

Guidance for Employers – Part One

Recruiting a Placement Student

This guide contains some useful information regarding the recruitment of placement students from Newcastle University. Whether you've recruited placement students in the past or you're completely new to it, hopefully you'll find some useful information.

The guide covers:

- What is a Placement?
- Before you Start
- Promoting your Opportunity
- The Application Process
- Offering a Placement

Part Two provides you with guidance around the management of a placement student.

What is a Placement?

Whilst the words placement, sandwich year, internship, year in industry etc. are often used interchangeably across different sectors, from Newcastle University's perspective a placement is:

- a **9-12 month work opportunity** which a student undertakes after their penultimate year of study.
- an **assessed** part of the student's University degree course.

The student would most likely be employed by your company on a fixed term contract.

Why hire a Placement Student?

Hiring a placement student can be an incredibly rewarding experience for you and your company:

- They can bring **fresh, up-to-date ideas** and skills with an abundance of enthusiasm;
- This is often the first full-time position students have held, and therefore **arrive with an open mind** and with few preconceptions;
- It can create a really useful **talent pipeline for graduates** – essentially a year-long interview;
- It can create a **lasting collaboration** with one or more Universities;
- It can give a current staff member a great opportunity to **develop their leadership skills**;
- Universities have a hugely **diverse population** and this gives you a wide talent pool to tap into.

Before you Start

There are several key points you'll need to consider before embarking on the recruitment process for a placement student.

- **Insurances** – if you are based in the UK, you should already hold Public and Employer Liability Insurances (or equivalent), and these would provide cover for the placement student as an employee.
- **Pay** – most, if not all Universities will not promote low or unpaid placement opportunities to their students, except for a registered charity.
 - Placement students are entitled to at least [National Minimum Wage](#), and experience shows that few students apply for roles with low pay anyway. [Glassdoor](#) has a useful page around average salaries for placements.
- **Duration** – The majority of placements are between 9-12 months in duration on a full time basis and is undertaken after their penultimate year of study. This is owing to the academic requirements of the University and so it's important to understand the hours requirement of a student's course before offering a placement.
- **Timing** – Employers can advertise for placements throughout the academic year (Sep-Jun) for the following academic year. Generally speaking however, it's a good idea to recruit as early as possible as students will start their search a year in advance of the start date.
- **Resource** – do you have the resources available to support a student? Whilst they are to be treated like any other employee, they will likely require a little more guidance and coaching particularly in the first few months.

If you have any queries about this, please [contact us](#).

Promoting Your Opportunity

Firstly, consider what it is you want the student to work on throughout the placement. Treat this like any other recruitment activity for a position in your company. Whilst it's a good idea to be somewhat flexible about the role in some cases depending on the student's requirements, a structured and **clear Person Specification and Role Description** will encourage more applications.

It's important that you contact the University straight away so we can help you promote your opportunity. We're a great starting point for **local companies** in particular as we have knowledge of the economy of the region. [Visit our website](#) and have a browse through our course list to see if we offer courses relevant to your position (if you're not sure, contact us anyway as we may be able to help).

Having said that, **try to be open-minded** about what type of student you're looking for. Unless they need to have specific technical skills, we advise you to encourage applications from students from a variety of subject areas. Degrees are designed to develop a plethora of transferable skills across all subject areas and you can often be pleasantly surprised!

Once you have a position ready to advertise, speak to the University about the different **recruitment activities** you can access, such as recruitment fairs, enterprise challenges, employer presentations etc. Getting your company's name and face on campus and in front of the students you're targeting can be invaluable. It also gives you the opportunity to speak to potential students before you recruit.

For more information about the ways in which Newcastle University can support in the promotion of your opportunity, please visit [our website](#).

The Application Process

Companies vary in how they recruit placement students, however the most common is a **written application/CV followed by an interview**. Some companies hold assessment centre activities prior to the interview.

When planning your recruitment activities, it is important to bear in mind that students will be at University and in many cases have a full timetable of lectures. **A lengthy recruitment process could be off-putting**, particularly if we're not local to your company. [Contact the University](#) to seek advice around this if you're not sure.

Further, whilst students are offered lots of advice around writing successful applications and performing well in interviews, this is often the first time they've been through a recruitment cycle. As such they may not be as 'polished' so some extra flexibility may be worthwhile.

Offering a Placement

If you have found the right candidate, we recommend you **tell the student as quickly as possible**. Students will often apply to multiple companies and any delay in making a decision could be off-putting and push them in another direction.

We strongly recommend that any unsuccessful candidates receive some **personalised feedback**, either over the phone or by email if necessary. This feedback is vital to their development and will reflect well on your company.

If the student accepts the offer, the University will undertake some **Health and Safety and Risk Assessment** checks to ensure the student's safety and wellbeing. Evidence of insurances and of a Health and Safety Policy are required, as well as role specific information such as a job description.

Once accepted, we recommend you keep in contact with the student prior to them starting. This **'keep warm' approach** can help the student feel prepared and at ease, and helps to ensure they don't renege on their offer.

Any support you can offer them in the period leading up to their placement would be beneficial. Some support you could offer include:

- **Finding accommodation** – some companies will source or even provide accommodation for their placement students.
- **Putting them in touch with other placement students** who will be starting at the same time, even from other departments within the company. If there are recent graduates or current placement students, it may be a good idea to put them in touch too.
- Providing them with a **mentor or buddy** who they can contact prior to starting.
- Providing them with a list of **things they need to bring/do on their first day**, including dress code, equipment etc.

If you have any further queries about recruiting a placement student, or to share some of your best practice and experiences, please [contact us](#).