

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Student Placement Employers Guidance Document

Commercial and Procurement

Recruiting a student placement into your commercial and procurement teams can help harness the skills and talent needed to future proof the profession and to ensure a pipeline of commercial resource into the workplace. Student placements are exciting opportunities for students. For many it is their first experience of employment and the first step on their future career ladder.

We hope you find this guidance document a useful resource to help you implement future placement arrangements.

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Target audience – Employers

This guide is designed for employers who are considering funding their own student placements within their commercial procurement teams. It provides guidance to help implement these arrangements effectively.



What is a student placement?

A student placement is a period of practical work experience undertaken by a student or recent graduate as part of their education or career development. It is also known as an internship, industrial placement, or work experience.

Key Features of a Student Placement:

Real-world experience:

Work in a real job environment, applying academic knowledge.

Temporary:

Typically lasts from a few weeks to a year.

Learning-focused:

Gain skills, knowledge, and insight into a specific industry or profession.

Supervised:

Mentored or supervised by experienced staff.

Student placement opportunities are vast with placements being one option to develop workplace skills and to link employers with education partners across varying degree programmes. MSc programmes may offer similar placement arrangements and should be explored with local education partners. Undertaking upfront research into the best option available for you as an employer will help define and shape your requirements to maximise available opportunities.

Typically, the procurement profession engages with student placements over a twelve-month period to offer students the opportunity to gain first hand experience and put commercial theory into practice.

Student placements are an excellent way of supporting career paths which help grow and foster future talent, attitudes, knowledge, and the skills the next generation need for the world of work. There is no set structure for what the placement should entail and is at the discretion of the employer. Experience should be relevant to the student's field of study to help them to grow their knowledge and experience further to enhance their academic studies.

Student placements bring the employer and student multiple benefits. They support collaborative partnerships between higher education and create additional capacity to support the delivery of organisational objectives. Student placements can be paid or non-paid, full or part time and are for a fixed term period.

Benefits

There are mutual benefits for both student and employer undertaking a placement arrangement.
A student placement opportunity offers a student the opportunity to gain valuable hands-on experience to develop their skills and knowledge through practical application of commercial activity.



- Create a talent pipeline into your organisation.
- Develop future practitioners skills, knowledge and experience.
- Introduce fresh, innovative ideas and perspectives.
- Lead as an example organisation for student placements.
- Develop opportunities for existing staff.
- Increase organisational capacity to address professional challenges.
- Inspire young minds and support for local education partners.

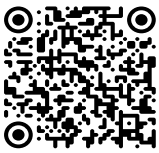
Options – What's available?

Student placements are available from most Welsh universities, offering opportunities for both private and public sector employers. Placement arrangements may vary across the Welsh education network and should be explored directly with local education partners.

The Welsh Government, in collaboration with the wider Welsh public sector has supported student placements from the University of South Wales' BSc Logistics, Procurement and Supply Chain programme, as well as Bangor University's Business and Management degree programme. Growing the network across the placement community brings together a knowledge transfer and strengthens the commercial profession across Wales.

There are eight universities across Wales listed within this guide*. To find out more on what placements, programmes and opportunities are available please visit any of the links below. For more in depth understanding of programmes available, employers should contact the institutions directly.

Bangor University



Aberystwyth University



Swansea University



University of South Wales



Wrexham University



Trinity Saint David University



Cardiff Metropolitan University



Cardiff University



*This guidance document signposts to the eight across Wales.
Similar options may be available at other Welsh education institutions.

How to engage in student recruitment?

Recruitment procedures for student placements often mirror standard organisational processes. Employers should engage with their HR and recruitment teams to share job descriptions and person specifications, which are then advertised and followed by interviews. They are self-managed by the employing organisation through collaborative working with the relevant education partner(s).

Placements are typically advertised directly through the host university and are circulated for promotion to students actively seeking placement opportunities. This is typically during the placement promotion window. Employing organisations may also advertise placements through their vacancies web pages.

Universities will have a deadline date for students to confirm their placement plans for their penultimate study year.

Advertising your opportunity

A job description, person specification, and advert are required to advertise placement opportunities. Employers should agree on funding and salary at the outset and include application details in the recruitment pack. It is recommended to have the application pack available to share with the university following the session, but it is not essential.

Information sessions can be arranged directly between the course leader and employer, either face-to-face or through virtual arrangements. An information session is not essential but is an effective way to share information about the organisation, the role, the opportunity itself and to address any questions around the position on offer.

