

The Sheffield Impact Programme



The Sheffield Impact Programme ran as a pilot activity between Monday 6th June and Friday 1st July 2022.

Activities were targeted at students who meet Equal Opportunities (Widening Participation) criteria, although the activities were open to all students. The first week of the programme consisted of knowledge exchange workshops to prepare students to make the most of their work experience. Students then completed a virtual work experience through a variety of different platforms. Several optional activities were also offered through the programme, for example, an introductory session, programme debrief and a face-to-face networking session.

Three objectives:

1. Engage students from Equal Opportunities backgrounds in measurable and sustained activity,
2. Provide students from Equal Opportunities backgrounds with opportunities to make links with employers and alumni and develop their knowledge of pathways after graduation,
3. Increased awareness of skills and attributes required for graduate roles within SMEs with a focus on improving networking and communication skills.



University of
Sheffield

ACTION & APPROACH

9 workshops between early June and late July 2022, covering:

- having impact in the workplace;
- managing nerves when networking;
- using LinkedIn to connect with employers;
- the benefit of building diverse teams;
- personal wellbeing in the workplace.

With additional activities:

- 2 virtual internships;
- Virtual work experience;
- Q&A sessions and networking opportunities;
- Employer Live Projects;
- Knowledge exchange sessions.

"I'm looking forward to hopefully inspiring students to see that you don't need to have everything together to set up a business, you simply have to be willing and determined! I can't wait to share my business and actually hear students' feedback on it." - Local fashion retailer

IMPACT

51 students took part across the programme

- 59% were from Equal Opportunities backgrounds.
- 76% reported increased confidence in finding a career.
- 70% made links with an employer or fellow student following the programme.
- 76% reported the programme increased their awareness of skills & attributes required for graduate roles, and reported an increased knowledge of networking.
- 90% rated the programme 4 or 5 stars.

17 employers engaged, providing 11 unique opportunities through the programme.

"The workshops were great starting points... including how to deal with my disability in the workplace and what is possible to put in place, which I did not know and felt very reassuring.

Finding out how other people dealt with their disabilities [was useful]... I enjoyed the fact that it normalized these types of "different" circumstances." - Student.

CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNT & FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Work experience, networking and knowledge exchange elements were attractive to students, and students were largely positive about the flexibility of the programme, particularly the work experience elements. Students often undertook more than the minimum requirements of the programme, e.g. more workshops or multiple work experience opportunities, and we had a large number of employers engaged.

The programme ran at the end of exam period which meant some students couldn't attend particular workshops or were concerned about workload, but in future the event could be run twice a year (Easter and June), or avoiding the exam period completely. The event could be linked up to other work experience programmes (such as the SME Summer Internship programme), but there is a risk of employers becoming over-utilised or not seeing the potential benefits, or the programmes not being mutually beneficial. There are great opportunities here for community-building.