Offering work experience to school students guide

Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 3

1. Setting up a work experience placement ....................................................... 4
   What should an employer consider at the outset? .............................................. 4
   How employers can engage with schools ........................................................... 4
   Requirements that a school will normally expect an employer to meet ............... 5

2. What employers should be aware of when offering work experience placement .............................................................................................................. 6
   Health & Safety ................................................................................................... 7
   Factors influencing the health and safety of young workers ................................ 7
   Risk Assessments ............................................................................................... 9
   Insurance .......................................................................................................... 10
   RCVS Advice .................................................................................................... 10
   Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (previously known as CRB) ................ 10
   Working Hours .................................................................................................. 11

3. HSE ascertained risks to young people ....................................................... 11
   Farm visits ......................................................................................................... 12
4. Project based work placements in businesses/ research institutes........ 15
5. Resources: Becoming a vet – where to find careers advice materials ...... 17
Introduction

Work experience is the short term placement of secondary school students with employers, to provide an insight into the veterinary profession and the veterinary workplace. Students are placed with employers primarily to observe and learn; not to undertake activities which require extensive expertise and training. It is undertaken at the employer’s premises and has enormous benefits for students.

Work experience fosters employability skills among young people; an understanding of business and client awareness, team-working and self-management. Enabling students to see what they are learning at school or college being applied in practice in the workplace can inspire young people, raising their aspirations and reinforcing their commitment to continuing their studies and training.

The Department for Education aims to encourage more work experience in the UK and to make it easier for employers to provide opportunities for young people to gain first-hand experience of the workplace. Work experience in the veterinary profession can provide an important opportunity for a student to gain a greater understanding of the opportunities that a veterinary degree can offer.

This guidance has been developed to help veterinary professionals when offering work experience placements to school students. Below you will find information on:

1. Setting up a work experience placement; including what the employer should consider at the outset; how employers can engage with schools; the requirements that a school will normally expect an employer to meet.

2. What employers should be aware of; in terms of health and safety, risk assessments, insurance, RCVS advice, DBS (CRB) checks and working hours.

3. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) ascertained risks to young people; farm visits.

4. Project based work placements in businesses/ research institutes.

5. Resources: Becoming a vet – where to find careers advice materials
1. Setting up a work experience placement

- What should an employer consider at the outset?
- How employers can engage with schools
- Requirements that a school will normally expect an employer to meet

What should an employer consider at the outset?

There have been many changes to the education system in recent years, many of which promote work-related learning and offer employers the opportunity to get involved with schools and colleges to better prepare young people for their professional lives.

Work-related learning has been statutory for 14-16 year olds since 2004 and it covers a wide variety of activities, including work experience, enterprise education, workplace visits, mentoring/ careers talks from employers and curricular projects based on real work situations. High quality work experience can help inform the choices young people have to make and it helps young people to develop the skills they need for employment.

Work experience is currently a National Curriculum standard and learning outcome in UK schools. Work experience is offered to young people from Years 10 to 12 or between the ages of 14 and 18 years old. It is often scheduled at an appropriate time in the learning programme and allows students to experience the world of work, often for the first time. For example, work experience can be important for students studying GCSE’s to help inform their decisions about A-level subjects that are required in order to pursue a particular career.

How employers can engage with schools

Employers can get involved with mentoring, local competitions and challenges, work tasters and careers talks as well as the more traditional work experience placements.

http://www.employers-guide.org provides information on the ways in which employers can get involved with schools and it provides guidance to help employers realise what they could offer to a school.
http://www.inspiringthefuture.org/ encourages professionals to volunteer to visit state secondary schools and colleges to talk about their jobs, careers, and the education routes they took. Volunteering can take place near home or work in the geographic location to suit the volunteer. A (criminal records) Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is not needed for 'career insight' talks. The project **Inspiring the Future** was launched in England in July 2012 and is being rolled out in Scotland and Wales in 2013. The programme is set to expand to include activities such as workplace visits and mentoring.

Searching for schools can be done through the Ofsted search engine, which is useful for employers who wish to find particular types of schools, such as specialist schools.

Contacting a school can also be done through organisations that specialise in working with schools.

