

**Student Guide to Work Placements at BMet – 2020/21**

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Welcome to Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMet).

As part of your studies at BMet, you will be required to complete a range of work-related activities that will prepare you for the transition from education into employment. These activities will include both Work Experience and **Work Placements**.

This guide aims to ensure you have all the tools and information required to plan, complete, and evaluate a successful **Work Placement** that is meaningful and relevant to both your course and your future career aspirations. You will also find guidance on building your employability skills, communicating with employers, and preparing for the ‘world of work’.

**Work Experience and Work Placements.**

Work Experience is any activity that gives you the opportunity to prepare for work. These activities are generally completed in the classroom, with support from your tutor, and may focus on building and enhancing your CV, interview skills and employability skills. An electronic record of these activities should be maintained, and you will work with your tutor to ensure you make consistent progress.

In addition to Work Experience, depending on the type of course and level at which you are studying, there is likely to be a requirement to complete a **Work Placement**.

**Work Placements** are usually time spent on an employer’s premises in which you will carry out tasks or duties in the same way as an employee, but with the emphasis on the learning aspects of the experience.

**Work Placement – minimum hours**

BMet has an expectation for the minimum number of hours needed for a Work Placement each academic year, depending on which level your course is at:

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| **Course** | **Activity** | **Minimum Hours**  **(per academic year)** |
| **L1 Foundation** | Short Work Placement that takes place with an employer (\*) | 10 |
| **L2** | Short Work Placement that takes place with an employer (\*) | 10 |
| **L3** | Short Work Placement that takes place with an employer (\*) | 15 |

**You will be expected to identify a suitable employer and contact them independently to arrange your Placement. This will ideally take place in the employer’s premises but if this is not possible e.g. due to Covid-19, we will help you to find another opportunity e.g. a ‘virtual’ Placement or other form of work experience.**

**What will you gain from your Work Placement?**

For many of you this could be your first involvement in the world of work, and whilst this may seem daunting, it will be rewarding as you start to consider life after college. Your **Work Placement** will:

* Help you to explore different career options.
* Give you valuable, realistic experience of a real working environment.
* Build your confidence, relationship, and communication skills.
* Develop a range of work-based knowledge and skills.
* Give you the opportunity to share your ideas and make contacts within an industry that interests you.
* Boost your CV and if relevant, your University (UCAS) application,
* Help you to demonstrate your abilities to potential future employers.
* Appreciate the relevance of your course and how it can be applied in a work situation.
* Help you explore possible career paths, or equally importantly identify types of work you may want to avoid.

**Finding a Work Placement**

An important part of your introduction to the world of work will be developing your confidence when communicating with employers and understanding what challenges there can be when trying to find employment. Therefore, BMet expects you to find your own **Work Placement**.

Just like looking for a job, there will likely be plenty of competition when you are looking for your **Work Placement**, so it is important to create a good impression!

One way to do this is to have a great Curriculum Vitae (CV). A well put together CV is like a ‘sales pitch’ to potential employers, showing them what you can offer to their business. It should highlight your strengths and help to explain why you would be an outstanding candidate for a **Work Placement**. Your CV is never ‘done’, it is a working document that you will continue to add to as you gain new skills and experiences throughout your working life, so keep it up to date!

*Whilst there is no standard template for a good CV, there is a lot of information and guidance available online to help you, such as*[*The Scholarship Hub*](https://www.thescholarshiphub.org.uk/how-write-good-cv-guide-students/)*,*[*Online CV*](https://www.online-cv.co.uk/student-cv/)*and*[*UCAS*](https://www.ucas.com/careers/getting-job/how-write-cv)

*You can also get help from your tutor and the Work Placement Team.*

**Important points to remember:**

* Your **Work Placement** must be meaningful, relevant to your course of study and in addition to any part time work.
* When communicating with employers you are representing both yourself and BMet and communication should always remain formal and professional.

