

WORK EXPERIENCE GUIDELINES

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1.1 What does 'work experience' mean to you?

Mention the phrase 'work experience' and the chances are that some students will immediately think about a week - organised by someone else - spent out of school in a company or some other place of work doing something boring and repetitive which has little or no relevance to any future career plans. This 'one size fits all' approach to work experience is no longer seen as being the most effective way of introducing young people to the workplace¹.

Now think instead about the phrase 'gaining experience of the world or work'. You now have the opportunity to put together your own unique mix of activities that truly reflect your interests and future aspirations, and which will allow you to have a greater insight into what different careers and working environments are **really** like.

According to a recent survey (High Flyers 2014), over 50% of the top recruiters in the UK said that students who have no work experience at all are unlikely to be successful in their selection processes and have little or no chance of receiving job offers from them. However, there are plenty of other good reasons why getting an insight into the world of work is important, including:

- To help you to decide whether a sector is right for you
- To broaden your experience of different working environments
- To prove or improve your employability skills
- To earn money (possibly).

1. Work Experience: Impact and Delivery – Insights from the Evidence by Anthony Mann, Education and Employers Taskforce, April 2012

1.2 What does the school expect?

In line with the way in which many secondary schools are managing work experience today, students at Langley Grammar School are now responsible for finding their own placements (although the option will still exist to work with our local education-business partners 'Learning to Work' to source those placements, but more about that later in section 1.8).

To make the process as straightforward as possible, we want to keep the formalities and paperwork to an absolute minimum, so that you and your parents have the

opportunity to be as resourceful and creative as possible when searching out interesting, varied and meaningful placements. The school will not be issuing any paperwork for employers, with the possible exception of a letter confirming that a student currently attends Langley Grammar School. **NB:** This letter will be issued only if it is specifically requested by an employer.

Copies of this letter are available from Mrs Golding at morning and lunch breaks in term-time or from the school office in the holidays. During the holidays, you'll need to ring first (between 8.00am and 2.00pm) to arrange a mutually convenient time to collect the letter from Reception. Please provide the full name and postal address of the person who has requested this letter.

Here are some general guidelines that we would like you to consider:

- Aim for a minimum of **five days** of different activities between now and when you return to school to start Year 12 in September
- In tutor time early in Year 12, you'll be asked to talk about what you've done over the summer holidays to broaden your experience of the world of work, as well as hearing about what other students have done
- The five days do not all have to be in one block and ideally they should not all be based in one location
- Think instead about a mixture of shorter placements in different types of organisation or perhaps in different departments within the same organisation
- Your placements do not even need to be within the UK – here is an opportunity for you to experience the world of work in different countries and within different cultures
- This is just the beginning of a process which should continue throughout your academic life and beyond into your entire working life as you develop your knowledge, skills and interests, and broaden your horizons into new career areas.

You also need to think beyond the summer holidays and begin to plan ways in which you could explore some of these ideas for gaining experience of the world of work during half-term breaks and other holidays throughout the 6th Form.

1.3 Where do you start?

You may already have some ideas about different careers and job roles that you want to explore, but don't worry if you don't. Start with one of the following free resources:

Play the Game on Plotr

The Game analyses your personality, interests and needs in life to help you find the best careers for you - www.plotr.co.uk/game/

My Career Springboard career test

This questionnaire takes about 20 minutes to complete and again, uses your answers to work out which careers are a good match for your personality, skills and interests. Go to www.mycareerspringboard.org to begin.

Career Wizard on eCLIPS

eCLIPS is an easy-to-use online careers resource that provides regularly updated information on over 1000 jobs and careers – www.eclips-online.co.uk. Log on by using the school's postcode (SL3 7QS) and then click on the Career Wizard tab at the top of the home page.

Career Wizard is designed to match jobs and careers to your qualifications and interests, including the skills you would like to use in your work, the subjects you enjoy and the type of environment you want to work in.

Your action plan from your careers interview with Adviza

Look again at the action plan you were emailed following your one-to-one careers interview with an external Careers Adviser from Adviza for a reminder about the careers interests you talked about then and other useful resources you were signposted to at the time.

