

ASK us about...



Job Prospects

Finding a placement or work experience

With the number of people graduating continuing to rise, having a good degree is no longer enough to make you stand out from the crowd. Employers value work experience highly, particularly experience that is relevant to the role they are recruiting for. Having experience can make a huge difference to your applications, so the earlier you start and the more you can do, the better your CV will look!

Need more help? Just ASK!

Call in for initial advice at a Help Zone "Drop In" in Student Services, who will refer you to a career specialist if required:-

- City North Campus, First Floor Baker Building
- City Centre Campus, Gosta Green, Room G27
- City South Campus, Second Floor Seacole Building
- Millennium Point: Ask at reception

Telephone 0121 3315588 or visit our web pages for dates and times of Drop Ins and services at other sites.

Careers and Job Prospects websites:

- <https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers>
- www.bcu.ac.uk/alumni/careers

Online e-guidance service:

- www.bcu.ac.uk/askus

Social Media:

- Facebook: [BCUemploymentzone](https://www.facebook.com/BCUemploymentzone)
- Twitter: [@employmentzone](https://twitter.com/employmentzone)

View our full range of leaflets online:

<https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers> >> Quick Links >> Handouts

Undertaking a placement or work experience carries the following benefits:

- Enables you to gain and develop 'transferable skills' such as team working, communication and commercial awareness
- You are likely to gain a graduate job quicker than those without experience – you may even be offered a job with your placement employer
- It helps you to 'test' your job ideas.
- You gain experience which enhances your CV

Resources

The BCU Careers and Job Prospects online vacancy database:- <https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers> then click on **Find a Job**

Other Useful websites

- www.prospects.ac.uk
- www.work-experience.org
- www.work-placement.co.uk
- www.e4s.co.uk
- www.topinternships.com
- www.hobsons.com
- www.support4learning.org.uk
- www.fledglings.net
- www.step.org.uk
- www.timebank.org.uk

The "Job Seekers Web Guide" leaflet on our iCity pages may also be useful to you.

Useful publications

The Student Services Library contains a number of leaflets, directories, DVDs and books. These are available at City North, City South and City Centre campuses, or on request at other campuses

What other activity could I do?

One of the other skills employers like to see is **networking**. It's amazing what you can find out from the people you already know. This is how you generate contacts, names, and a chance to go and ask questions (an information interview rather than a recruitment interview). Don't forget about your Social Networks too. Websites such as LinkedIn and Twitter can be excellent for finding and approaching contacts.

For more help, see our leaflet **Networking and Social Networking** available on our iCity pages and from Student Services.

I've done my research – now what?

Now you need to find out how to apply – is there an online application form? Are they currently advertising? Or is this a speculative approach - that is, you do not know whether or not they have any placement opportunities but this is the company for you!

Whatever your method of approach it needs to be a good one. Look at the sections on our iCity pages about CVs and Covering Letters.

Do a rough draft of your covering letter, CV and your application and get it checked by a Careers Consultant; for more details, see our the "Need More Help" section.

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Careers and Job Prospects August 2011

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T: 0121 331 5588
www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services

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What type of work experience can I do?

It is important to remember that all work gives you some experience, including bar work, volunteering and Saturday jobs. The experience could take the form of short-term, long-term (e.g. one year) or part-time employment, and could be paid or unpaid.

Work experience comes under a number of different names, including:

Sandwich and industrial placements: a fixed-term period of assessed, paid work that forms part of your degree. It often lasts for a full year.

Work Placement: A period of work experience, which can be paid or unpaid. This can be arranged through your university with an employer or by yourself and is for an agreed period of time, typically 1-2 weeks.

Work Shadowing: A more informal type of work experience where you 'shadow' or observe a member of staff performing their job. This can be valuable in helping you find out more about a job or a career. It is often the easiest to arrange as it requires less organisation from the employer.

Internship: A phrase that is increasingly used by large companies and refers to a placement within their organisation, often over 6-12 weeks during the summer.

International Students

You should check if there are any restrictions on undertaking a placement or work experience before you apply. For further guidance please refer to the UKCISA website at www.ukcisa.org.uk and click on the link "Working in the UK during your studies".

Finding your ideal work experience: Top Tips

- **Identifying an opportunity:** think about likely career interests and long-term goals you may have and skills you want to develop
- **Not sure what you want to do?** Think about broad occupational areas and try short placements in these to give you an insight into different roles.
- **Balancing work and study:** Think about how much time you can spare for work in addition to studying
- **Researching a company:** Identify companies that you are interested in working for. The internet and business directories are good starting points. You can also get help from the Careers and Job Prospects team or see our handout "Researching Employers"
- **Approaching a company:** Some companies will advertise work experience placements but most work experience is found informally. Sending your CV and a cover letter is a good approach but don't be afraid to just pick up the phone and ask. Most employers are grateful for offers of work experience and will be glad you called!
- **Making contact:** In contacting companies or organisations, start by speaking or writing to the HR Manager stating why you are interested in them and in getting work experience. Remember to highlight what skills you can offer them and personal qualities you have.
- **Preparing for an interview:** You may be asked to come along and meet the employer before starting. This can be on an informal or formal basis, so it's good to prepare as you would do for a job interview. Be prepared to explain why should the company or organisation should take you on. What are the benefits to them?

Where can I find company information?

Student Services

We hold a selection of reference books and directories of companies, as well as vacancy directories and a selection of journals. There is a useful leaflet called **Researching Employers**, available in Student Services, or on our website (see 'Need More Help' section for Student Services details).

Birmingham City University Libraries

There are links to a wide range of databases and websites providing quality business information. Look through the Business Subject Pages via Birmingham City University Library Home page: library.bcu.ac.uk

Birmingham Central Library Business Insight

This specialist business library houses a wide selection of national and international business directories, databases and journals. Contact 0121 303 4531 or www.birmingham.gov.uk

Company Listings

Yellow Pages and Business Pages:

Identify companies by product or service and location. Look online at www.yell.com for a quick search.

Directories:

Business directories provide names, addresses and contact details of organisations. They may be specific to a particular industry or specific to a region or country. To identify which directories are appropriate to you, look at current British Directories available in Student Services at City North Campus and Kenrick Library.

Your First Move (www.yourfirstmove.co.uk) : Lists companies by Sector and Region

Kompass (www.kompass.co.uk): A searchable database of international companies, select by country and industry sector.

Key British Enterprises:

A guide to the UK's top trading companies providing location, parent company information, export data, and a brief section on company financial data. Available via BCU Library home page

Chambers of Commerce:

Directories of members for regional lists of businesses within a Chamber's region: www.chamberonline.co.uk; and for Birmingham: www.birmingham-chamber.com

Kellys Directory:

Look for companies by product or location, particularly useful for identifying providers of particular products www.kellys.co.uk

Business Information: www.ukbusinesspark.co.uk

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