**Tips for finding your own Work Placement**

* Familiarise yourself with the types of jobs that are available within your area of interest and remember to think creatively! For example, if you are doing Accountancy, you are not limited to **Work Placements** within a firm of Accountants, a **Work Placement** within a Finance Department of a different type of company could be just as relevant.
* Do your research before contacting companies. Browse their website to see if they mention any opportunities for work experience. If they do, try to identify if there is a member of staff responsible (they may be referred to as a Volunteer Coordinator or a Recruitment Manager) and if you can, refer to them personally when you contact the employer.
* Speak to friends or family who work within the area you are interested in; they may be able to speak to someone where they work who can help you to find a **Work Placement**.
* Once you have identified a suitable employer, send an enquiry by email asking about the possibility of doing a **Work Placement**. Explain why you want to complete **Work Placement** with them and attach an up to date, professional CV. You can use the template at the end of this Guide as an example of the information you should include.

**Support with Work Placements**

There are a lot of expert resources online to help you find a relevant and meaningful **Work Placement**. You can explore these sites to learn more about your career options and the relevant companies that you may wish to contact. The table below contains some examples:

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| [Prospects](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/) has lots of advice about contacting employers, tools such as a career planner and job match, and hundreds of job profiles.  [Glassdoor](http://www.glassdoor.co.uk/) is a job search site but is also a useful site for finding out more about companies before applying. It has reviews from employees at thousands of companies talking about what it is really like to work there (like a ‘Tripadvisor for jobs’!).  It also shows salary ranges and information about the interview process as well as giving each company a star rating.  [Start](https://guest.startprofile.com/) is a careers guidance website that offers advice about career pathways, qualifications, employability skills and has lots of tips for finding and securing work experience.  [My World of Work](https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/tools/skills/start) has a Skills Explorer Tool that helps match your skills with a career that is right for you.  [Changing Education's](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtmg9LlAzOzlpaz9FhjjloQ) ‘Spotlight Sessions’ is a series of short videos from senior staff in a huge range of fields. They offer advice about getting into their industry as well as sharing experiences of what day-to-day life is like in their company.  [The Festival of Enterprise](https://www.festivalofenterprise.co.uk/webinars/) has produced a series of free webinars, discussing ideas around business skills, networking, and success in a post-Covid world. All past webinars are stored on their website, so there is plenty of great content to browse through.  [Charity Job](http://www.charityjob.org.uk/) lists paid and voluntary opportunities with a huge range of charities - from Age Concern to the Zoological Society, so you will be sure to find something you are passionate about here.  [Save the Student](https://www.savethestudent.org/student-jobs/the-ultimate-guide-to-volunteering.html) has a great guide on the benefits of volunteering and further links to help you find the perfect role.  It is also worth getting signed up to [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/) and building up your network of contacts.  If you aren’t familiar with the social network there is an excellent starters guide [here](https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students). |

**Preparing for Work Placement**

Once a **Work Placement** has been arranged with an employer and agreed by your tutor, a **Risk Assessment** will take place to ensure that you will work in a safe and organised environment.

Once the **Risk Assessment** is complete, you will receive a **Work Placement Learner Contract**, confirming the dates and times of your **Work Placement**. This will need to be signed by you, your parent/guardian, your tutor, and the employer before your **Work Placement** can begin.

**Preparing for your first day**

To help your first day go smoothly, prepare in advance by considering the following questions:

* How will I get there?
* Do I need help with travel costs or equipment?
* How long will it take me to get to my **Work Placement**?
* Where should I go on my first day?
* Who should I ask for when I get there?
* Have I been assigned a Supervisor or Mentor?
* What are my working hours?
* Do I know what the dress code is at the **Work Placement**?
* What shall I do for lunch?

If you are unsure about any of these questions, speak to your tutor, the **Work Placement** team, or ask your employer contact before the **Work Placement** starts. Think about doing a trial journey beforehand.

**Developing your employability skills**

Your **Work Placement** will give you an insight into how it feels and what is required to work in a specific industry. It will allow you to develop the skills you need to help you to find employment and progress in your chosen career. These ‘employability skills’ are sometimes referred to as ‘soft skills’ or ‘key skills’ and are usually relevant to any industry. Improving your communication, teamwork, time management, creativity, confidence, independence, and problem-solving skills for example, will help you stand out in any interview and make you more employable. You will work with your tutor throughout your course to explore your own strengths and areas for development and there is also support available to you from the Careers team and your Work Placement Coordinator.

