

HOW TO UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PLACEMENTS



Studies suggest that **Graduates contribute approximately £1 billion of added value** to the UK economy annually.* So given the well-documented skills challenges recruiters face it's no wonder employers are turning to placements to identify the best future talent for their roles.

Undergraduate placements, graduate placements, and graduate schemes are powerful tools on their own, providing opportunities to engage with emerging talent at different stages of their educational journey. However, when used in synergy, they form a comprehensive strategy for accessing the finest future talent as early as possible, and nurturing these candidates into future leaders who can seamlessly transition into full employment within the organisation.



UNDERGRADUATE PLACEMENTS

Also known as a “sandwich year,” “industrial placement,” “internship,” or “work placement.”

- Usually spans a full year and occurs between a student’s penultimate and final year of their degree.
- Offer students valuable real-life experience and essential skills, serving as an early opportunity to assess and cultivate relationships with the best future talent.
- An effective strategy for building a pipeline of prospective candidates for future graduate placements or schemes.

Typically, these placements commence around August, with recruitment processes taking place between October and December.



GRADUATE PLACEMENTS

Also known as “Internships,” graduate placements represent fixed-term contracts following university graduation.

- Particularly well-suited for short-term projects.
- Serve as an avenue to retain individuals who have demonstrated exceptional performance during their undergraduate placements but for whom suitable roles have yet to become available.
- Offer employers an opportunity to instill industry-specific skills and competencies within their workforce.

Typically commence around August to align with graduation times for more regular intakes. However, they are completely flexible and can start at any point of the year, usually attracting graduates from the past few years.



GRADUATE OR POST-GRADUATE SCHEMES

Also known as “Graduate Programs” or “Trainee Programs.”

- Structured initiatives designed to ingrain industry-specific skills and company values.
- Typically spanning a duration of 1 to 3 years.
- Often come with the expectation of a full-time role.

Typically start in August, with recruitment efforts commencing as early as 10 months prior and deadlines typically set for November or December.

UK companies get an average of **39 applicants** for each graduate scheme vacancy*

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Tapping into future talent pipelines

Placements offer young people the opportunity to gain real-world experience, whilst contributing fresh ideas and energy to your business. We look at some of the key benefits of employing placements, as well as practical employer-focused strategies to take advantage of the available talent.



Fresh Perspective

Graduates bring new ideas and a fresh perspective on problem-solving, enabling businesses to adapt and innovate in a fast-paced environment. Their willingness to learn, courage to take risks, and flexibility are qualities that companies can leverage to gain a competitive edge.



Skills Development

Placements assist students in developing transferable and hard skills that are essential for their future careers. They gain hands-on experience in a professional environment, which enhances their communication, problem-solving, and technical skills. By providing training and support, employers can foster a learning mindset and ensure that graduates are equipped to contribute to the work environment.



Reduced Hiring Risk

A placement can be considered a trial period for a candidate without the need for a long-term commitment. It allows employers to assess the candidate's work and communication skills, team fit, and industry acumen - all without the pressure of a long-term commitment.



Talent Pipelining

Placements are an ideal way for employers to pipeline talent. This proactive approach enables companies to identify promising candidates and develop them for future roles. By building a talent pipeline, employers can reduce time-to-hire, lower recruitment costs and drive retention rates.



Attracting Talent - Strategies for Employers

Early Recruitment and Attraction: Employers need to be proactive in sourcing talented candidates by attracting them early in their academic careers. Employers who use placements or graduate schemes secure the best candidates with the most suitable skill sets and ensures a competitive advantage in attracting the most talented graduates.



Jazz Pharmaceuticals

Placements are an effective way for us to nurture and create top talent, which will be integral to our growth as we strive to serve the unmet needs of more patients all over the world. Placements and early talent schemes bring new ideas, fresh perspectives and new energy to our business and help us to address the biggest healthcare challenges that patients face now and in the future.



Effective Recruitment

The success of a placement or graduate scheme begins with recruiting the right candidates. Building strong connections with multiple universities is pivotal. Effective recruitment entails not only advertising opportunities widely, and in the right places but also broad outreach, attending career fairs and proactive engagement with academic institutions to identify and nurture top talent. These efforts lead to a diverse and well-prepared candidate pool, ensuring a mutually beneficial experience for both the organisation and the student.

Graduates in science and technology earn **13 percent more** than the average graduate starting salary[^]

Summary

Placements are a valuable and sustainable hiring strategy for employers looking to build a pipeline of future talent, realise a positive ROI on recruitment investment, support local universities, and create opportunities for the next generation of talent. With an increasing amount of companies using placements and graduate schemes as a way to attract the best new talent, any company not including them in their hiring strategy faces missing out on the best candidates. Attracting the right candidates can be the difference between a good business and a great one.

*According to data from the Institute of Student Employers

[^]Graduate Jobs

Average graduate starting salary in the UK in 2023 was **£25,856[^]**

Employment through an agency

Due to the short-term nature of placements, using an employment agency is a practical choice. An agency can efficiently match candidates to roles, manage administrative tasks, and provide valuable HR support, ensuring compliance and payroll management. This allows organisations to focus on core operations while benefiting from the flexibility of short-term placements. Using an agency also means companies with headcount restrictions can utilise placements.

Unlocking Future Talent with Cogent Skills

Access to tailored services and expertise can prove invaluable in securing high-quality placement candidates and ensuring the effectiveness of your graduate scheme.

At Cogent Skills, we bring a wealth of experience in the recruitment, employment, and management of placements and graduate schemes. Our comprehensive services range from acting as a dedicated employment agency, assuming all hiring responsibilities for seamless access to placements, to crafting bespoke graduate schemes tailored to your company's exact needs.

With established collaborations spanning more than 80 UK universities and the trust of many of the world's leading companies, we are the preferred choice to support future talent ambitions. To learn more, please get in touch with our team at info@cogentskills.com or call us on **01925 515 200**.