

Supporting work placements for students: A guide for employers

Introduction

This guide is designed to assist members of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists, when providing work placements for a student considering a career as a Chartered Architectural Technologist, MCIAT or professional Architectural Technician, TCIAT.

This document should be used in conjunction with guidance supplied from the student's school, college or university.

1. About work placements

A work placement allows a student the opportunity to carry out a range of tasks and duties in a practice/company, with the focus primarily on the student undertaking a broad experience of day-to-day life within a practice/company.

A student should be given the opportunity to see as many facets of a practice/company as possible and not solely used to undertake routine or menial tasks, which when undertaken, should be kept in proportion to the knowledge and application levels of the student.

1.1 Types of work placement

There are different types of work experience available for a student, depending on their studies:

- Pre-16 work experience

This is for a student in their final year at secondary school and is aimed at developing key skills through first hand experience in the workplace. It normally lasts for two weeks and the student records their experiences in a diary. There will be a high level of supervision required. Activities undertaken would include shadowing and observing, including attending meetings, as well as short investigative projects and basic design work on paper and CAD.

- Post-16 work experience

This is aimed at supporting a student's coursework and career aspirations as they progress through A levels or similar study and is for one or two weeks. A student and a potential employer are matched up to ensure that appropriate learning and development opportunities are available. There will be a moderate level of supervision required. Activities undertaken would include shadowing and observing, including attending meetings, carrying out investigative projects, preparing reports as well as basic design work on paper and CAD.

- Voluntary work experience

Voluntary work experience falls outside of the school/college curriculum and is an agreement between the student and the employer. The student may approach the employer asking to work several hours a week after school assisting with any duties

within the practice/company and not getting paid for their time. In return, the employer should allow the student to experience a broad range of activities within the practice/company.

- Extended work placements

These placements offer a student the opportunity to work with an employer for one or more days each week over an extended period of time, mirroring the part time student model. There will be a moderate level of supervision required. Activities undertaken would include attending meetings, carrying out investigative projects, preparing reports and standard design work.

- Undergraduate sandwich course

Sandwich courses usually involve the whole of the third year (of a four-year degree), with the objective of providing a student with work experience within their chosen profession; Architectural Technology. This student would be regarded as full time, temporary employees with appropriate levels of supervision and autonomous working. The placement should be structured to ensure that both parties benefit. Students may have specific tasks and learning to undertake for their studies and may use the year as an opportunity to initiate their Professional and Occupational Performance Record for Chartered Membership. Activities undertaken would include attending and presenting at meetings, carrying out investigative projects, preparing reports, problem solving and medium level design including 3D and concept work.

- Undergraduate vacation placements

This is similar to the sandwich placement but limited to a student's vacation. It can be project-linked or general experience and usually lasts around ten weeks. Again, such students should be regarded as full time, temporary employees, with appropriate levels of supervision and autonomous working. The placement should be structured to ensure that both parties benefit. Students may have specific tasks and learning to undertake for their studies and may use the year as an opportunity to initiate their Professional and Occupational Performance Record for Chartered Membership. Activities undertaken would include attending and presenting at meetings, carrying out investigative projects, preparing reports, problem solving and medium level design including 3D and concept work.

1.2 Why are work placements important?

Work placements can offer professional, personal and social benefits for students and employers.

Benefits for students

- develop an understanding of the construction industry and Architectural Technology and the opportunity to investigate real projects as part of their coursework requirements;
- a student can obtain knowledge and develop work skills in the practice/company setting, raising their awareness in recognising hazards, assessing and controlling risks and improving their own learning and performance;
- have the opportunity to be treated as employees;

- contribute positively to their own development in aspects such as self-confidence, personal and communication skills and motivation.

Benefits for employers

- the opportunity to promote their profession and encourage students to consider future employment in the construction industry;
- help young people to develop their skills and mature;
- treat students as potential future employees and develop possible recruitment links with schools and colleges.
- support within the practice/company

2. Supporting work placements

There are a number of ways in which employers can support work placement opportunities. You can begin by introducing yourself and your practice/company to the careers office or Personal and Social Education (PSE) Department at schools and colleges in your area. The best way to find them is via Yellow Pages.

For universities, you can start by contacting the Department of the Built Environment, or similar, and speak directly to those involved with the Architectural Technology or building studies programme. Details of universities offering accredited degrees in Architectural Technology can be found on the CIAT website (www.ciat.org.uk).

Once you have created a link with your local school/college/university, you can then produce the following documents for them to use with their students when discussing possible work placements:

2.1 Practice profile

This is a general statement about your practice and what you do, to give the student an idea about your profession and the work involved.

Example:

ASE Associates Ltd is a small friendly practice based in London, which offers a personal and professional service tailored to clients' needs. The Managing Director is a Chartered Architectural Technologist and others in the practice include fellow Chartered Architectural Technologists, Architectural Technicians, architects and surveyors. The company was established in 1982 and since then has worked on a variety of projects ranging from shop outfits to new build, from listed building works to commercial schemes. The practice appeared number five in the top 100 architectural practices in London.

