

# Finding work experience – information for MBB students

## Some general tips

- Work experience is a great way to test out different career ideas to see if you like that sort of work. Graduate recruiters will be impressed if you have previous, relevant work experience. If you aren't sure what you'd like to do after University, read the Careers Service handout 'Career ideas for students & graduates – Molecular Biology & Biotechnology': [www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/mbb\\_careerideas.pdf](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/mbb_careerideas.pdf). Talk to a Careers Adviser.
- It may take a while to find relevant work experience. In the meantime, think about other work experience you have. Can that help you develop skills that will be useful in your chosen career? Can you get any type of experience in an organisation relevant to your chosen career, so you can gain an insight into how the organisation operates and make contact with people who might help you find more relevant experience?
- Be flexible in terms of the length and type of experience you seek. For example, you may find it necessary to seek several short placements with different organisations in order to gain a good level of experience.
- Be proactive and imaginative in your search for work experience. Don't limit your chances by only looking for publicised opportunities - some organisations may be able to offer work experience but do not advertise individual opportunities, whilst others may not have yet considered offering work experience but might be persuaded if they see a good applicant. Make speculative applications by sending your CV and covering letter to organisations where you'd like to work: [www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs/creative](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs/creative). Make use of social media such as LinkedIn and Twitter to individuals or organisations you might approach: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/media](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/media)
- Spread the net as widely as possible. Don't just aim for the larger, well known organisations but also consider work experience with Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs): [www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/pdf/sme.pdf](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/pdf/sme.pdf). For information about of growth sectors across the UK see [www.ukbusinesspark.co.uk](http://www.ukbusinesspark.co.uk), [www.yorkshiregraduates.co.uk/employment-training](http://www.yorkshiregraduates.co.uk/employment-training), or [icould.com/regions](http://icould.com/regions)
- Competition is strong for many work experience placements. Ensure your applications for work experience are effective: [www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob)

## Work experience in and around the lab

Popular work experience providers include universities and research institutes. As a starting point, check websites of learned societies and research institutions associated with your area of research interest (see the Careers Service information sheet 'Careers in a Research Environment – Information for MBB Scientists' for more details ([www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/mbb\\_labcareers.pdf](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/mbb_labcareers.pdf)) as well as [www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/network/students/index.aspx](http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/network/students/index.aspx) and [www.studentladder.co.uk](http://www.studentladder.co.uk). Talk to your tutor or other lecturers whose research interests you to see if they would be willing and able to offer you a summer placement in their lab and act as your supervisor [www.shef.ac.uk/researchsupervisors/view](http://www.shef.ac.uk/researchsupervisors/view). They may be able to apply to one of the learned societies or research institutes for a bursary to help fund your placement. Do this early - applications may have to be made in Oct / Nov in the year before your placement. Investigate the University's SURE scheme ([www.sheffield.ac.uk/sure/lets](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/sure/lets)), On-Campus Placements and other internship opportunities ([www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs)). Other possible sources of work experience include pharmaceutical companies ([careers.abpi.org.uk](http://careers.abpi.org.uk)); biotechnology companies ([www.cogent-placements.com](http://www.cogent-placements.com)); or search the websites of individual members of the BioIndustry Association [www.bioindustry.org/membership/member-directory](http://www.bioindustry.org/membership/member-directory); Government and other public bodies ([www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/jobs.cgi](http://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/jobs.cgi)); or search departments via [www.gov.uk/government/organisations](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations), the NHS ([www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)) and [www.amrc.ac.uk](http://www.amrc.ac.uk); [www.charitychoice.co.uk](http://www.charitychoice.co.uk), [www.sheffieldhelpyourself.org.uk](http://www.sheffieldhelpyourself.org.uk)); food and drink manufacturers ([www.fdf.org.uk](http://www.fdf.org.uk)). Specific schemes which are targeted at undergraduates can offer science-related placements, eg [www.step.org.uk](http://www.step.org.uk), [www.studentladder.co.uk](http://www.studentladder.co.uk) and [www.fledglings.net](http://www.fledglings.net). Check your department's website, email alerts and notice board; Dr John Rafferty helps to promote a range of summer work experience opportunities to MBB students whilst Dr Jim Gilmour can help with year-long placements. Also see New Scientist Careers Special: [jobs.newscientist.com/en-gb/landingpage/1401410893/careers-guide-uk](http://jobs.newscientist.com/en-gb/landingpage/1401410893/careers-guide-uk). Make use of online, searchable databases for a wide variety of work experience opportunities suitable for students of any degree discipline, including biosciences. In particular, see the Careers Service's myVacancies listing at [www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs). Also see [targetjobs.co.uk/internships](http://targetjobs.co.uk/internships) and [www.prospects.ac.uk/work\\_experience.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/work_experience.htm)