Many schools and colleges work collaboratively as part of 14-19 partnerships or consortia and may want to engage with employers in this way. Local authorities provide the strategic leadership for these 14-19 partnerships and may be able to help employers decide how best they can benefit schools and colleges in a local area.

Alternatively, links with schools via school governors is a route that can be used to make direct contact with a school. Schools and colleges usually require a lot of lead time to plan activities and many schools have nominated members of the senior management team who are responsible for links with local employers.

**Requirements that a school will normally expect an employer to meet**

Following initial contact, the school and employer have to reach an agreement on what to offer and how best to work together. Employers will need to agree the resources and support they can commit to providing to the school or college. A business case may be required to put all the information and benefits together. See preparing a business case.

It is a good idea to formalise the relationship between the employer and the school through developing protocols, agreeing behaviours and nominating key contacts on both sides. The agreement may need to be updated and reviewed as the partnership develops.

Arrangements could include:

- Understanding the responsibilities of each party
• Setting out how contacts will be facilitated
• Planning how projects, visits, talks, etc. will be organised
• Health, safety and child protection issues
• Plans for evaluating activities
• Arrangements for maintaining and developing the partnership over time.

When you are offering a work experience placement to school students, the work experience organiser will deal with parental consent. The school or college will normally speak to the young person before starting the work experience placement to confirm their expectations in order to support their understanding of what the placement involves.

It is important to understand the practical implications of working with schools and colleges including: (criminal records) Disclosure and Barring Service checks, insurance and health and safety, considered in Section 2 & 3. It is also essential to ensure that employees in the workplace are prepared.

2. What employers should be aware of when offering work experience placement

The British Safety Council lists a range of factors that can contribute to a young person being at risk in the workplace. It is worth considering when offering work experience.

• Young workers will have usually received less training and have less experience than older workers and are likely to be less competent than older workers when performing the same duties
• Young workers, especially some young males, may display an indifferent or carefree attitude towards risk resulting in them taking shortcuts concerning workplace safety
• Young workers’ decision making ability is less developed than older workers - the part of the brain responsible for making complex decisions is still developing during early adult years
• Young workers may be reluctant to ‘speak up’ about a workplace hazard which can result in a lack of faith in their ability, a lack of confidence, a fear of challenging older workers, a fear of being wrong or a fear of being blamed

The British Safety Council ‘Speak Up Stay Safe’ campaign is a useful resource for information about understanding young people’s attitude to risk. The campaign encourages young people to take responsibility for their own health and safety by speaking up if they don’t feel safe.

Health & Safety

What are my legal duties?

• Students on work experience are classed as employees for health and safety purposes; therefore as an employer, you owe a duty of care to the student, just as with any of your employees

• An employer’s existing workplace risk assessment may already cover risks that work experience students may be exposed to

• Where an employer has never employed a young person under 18 before (including on work experience), the employer will need to review his or her risk assessment, to take account of any risks that may arise as a result of the young person’s age, relative lack of maturity or experience.

The British Safety Council fact sheets on employing young people are useful concise guidelines on the factors that influence the health and safety of young people at work and could also be relevant to work experience placements:

Factors influencing the health and safety of young workers

Everyone is different, and that applies to young workers. Some will be shy, others are confident or over-confident, there is no one rule for all.

The following may be useful when assessing the factors that can influence the health and safety of young people:
Attitude towards risk. Health and safety can be a difficult subject to engage young people. Some may have a greater inclination to take risks and may be blasé about the dangers, which could result for example in them taking shortcuts with safety, not using PPE or driving unsafely.

Impressionable. Young people are new to work and are naturally impressionable. They are still forming their views on the world. They are susceptible to peer pressure. If their colleagues are taking unsafe risks they are more likely to follow suit.

Eager to impress. This could lead to some young people working longer hours, not taking breaks, not raising issues about safety for fear of being seen as a ‘complainer’, or attempting to carry out tasks that they are not trained to do.

Lack confidence. Young, inexperienced workers may not have faith in their own ability. They may be too intimidated to challenge older workers. They may not ‘speak up’ about a safety issue for fear of being wrong or being blamed. Some young workers may say that they understand a procedure or instruction when they do not – so as not to appear foolish or forgetful.

Tiring easily. Young people, especially when they are new and unused to work, are more susceptible to fatigue. This can lead to them making mistakes or being unable to concentrate.

Lack of concentration. Being unused to work, young people may find it difficult to concentrate for long periods. Problems in their personal life can cause them to become easily distracted. Alcohol and drugs consumption is higher than average amongst young people. This can lead to a drop in performance, slower reaction times, or feeling tired or unwell.

Difficulty making decisions. Research has shown that a young person’s brain is still developing into their 20’s and that the part of the brain responsible for making complex decisions is one of the last to develop. They may find it more difficult to make decisions when under pressure.
Risk Assessments

- The Department for Education expects schools, colleges and employers to take a common-sense approach to risk assessment.

- Schools and colleges do not have to carry out any extra risk assessments on employers whose risk assessments already take into account the risks that could impact on young workers.

- Where an employer is new to work experience or has not employed a young person under the age of 18 before, it is advisable to revisit the risk assessment to identify the risks specific to a young person.

- It may be useful to develop a generic risk assessment for young people, which could be modified to deal with particular work situations and any unacceptable risks.

- The risk assessment must always be reviewed if the nature of the work changes or if you have reason to believe that it is no longer valid.

- Before offering a work experience placement, an employer must let the student’s parents or carers know the key findings of the risk assessment and the control measures taken.

- HSE advises that this does not have to be provided in writing, and the employer may ask the work experience organiser to help provide the information to parents or carers of the student.

- It may also be prudent to make any employee representatives for health and safety aware of the key finding and control measures of the risk assessment.

- The student must also be told about the risks to their health and safety identified by the assessment and the measures put in place to control them, including the procedures to be followed in the event of serious and imminent danger.

- HSE guidance is available on controlling risk in the workplace is a useful starting point.
Insurance

- All practices have to have public liability insurance to cover clients on their premises and this should also cover work experience students. It is worth checking your policy to make sure.

- Under the practice policy provided by Lloyd & Whyte work experience students are covered with no extra charge under the Employers and Public Liabilities section of the policy - the practice is covered as long as it complies with Health and Safety at Work legislation.

- Practices can provide a statement of the public liability insurance and request that the school or parent sign the statement accepting it as reasonable cover.

- Practices should be aware of health and safety issues and perform a risk assessment on what activities they allow work experience students to perform.

- Schools may require additional health and safety measures to be put in place and it is worth discussing this with the school or local authority.

- The Lloyd & Whyte practice policy does not cover work experience students to carry out any treatments on animals because the students are unqualified. Observing or clerical work is covered.

RCVS Advice

- The position of the RCVS is clear cut; no lay person should have care of an animal in terms of medical treatment or procedures and there should be no delegation of duties by the Veterinary Surgeon to a work experience student.

Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (previously known as CRB)

- Schools, colleges and employers are often concerned about whether staff working with young people while on work experience should be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). In many instances it may not be necessary and depends on the circumstances. (DBS replaced the Criminal Record Bureau and Independent Safeguarding Authority in December 2012)
• Employers should consider a DBS check of someone who has a specific designated responsibility for supervising a student, particularly if the student is under 16 years of age; is a vulnerable student for any reason (e.g. a student with special educational needs); or where the supervisor will spend a substantial amount of time alone with the student.

• Schools and colleges should not ask an employer to conduct a DBS check on staff who are simply working alongside the student.

Working Hours

The number of hours worked and the pattern of work is normally a matter for agreement by the employer, school, parents and students. Unless there are strong reasons to the contrary, it is recommended that students should not be asked to work more than a standard eight-hour day. Students should not work for more than five days in any consecutive seven-day period.

A BVA Guide to the Working Time Regulations is available from the Workplace Guidance section of the BVA website.

3. HSE ascertained risks to young people

The HSE recognises that young people, especially those new to the workplace will encounter unfamiliar risks from the working environment and any activities they may undertake. Key risks have been identified by HSE and may arise because of a student’s lack of experience, maturity or confidence to ask for help.

HSE advises that all risk assessments need to take account of certain features which apply to young people:

• the nature of any physical, biological and chemical agents they will be exposed to, for how long and to what extent;

• what types of work equipment will be used and how this will be handled;

• how the work and processes involved are organised;
• level of health and safety training provided
• risks from the particular agents, processes and work.

**Physical or psychological capacity.** In the majority of workplaces there is no difference in the kind of mental and social skills used by young people and adults. However there will be individual differences in the psychological capacity of young people based on differences in their experience, skills, personality and attitudes. Some situations could be beyond a young person’s mental and emotional coping ability, such as dealing with violent and aggressive behaviour from a client, or difficult decision making in stressful situations such as anaesthesia.

**Radiation.** The risk of developing cancer and hereditary defects from exposure to ionising radiation increases slightly for young people but is controlled by setting statutory annual dose limits. The main dose limits which relate to the whole body dose are the most important elements in relation to cancer risk; the limits for young people per calendar year can be found on the HSE website and in their guidance. The BVA guide for the safe use of ionising radiations in Veterinary Practice is also available to order from the BVA website.

**Hazardous Substances:** Guidance produced by the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) advises that people aged 18 years and under should not handle animals infected with Hazard Group 4 biological agents; HSE have produced a guide: Working safely with research animals: Management of infection risks.

Employers must take precautions for all employees regardless of their age or state of health against the risk of infection at work, acquiring an allergy to certain micro-organisms and toxicity (e.g. C botulinum). In carrying out a risk assessment employers should identify the measures that are required to control or eliminate health and safety risks. BVA Practice Standards Guidance contains template risk assessments.

The risks to young people are adequately controlled if the practice is complying with other specific health and safety law, the Manual Handling Operations Regulations and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH).

Farm visits
There are legal prohibitions on children under the age of 13 undertaking certain activities on farms. Older children of school age may undertake some of these activities subject to conditions. The activities mainly relate to agricultural operations but also to children riding on machines, vehicles and farm implements, some of which may be used when carrying out veterinary services on-farm. The HSE provides guidance on preventing accidents to children on farms, which is useful guidance for vets taking work experience students on farm visits.

You should be aware that all adults working in agriculture, which includes visiting workers as well as employers, employees and contractors, must take responsibility for child safety.

Activities and tasks on farms have the potential to cause significant harm to anyone visiting a farm and in particular to school age students who may be less aware of health and safety risks. It is important that you think about the tasks and activities that you undertake ahead of and during a farm visit to consider the risks involved. For example;

- What work equipment you and the farmer use, such as machinery and does the operator have clear all-round vision from it?
- What risks are there from the layout of the workplace, such as blind corners or slurry lagoons?
- What areas on the farm might prove especially attractive to children, such as bale stacks or animal pens?
- What are the risks from hazardous substances such as bacteria and chemicals?
- How do you organise and control work activities, including the age and responsibility of other workers?
- Do you believe the farmer is familiar with the risks on-farm?
- Remember that children have only a limited awareness of risks, and that they are both physically and mentally immature
- Injury and ill health from animals; animals do not need to be aggressive to cause serious harm to, or even to kill, a child - the dangers of mature cattle and horses are obvious, but sheep or pigs also cause serious injury
• If you take a work experience student to see animals in the field make sure that they stay close to you and do not wander off among the animals.

• If you want to show work experience students young animals, make sure that both the animal and the student are outside the pen, or secure or remove the mother from the pen

• Hazardous substances in agriculture range from pesticides and veterinary medicines, including sheep dips, to dairy chemicals and workshop degreasers. All such substances should be securely locked away at all times unless they are directly and continually supervised and you should ensure there are no unattended pesticides or sheep dip around

• As well as man-made hazards, there are natural hazardous substances on the farm such as micro-organisms (bacteria etc.) present in manures, slurry, dusts and soil - always make sure work experience students wash before eating or drinking

• Animal diseases or organisms can be passed to humans and cause illness (zoonoses). These include orf, which causes skin lesions, Q fever, which causes flu-like symptoms, E. coli O157, which may cause serious diarrhoea or worse, and cryptosporidium, which may also cause diarrhoea. Farms and grain stores often attract vermin; rats can cause illnesses such as leptospirosis. More information about zoonoses can be found in the Practice Standards guidance on the BVA website.

