

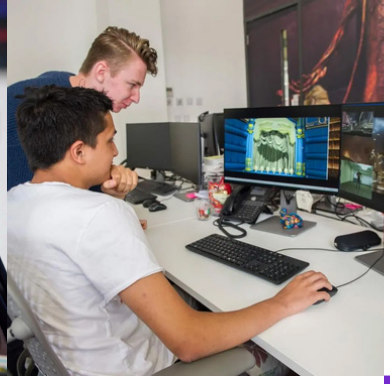

National Work Experience Standard



CERTIFIED BY FUTURES FOR ALL

Learn About Our National Work Experience Standard

The **independent certification** for employers who provide high-quality work experience.

What it is

National Work Experience Standard is an independent certification for employers that provide high-quality work experience for young people. It sets out what good work experience looks like, based on research and more than a decade of practice with young people, schools and employers across the UK.

Employers are assessed against nine Standards covering how work experience is planned, delivered and improved over time. Certification is awarded only once an employer has been through a full, independent assessment and every Standard has been met. As the country's largest provider of work experience, we know what good looks like. Certification means you do too.

Why it matters

There is no shared national definition of what good work experience looks like, so quality varies widely. Around a third of young people describe their work experience as a waste of time, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are least likely to access the best placements (Employers & Educators, 2026).

The employers who get work experience right build stronger, more diverse talent pipelines, earn recognition in their communities and get a better return on the time they invest. Certification gives you an independent way to show you are one of them.

How it works

The process has three steps. Every employer starts in the same place.

01

Self-assessment.



Free, open to any employer and with no commitment. You answer a short series of questions based on the nine Standards and tell us a little about your organisation and your programme. You get a one page report with your responses, recommendations for improving or maintaining your practice, and a link to examples of what good looks like in action. This is your starting point, and a first sense of where your programme sits before you decide whether to go further.

02

Full assessment.



If you want formal recognition, you move into the full assessment, which is a paid service. You supply evidence against each Standard to support your self-assessed ratings. An assessor reviews the evidence and self-assessment together, and has a follow-up conversation with you, to reach a judgement on each Standard. Borderline submissions go to a moderation panel before an outcome is confirmed.

03

Outcome and certification



Employers who meet our Standard are certified and receive a full report followed by a certificate. The report gives detailed feedback on your evidence and sets out suggested improvements or ways to maintain quality. Employers not yet meeting the Standard receive the same full feedback and can resubmit once they have made the recommended improvements. Certification is issued placement by placement and is valid for three years.

What we assess

The nine Standards follow the placement journey. Before the placement: clear aims, engagement and outreach, and safe, accessible and inclusive practice. During the placement: learning and developmental outcomes, programme structure, and meaningful interaction. After the placement: opportunities for reflection, recognition and supporting next steps, and evaluation and continuous improvement.

What certification gives you

National recognition. Schools, colleges and young people have no reliable way to tell good work experience from poor. Certification tells them your programme meets a national standard, and helps you stand out to early talent.

A stronger early talent pipeline. Certified employers are already building relationships with the young people who will be their workforce in five years.

Social proof, not just social commitment. Certification gives your investment in young people independent credibility that holds up in an ESG report, an annual review or a public sector tender.

A clear picture of your programme. Assessment shows you what is working well and where to focus next, with a community of certified employers sharing practice alongside you.

A seat at the table. Employers certified now help shape what National Work Experience Standard becomes. They will be the names associated with setting the benchmark.



Get started

To find out more about certification, or to talk through how your programme measures up, contact us at **national.standard@futuresforall.org**

Register to get certified

Start your free self-assessment