

Guidance for students

LinkedIn for placement students

LinkedIn can help you at every stage of the placement process whether you're looking for a placement, putting your application together, or preparing for an interview or assessment centre. Even while you're on placement LinkedIn has a feature that can help you make the most of your time.

Presenting yourself professionally to placement providers

Don't be a digital disaster

Recruiters may look for information about you online as part of the recruitment process. The information that can be found about you through an online search is sometimes referred to as your digital footprint. Have you searched for your name online recently? Are you comfortable with potential employers reading what you've found? Familiarise yourself with the security settings on social media platforms and seek advice from careers or information staff within your institution about how to improve your digital footprint.

Achieve 'All Star' status by completing all sections of your Profile and by having Recommendations, Connections and Endorsements. You are the only person able to see your Profile Strength.

Action point

Placement providers may search for details about you online as part of their recruitment processes. It is important to develop a professional online presence.

- Set aside time to work on your LinkedIn profile - don't leave it as an afterthought.
- Seek advice on your profile from your careers service.

Make your professional self visible online

You can use LinkedIn to present your 'professional self' online. Indeed, it can be a platform that you would actively encourage employers to find! You can increase your visibility to potential employers who might be looking up your name online by ensuring that your profile is complete and has reached the All Star standard and by using keywords relevant to your chosen

sector area or specialism. Careers staff and placement staff within your institution can usually give you advice on what to include in your profile.

Highlight projects and achievements

If you haven't got much formal work experience at this stage, think of other areas that you can highlight on your LinkedIn. This could be volunteering, membership of sports teams or responsibilities gained as a course representative. Remember that you can include visual elements on your LinkedIn profile, so you could include links to presentations that you've created or to any portfolio that you might be creating as part of your course.

Link your profile to your CV

You can also put a link to your LinkedIn profile on your CV. The default URL to your profile probably contains lots of numbers and characters, which won't look neat on your CV. However, LinkedIn gives you the option to customise your URL, so use this option to create a shorter link.

Looking for your perfect placement - advertised and hidden opportunities

Looking for advertised opportunities on LinkedIn

The LinkedIn Jobs Database contains details of placement opportunities both in the UK and overseas.

Discovering hidden opportunities via your connections

Just because a company isn't advertising a placement doesn't mean that an opportunity doesn't exist to undertake a placement there.

The bigger your network of connections the more likely it is that one of them might have the perfect opportunity for you.

If you're meeting someone in person that you've only corresponded with online to exercise sensible caution. Research their background online, meet in a public place or official building, tell a friend of your whereabouts and arrange to check in with a friend immediately after a meeting.

Action point

Not all placements are advertised! Be proactive in your search by using LinkedIn.

- Make the most of your existing connections on LinkedIn.
- Always personalise your message when you make a new connection request.

Connect with graduates from your institution to expand your network

Consider connecting with graduates from your university to expand your network. You can use LinkedIn's Find Alumni feature to identify graduates from your university.

- **Gain inspiration** - find out where recent graduates from your course undertook their placement.
- **Get insider knowledge** - perhaps a recent graduate from your university is now working for a company where you'd like to undertake a placement. They may be able to give you insider information about what the company culture is like.

Personalise your connection message

Making the effort to personalise your connection request message shows the recipient that you value the opportunity of connecting with them as a professional on LinkedIn. This is particularly important if you're connecting with someone who doesn't know you well.

Using LinkedIn to support your application or to prepare for an interview or assessment centre

Find out more about the company before you apply

Check to see if the organisation has a company page on LinkedIn. On company pages you can find recent updates about the company, which can improve your knowledge not only of what is happening within the company but can also give you a sense of that company's ethos and values.

Demonstrating sector knowledge

Placement providers value candidates who show real passion and enthusiasm for their chosen industry. LinkedIn has several features that can help you to build your sector knowledge and commercial awareness:

- **Channels:** Follow LinkedIn channels to get industry updates.
- **Influencers:** Follow influencers to gain insight from leading industry figures.
- **Groups:** Join groups related to your degree subject or chosen industry and contribute to the discussion.

Action point

Research the organisation and the sector it operates in. Don't just rely on the information on their website!

Features on LinkedIn that can help with company and sector research include:

- Company pages
- Groups
- Influencers

Get insider knowledge from your connections

- If you have an interview or assessment centre coming up, check to see if any of your connections have a connection within that company. They may be able to arrange an introduction, so that you can get further information about

During your placement year

Already secured a placement? Congratulations! There are several features on LinkedIn that can help you to make the most of your placement year:

Connect with colleagues

- Connecting with your new colleagues can improve your visibility within the organisation. Remember to personalise your connection request.

Make the most of conferences and events

- Don't just limit your new connections to your immediate colleagues. If you're attending a conference or other external event remember to connect with people you meet there. You never know when a connection made on placement might be useful in the future.
- Use LinkedIn's How We Met feature to record information about where you met that contact and any details of your initial meeting, such as topics discussed. This can be helpful to jog your memory in the future.

Update your skills and get endorsements

- Using new software? Successfully led a project? Trained colleagues? Whatever new skills you have acquired on placement, don't forget to add them to the skills section of your profile. Ask people who have seen you demonstrate these new skills to endorse them on your profile.

Collect recommendations

- Recommendations work in a similar way to references on your CV. Ask your line manager on your placement to write a few sentences about your time on placement.

- Recommendations can add real value to your profile and demonstrate your abilities and skills to potential future employers.

Action point

Remember that the connections you make on your placement year may help you in your future career!

- Be proactive in securing LinkedIn connections during your time on placement.
- Use the "How we met" feature to record useful information about your connections.

When you return from placement

Update the experience section in your profile

- Remember to update the experience section in your profile to include details of your accomplishments during your CV year.

Update your headline and summary

- You may want to make changes to your headline and summary to reflect the experiences that you had on placement. Remember that graduate employers really value placement experience.

Add projects to your profile

- If you were responsible for specific projects, you can add these separately under your profile section.

Post about your experience

- Be proud of your time on placement! Did you find ways to save the company money? Create a new product? Lead a project? Re-design a system so that it was more efficient? Don't be shy! Mention it in your profile.
- To create further impact you could create an update or a long-form post about your experience, perhaps linking the theoretical aspects of your course to the practical experience you gained on placement. Long-form posts give you the opportunity to contribute to the academic discourse about your subject or to highlight in depth a skill that you have developed such as project management.

Further resources

You can find additional resources on LinkedIn at:

<https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students>