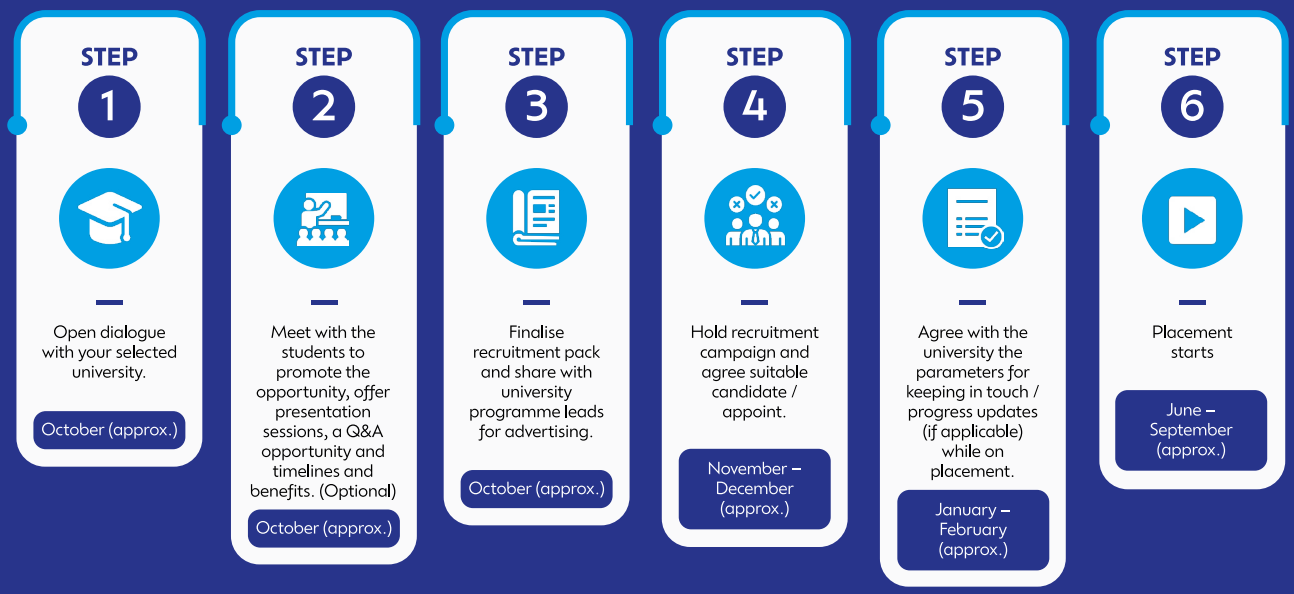
This will help students decide whether the opportunity is right for them and for you as an employer, and will allow an opportunity to answer role and organisational related questions from the student group. It also helps build a rapport between the employer and students at an early stage of the process.



The recruitment window

Placement start dates are at the employer's discretion. Typically, placements begin at the start of the Autumn Term, with engagement starting the previous year. Employers should coordinate with local universities to understand their processes and timelines. This will ensure the greatest opportunity for a successful recruitment. An indictive timeline can be seen below but the placement need will be based upon what works for the employer, the course programme and the students themselves.

Typically, information sessions and associated recruitment can begin anytime from October of the previous placement start year with recruitment concluded by November/December. Some recruitment exercises can extend past this date. Start dates are usually at the start of September or may begin earlier while the student is on summer break. Student availability reduces as placement opportunities are accepted. Universities may stagger employer engagement with the student pool to fit with their existing longer-term partners and pipeline intakes.



Most students have limited contact with their releasing universities while on placement. Contact arrangements and frequency should be discussed at the outset of the placement and agreed (where known) at the discretion of all parties.

Roles and salaries

Placements are paid or non-paid for a fixed term period and are advertised as full or part time posts. Job titles and salaries are at the discretion of the employer.

Examples include:



- Commissioning and Procurement Student Placement



- Buyers Assistant Student Placement



- Procurement Officer Student Placement

Placement posts are typically considered entry level posts and range between £20K – £25k per annum for full time posts.

Lessons learned

The following lessons learned may help when setting up a student placement.

- Plan ahead and allow ample time for information sessions and recruitment.
- Engage with universities early to gauge the available student pool.
- Consider which university program best meets your requirements.
- Clearly communicate workplace expectations, including conduct and dress code.
- Expect students to occasionally return to university for course essentials.
- Allocate a student mentor if possible.
- Leverage your employer network to gain insights from similar organisations.

