

Guidance for Employers – Part Two

Managing a Placement Student

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

The guide covers:

- Before they Start
- Induction
- First Few Weeks and Beyond
- End of Placement

Part One provides you with guidance around the recruitment of a placement student.

Before they Start

We understand that there are specific considerations when managing a placement student, which can have different challenges to the usual management of staff. We've outlined some key advice below, which of course are not prescriptive. Remember to contact the student's University contact if you require any specific guidance – ask the student for contact details if you are unsure.

We recommend that before they start, you send them as much information as possible to help them prepare for their first day. This can be via email, phone or video call, or a combination.

This should include:

- Dress code – try to be specific and give examples.
- Where they need to arrive (postcode, building name and floor) and at what time.
- Can they drive? Where should they park? Do they need a permit in advance?
- Who they should ask for upon arrival.
- Contact number and email for both their Line Manager and the Reception.
- What time they are likely to finish on their first day.
- What they should bring;
 - Equipment
 - Proof of identity
 - Packed lunch (and provide details of any nearby shops/cafes etc.)
 - Own mug/coffee/tea!
- Remote working – will they need specific equipment and will it be provided? How will you communicate with them (Zoom/Teams etc). If using video conferencing software, does the student have access to a camera on the device they'll need to use? The University use both Zoom and Teams and so students should be familiar with these systems.

Further, students will have had some form of Placement Preparation activity from the University and so they should arrive at their placement ready and raring to go!

Induction

As mentioned, this is often a student's first foray into full time work and this can be daunting. A structured, thorough induction can really help the student settle quickly, whether in person at the office or remotely via video call if required. Things to cover may include:

- **Overview of the company**
 - What are the company's aims and values?
 - Who are your customers?
 - Where does the company sit within the sector, the local economy and the wider economy?
- **Overview of the team**
 - What team does the student sit in?
 - What is the function of the team and where does it fit within the company?
 - Who should the student report to?
 - Who are their immediate colleagues?
 - A tour of the facilities
- **Overview of their role**
 - What will the student be working on?
 - What are their goals and expectations?
 - What training will they receive?
 - Who are they answerable to?
 - What will they be doing during the first week and what programmes/equipment etc. will they be learning about?
 - What wellbeing/employee benefit services can they access and how?
- **Workplace expectations**
 - What is their start and finish time, and any other breaks?
 - What are the 'office rules'?
 - Can they eat at their desk?
 - Can they listen to music through their headphones?
 - Can they work from home?
 - Will they have equipment?
 - How will their Line Manager be contactable?
- **University requirements**
 - Is there a Placement Learning Agreement or other such document to complete?
 - Do they have a module to study alongside their placement, and can some of this be done during work hours where possible?
 - Will there be a visit from someone at the University?
 - Will the student be asked to attend any meetings/workshops, either in person or virtually, during working hours?
 - Is there an assessed element that requires something to be completed by their Line Manager e.g. a Placement Evaluation?
- **What they want to get out of the experience**

- What kinds of skills are they looking to develop?
- What parts of the business or sector are they most interested in?
- What are they most looking forward to?
- How does this placement fit into their overall career plan?

Throughout this whole process, it's important to stress that the student can ask questions about anything they're unsure about. Students often feel that they can't ask what they consider to be 'silly' questions and so reassurance that there's no such thing as a silly question can really help.

Some companies will **assign an Induction Buddy** to the student, who can help the student to settle in. They can be a useful go-to for students, particularly if they're a recent graduate themselves.

Finally, it's important to remember that as the employer, **you have ultimate responsibility for the student's health, safety and wellbeing** whilst on placement.

The University can provide advice and guidance on any of the above where necessary and **you will be provided with a University contact** at some point within the first few weeks of the placement. Do not hesitate to contact us at any point.

First Few Weeks and Beyond

The first few weeks or months will likely be a challenge for your placement student as they adapt to working life. Whilst Universities will often try to prepare students for the working world, through group discussions and activities such as prioritisation tasks, it will likely take time for them to put it into practice. Things we take for granted such as how to write a professionally worded email, how to manage multiple deadlines on our to-do list and how to answer the telephone correctly are often completely new to the student.

With a little patience and support, students pick up these skills and habits very quickly and, coupled with their enthusiasm and fresh approach, often makes them an invaluable member of the team.

Some things we recommend you put in place to help your placement student in their first few weeks and beyond include:

- **Regular 1-2-1 meetings**
 - Weekly or fortnightly meetings at a set time to discuss how their work is going, how they're managing and an opportunity to discuss any issues. Having a set time that is stuck to rigidly gives both student and supervisor a space to speak about things. If the student is working remotely, they may need more contact time with you as they cannot ask you questions as freely as if they were in the same office.
- **Clear goals and objectives**
 - It is vital that the student knows what is expected of them with regards to their work. SMART goals or equivalent can help students to focus on what is required of them. If they are working on a large project for example, it would be useful to help them break it down into smaller, achievable goals.
- **Formal Appraisal/Performance Reviews**

- As with any member of staff, we recommend you undertake formal appraisals with the student. This helps the student see the bigger picture and track their development against not only their University requirements, but the company requirements. Quarterly or six-monthly appraisals are commonplace.
- **Dealing with issues**
 - There may be occasions when a student does not perform to the level they ought to be. If there are any issues, it is important to address them straight away. Poor timekeeping, poor attention-to-detail and a lack of focus for example, whilst of course unprofessional, could be an indicator of something underlying. Getting to the root of the problem quickly can help in tackling any such behaviours.
 - Ensure the student has access to any wellbeing support available through your company.
 - If problems continue, and/or you have any concerns about the student, remember to contact the student's University contact for advice straight away.

End of Placement

When the student approaches the end of the academic year (this may or not coincide with the end date of their placement with you), you may be required to complete some form of **Placement Evaluation** and to sign off on the student's hours. **This is a vital component of their academic module.** Whilst we expect students to take ownership of this and discuss with you in good time, we recommend you make a note in your diary of when this is due. If you have any questions about this, contact the student's University contact.

You may also be asked to complete an **evaluation of your experience with the University as a whole**. It may cover aspects such as the level of support you've received from the University, clarity of expectations etc. This helps us to improve our offer to both students and employers year on year and as such we really value your input.

As you approach the end date of the student's placement with you, we recommend you have an **exit interview** with the student to both provide and receive some feedback about the experience. This could cover:

- How you feel they have developed over the year? **What skills they've improved** and what they can continue to work on to improve further.
- **What impact the student has had** on your business.
- What they **enjoyed the most**.
- Would they consider **working for the company in future?**
- Can you connect and give them some recognition on **LinkedIn?**
- Can you be a **reference** for them in future?

Depending on whether you and/or the student wish to carry on an employment relationship in future, you might want to consider:

- Can you offer the student a **graduate position** to start once they complete their final year at University?

- Is there a possibility of **part time work throughout the student's final year**?
For example could they be employed as an on-campus ambassador for recruitment opportunities at your company?
- Could the student **undertake a project** for their final year dissertation which contributes to your company's goals?

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