## Using your science in outside the lab

You might like to get work experience to try out a variety of careers using your science but outside of a lab environment such as science communication, publishing, journalism or broadcasting. Other areas include scientific sales, administrative roles around clinical trials, the law, policy and campaigning, charity administration, health economics and bio or information management. For more information and links to useful websites:

[www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/mbb\\_careerideas.pdf](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/careersdegree/mbb_careerideas.pdf)

## Teaching-related work experience

If you are interested in a career in teaching, get as much experience as possible before applying for a PGCE/PGDE, School Direct, TeachFirst or other teacher training. Investigate US in Schools ([www.shef.ac.uk/schools/outreach-programmes/us-in-schools/applying](http://www.shef.ac.uk/schools/outreach-programmes/us-in-schools/applying)) and approach schools speculatively for work shadowing and more hands-on work experience as well as getting involved in after-school clubs, youth groups, summer camps, etc. Local authority websites usually list contact details for schools. For general information about teacher training:

[getintoteaching.education.gov.uk](http://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk). For FE: [www.feadvice.org.uk](http://www.feadvice.org.uk) and HE:

[www.prospects.ac.uk/higher\\_education\\_lecturer\\_entry\\_requirements.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/higher_education_lecturer_entry_requirements.htm)

## Work experience for medicine, dentistry and other healthcare careers

If you are considering a further qualification in Medicine, Dentistry or other health-related profession, it is vital to get as much hands-on caring experience as possible, even if you have done this before coming to University. Contact care homes, hospices, GP surgeries, hospitals and dental practices to see if they have vacancies (paid or voluntary). Use [www.yell.com](http://www.yell.com) to find contact details and also NHS choices: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). Further info on getting into medicine / dentistry: [www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/presentations/gettingmedicine/player.html](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/presentations/gettingmedicine/player.html)

## Try something a bit different

The majority of graduate jobs (about 60%) are open to people from any academic discipline - your personal skills and qualities are more important than the degree topic you study. Some MBB graduates choose to work in roles as diverse as events management, retail, recruitment, medical sales, human resources and finance. The 'Prospects' website has sources of useful information about a wide range of career areas: [www.prospects.ac.uk/types\\_of\\_jobs.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm). Browse all jobs and select one from the list to bring up an occupational profile, which contains a variety of useful links - in particular see 'Employers and vacancy sources'. Also see the 'Targetjobs' website: [targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors](http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors). In addition, the Careers Service has a range of reference materials and take-away literature about occupations, potential employers you can contact, directories which might help you identify suitable organisations and information about work experience in general. We can also provide one-to-one advice and information about work experience – ask at the Careers Service for details.

## Taking a year out in Industry (either after Level 2 or at Level 4)

As an MBB student you have the opportunity to benefit from taking an industrial placement year as part of your degree. Those enrolled on the four-year MBiolSci can opt to spend a year in industry at Level 4. Alternatively, anyone (including those on the three-year BSc) can choose to undertake a placement year between their penultimate and final year of study under the Degree with Employment Experience scheme ([www.shef.ac.uk/placements](http://www.shef.ac.uk/placements)). Both are subject to the approval of your department. Compare the benefits of the Degree with Employment Experience with spending a year in industry at Level 4 – talk to your tutor or book an appointment with our Placements Team for impartial advice.

## Using your experience to enhance your CV

Graduate employers want their new recruits to offer them more than a degree alone - they also want to see evidence of skills and personal attributes. It's a good idea to keep a brief record of the skills you are developing during your experience, with examples of how you have used them. You can then include these examples in applications for future jobs, or refer to them at interview.

The Careers Service "Skills for Work Certificate" is designed to help you use your work experience (including voluntary work, summer placements and part-time jobs) to demonstrate to future employers that you have the necessary skills to function in the workplace. It will also help you to learn more about yourself and your career options:

[www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/advice/sfwc](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/advice/sfwc). Also check out "The Sheffield Graduate Award":

[www.shef.ac.uk/theshieldgraduateaward](http://www.shef.ac.uk/theshieldgraduateaward), if you are participating in other extra-curricular activities from committees and societies through to sports, enterprise or international activities.

## Other help and support from the Careers Service

The University's Careers Service can help you if you want to: discuss your future career options; find out more about employers or further study; obtain further information about graduate vacancies; or get help with your applications, interview or assessment centre technique. Even if you haven't got a clue about where to start, we're here to help! Call into the Careers Service on Level 1 of 388 Glossop Road or, for work experience enquiries, visit the Student Jobshop in the Students' Union Building. Further information is online at [www.shef.ac.uk/careers](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers)