National Work Experience Standard

CERTIFIED BY FUTURES FOR ALL

Work Experience Certification Good Practice Guide

About this document

This guide shows what best practice looks like in real work experience programmes. Every example in it comes from an employer in our community of founding members, and each one has been chosen because it shows a standard being met or what excellent practice looks like.

It isn't a guide to delivering work experience, and it isn't a comprehensive guide to evidence submission. **Our delivery resources** cover the first and our evidence submission guidance covers the second. This one sits between them: it shows what good looks like once it's in place, so you can recognise it in your own programme.

The framework in brief

National Work Experience Standard has Nine Standards, grouped by when they come into play.

Before the placement: Clear Aims (Standard 1), Engagement and Outreach (Standard 2), Safe, Accessible and Inclusive Practice (Standard 3)

During the placement: Learning and Developmental Outcomes (Standard 4), Programme Structure (Standard 5), Meaningful Interaction (Standard 6)

After the placement: Opportunities for Reflection (Standard 7), Recognition and Supporting Next Steps (Standard 8), Evaluation and Continuous Improvement (Standard 9)

The self-assessment uses the same structure, so it lines up directly with a full assessment.

How the examples are organised

For each standard you will find examples of practice that meets the standard, alongside examples that go further. The examples are illustrative rather than a checklist – they show what good looks like in practice, drawn from real employer programmes. Examples come from employers across sectors including finance, engineering, life sciences, food and drink, and the creative industries.

We haven't included examples of practice that didn't meet a standard. In assessment, that outcome almost always comes down to evidence being insufficient or not submitted, rather than a particular type of practice.

For more information about sourcing and submitting your evidence, please contact **national.standard@futuresforall.org**.





Before the placement

01

Standard 1: Clear Aims

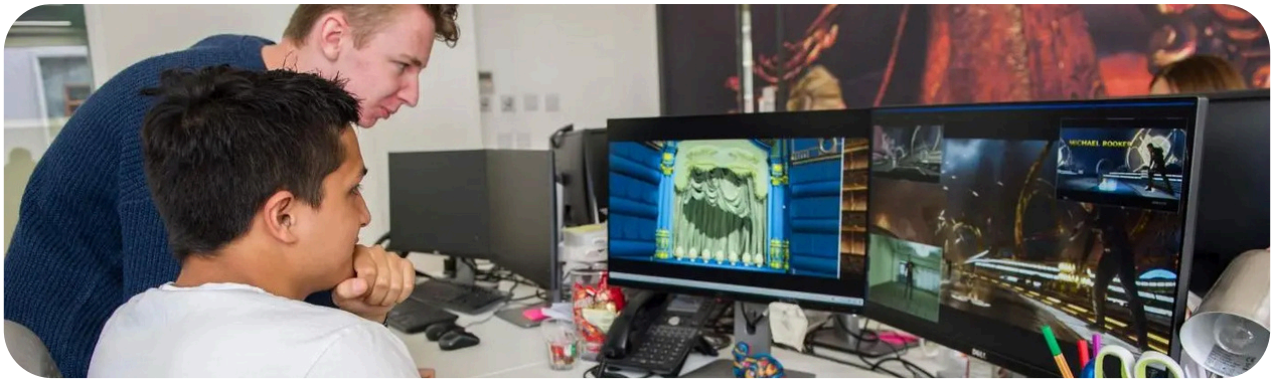
Evidence shared	Why this is a strong example
Evidence that Met Standard Advert for the placement	A good advert doesn't just invite young people to apply - it explains, in a few clear sections, exactly what the week will involve and what students can expect to gain from it. It also lists the specific skills students should come away with, so the purpose of the placement is obvious from the very first thing a young person reads, well before they apply.
Evidence that Met Standard Plan for the first morning of the placement	Before any activity begins on day one, there's a dedicated moment where staff sit down with students and explain what they'll get out of the week. This means the purpose of the placement is set out to students in person, right at the start, rather than only being written down somewhere and never mentioned again.
Evidence of Excellent Practice Work experience advert, participant feedback, and planning meeting notes	A strong work experience advert sets out clear aims for the programme, and participant feedback confirms these aims are actually being met, with young people reporting a better understanding of the sector as a result. Planning meeting notes show this feedback has directly shaped delivery decisions - for example, moving a session earlier in the day to protect time for the activities most closely tied to the programme's aims. This shows the aims aren't just written down once and left; they're checked against real evidence and used to keep the programme purposeful over time.



Standard 2: Engagement & Outreach

02

Evidence shared	Why this is a strong example
Evidence that Met Standard A talk given to a group of students at a school	Staff went into a school to talk to students directly about the placement - what the company does, what jobs are available, and how to apply. A message from a school afterwards, asking for another placement because of a positive experience the year before, shows this is a route into work experience that gets used again and again, not a one-off favour.
Evidence that Met Standard Emails with a delivery partner, and clear instructions on how to apply	Rather than placements being arranged informally, there's a clear, structured way for young people to apply, set out on a partner organisation's website with straightforward instructions. Behind the scenes, ongoing emails between the employer and their partner show placements being planned together in advance, including practical details - like where to go and what to expect - shared with students ahead of time.
Evidence of Excellent Practice Application form, and a record of the schools they'd worked with over the past year	A strong application form asks more than just contact details - it includes a few anonymous questions to help understand whether the placement is reaching young people who might not otherwise get this kind of opportunity, and it's made clear these answers aren't used to judge applications. Alongside this, a record of school visits over a full year shows a wide range of schools booked in, including several working with students who need extra support, and a number of schools who come back year after year. Together, this shows a genuinely wide and deliberately fair approach to reaching young people.



