

UNIVERSITY OF WALES, TRINITY SAINT DAVID, CAREERS SERVICE

Work Experience Guide

Why do work experience?

Following are some examples:

1. I want to gain work experience to identify the type of environment I think I would be happy working in such as:
I want to work in an office
Working with people is really important to me
I fancy working on my own
Something to do with my subject
This sounds like it might be interesting....
A friend told me about that kind of work, I want to try it!
2. You may also want to do work experience to find out how others in your industry have got to where they are today – the best way to do this is to talk to as many people within the organisation as you can. This is networking which is probably the most effective way of finding out about jobs.
3. You may want to find out about the skills that are required in a particular job or industry such as:
Communication
Leadership
Problem Solving
Working on own-initiative
Or Job/Industry specific skills such as archaeological technical applications, medieval history etc.
4. You may want to develop new skills that you have identified you do not have but recognise are important in order to get a job. These can be transferrable skills such as team working or negotiation skills.
5. You may want to further develop existing skills – fine tune them so they are the best they can be
6. It is a chance to see what you do and don't like about a job.

The above list is not exhaustive.

How to look for work experience:

- Decide what you want to do – office admin work, archaeology, teaching etc.
- Decide where you can do it – consider travel restrictions – research public transport and locations you can realistically get to - usually you need to be able to get to the office by 9am and leave at 5pm although many local employers will be sympathetic to travel restrictions in rural Wales.
- Decide when you can do it – note dates you can/cannot do
- Read local newspapers to see what companies are featured.
- Use resources like Yell.com or search engines like Google to find relevant companies
- Talk to people in your network to get ideas e.g. course mates, lecturers, friends, family, Careers Adviser. You can also approach GO Wales work taster co-ordinator Helen Davies , based in Carmarthen Email h.e.davies@tsd.ac.uk
- Register with the Student Vacancy Database on <http://prospects.tsd.ac.uk> for information on work experience opportunities.
- When you have found a few companies, do some research. Some will have established procedures for applying for work experience which will be noted on their website so you will need to follow the instructions. Others will make no mention so it is worth phoning them to find out who the relevant person is that might consider an application for work experience. Prepare before you phone – it is important to sound confident and organised.
- Send a covering letter by email, outlining your reasons for contacting them – what you are currently doing, what you hope to achieve and what you can offer. Indicate your availability – indicate future availability as they may not be able to accommodate you now but may be able to do so in future.
- Send your CV ensuring it is tailored to that opportunity. Always write your CV assuming the position of what you can offer not what you can get out of them! Get it checked by a Careers Adviser.
- Indicate that you are happy for them to keep your CV on file if nothing is available at present and thank them for taking the time to read your email.

When you are successful....

Treat it as though it is a real job – be on time and ring if you cannot make it if you are sick etc.

Ensure you have researched the company and know everything there is to know including what the company name stands for, how they started, what they do*, what their future aspirations are, who their customers are, who their competitors are.

Ensure you have followed any instructions exactly – one of the biggest let downs for employers is a lack of attention to detail. Read the email or letter they have sent several times ensuring you have done all they've asked you to. If there are no instructions, you may want to find out, i.e. – what is the dress code, what time are you expected to arrive, should you bring a packed lunch or is there a canteen etc, do you need to bring ID etc.

Be confident. You need to indicate your interest and demonstrate you know why you are there. Ask questions – if they give you a task, ask why it needs to be done.

You will most likely be allocated a supervisor or mentor – find out what their job is and how you can help them.

Be careful not to criticise - they may have procedures that seem out dated and cumbersome but it is likely they are this way for a reason. Ask why things are done in a specific way and when you understand and think you can make a relevant contribution, voice it then and only then. It should seek to be cost effective and efficient however you don't want to suggest it to the person whose job may become redundant if your suggestion is taken on board!

Be flexible with your time and try to fit in with their schedule. There may be days when you have arranged to come in that for whatever reason they can no longer accommodate you. Be gracious and offer alternatives.

Be adaptable in your approach – you may be asked to do things that you don't want to do however this is a good learning experience for being in the workplace. Sometimes we are asked to do things we would rather not!

If invited to go for a coffee on your breaks, go. This is an invaluable opportunity to socialise and network.

Network – if there are people within the organisation who have valuable contacts or who will be beneficial to you, ensure you get their contact details and keep in touch. This works both ways – they need to know that you will be beneficial to them/their contacts so make sure you use all opportunities to shine. If they don't know what you are good at or what you are interested in, how will they be able to recommend you to anyone!

Ask for feedback from everyone you have come into contact with before you finish your work experience and specify that you are happy to receive constructive feedback in order to improve yourself.

Inform them that you are happy to help in any way in the future perhaps as a volunteer if the need arises (obviously you need only do this if you have enjoyed your experience and wish to expand upon it). Thank them for having you. A little appreciation goes a long way.

For more information see: http://www.prospects.ac.uk/work_experience.htm

<http://targetjobs.co.uk/work-experience>

To make an appointment to see Nesta James, Senior Careers Adviser, please email: n.james@tsd.ac.uk, telephone 01267 676830 or call into Student Services.

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