Video case studies

While watching videos of people talking about their jobs isn't a substitute for getting out into the workplace, these case studies can provide another useful starting point to narrow down possible options for further investigation:

- www.icould.com/watch-career-videos/ - there are over 1000 career stories to choose from with the option to search by subject (e.g. Geography), job type (e.g.

Engineering) or life decision (e.g. “I can’t decide whether to go to university or not”)

- www.careersbox.co.uk – this online library of careers-related films showing real people doing real jobs across all sectors
- www.careerplayer.com – here you have the insiders’ views on graduate jobs, covering careers information on industry sectors and job roles, tips and advice on applying for vacancies and profiles of graduate employers.

1.4 Developing skills for future employability

Well planned experience of the workplace makes a direct contribution to developing the skills cited as being ‘in demand’ by employers, such as team working, communication and customer service. The CBI (one of the UK’s leading independent employers’ organisations) defines these employability skills as:

Self-management	Accepting responsibility while being flexible, resilient, self-starting and assertive with a willingness to listen and accept feedback
Team working	Respecting others and able to co-operate, negotiate, persuade and contribute to discussions
Business and customer awareness	Basic understanding of the drivers for business success, the importance of innovation, risk and profit, and the need for customer satisfaction/loyalty
Problem solving	Analysing facts and situations and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions
Communication and literacy	Producing clear, accurate, structured written and spoken communication, including listening and questioning skills
Numeracy	Ability to manipulate numbers and apply mathematical skills in practical contexts (e.g. measuring, weighing, estimating and applying formulae)
IT skills	Familiarity with word processing, spread sheets, file management and the use of internet search engines

Armed with the information that you gain for using the resources listed above in section 1.3 (*Where do I start?*) and/or the ideas you already had about possible avenues you want to explore, be clear from the outset about what you want to achieve from doing your work experience. Set yourself some personal aims or objectives:

- What do you want to have learnt about by the end of your time there?
- What employability skills do you want to develop?
- What do you want to have seen?
- What do you want to have done?

Being aspirational is good, but you do also need to be realistic about what's practical and possible within the limited amount of time available during your placement!

The attached CBI 'Employability & Work Experience' guide for employers and students outlines a set of competencies that help to make someone employable. They can be used as a checklist throughout a work experience placement to understand how various competencies might be important at work, to keep a record of the tasks and activities undertaken, to rate your abilities and to identify priority areas for development.

<http://aces.shu.ac.uk/employability/resources/timewellspentbrief.pdf>

1.5 Degree courses where work experience is essential

There are a number of vocational degrees where university admissions tutors cite the completion of relevant work experience and/or volunteering as an **essential** entry requirement for their degrees, including:

- most healthcare-related degrees (e.g. Medicine, Dentistry, Optometry, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy)
- Veterinary Sciences
- Teaching
- Social Work
- some Law, Engineering, Business and Economics courses.

However, even if completing work experience isn't specified as an essential entry requirement for a particular course, don't lose sight of the key purpose and benefits of doing work experience. For example, how do you know if you're **really** suited to being an accountant and that you'll find the work interesting if you've only got a vague idea of what he or she actually does on a day-to-day basis? Students sometimes base their understanding of a whole career on what they see on TV, without realising what goes on behind the scenes, which may make much less interesting viewing, but is often the daily reality of some roles.

1.6 *How do you find placements?*

- Start with your own immediate network of contacts – your family, friends and neighbours, your parents' friends, your friends' parents, your parents' work colleagues; anyone you know may hold the key to a really interesting placement for you
- Find out what jobs they do and ask if they could arrange for you to spend a day or two gaining an insight into their day-to-day work
- Be sure to let people know what you're hoping to gain from the time spent in their workplace (i.e. your aims regarding what you want to learn about, see and do – see section 1.4 above), so they understand what you're looking for; however, be prepared to be flexible and adaptable if they suggest something different to what you originally envisaged
- If they're reluctant to offer whole days, suggest a visit of just half a day – it's amazing how much information you can gather about someone's workplace and job role in just a few hours
- While it may be tempting to go for 'the easy option', such as simply tagging along to spend a day or two with your parents in their workplaces, if it's not an area of work that you're curious about, push yourself to find something else that is more likely to appeal to you and that matches your interests and longer term aspirations
- If you have a specific industry sector in mind, but no obvious contacts within that sector, Google it to find out about organisations in the local area and contact them direct to ask if they can offer you any work experience
- Think creatively about other ways that you can get a 'foot in the door' to see first-hand what different jobs actually entail, for example:
 - a. **Shadowing** someone for a day (where you observe people going about their work but without actually assisting) requires minimal organisation and creates minimal disruption, but can give you a good insight into the rewards and pressures of a particular job