Standard 3: Safe, Accessible & Inclusive Practice

03

Evidence shared	Why this is a strong example
Evidence that Met Standard A safety check completed before the placement, and a written safeguarding policy	Before the placement, the employer worked through a straightforward checklist covering the basics - insurance, fire safety, first aid, and confirming everyone involved understands how to keep young people safe. This is backed up by a simple written policy explaining what safeguarding means in practice and what staff should do if they're ever concerned about a young person, including clear rules such as never being alone in a closed room with a student.
Evidence that Met Standard A short code of conduct shared with students in advance	Before their placement, which ran online, students were sent a simple set of expectations for taking part - being on time, respectful and safe - along with a clear explanation of what would happen if someone didn't follow the rules, including who to contact if something went wrong. Each student also confirmed in writing that they understood the terms of taking part before the placement began.
Evidence of Excellent Practice A short conversation and some paperwork completed for each student before their placement	Before the placement starts, each student is asked directly whether there's anything the employer should know about in terms of access needs. This feeds into a written safety plan, along with a signed commitment to update it if anything new comes up once a student has been matched to a placement. Each student is also sent a personal note before they arrive, telling them exactly who to ask for and what to expect on their first day. This is a genuinely individual, planned-in-advance approach.



During the placement

04

Standard 4: Learning & Developmental Outcomes

Evidence shared	Why this is a strong example
Evidence that Met Standard A project plan with clear learning goals written into it	Before the placement starts, the employer sets out exactly what they want students to gain - skills like teamwork, communication and problem-solving - and this is explained to students on day one. Students then work towards these goals through a hands-on project and present what they've done at the end for feedback.
Evidence that Met Standard An onboarding email and accompanying slides setting out what students will gain from the week	Before the placement, students are sent a friendly onboarding email and slides setting out clear learning outcomes, pitched at an accessible, engaging level for the age group attending. These outcomes are aligned with the programme's wider aims and used to shape the three-day timetable.
Evidence of Excellent Practice A short survey before the placement, another after it, and feedback collected across the whole programme	Before the placement, each student is asked what they're hoping to get from the week, and afterwards the same students are asked what they've learned and how useful it was for their future plans - most rated it highly, with many naming specific career roles they now wanted to look into further. The employer kept four different versions of their session materials, and comparing them shows the content has genuinely been updated between cohorts rather than left unchanged. This combination of clear, evidenced impact and a real cycle of improvement over time shows learning outcomes that are built into how the programme evolves, not just how it starts.



Standard 5: Programme Structure

05

Evidence shared	Why this is a strong example
Evidence that Met Standard A clear, day-by-day plan for the placement	The programme follows a clear, varied three-day structure, including a problem-solving team-building exercise and a group project where students carry out research, prepare a presentation, and present back to peers for feedback. This gives a logical, well-paced shape to the week, with a good mix of activity types.
Evidence that Met Standard A short outline of the three days	The first day focuses on general learning, and the following two days move into more hands-on, workplace-based activity - including a project, meeting staff, and preparing a short presentation. This gives a clear, logical shape to the week.
Evidence of Excellent Practice A presenter guidance document, opening session slides, and impact report data	Ten subject matter experts each lead a one-hour session on a different part of the industry, building progressively toward a final group product design and presentation challenge that pulls together everything from across the week. Impact data confirmed the structure works, with strong participant satisfaction and evidence of knowledge gained. The participants asked for more live, interactive content, so the team is adding a new live session for the next delivery. This shows a programme structure that's not just well sequenced, but genuinely shaped and reshaped using what participants say.



Standard 6: Meaningful Interaction

06

Evidence shared	Why this is a strong example
Evidence that Met Standard Feedback from students after the placement	Students had the chance to speak directly with a range of different staff during the week. Feedback afterwards confirms this was one of the parts of the week students valued most, with several mentioning specific conversations or sessions with staff as a highlight.
Evidence that Met Standard Participant feedback and thank-you cards submitted after the programme	Throughout the week, participants had regular opportunities to speak directly with industry professionals, giving them real insight into working life in the creative industries. The feedback and thank-you notes submitted afterwards show how much participants valued these conversations. What makes this meet the standard is that interaction with staff was built into every day of the placement rather than limited to a single Q&A or set moment, and the employer could show, through the participants' own words, that it happened and that it mattered.
Evidence of Excellent Practice A short outline of the placement	Over two of the three days, students work directly with staff on a real task, building towards presenting their work back to the team. This is combined with informal opportunities to hear directly from staff about their own career journeys, plus time spent on practical skills like CV writing and interview practice, delivered in person. This gives students several genuinely two-way ways to engage with people across the organisation.

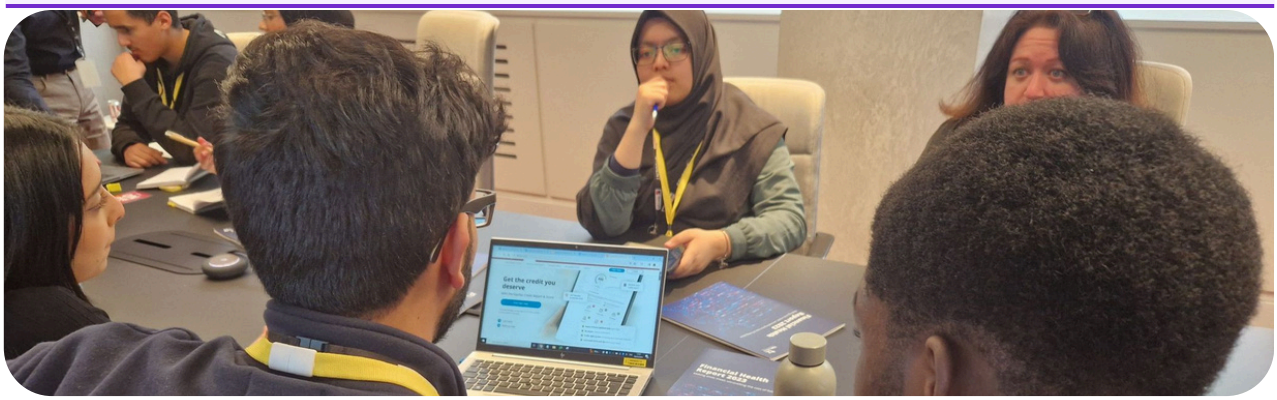


After the placement

07

Standard 7: Opportunities for Reflection

Evidence shared	Why this is a strong example
Evidence that Met Standard A programme schedule and a feedback form	The programme schedule shows that reflection happens at several points across the week: a mid-week check-in, a final presentation on the last day where students look back on their whole experience - including an honest pros-and-cons assessment of the placement - and a feedback form at the end. This gives young people multiple structured moments to think about what they've done and learned over the course of the week.
Evidence that Met Standard A survey completed by students after the placement	As well as asking students to rate the week, the survey asks them directly what they plan to do next as a result of what they've learned - and students give specific answers, such as looking further into a particular career or type of study. This is a genuine moment of reflection built into the end of the placement.
Evidence of Excellent Practice Details of daily reflection prompts, the mock interview activity, and a LinkedIn session, from a follow-up discussion	Reflection happens throughout the programme, not just at the end - through short daily prompts, a mock interview, and a session on building a LinkedIn profile. The mock interview in particular asks students to put what they've learned into practice, turning it into something they can genuinely use going forward. This gives students repeated, varied opportunities to reflect, and a clear route to apply what they've reflected on.



Standard 8: Recognition & Supporting Next Steps

08

Evidence shared	Why this is a strong example
Evidence that Met Standard Details of a closing session on the final day	The programme ends with a dedicated moment where every student is formally recognised for completing the placement, built into the final day. This shows students clearly receive acknowledgement for what they've done.
Evidence that Met Standard The Friday Finale presentation format, and participant certificates	At the end of the week, every group presents their project to a panel of judges, who give structured feedback using a clear scoring framework covering content, presentation and participation. Every participant also receives a certificate marking their completion of the programme. This ensures every participant leaves with genuine recognition and feedback on what they did.
Evidence of Excellent Practice Certificates, digital badges, participant feedback, and progression resources	Every participant receives a certificate and digital badge for completing the programme, along with individual developmental feedback from staff, industry professionals and clients throughout the week - tailored to each person, covering both technical skills and workplace behaviours. Alongside this, students are given information about careers, training, mentoring and further learning opportunities. This combines genuine recognition with a clear, individualised route to next steps.



Standard 9: Evaluation & Continuous Improvement

09

Evidence shared	Why this is a strong example
Evidence that Met Standard A survey completed by students after each placement	At the end of every placement, students are asked a consistent set of questions about what worked well and what didn't - including open-ended questions on how the week could be improved. Several students independently raised the same suggestion, showing the employer is getting clear, useful, repeatable feedback each time.
Evidence that Met Standard Feedback forms, and follow-up contact with former participants	Feedback is collected consistently from young people at the end of each placement, and the employer has also tried to reach former participants afterwards to find out whether the experience shaped their career choices. Feedback from end-of-placement presentations is reviewed and used to make changes to the programme where appropriate. This shows an employer that listens to feedback and takes it into account when shaping future placements.
Evidence of Excellent Practice Year-end wrap-up and planning meeting notes	Feedback is gathered from young people before and after the programme, and from staff across three different delivery locations, then reviewed together at the end of each year. This has led to real changes - for example, moving a session earlier in the day after it kept overrunning and being cut short, and giving facilitators more guidance on keeping sessions interactive after one cohort found a session too lecture-heavy. This shows a genuine cycle of feedback leading to specific, evidenced improvements year on year.