Chartered Architectural Technologists provide architectural design services and solutions. They are specialists in the science of architecture, building design and construction and form the link between concept and construction. They negotiate the construction project and manage the process from inception through to completion.

2.2 Work placement vacancy

This is a job description for a student to understand the role of a professional practising Architectural Technology. This can be tailored depending on what type of work placement it is for (please see 1.2).

Example (for undergraduate student on a sandwich course)

Job title: Architectural Technology placement student

Job ID: AT- ASEASSOCIATES.1

Location: London

Short description: ASE Associates are pleased to offer several work placements for undergraduates studying on a CIAT accredited programme to support our small and friendly practice.

Full job description: The successful applicants will be working on a range of projects and will be working under the supervision of Managing Director, Adam Turnham MCIAT. Duties will include: developing and producing project briefs, accessing legal requirements, producing feasibility studies, preparing and presenting design proposals, producing, analysing and advising upon specification, materials selection and detailed design solutions, design stage risk assessments and more including site visits. Candidates will also be supported for membership of CIAT (Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists) particularly for completing the Chartered Architectural Technologist Professional and Occupational Performance (POP) Record to progress to Chartered Membership. Candidates must be studying a degree in Architectural Technology at a CIAT accredited university. If you meet the above requirements and are interested in joining us to progress your career, please send CV along with a covering email initially to adam.turnham@aseassociates.co.uk

2.3 Work profiles

This profile describes the qualifications, skills and qualities that are required for a Chartered Architectural Technologist or professional Architectural Technician, along with responsibilities, for the student to understand the profession and role.

Example

Chartered Architectural Technologist

As a Chartered Architectural Technologist (MCIAT), I am able to complete a project from its' inception right through to completion, which include the certification stages. I provide architectural design services and solutions and am a specialist in the science of architecture, building design and construction and form the link between concept and construction. I negotiate the construction project and manage the process. I practise on my own account with other professionals within the construction industry and must maintain adequate Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII)

I have a BSc (Hons) in Architectural Technology from the University of Bolton and qualified as a Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists in 2004. I maintain my competence by completing CPD (Continuing Professional Development) by attending a variety of seminars, reading construction related newspapers and magazines and keeping myself up to date with all the new Building Regulations etc.

My role is focussed on the operational requirements for my practice, delivering the project when live and having input into all projects through my staff. I also deal with the contract administration and sign off certificates. I am a functional Chartered Architectural Technologist and also look after my own clients. A typical day for me will involve feasibility projects, board meetings and site meetings — it is very varied and 60% of the day is spent dealing with projects. My key role is ensuring delivery of a product to the client in a manner expected of us as we are providing a service — I see myself as a valuable team member and take the lead role.

3. Setting up work placements

Hours: it is recommended that a student experiences the 9am-5pm work culture and should not work outside of these hours.

Payment: work placements are part of a student's education and payment should not be made for work performed. Employers may wish to help with travel, clothing and/or subsistence costs.

Equal opportunities: employers should ensure that work placements are planned in accordance with equal opportunities with respect to gender, ethnicity, race, cultural origins, physical disability, special educational needs and social disadvantage. Please contact the Equal Opportunities Commission for further details or visit their website www.eoc.org.uk

Confidentiality: it is essential to emphasise to students the trust that is placed in them in relation to confidential issues.

Trade unions: the Trades Union Congress (TUC - www.tuc.org.uk) support workplace activities for students.

Health and Safety: it is a mandatory requirement for employers to have a Health and Safety Manual and a student should see sight of this as part of their induction to the practice/company. Further information is available from the Health and Safety Executive (www.hse.gov.uk). Other issues relating to Construction (Design Management) Regulations (CDM) and Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) should be taken account of.

Insurance: employers should ensure that all insurances provide both for a student during their work experience and the necessary protection to the employer.

4. Managing work placements and learning

4.1 Pre-placement

Employers are advised to set up a pre-placement meeting with the student. This stage could entail:

A letter of understanding: this ensures that the work experience scheme and arrangements between the practice/company and the local education services is fully understood. This is issued to all prospective placement providers. A signed acknowledgement slip confirming that this letter of understanding is acceptable must be returned to the relevant organisation prior to a placement commencing.

Interview: some work placement schemes operate a selection process through interview. This might be undertaken by the school on the employers' behalf, or employers may be invited to do this. The school/college or facilitating organisations will provide guidance on their own approach and expectations.

A placement confirmation letter:

Example

Address, Date

Dear student

Re: Work Placement, ASE Associates Ltd, London

Following your recent interview, I am delighted to confirm that your work placement at our practice will take place from 5-19 January 2007. Your working hours will be from 9.00am – 5.00pm, with an hour for lunch. With regard to your travel expenses, these will be reimbursed at the end of each week as agreed in your recent interview. If you require any special arrangements, then please let me know in advance.

Please find enclosed an outline structure of your placement, which has been designed following your interview and we hope that this will give you a variety of experiences and an insight to the activities involved within the running of a construction project.

On your first day, please arrive at reception at 9.00am, where you will be met by myself.

I look forward to seeing you on 5 January, and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above. I would be grateful if you could please sign and return the enclosed copy of this letter to confirm your acceptance.

Yours sincerely

Mr A Turnham MCIAT, Managing Director

4.2 During placement

Induction: employers are encouraged to plan an induction programme including health and safety, background to the practice, a tour of the office/building and introductions to other members of staff.

Support and supervision: a student should be assigned a supervisor, at the practice/company, who takes responsibility for her/him for the duration of the work placement.

Review and feedback: most schemes use a student learning diary or log. The student will complete the diary/log; recording everything they do each day. It is recommended that the supervisor also record feedback, so the student can see how he/she is performing.

4.3 After placement

Evaluation, reporting and feedback: there are several strands to evaluation, reporting and feedback. These include:

- an end-of-placement review with the student and a written record
- an employer's report back to the school/college and a written record
- review with the practice's staff who were involved in supervision and support
- any records of incidents to be completed by the student and the school/college co-ordinator

Example

WORK PLACEMENT FEEDBACK	
To be filled in as soon as is practicable after completion of work placement.	
Student name	
Work placement organiser.....	
Date/s of placement	
Work Placement provider	
Activities undertaken well:.....	
.....	
.....	
Activities which proved too challenging:.....	
.....	
.....	
Incidents to be reported to school and/or parents:.....	
.....	
.....	
Signature	Date

5. Projects and assignments

5.1 Projects and assignments

A project or assignment could be:

- included in the placement specification by stating that a project/assignment will be set as part of the placement.
- raised at the interview or pre-placement meeting. If the person has no interest in the topic on offer at the time, it may be possible to modify it.
- introduced and discussed during the induction. It is important to set aside enough time to complete this thoroughly.
- reviewed at progress meetings, so that any adjustments can be made. The outcomes could be presented at the final review meeting with feedback given.

5.2 Examples

A number of different projects and assignments can be created for students to increase awareness of the industry. A starting point, for example, could be asking them to write job descriptions for key roles, such as a Chartered Architectural Technologist, a civil engineer, an architect or a surveyor, or practise role-playing given a specific problem to solve.

The following examples relate to teenagers on one/two week placement:

Quick tasks (intended for times when the student needs a 'fill-in' task):

Select any number of these and carry them out in the time allotted

- 1) Ask your work experience supervisor for a photo of a building he or she is working on. Using the internet and the technical library find doors and windows to match those in the photograph. Present your findings to your work experience supervisor. (30-60 mins)
- 2) Ask your current project supervisor for a suitable project to research. Carry out research by locating the project files and finding a Contract Administrator's/ Architects' Instruction. Make notes on the instruction. Instructions are used to vary the contract between the contractor (builder) and the client. Can you find what was originally in the contract? Your supervisor may be able to give you clues! (30-60 mins)
- 3) Attend site with your work experience supervisor. Note down everything you see.
- 4) Measure up the room you are working in and draw up in the space to show plans and elevations. Note where all the furniture is! (60-120 mins)
- 5) Create a photomontage of buildings and interiors that inspire you. Use old architectural magazines and the internet. Mount these on an A1 sheet and add captions stating why the photos inspire you. Pay attention to how you present the work (60-120 mins)
- 6) Ask your work experience supervisor to show you some drawing techniques on the computer/drawing board. Get your supervisor to describe a current project to you. (30-60 mins)

7) Construct a tower from paper straws. How thin can you make it without it falling over? (30-60 mins)

Projects (intended for the duration of their time on work experience)

Compulsory

8) Investigate the construction industry and how both a Chartered Architectural Technologist and an Architectural Technician fit within it. Use fellow colleagues for anecdotal information and see if they're right using the internet! Provide your work experience supervisor with a 2500 word presentation/essay on your findings.

Links:

www.ciat.org.uk www.architecture.com
www.cic.org.uk www.bconstructive.co.uk

Optional – pick at least one!

9) Take a camera and photograph images of buildings you like around where you work and live. Print out the photographs and try to extract the elements, which most inspire you. At the end of your work experience term provide your work experience supervisor with a presentation and be ready to talk through your presentation.

10) Think of your school. What improvements could be made to make learning, eating and socialising more fun? Pick one aspect and design a fun space!

Suggested links:

www.joinedupdesignforschools.com www.archfoundation.org
www.school-works.org/inspiring.asp www.bsf.gov.uk

11) Think of the Millennium Dome – you have been charged with making this space fun for today's young people. You are charged with using your imagination to fill this huge space! Find out the size of the dome and then provide your work experience supervisor with a presentation showing what you would put in the dome and how it would fit. Use the internet to carry out research. Anything goes be it football stadium, nightclubs, theme parks, food outlets, skate boarding parks ... you decide. The only problem is it has to fit!

12) Fancy something close to home? Take a tape measure and accurately measure your home. Create an accurate 3D model in cardboard. Each floor and the roof should lift off! Research why your home is designed that way. For instance, why are bedrooms normally upstairs?

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