

**Tomorrow's
Engineers**

Engineering work experience



An employer's guide

Acknowledgements

This guide has been produced by a subgroup of the Royal Academy of Engineering's Diversity Leadership Group, based on contributions from a number of employers and organisations. We are very grateful to those involved who have been generous in sharing their accumulated good practice for the benefit of the wider engineering community. Particular thanks go to the individuals below who have contributed directly to the document production:

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Introduction

This guide explains what an inclusive work experience process in an engineering business typically entails. It forms part of an overall careers and education toolkit for engineering employers and other organisations seeking to engage with young people, published by Tomorrow's Engineers.

www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/employertoolkit

The primary audience for this document is the engineering employer who is establishing and delivering a work experience programme.

Aims

The information in this guide is designed to:

- Help employers make a realistic assessment of the resources required to offer quality work experience.
- Provide case studies, templates and referenced information that can be used by any organisation, but particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to minimise the effort required in offering work experience.
- Suggest ways in which engineering and manufacturing employers can broaden the reach of their work experience programme beyond family, friends and the types of students that typically apply, in order to increase the size and diversity of the talent pool for engineering.

General guidance on work experience

Good general guidance on delivering work experience can be found in a number of recent publications from government and other sources and is not duplicated in this guide.

We would recommend looking at any of the following sources:



Department for Education:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/306663/making-work-experience-work-for-you.pdf



CIPD:

www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/work-experience-top-tips.aspx



UK Commission for Employment and Skills

www.gov.uk/government/publications/not-just-making-tea-a-guide-to-work-experience

Accompanying documents

The sample documents and templates listed below can be adapted and used to support an engineering or manufacturing employer's work experience programme. These documents will be referred to within this guidance. The documents can all be found at:

www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/employertoolkit/workexperience

- [Sample work experience policies](#)
- [Sample work experience application form for students](#)
- [Sample work experience preparation letter to students](#)
- [Student's work experience diary template](#)
- [Suggested information for parents](#)
- [Sample work experience permission form](#)
- [Careers conversations and learning outcomes for students](#)
- [Example of safeguarding guidance](#)
- [Risk assessment template](#)
- [Sample confidentiality agreement](#)
- [Sample IPR agreement](#)



Disclaimer: Notwithstanding the information given in this document, every employer is responsible for satisfying themselves that they have observed all current, relevant legislation that applies to bringing students into their businesses.

Publication note: The information contained within this document, particularly around issues of safeguarding and health and safety, is correct at time of publication in June 2015. Note that the document will not be maintained on an ongoing basis. Any future updates will be clearly indicated.

1. Terminology

For clarity of terminology, the following definition is used in the context of this guide:

- A **work experience** is an opportunity for young people aged 14-19 to experience the workplace and is for 10 working days or fewer.
- A **work placement** is an opportunity for those who have left school to experience work with an employer and lasts between 10 and 20 working days.

For work experience involving school students, travel expenses would normally be covered by the student's home institution, not by the employer.

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“ From the age of 15 I knew I wanted to be an engineer. I wasn't quite sure what kind of engineer; I just knew that in this profession I'd have an opportunity to do what I love – understand how systems, machines and mechanisms worked. Wanting to know more about engineering I arranged work experience with British Airways; working on their Boeing 747-400 I felt on top of the world – this was a great place to be, working with the engineers, asking questions and learning all that I could during my time there. This placement, as well as my placement with motor building company, Lewis DMR, strengthened my dream of becoming an engineer. ”

Nazia Ali, Graduate Engineer,
Jaguar Land Rover

2. Reaching a diverse cohort

One of the key aims of this guide is to help employers make their work experience opportunities available to a wider pool of students.

Many businesses offer work experience to family and friends of current employees. Whilst there is nothing wrong with this in itself, proactive action to encourage greater engagement with students from diverse social and demographic backgrounds yields benefits in the longer term, by broadening the reach, understanding and attractiveness of engineering to new groups in society.

There is a good evidence¹ base² that supports the link between undertaking relevant work experience and subsequently joining a profession. This works both ways – students that undertake engineering work experience often increase their desire to become engineers and employers often place high value on relevant work experience when recruiting for graduate or apprenticeship schemes, especially if prior experience has been within their business.

2.1 Diversity participation guidance

The engineering profession is making concerted efforts to increase its appeal to a wider cross-section of society in order to increase the future supply of skilled entrants from a broad demographic base.

We strongly recommend that work experience cohorts should be a mix of girls and boys. Some companies, for example MBDA and National Grid, have a company policy of 50/50 gender balance in all cohorts. Wherever possible, we recommend that a 50/50 gender balance is the aim for all work experience offerings.

Whilst women are the most underrepresented group in engineering compared to the working population, there are other demographic groups that also have low representation and that can be actively prioritised through work experience programmes. These include black and minority ethnic (BME) students, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and disabled students. Some businesses, for example National Grid, also allocate a proportion of their work experience offering each year to individuals that are at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training).



“ We believe it is important to run our work experience programmes for both girls and boys on an equal 50/50 basis, to build an early awareness and expectation of the inclusive workplace they will eventually enter, particularly if it is National Grid. Working together builds understanding and appreciation of different perspectives and helps shape individuals so that they understand the value we place on having an inclusive and diverse workforce. ”

Tony Moloney, Head of Education and Skills, National Grid

¹ Employer Perspectives Survey 2014, UKCES www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415503/EPS_2014_England_Slide_Pack_FINAL_for_web.pdf

² The Graduate Market 2015, High Fliers www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2015/graduate_market/GMReport15.pdf CBI, UKCES

2.2 Targeting mechanisms for a diverse student pool

The Department for Education publishes secondary school performance tables³ which can be filtered geographically and provide data on school characteristics as well as attainment. These characteristics give an indication of the gender balance for individual schools together with their free school meal profile (a proxy

indicator for lower socio-economic background), school type (comprehensive, selective, single sex, etc.) and proportion of pupils that have English as an additional language. These factors may be useful in prioritising which schools you target within any particular area.

2.2.1 Invitation to selected schools

Employers may choose to invite a specific set of schools to take part in their work experience programme. In this case, it should be made clear to each school the types of students being sought. In order to encourage diversity of participation, employers could ask each school to nominate students according to their desired diversity balance. As an example, a school could be invited to nominate four students, of which half must be girls and/or

half must be from a BME background. Where there is more interest than places available, the school could be asked to advise on which students would benefit most from undertaking work experience with the employer. These may be students who are actively trying to make up their minds about career options (and hence deciding which subjects to select) rather than those who are already clear which direction they are following.

2.2.2 Geography

Some employers with main sites choose a defined geographical radius as the filter for selecting schools or students.

As part of the Tomorrow's Engineers programme, a geographically searchable database of engineering careers activities across the UK has been developed, to provide an accurate picture of what is happening locally. The database is available to employers who join the Tomorrow's Engineers national network (see www.engineeringuk.com/tomorrows_engineers). This continually expanding heat map is driven by a powerful database that captures employer outreach activity. This enables Tomorrow's Engineers to identify new opportunities and areas of duplication and to work with local employers to reach more schools more efficiently.

Tomorrow's Engineers (www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk) is a programme of co-ordinated schools outreach and careers inspiration, led by the engineering community, that aims to create the next generation of engineers. Tomorrow's Engineers aims to give all young people aged 11 to 14 the opportunity to access at least one engineering experience with an employer, to help them make the connection between school work and career possibilities. Employers within the Tomorrow's Engineers network have access to an evaluation scheme to help benchmark their outreach activity against national data, work experience guidance and the full range of Tomorrow's Engineers careers resources.

“ The work experience programme at MBDA provided me with a valuable insight into the high-tech manufacturing industry while also providing an appealing future career preview. My work experience was the tipping point in my career plan to apply for an apprenticeship. ”

Lee Bibby, Apprentice, MBDA

³ Department for Education performance tables www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/index.html

2.2.3 First come, first served

Allocating places based on order of received application may be simplest, especially where a business offers a large number of opportunities. In this case, the places and methods by which work experience opportunities are advertised become more important in order to ensure diverse take-up. As an extension to this approach, a proportion of available places could be allocated to particular under represented groups.