Example job descriptions

Example job descriptions are available within this guide to support employers embarking on their first student placement journey.

Cardiff County Borough Council

Caerphilly County Borough Council

Welsh Government

About us

The Welsh Government's Capacity and Capability Team works with the Welsh public sector to offer commercial development opportunities, supporting the sustainability and growth of the Welsh procurement profession. For more information, contact **commercialcapability@gov.wales**.

Student testimonials

Student placements have been supported by Welsh public procurement teams for over a decade. Hear from past students on how working a placement year in public procurement has supported them on their career journey.

My placement at Cardiff Council was an invaluable experience that significantly enhanced my academic and professional development. Being part of the procurement team gave me the chance to put what I'd learned during my degree into practice and really build on that knowledge. I got to see how procurement works in the real world and experience first-hand how complex things like contract management and working with different stakeholders can be.

After my placement ended, I applied for a Category Specialist role and was successful in securing the position on a part-time basis while completing my final year of university. Since graduating in the summer, I've moved into a full-time role and am now in the process of applying for a Senior Category Specialist position. I never imagined progressing this quickly, and I truly believe this wouldn't have been possible without taking the opportunity to do a sandwich year placement.

I'd definitely recommend doing a placement year to any student thinking about it. It really helps you make sense of what you're learning at uni, gives you a better idea of what kind of career you might want, and boosts your chances of getting a job after graduation thanks to the hands-on experience.

Rebecca Parsons, Cardiff Council

The time that I have served in my placement has been nothing but invaluable. From gaining exposure to a real-life procurement function, to seeing and dealing first hand with the issues and hurdles that Procurement teams face daily as well as the massive change which is the new Procurement Act. Also, not to forget how valuable this time will be not only to my dissertation on my final year, but also to my employment possibilities once I graduate as not only do I now have a years work experience, but also done one of the three years that I need to achieve my MCIPS status.

John Callison, University of South Wales

Placement is an opportunity that has immensely developed my skills within procurement in just a few months. The theoretical knowledge applied in the industry is truly different from the shared experiences of lecturers. It was incredibly beneficial that my colleagues were more than happy to assist with their words of wisdom on properly tackling obstacles, while keeping it challenging enough for me to solve some issues myself.

I would certainly recommend other students to take up a placement, as it not only helps in understanding the procurement process in the industry and improving our perception of it, but it also fosters interests in specific areas of procurement. From gaining insights into public sector procurement and its goals for reducing carbon emissions to handling tasks like setting up meetings for tender evaluations, the experience is invaluable.

Syed Khazir, Caerphilly County Borough Council

Checklist

Employer Checklist for Hosting a Student Placement

This checklist provides a summary of key steps and considerations for employers looking to host a student placement. Use this guide to ensure a successful and rewarding experience for both the student and your organisation.

1 Planning and Preparation

- Define the objectives and goals of the student placement.
- Identify the skills and qualifications required for the placement.
- Create a detailed job description outlining the roles and responsibilities.
- Determine the duration and schedule of the placement.
- Engage with your HR and relevant universities to understand their requirements and to ensure the best possible outcomes.
- Allocate resources and budget for the placement.

2 Recruitment and Selection

- Advertise the placement opportunity through relevant channels.
- Review applications and shortlist candidates.
- Conduct interviews and assess candidates based on predefined criteria.
- Select the most suitable candidate and extend an offer.
- Complete any necessary paperwork and agreements.

3 Onboarding and Training

- Prepare an onboarding plan and schedule for the student.
- Introduce the student to the team and provide a workplace tour.
- Assign a mentor or supervisor to guide the student.
- Provide necessary training and resources for the role.
- Set clear expectations and goals for the placement.

4 Supervision and Support

- Conduct regular check-ins and provide feedback to the student.
- Offer guidance and support to help the student achieve their goals.
- Encourage open communication and address any concerns promptly.
- Provide opportunities for the student to learn and grow.
- Evaluate the student's performance and provide constructive feedback.

5 Evaluation and Feedback

- Conduct a final evaluation of the student's performance.
- Gather feedback from the student about their experience.
- Identify areas for improvement and lessons learned.
- Acknowledge the student's contributions and achievements.
- Provide a reference or certificate of completion if applicable.

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Digital ISBN 978-1-80853-611-3
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