

# Work Placement – A Best Practice Guide for Students



Association of  
Higher Education  
Careers Services

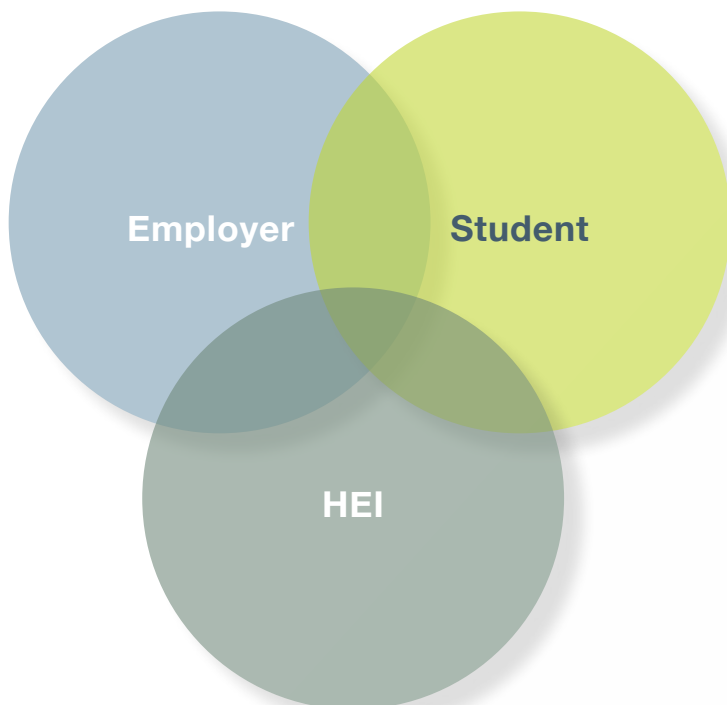
## AIM

The aim of this document is to provide a guide to best practice for students who are undertaking Work Placement learning as part of a course of study in a Higher Education Institution (HEI).

While the term Work Placement is used, the information may be applied and adapted to any work-based learning component of a HEI course, regardless of duration.

This Guide is intended to act as a reference document, to be used in conjunction with the detailed, course-specific requirements of the student's programme of study.

It is important that each student checks with their own HEI for specific course-related requirements.



# BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

It is important that all three parties involved – employer, student and HEI - work together before, during and after the Work Placement and that all are clear about their roles, responsibilities and entitlements at all stages.

---

## BEFORE PLACEMENT

- Have a clear understanding of the Placement element of your course and accept its implications in terms of preparation and commitment.
- Attend all relevant information sessions organised by your HEI.
- Write a great CV, highlighting your skills and achievements as well as membership of clubs and societies.
- Make full use of the support available in your Careers / Placement Service, go to practice interviews and attend employer talks.
- Where you are active in seeking Placement beyond the HEI system, make sure to advise your Placement representative.
- Be proactive in identifying suitable opportunities as ultimately it is your responsibility to succeed in Placement!

## DURING PLACEMENT

- Be aware of and comply with all HEI requirements, including assessment.
- Provide your HEI with any requested information such as your work contact details and keep in regular contact as required.
- Be professional in the workplace and recognise that you are representing your course and your HEI.
- Co-operate with arrangements for your HEI to visit, where required.
- Ideally, and certainly where required for assessment, keep a journal evidencing your learning and skills development.
- Most importantly, take every opportunity to make the most of your learning experience.

## **AFTER PLACEMENT**

- Visit your Careers / Placement Service to update your CV with your Placement learning experience, highlighting skills developed and your achievements.
- Apply and integrate what you have learned into your academic studies.
- Share your experience with fellow classmates, next year's Placement students and HEI staff.
- Use the experience as a basis for focusing on your career plans.
- Keep in contact with your employer to explore the opportunity for a graduate job or to source a work reference.

## **MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR WORK PLACEMENT**

- Set yourself goals at the start
- Be eager and enthusiastic to learn
- Be positive and proactive
- Ask questions, be curious
- Build good relationships
- Enjoy the experience!
- Request feedback throughout your placement
- Keep a diary listing new skills, achievements and training

## **EMPLOYERS WHO RECRUIT STUDENTS**

- Multi-national organisations from all industry sectors.
- Small and medium-sized enterprises and family businesses.
- Community and voluntary groups.
- Government departments, public and semi-state organisations.

## WHAT IS WORK PLACEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

Work Placement is a planned period of professional learning or experience, which may be accredited and where the learning outcomes are part of a Higher Education programme or module.

It is a three-way partnership between an employer, a student and a HEI, where a student is given the opportunity to work and learn in a professional environment relevant to their studies, in order to achieve set goals.

---

## REASONS EMPLOYERS RECRUIT STUDENTS

- Students offer a source of skilled labour and an insight into new practices being taught in HEIs.
- Students provide a flexible and cost-effective solution to recruitment needs and help ease staff workload at busy times.
- They bring new ideas and new perspectives into the workplace.
- Employers can recruit an additional resource to undertake projects.
- Employers can identify potential new recruits and create a feeder pool for future graduate recruitment.

## BENEFITS OF WORK PLACEMENT TO STUDENTS

- Provides you with the opportunity to put course theory into practice.
- You learn new knowledge and skills, course-related and personal.
- Gives an insight into working life, develops self-awareness and supports you in making career decisions.
- Builds your CV, highlighting your new skills and achievements.
- Enhances your employability and job prospects after graduation.
- Creates a network of potential contacts for the future.

## ABOUT AHECS

*Association of Higher Education Careers Services (AHECS) is the representative body for Careers Advisory and Work Placement Professionals in Higher Education in Ireland.*

*Its mission is to lead, support and facilitate collaboration among Higher Education Careers Services throughout Ireland and be the recognised authority on graduate career development, learning and employability.*

*All 27 Universities and Institutes of Technology in Ireland, North and South, are members.*

## ABOUT THE AHECS WORK PLACEMENT TASK GROUP

*The Group promotes the concept of Work Placement and its policy development through engagement with all stakeholders involved: students in Higher Education, Work Placement staff, academic staff and management in Higher Education, employers and their representative professional bodies, statutory regulatory bodies and Government departments.*

*It is committed to developing best practice policy and guidelines for Work Placement learning, producing relevant research publications and creating a forum for the sharing of expertise and experience among Work Placement professionals.*

### **Produced by the AHECS Work Placement Task Group:**

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT) | National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) | National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM) | Trinity College Dublin (TCD) | University College Cork (UCC) | University College Dublin (UCD) | University of Limerick (UL) | Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)

### **AHECS**

(Association of Higher Education Careers Services)

e: [admin@ahecs.ie](mailto:admin@ahecs.ie) | w: [www.ahecs.ie](http://www.ahecs.ie)



Association of  
**Higher Education  
Careers Services**