please follow this guidance:

- Discuss the placement in advance with the organiser and take account of what they and the parents or carers tell you of the young person's physical and psychological capacity and of any specific needs, for example due to any health conditions or learning difficulties.

- Conduct a risk assessment (use the Young Person's Risk Assessment Form available on the Health and Safety Intranet site). Many OU environments, such as offices, are low-risk with everyday risks that will mostly be familiar to the student – existing arrangements for other employees should suffice here. For environments with risks which may be less familiar or higher-risk environments, you should take care to properly assess these and manage them. Please seek assistance from the Health and Safety Department if you are unsure or require further advice.

- Keep appropriate records. The risk assessment should be retained in the usual way. You should keep a copy of any forms completed for the school and retain these at least until the placement is over, keeping in mind data protection principles.

- Cover health and safety in the induction with the young person on their first day. Notify them of the rules, any risks identified, and the control measures put in place to combat them or precautions to be taken, and how to raise concerns.

- If the placement organiser asks you to complete their own risk assessment/safety checklist, please do this in addition to the OU risk assessment. They may also ask to visit the OU to confirm the safety measures as part of a general audit and this should be accommodated.

Please seek advice from the Health and Safety Department in Estates, if necessary.

**Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks**

No DBS (formerly CRB) check is required for staff supervising young people aged 16-17. A DBS check may be required for those supervising a child under the age of 16 on a work experience placement, depending on the circumstances.

In order to determine what, if any, checks are necessary, consideration needs to be given to the nature of supervision and the frequency of the activity.[1]

Please discuss this with Careers@open.ac.uk in good time to enable a check to be completed if necessary.

**Eligibility to work and reside in the UK**

You should check that the young person undertaking work experience is eligible to work and reside in the UK by asking to see the following documents:

- A British passport or equivalent (e.g. biometric residence permit or immigration status documents); and
- A letter from school or college confirming term dates;
- You should also ask to see their student visa if applicable;

If these documents are not available, please seek further advice from Careers@open.ac.uk.

Units are responsible for checking, endorsing and retaining copies of appropriate documentation before commencement of the placement.

[1] See Department for Education "Keeping Children Safe in Education" statutory guidance (September 2018) for further information.

**Insurance**

Work Experience Placements will be covered by the University's Employers and Public Liability Insurance, providing risk assessments are carried out (and retained in case of need) and that there is appropriate supervision. There is no need to inform the Finance Division or our Insurers on an individual basis.

## 3. Best practice guidelines and practical considerations

When organising a work experience placement, it is good practice to:

- **Plan** the placement in advance - look for a variety of suitable tasks and duties and provide a job description or similar so that expectations are clear. You will need to organise a visitor pass and access to IT systems where appropriate (but consider whether there are issues of confidentiality to address in doing so).

- Ensure there is a dedicated person to **supervise** the young person and **review** their progress regularly.

- Carry out an **induction** with the young person on the first day of their placement. This could include an introduction to the University and workplace, a tour of the facilities, clarifying expectations (e.g. how long the placement is for, what hours they should work and what to do in the event of sickness absence), establishing their goals and giving an opportunity for them to ask questions. It must also include a health and safety briefing and an

explanation of their responsibilities to maintain confidentiality of OU data and information.

- Provide **support** – consider assigning a buddy, mentor or coach who is separate to the supervisor.

- **Communicate** clearly to all members of staff who the student is, what they will be doing and for how long.

- **Evaluate and feedback -**meet with the young person at the end of the placement to review and evaluate how it went. You may be asked to provide a reference or complete an evaluation form by their school afterwards.

## 4. Useful resources and support

If you require additional advice or support about arranging a work experience placement on behalf of the University please contact Careers@open.ac.uk in the first instance.

If you would like further general information on arranging work experience placements there are a number of documents available online, including:

- CIPD: Making work experience work: top tips for employers (February 2014)

- CIPD: Work experience placements that work: a guide for employers (updated April 2012)

- Department for Education: Making work experience work for you: Study Programmes, Traineeships and Supported Internships (June 2013)

- UK Commission for Employment and Skills: Not just making tea…Reinventing work experience (February 2014).

## 5. Related University documents

Work Experience Policy

Young Person's Risk Assessment Form

Health and Safety Intranet site – 'Young Persons' tab of A-Z

## 6. Version control

**Version number:** 7.0, effective 3 November 2026.

**Summary of revisions made:** Updated that staff need to contact careers@open.ac.uk in advance of arranging any work experience placements.