“ I had planned to be a doctor but I changed my mind after spending two weeks on work experience with an engineering company where I enjoyed problem solving, modelling things by hand and using computer tools to test science in real life. ”

Angela Malynn,
Mechanical Engineer, Arup

2.3 Advertising mechanisms

A number of approaches can be taken to encourage a diverse pool of students to apply for work experience opportunities. Employers may choose to reserve some of their available places for students put forward by friends and family of current employees but we would encourage employers to be as open as they can be with as many of their available places as possible.

2.3.1 National mechanisms

An industry-led accreditation framework – Industrial Cadets – provides a flexible model for all sizes of employers to enable them to run accredited workplace experiences.

www.industrialcadets.org.uk

For specific societal groups, employers could consider liaising with specialist diversity organisations such as the Women’s Engineering Society, WISE, Sutton Trust, the Social Mobility Foundation and Business in the Community to publicise opportunities.

2.3.2 Regional mechanisms

Many areas of England are covered by the regional network of 80 Education Business Partnerships working with schools and employers to form links that support work-based learning in all its forms. Employers can register an interest at **www.ebpnational.org.uk**

In Wales, Careers Wales operates a searchable work experience database that can be used to list available work experience opportunities for students in Years 10 to 13 **www.careerswales.com/en/tools-and-resources/work-experience-database/**

In Scotland, general information about work experience is provided through Skills Development Scotland at **www.myworldofwork.co.uk/section/work-experience**

2.3.3 Local mechanisms

Employers could consider advertising work experience opportunities through local community groups in order to reach a more diverse student cohort than might otherwise be possible. These could include such outlets as Scouts, Girl Guides, local councils, youth centres, leisure centres, libraries, Jobcentre Plus, local school governors’ associations, Local Enterprise Partnerships and others.

3. Choosing a delivery model

There is no single ‘right’ model by which employers should offer work experience opportunities to students.

There are, however, a number of current approaches that different engineering employers use successfully. Examples of different approaches are presented here, together with suggested factors to consider when choosing a model.

3.1 Work experience organisation

Establishing a work experience policy is recommended, so that employees and external stakeholders have a clear understanding of the approach taken by the business in delivering work experience opportunities.

The policy should define what constitutes work experience, to whom it is available, how the application process works and who is responsible for the different aspects of the work experience delivery in the before/during/after phases.

Examples of company **work experience policies** drawn from Crossrail and Rolls-Royce can be found online at www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/employertoolkit/workexperience

3.2 Size of scheme

This will be determined by an employer’s capacity to deliver a work experience scheme. Large engineering employers routinely offer hundreds of work experience places every year whilst a small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) may only be able to support one or two.

At any scale of scheme, it is better to offer fewer, good quality work experience opportunities than greater numbers of low value-added opportunities. In engineering particularly, to which students may have had little or no prior exposure, a good work experience opportunity can play a vital role in helping a prepared student crystallise their views about their next career steps. Conversely, a poor experience can put off potential future engineers.



3.3 Work experience duration

Duration can be defined by the employer. However, it is recommended that the minimum duration for work experience is one week. This gives sufficient time for a variety of experiences to be provided together with time for targeted employability skills guidance and careers conversations.

3.4 Timing

Traditionally, engineering work experience has been offered by most employers during the summer term, in the period following students' exams. However, some engineering employers deliberately offer work experience opportunities with distinctly different timings:



Spread – the employer schedules a spread of work experience weeks throughout each year, at points suitable for the business. Several students, usually from different schools, join the business at the same time but undertake experiences that are individually focussed and will usually be in different departments or teams. It is worth noting that spreading work experience opportunities throughout the year in this way may increase the capacity of an employer to deliver opportunities as the demand on coordination staff and host departments is more dispersed.

Case study: MBDA

MBDA Systems has a well-established approach to gender-diverse work experience that yields impressive results. The company offers schools within a 15-mile geographic radius of their sites opportunities to nominate Year 10 students for two work experience places per school. The students put forward by any individual school must meet a 50/50 gender balance, a requirement that has been strictly enforced for at least 15 years. The students are selected using the same academic criteria that the company applies in selecting apprentices. In addition, this work experience is offered during particular weeks throughout the year determined by the company, none of which fall during the summer. MBDA's consistent approach year-on-year has helped cement strong relationships with schools to support this model. The work experience activity is organised and delivered by MBDA's own apprentices, many of whom are female. This provides the students with powerful early-career role models as well as giving management experience to the apprentices. Many of the students who take part in work experience subsequently apply for apprenticeships with the company.