***Resources for developing employability skills.***

[Barclays Life Skills](https://barclayslifeskills.com/young-people/) has lots of tips for improving your CV and cover letter and can assist with identifying and building on your skills and interests. It will also offer you useful advice on budgeting and handling your money.

The DfE have launched a [Skills Tool Kit](https://theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk/) signposting a range of free online courses to boost your employability.​​​​​

**During Your Work Placement**

* You should expect to receive a Health and Safety Induction on your first day of your **Work Placement** detailing evacuation/emergency procedures and any relevant Health and Safety information that you need to know.
* If you are unable to attend your **Work Placement** due to illness, or for any other reason, you must notify your tutor on the first day of absence, and on each day that you cannot attend after that.
* Should you have an accident whilst undertaking your **Work Placement**, you must notify your tutor at the first opportunity. They will notify the Work Placement Health and Safety Coordinators on your behalf.
* Should any concerns or issues arise during your **Work Placement**, you should notify your tutor immediately. Any safeguarding issues will be addressed in line with the College Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
* You must keep a timesheet and activity log throughout your **Work Placement** which needs to be signed off by your Supervisor. An example timesheet is included at the end of this Guide.
* You **SHOULD NOT** move to a different **Work Placement** without the prior agreement of the Work Placement Health and Safety Coordinators. If the Work Placement Coordinator finds that a student has started a **Work Placement** that has not been risk-assessed, they will contact the employer, student, and tutor to inform them that the **Work Placement** cannot continue until the necessary checks have been carried out.

**Professional behaviours and attitudes**

* **Agreed hours** - you will need to agree your work schedule with your employer before starting your **Work Placement** and ensure that your hours meet the minimum requirements for your course. **Work Placements** may take place in a block e.g. over the course of a week, or for one day per week over a longer period. In a typical office environment, you may be expected to work 9am – 5pm with up to an hour for lunch, but this can vary greatly depending on your role and the sector you are working in.
* **Be Punctual** - you should arrive a few minutes early to ensure you are ready to work for your scheduled start time. Keep a record of your start and finish times.
* **Dress appropriately** - most workplaces will have a ‘dress code’ that you should comply with and this will vary, depending on the kind of industry you are working in. If you are expected to wear a uniform or require **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** to carry out your role, this should be provided by your employer. Discuss this with your employer before beginning your **Work Placement** to ensure you will be appropriately and safely dressed.
* **Positive attitude** – **Work Placements**, like many new experiences, can be daunting and it is quite normal for you to feel nervous or unsure before starting. This does not mean you need to change your **Work Placement**. Learning to cope with new places and people is all part of your course and it prepares you for the world of work.

**Reflecting on your Work Placement (evaluation)**

Once you have completed your **Work Placement**, remember to:

* Write a letter of thanks to the employer/Supervisor.
* Share your timesheet and activity log with your Tutor and confirm that you have met the minimum requirements for **Work Placement** hours.
* Reflect on how the experience has helped you develop your skills and knowledge and update your CV accordingly.

**Contacts and Support**

You will be working with your tutor to complete work experience and to record **Work Placements**. Should you require further assistance with finding a **Work Placement**, writing your CV and cover letter, or communicating with employers you can also contact your **Work Placement Coordinator**.

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| **Work Placement Coordinators:**  Andrew Fisher (Sutton Coldfield College) – [andrew.fisher@bmet.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.fisher@bmet.ac.uk)  Coby Hatton (James Watt College) – [coby.hatton@bmet.ac.uk](mailto:coby.hatton@bmet.ac.uk)  Suzanna Hussain (Matthew Boulton College) – [suzanna.hussain@bmet.ac.uk](mailto:suzanna.hussain@bmet.ac.uk) |

Access the ‘**Work Placement**’ module on Moodle or MS Teams to see your **Work Placement Coordinator’s** Availability Schedule and to request an appointment. You will also find more information and guidance there, including letter templates and other resources.