- b. Some large organisations offer formal **organised work experience schemes**, such as:
- NHS - www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/media/1966443/workexpteachersguide-final-.pdf
 - BBC – www.bbc.co.uk/careers/work-experience/
 - Work experience schemes in the Financial Services sector are advertised on www.directions.org.uk/getting-in/
 - Student Ladder at www.studentladder.co.uk/work-experience promotes work experience opportunities in a range of sectors including Banking, Professional Services, Media, Law, Science and Charities
- c. **Information interviewing** is a way of finding out about job roles when it's not possible to observe people actually in their workplace, maybe for confidentiality or other specific health and safety reasons; instead you meet them away from work (say in a coffee shop) and carry out a structured interview to gather as much information about their role and background as you can; there are some suggested questions for information interviewing in section 1.10
- d. Attend a **business taster day** (sometimes called an Insight Day) or a **STEM-specific course** offered by Headstart - www.etrust.org.uk/headstart/courses
- e. Sit in the **public gallery of a Law Court** to see the legal system in action
- f. Complete a **first aid course** and then volunteer to put your skills into practice in the local community (see section 1.7 below)
- g. Look for a **paid holiday job**:
- www.e4s.co.uk
 - www.student-jobs.co.uk
 - www.studentjob.co.uk
- h. Many universities, museums and professional institutions offer a wide range of **public lectures**, both at their premises and also as **podcasts**
- i. **Volunteer** with a charity or other not-for-profit organisation.

1.7 Volunteering

Volunteering is an excellent way not only to find out if you're suited to a particular area of work, but also to:

- learn new employability skills and develop your self-confidence, so boosting your CV and improving your job prospects
- work with people from different parts of the local community, including the elderly, children or other vulnerable groups, such as the homeless
- demonstrate a strong commitment to a cause, such as conservation and
- challenge yourself to confront either a personal phobia (such as facing the sight of blood as a regular St John's Ambulance volunteer), or misconceptions about stigmatised groups in society (such as people with mental health issues).

Think about not only **why** you want to volunteer, but also **what** you want to achieve. For example, if you are looking to provide evidence of your caring nature (as required for healthcare-related courses and careers for example), volunteering every week at a local care home for the elderly will be much more relevant than working in a charity shop.

If however you're interested in how a business runs, then working in a British Heart Foundation shop would help you to understand how the manager meets sales targets, implements marketing strategies, displays products for maximum effect and delivers customer service to the general public.

For volunteering made easy, go to www.do-it.org.uk . Enter your home or school post code and search for opportunities that match your specific interests.

1.8 Learning to Work's costed service

Our education-business partners 'Learning to Work' (LTW) offer a costed service to find one-week work experience placements within the local Slough area during the summer holidays for £60.00.

Further information about LTW's service is included in the separate documents:

- Learning to Work – private work experience flyer
- Learning to Work – private work experience terms of agreement

- Learning to Work – private work experience application form
- Learning to Work – private work experience parental agreement form.

1.9 Preparing for a successful placement – before, during and after

Before each placement

In the run-up to each placement, be clear with the person representing the organisation you are visiting, about logistical arrangements such as:

- what time you are expected on the first day and where to report on arrival
- the dress code
- a contact phone number in case you get lost or delayed
- arrangements for lunch
- anything else specific to that particular organisation.

Think too about how you intend to travel to and from the premises, and allow plenty of time for your journey.

During each placement

Remember that you are an ambassador both for yourself and although the school has not been involved in organising your placement, you will be seen by others as an ambassador for Langley Grammar School.

Nationally, an estimated one-quarter of students are offered part-time employment following a work experience placement, which can then sometimes turn into longer internships during university holidays and even potential full-time employment. So be sure you make a positive impression on **everyone** you meet along the way.

- Be punctual and look smart
- Appear keen and ask lots of questions about how current employees got into their job, the qualifications they needed, additional training they've received and what they find satisfying and challenging about their work
- Take notes either at the time or immediately afterwards while the information is still fresh in your memory
- **Keep a record** of who you've met (including their name and contact details) and what you observed or did; **this is becoming increasingly important as some**

university admissions tutors (particularly for healthcare placements) will ask for evidence to prove that you *really* did complete the work experience you refer to in your UCAS application; also, as part of starting to build up your own professional network, you may want to contact people again in the future about potential employment opportunities.

After each placement

If appropriate, email the individuals who helped you during your placement to thank them for their help. It may also be an opportunity to ask if they can suggest someone else from their network that you could contact as a means of organising another placement in the future.

It is also worthwhile to look back at your notes and to reflect not only on what you did during your visit, but more importantly on:

- what you learned about each specific job role and work environment you encountered
- the employability skills you developed and demonstrated
- how this has influenced your view (positively or negatively) on that particular job role, organisation or sector and
- what you want to do next as a result, whether that's finding out more about a particular aspect of a career or perhaps changing tack altogether and exploring something else instead; you may conclude that this particular career or sector isn't right for you and that's perfectly OK!

All this information will be particularly valuable when you start to think about writing your Personal Statement or CV as part of your application for university, an apprenticeship or other school leaver scheme.

1.10 Questions for information interviewing

Information interviewing is all about talking to people 'in the know' who can give you an insight into their world of work, but where they may not be able to invite to observe them first-hand in their workplace. The types of questions you might want to ask are:

- How did you get into this field of work?
- What's your background? What qualifications do you have? What previous jobs have you had?
- Have you had any further training or done any more qualifications since starting this job?
- What skills and personal characteristics do you think you need to be successful in your role?
- What's a typical day or week like?
- What do you like best and least about your job?
- Where do you think the opportunities are going to be in your sector in the future?
- What advice would you give to someone who's interested in your field of work?

1.11 Employers' and parents' responsibilities

In June 2013, the government simplified the rules regarding health and safety guidance for those taking part in work experience, by confirming that the insurance industry now treats students as employees, so that they are now covered by existing Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance policies of the organisation where they are carrying out their placement **provided the insurer is a member of the Association of British Insurers.**

Your parents **must** tell the placement provider if you have any behavioural and/or medical conditions (such as asthma) or other special needs that could be relevant for your safety and care while on placement.

Further information about the new legislation can be found at:

www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/workexperience/cutting-bureaucracy.htm

It is your parents' responsibility to check that the employer has insurance in place and that any behavioural and/or medical conditions are disclosed to him/her.

1.12 Useful websites for parents

The following websites, written specifically with parents in mind, suggest other useful resources and guidance on finding work experience placements:

- www.parentalguidance.org.uk/the-importance-of-work-experience
- www.careersadviceforparents.org/p/helping-your-child
- workingadviser.com/where-to-find-work-experience-for-school-aged-students/

1.13 Summary checklist

- Aim to complete a minimum of five days experience of the world of work by the end of the summer holidays, by combining different activities in various workplaces that match your interests; use the resources described in section 1.3 to get started
- Think about what you want to learn about, see and do during each placement and some of the employability skills you want to develop
- Check if work experience and/or volunteering are essential entry requirements for any degree courses you're considering
- Be resourceful and flexible when it comes to finding suitable placements and remember that one contact can sometimes direct you to another – just ask!
- If you're not able to get access to a particular workplace that interests you, see if you can do an information interview with that person elsewhere instead
- Volunteering lets you not only find out about different areas of work, but also gives you the chance to demonstrate and develop new employability skills
- Get the most out of each placement by following the guidelines before, during and after each placement so that you make a positive impression on everyone you meet - it may even lead to future offers of employment!

- Keep a record of what you do and who you meet along the way, so you can prove that you really did complete your placements and so you can reflect on what you've learnt afterwards

- Taking on work experience students should be straightforward for employers in terms of their Health & Safety and insurance responsibilities and should not generate unnecessary paperwork or bureaucracy