Further work experience case studies, e.g. from Finmeccanica, can be found on the Tomorrow's Engineers website

Collective – the employer offers one or more distinct work experience 'events' that happen at a scheduled point in the year. These would involve bringing a group of students in for a common time period, with experience delivered to the collective group. This model would involve students taking part in activities, tours, development sessions and discussions as a group and may use a residential setting where facilities exist.

Case study: National Grid residential courses

Each year, National Grid sponsors and hosts a high quality, week-long residential engineering experience at its National Training Centre with 100 Year 10 students, 50% of whom are girls. The course was co-designed by the Smallpeice Trust, with the intention of attracting students with the aptitude to study STEM subjects at A level and beyond.

The students are given the opportunity to explore the world of energy generation, transmission and distribution through a series of interactive workshops and demonstrations. They learn about the nation's energy networks and visit facilities that encourage a deeper knowledge and understanding of the gas and electricity industries.

The students take part in thought-provoking activities to find out how our energy demands will be met in 2030, meeting and working alongside engineers from National Grid to draw on their expertise and experience. The week helps students develop confidence, time management, problem solving, planning, presentation and team building skills.

“ In the years ahead, renewable energy will be more and more important. Having the best engineers will be crucial if we want to develop, so engineers will become even more important. I want to be part of that. ”

Elizabeth Haigh (15), National Grid work experience student



Summer – similar to spread work experience but the employer offers opportunities only during the summer term or summer holiday period.

Case study: Renishaw summer work experience

Renishaw delivers seventy individual work experience weeks per year to pupils from schools in the south west. Each school can send three pupils, who are asked to provide a written statement about what they hope to achieve from doing work experience at Renishaw and the area of the business they are keen to work in. If more than three good applications are received the school selects the students they feel would benefit most from the experience. Once selected, students are allocated to a department (taking into account their areas of interest, where possible) in the week they have requested. If the business has reached capacity during term time, students are invited to come in during their own time in one of the school holidays.

Children of staff members account for up to 40% of Renishaw's work experience places. Around 12 pupils per year are invited for extended work experience between their AS and A levels or during the summer prior to their degree.

On the first day of their work experience week, students have the same induction as new starters, as well as signing the NDA and confidentiality documents. They are then allocated a supervisor for the week in the department they will be working in. They are expected to work 8am to 4.45pm Monday-Thursday and 8am-1pm on Friday. Students receive feedback on their week and Renishaw looks at this if they subsequently apply for an apprenticeship.

In 2015 Renishaw is piloting a work experience for 50 students to attend during the same week in July. The students will be designing, building and presenting a project.

Ad-hoc – many businesses have no set pattern to the work experience opportunities they offer and no formalised approach to the way in which these opportunities are made available and publicised. Whilst this approach may best suit your business, it is worth noting that there can be increased overheads from this approach on the organisation and diversity of work experience opportunities as a result.

4. Preparation activities

Work experience with a company may be a student's first experience of an employment setting.

4.1 Start the student thinking about their work experience

It is very likely to be the student's first experience of an engineering employment setting. In order to achieve maximum benefit for both the student and the business, it is worth asking the student to conduct some prior research about the business and to consider their own objectives.

A **sample student application** form for work experience along with a **sample work experience preparation letter to students** can be found at www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/employertoolkit/workexperience

Whilst not every business would need to use student application forms as a part of their selection process, the completion of a form provides a good development opportunity for students in many cases. It also makes them think about their motivations in applying and what they hope to gain from the experience.

Students can also be encouraged to explore information sources such as the engineer case studies at www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/case_studies

4.2 Pre-briefing for hosts

The documents referenced in the introduction to this guide contain a wealth of information on how to prepare staff for their role as work experience hosts or supervisors. From the particular perspective of delivering engineering work experience to a diverse student group, hosts should also be briefed to be inclusive in their approach to looking after work experience students. This should include:

- Taking care to use language that counters traditional stereotypes
- Illustrating, wherever possible, that the business environment is diverse. In the modern engineering workforce, staff who are female and/or from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are engineers and managers. Everyone is expected to work in diverse teams and it is important that students appreciate this during their experience
- Steering away from traditional gender stereotypes in task allocation, i.e. assign girls as well as boys to team leading or hands-on roles.

