

# PLACEMENTS, INTERNSHIPS AND WORK EXPERIENCE

## Why is work experience important?

- Work experience makes students stand out from the competition when it comes to finding a job, many recruiters want examples of work experience, in addition to your academic achievements. Almost any kind of work experience can make you more attractive to employers and without a doubt, it is one of the best things you can do to make yourself more employable.

### Work experience helps you to:

- Develop your confidence, interpersonal, transferable and specialist professional skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, time management, customer service, problem solving, IT and software systems, following processes and procedures, sales and meeting targets and deadlines.
- Put your academic knowledge into practice in the real world and meet people, build contacts and potential referees for future job applications.
- Explore your options, gain an understanding of your chosen career interest or industry, clarify your own career aspirations and achieve personal goals and potentially receive a 'foot in the door' and possible job offer. Paid work experience can also provide a valuable source of financing living, social and travel costs.

## Examples of work experience

- **Internships:** usually 4-12 weeks long, often take place over the summer or vacations. They are mostly paid and involve working on live work projects and tasks. Find opportunities on [My Jobs Online](#).
- **Placements:** these are usually paid and up to a year long as part of your degree. Visit [My Jobs Online](#) for vacancies.
- **Work shadowing:** usually unpaid and just for a day or two where you spend time observing someone in their role at work. Useful for people who want to check-out different careers before they commit to them. Family, friends and university contacts can be a good place to start.
- **Work experience:** is often unpaid and short term e.g. a few days or weeks, where you may be doing some observing or getting involved in some work activities. Some companies offer tailored work experience schemes, however, most students make contact with their chosen organisation directly or through family, friends or [LinkedIn](#) contacts.
- **Research:** at universities, research institutes, charities, governmental departments and companies can help you to build on skills developed during your academic studies and develop data collection

and analysis, technical skills, funding and report writing, especially useful if you are considering an academic or research career. Explore [reading.ac.uk/careers/urop](https://reading.ac.uk/careers/urop) for opportunities.

- **Paid part time/vacation work:** can provide the opportunity to work flexibly around your studies and commitments. Opportunities may be available on campus and in commonly in retail, hospitality, healthcare, tutoring and office roles, many with a customer service focus. Visit [reading.ac.uk/campusjobs](https://reading.ac.uk/campusjobs).
- **Teaching, tutoring and proctor:** using your subject strengths and knowledge or languages to support students at different levels develop confidence and learn and develop their abilities. Students in Schools ([reading.ac.uk/sis](https://reading.ac.uk/sis)) offers the opportunity to volunteer at local schools.
- **Positions of responsibility:** this could include roles such as course representative, elected role in the Student Union, a role in a committee or society, ambassador or mentor at university or in the community.
- **Previous industry experience:** can demonstrate valuable transferable skills even if you are changing direction.
- **Sports leadership and coaching:** using your sports achievements and any coaching experience or certifications can be a great way to demonstrate commitment, communication, teamwork and leadership.
- **Volunteering:** if you have a connection with an organisation's ethos, you could offer your time to support their activities. Whilst unpaid, this is very useful on your CV in terms of experience and transferable skills. [Do-it.org](https://do-it.org) advertises opportunities locally and nationally. The hours you spend could count towards the RED Award!
- **Self-employment and self-made opportunities:** you may run your own business, be a social media influencer or vlog creator, write blogs or articles, provide technical support, produce music or play in a band, these can showcase your enterprising skills and creativity.
- **Clubs/societies:** if you have a responsible role such as chairperson or treasurer, this is useful experience to put in your CV or on an application form in terms of transferable skills.
- **Working for a family business:** even on a voluntary basis, can show your work ethic and skills
- **Professional placements:** we strongly encourage you to consider doing a placement as part of your degree programme. If you don't have a mandatory placement as part of your degree, check out the optional work-related learning modules and sign up ([reading.ac.uk/careers/placements](https://reading.ac.uk/careers/placements)). Flexible placement options are available, from a Professional Placement Year, to shorter summer placements which are all credit bearing. If you are unsure how to contact your Placement Coordinator or Placement Tutor, email [placements@reading.ac.uk](mailto:placements@reading.ac.uk).
- Company insight days and career fairs can be a good way to network and find out about different opportunities and industries. Take a look at [ratemyplacement.co.uk/insights](https://ratemyplacement.co.uk/insights) or [e4s.co.uk](https://e4s.co.uk).
- Contact organisations directly by phone or email to enquire about work shadowing and experience opportunities, as many are not advertised. Follow up contacts or industry professionals through family, friends, career events and presentations or via LinkedIn or social media.

**To grow your experience visit: [reading.ac.uk/careers/grow](https://reading.ac.uk/careers/grow)**