

## Starting Points: How can I find my own placement?

Looking for advertised placements is not the only way to gain work experience. It is possible to find your own using a more proactive approach - this will require perseverance, and a plan.

### Who could I approach?

- Think about the type of industry and organisation you would like to work in
- Be selective - it is better to approach a number of carefully chosen companies, showing that you have researched them and that you think you have something to offer them, than sending off generic approaches to 50 companies
- Don't just go for big name companies you have already heard of - small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have lots of opportunities and could offer a very varied experience - be open-minded

### How can I find companies?

- Graduate careers websites such as Prospects and TARGETjobs can help you identify organisations within your area of interest; professional bodies and Skills Councils - which often have useful employer directories
- Online directories such as Yell, Thomsonlocal, Kompass
- LinkedIn can help you find out who the people you know are connected with - you may already have some useful "second connections"; use keywords in the search box to find specific types of organisation

### Don't forget to network

- Many of our students find their placements through networking and sending out speculative applications
- Ask family or friends if they know of any potential opportunities
- Talk to tutors in your department about their possible links with any organisations
- LinkedIn can help you find out who the people you know are connected with - you may already have some useful "second connections"
- Research companies working in your area of interest even if they are not advertising a position you can send them a speculative application

### Use social media

- Many opportunities are now advertised by companies on Twitter and Facebook. Following interested companies means you will see opportunities as soon as they arise
- Ensure you have a strong and professional online presence on social media. Potential employers will look you up!

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## **Shall I just send the company an email?**

- Not yet! Research each company first, using their website, and follow them on LinkedIn and maybe Twitter
- What is their business, what do they do, what projects are they involved in, who are their competitors?
- And then think about yourself...

## **What will they want to know about me?**

- What strengths, skills, and key experiences do you have that the company would be interested in?
- Prepare a strong CV highlighting these strengths and skills
- Think about developing a LinkedIn profile, clearly stating in the heading that you are seeking a placement and the industry and type of role you are interested in

## **How should I approach a company?**

- This could be by letter plus CV, or email plus CV
- Find a named person to send to - check their website, give the company a ring, or try LinkedIn
- Be polite and professional in all of your contact
- Check your spelling and grammar

## **What should I say?**

- What do you have to offer them? Why should they take you on? Make this clear
- Why are you approaching them - why do you want to work for them? Show your interest and enthusiasm for what they do
- Be clear about what you are asking for - a sandwich placement year/shorter work experience - give possible dates and any other requirements of the placement
- Say in your letter that you will be following up with a phone call in a week or two

## **What if I don't hear anything?**

- Follow-up by phone after ten days or so, referring to the letter/email you have sent
- Ask if you can talk to a relevant person, or arrange a time to phone and talk, or perhaps arrange a meeting
- Even if a company is not able to offer you a placement, show an interest in what they do, use this as an opportunity to gather information for the future

## **Want to talk it through?**

Contact Careers and Employability for further advice and support:

Phone: 0114 225 3752 Email: [careers@shu.ac.uk](mailto:careers@shu.ac.uk)