“ I had little to no experience in engineering before my work experience with Rolls-Royce. This opened the engineering door for me; I completed both practical and technical activities on various sites which greatly increased my confidence. This showed me that I could use my creativity and technical abilities side-by-side, and confirmed that this route was the right one for me. ”

Emma Allott, Advanced Apprentice, Rolls-Royce

4.3 Work experience diary

It is good practice to ask the student to make a record of their work experience through a diary or workbook. This should record their objectives, task assignments and reflections on their experience. A **work experience diary template** can be found at: www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/employertoolkit/workexperience

4.4 Involving parents and carers

Many students taking part in work experience will look to their parents or guardians for support and advice regarding their career options. Parents tend to have significant influence, as highlighted by recent research from The Institution of Engineering and Technology⁴. It is very important to engage parents in the work experience process in a positive way, pointing out ways in which they can support their child. This is especially true for engineering, a profession of which many parents will have had limited experience.

Suggested **information to give parents**, along with a **permission form** (to capture emergency contact details, medical conditions and so on) and a **sample letter to students** can all be found at: www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/employertoolkit/workexperience



“ Work experience shouldn't be a 'nice to have' but a must for young people. It is the single biggest interaction that persuades young people to take up a career in engineering. Renishaw have always been committed to giving young people work experience and have had many young people return as apprentices and graduates. ”

Julie Collins, Education Liaison Manager, Renishaw

5. Careers conversations

The time that a student spends with a business during work experience is an ideal opportunity to introduce information about engineering careers in a supported way. The wide variety of roles and disciplines that can be pursued in engineering can be confusing for students, teachers and parents so it is worth providing several opportunities to talk to early career engineers as well as signposting to sources of further information about engineering careers, beyond those within the host company.

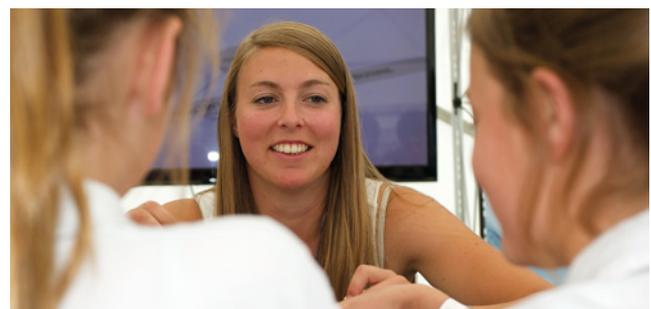
At the end of their work experience, the aim should be for students to:

- Be better informed about routes into engineering;
- Be more knowledgeable about what engineering job roles involve;
- Understand how engineering, design and technology relate to what they learn at school;
- Understand the potential rewards of a career in engineering.

A helpful overview of suggested **careers conversations and learning outcomes for students**, together with possible ways of integrating each aspect into work experience can be found at: www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/employertoolkit/workexperience

Useful links for students who are seeking further careers information, advice and guidance can also be found here.

Tomorrow's Engineers publishes a series of career route maps for engineering in the UK that may be helpful to students on work experience. Route maps and other useful literature for students, parents and teachers can be found on the careers resources section of the Tomorrow's Engineers website.



⁴ IET research into parental attitudes and influence towards engineering careers for girls and boys www.engineer-a-better-world.org/research/

6. Safeguarding and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements

Businesses should already have safeguarding guidance in place. An **example of safeguarding guidance** from National Grid can be found at: www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/employertoolkit/workexperience

In order to address issues relating to safeguarding efficiently, these can be included as part of your standard risk assessment process prior to bringing young people onto site. **Example risk assessments** that Rolls-Royce use as part of their work experience provision can also be found in the employer toolkit. These cover engineering, manufacturing and office environments and can be adapted and added to for other companies to use.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks replace the previous checks obtained through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

DBS checks for pre-16 work experience

Schools decide what checks are necessary after considering the nature of supervision and the frequency of the activity. In many cases,

DBS checks will be deemed unnecessary. The school is likely to request an enhanced DBS check in cases where the person working with the child is unsupervised and the same person is in frequent contact with the child.