To limit the risk of a work experience student being affected by these diseases, make sure they do not:

• contact any animal obviously suffering from illness or infection such as scouring, orf or ringworm

• eat or drink during or after contact with animals, faeces, or areas which animals have soiled until they have washed their hands thoroughly with soap and clean running water, using a clean paper or roller towel to dry them
4. Project based work placements in businesses/ research institutes

Experience in a science and business environment can help to motivate and inspire school age students to consider careers in professions such as veterinary science / research. Work experience and project based work placements provide a good opportunity for school age children to develop their interest and gain some experience that could help them to make an informed decision about their careers.

There are opportunities for students of science to gain scholarships and bursaries through organisations such as the Nuffield Foundation to gain experience in a science and business environment. Placements can take place anywhere as long as there is a relevant research project available for the student.

The Nuffield Foundation Research Placements are awarded to 16-17 year olds who are studying a science, technology, engineering and maths course (STEM). The students benefit from experiencing life in a scientific and technological environment within business and industry. The scheme funds students to work in an organisation over the summer for 4-6 weeks in any area of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Hosting a placement would involve the provision of a defined role that achieves agreed learning outcomes in any aspect of research or business that your organisation conducts. Here is an example of a placement:

During the summer of 2012, the Virology Branch at the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) in Belfast supported three Sixth Form pupils from local schools in the completion of 6 week research projects. One student based in the Fish Diseases Unit, practised tissue culture and PCR techniques in the study of strains of salmonid alphaviruses. Another student was placed within the Porcine Virology Unit and was actively involved in the investigation of a recently discovered virus of pigs, while the third student carried out her project within the Avian Virology Unit, looking at low pathogenicity strains of influenza in tissue culture. All three students were supported by scientific and veterinary staff at the institute and had the opportunity to present their work at a special Nuffield Celebration Evening. These pupils all proceeded with
university applications for veterinary medicine and/or veterinary biosciences courses.

The leaflet *Supporting your business, supporting careers* by the Nuffield Foundation is for businesses interested in hosting a placement and has helpful case studies showing the types of placements, like the one above, that can be offered. The website also has a list of the universities / research institutes and companies (such as the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institutes and Norbrook Laboratories) that have recently provided placements for students.

**STEMNET** (science, technology, engineering and mathematics network) is an organisation that champions the input of employers into education and believes that STEM is relevant to everyday life and to the career opportunities that are available, as well as helping to sustain the UK’s future economy. There are a number of programmes developed by STEMNET to encourage professionals to get involved in education.

The **STEM Ambassadors programme** helps professionals who work in a range of STEM related roles and from STEM backgrounds to volunteer to get involved in activities from careers talks to running workshops in local schools. By contributing to regular lessons or participating in extracurricular activities, it is up to the professional to do as little or as much as they choose. Through the programme, young people have been involved in activities such as zebra fish embryo activity, farm walks, and rat dissection, all of which engage their interest and present a fresh perspective for STEM careers.

Veterinary professionals involved in STEMNET can inspire young people and make a difference to the delivery of STEM subjects.

Simon Doherty, a Veterinary Research Officer at the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) in Belfast, is a STEM Ambassador. He has participated in a variety of STEMNET activities, including a ‘Speed Networking’ event where Year 10 and 11 pupils had the opportunity to interview a wide spectrum of STEM Ambassadors about their jobs, the routes into their chosen professions, academic qualifications and career options. Other events Simon has participated in have included careers talks and mock interviews for second level pupils, and ‘vet visits’ to primary schools.

**STEMNET Ambassadors** are registered; DBS checked and receive an induction into working in the classroom. Support is provided by regional representatives, relevant projects
are suggested for Ambassadors to become involved with and help is available to liaise with schools.

5. Resources: **Becoming a vet** – where to find careers advice materials

The BVA website has an area dedicated to careers advice:

- With stories from young vets and vet students about their experiences and advice on the skills and attributes needed to become a veterinary surgeon.

- Links to useful resources such as the RCVS careers advice pages which provides information about the Walks of Life DVD and brochure with case studies and videos of vets working in a range of roles.

- A power point presentation that covers all the popular questions about becoming a vet