The statutory obligations regarding DBS checks are set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education*⁵, the statutory guidance on safeguarding from the Department for Education (DfE), which came into effect in April 2014. Paragraphs 90-94 are relevant to work experience situations.

DBS checks for post-16 work experience

From July 2012, providers are no longer required to carry out enhanced DBS checks on employees/staff supervising young people aged 16-17 on work experience. This advice, which was published by the Department for Education in October 2013 (page 14), replaces the previous requirement for checks to be carried out for extended work experience placements of more than 14 days.

7. Health, safety and insurance liability

The Government has made efforts to minimise the bureaucracy associated with work experience since 2012. Under health and safety law, work experience students are counted as employees and should be treated no differently to other young people employed by the business, as described clearly at www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople

An employer's existing employers' liability insurance policy should cover work experience placements, provided the insurer is a member of the Association of British Insurers or Lloyds, so there would be no need in this case to obtain any additional employer's liability insurance if taking on work experience students. We would suggest, however, that it is good practice for the insurer to be made aware that the company will be hosting under-16s on site.

For detailed guidance from the Health and Safety Executive see www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/workexperience/placeprovide.htm

In addition, existing risk assessments for the workplace should cover many of the risk areas applicable to work experience. Businesses may need to review their existing risk management process to assess whether any adjustment is needed to cater for the presence of young people. See www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/risks for specific guidance.

A **risk assessment template** for engineering and manufacturing employers, covering many of the risks typically encountered in an engineering setting can be found at: www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/employertoolkit/workexperience

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/350747/Keeping_children_safe_in_education.pdf

8. Dress code guidance

Most businesses have a dress code that applies to their staff. This guidance should already avoid excessive restrictions that would affect some groups of staff more than others. Students should be given clear information before they arrive on site regarding the expectations and requirements within the business.

Students may not be familiar with the term 'business dress' so it may be worth providing explicit examples of what is acceptable in your business and what is not. The following suggestions provide a good starting set to adapt to your setting:

Smart business dress – you could wear trousers/skirt/dress, a shirt/blouse. No jeans, tracksuits or hoodies

Casual business dress – you could wear trousers/skirt/dress, a polo shirt or smart T-shirt. No football shirts or logo tops, no jeans or tracksuits

Sensible shoes – school shoes are ideal, no trainers, avoid extreme heel heights

Jeans (if appropriate to your setting)

No trainers

No facial jewellery except where of religious significance

If appropriate, warn students that jewellery may need to be removed and long hair may need to be tied back for certain activities, for example tasks involving machinery.

Safety shoes may be required for some planned activities. This should be made clear to students in advance, especially where they have an option to bring their own suitable safety shoes with them. Give a clear statement about protective equipment, such as:

'You may be required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) during some/all of your time with us. Any mandatory PPE will be provided and, if supplied, must be worn as directed. PPE could include safety glasses, helmets, safety shoes and workwear/overalls.'

9. Planning and accreditation

You may find it helpful to use an independent framework for planning the structure of student work experience tasks or projects. One widely recognised framework is that of the British Science Association's CREST awards. As an example, BP has used the CREST award framework in their Year 10/11 work experience activities in recent years. Their approach is profiled in a case study⁶, available from the National STEM Centre Library.

Another framework used by a growing number of engineering companies to accredit their work experience activities is Industrial Cadets, run by EDT. This industry-led quality standard provides three accreditation levels of work experience activities, in addition to support for companies and schools, and is aimed at students aged 11-19. For more information see www.industrialcadets.org.uk

10. Confidentiality and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Depending on the nature of your business and where students are to be placed within your organisation, you may be concerned about securing student confidentiality with respect to information they have sight of during their work experience. You may also judge that protecting your IPR is necessary. The relevance of these issues must be assessed by you for your specific business but, should you wish to address either of them, [sample confidentiality and IPR agreements](#) can be found online for you to adapt to your particular situation.

⁶ www.nationalstemcentre.org.uk/elibrary/resource/4458/crest-awards-through-work-experience

Accompanying documents

The sample documents and templates listed below can be adapted and used to support an engineering or manufacturing employer's work experience programme. These can all be found at:

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With thanks to National Grid for use of selected images.

For further information, please visit the Tomorrow's Engineers website:

www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk