

UKESF Scholarships

Top Tips for Your Summer Work Placement (Including Tips for Remote Working)

As summer approaches and the academic year draws to a close, thoughts turn from labs, project reports and exams, to work placements. Work placements are an important part of the UK Electronics Skills Foundation's Scholarship Scheme and Internship Programme. It is a fantastic opportunity to gain invaluable experience and to learn first-hand about working at a leading Electronics company.



Undoubtedly, employers treat work placements as an extended period to evaluate undergraduates in order to judge their suitability for graduate employment. We know that over half of UKESF Scholars are offered permanent positions with their sponsors upon graduation, following successful work placements. So how should you prepare for your summer work placement and impress your sponsor; what are the top tips for success?

We've compiled a list of top tips from the experiences of previous scholars. These tips are based on their experiences, so you can trust that they know what they are talking about, and they can hopefully make all the difference to ensure you have a successful placement and get offered a graduate position.

1. **Network.** Make connections with as many colleagues as possible in the first few days of your work placement. It can be tough in a new environment but if you're friendly and introduce yourself, people will be more willing to help and provide encouragement.
2. **Ask.** Don't feel too overwhelmed if a tool or piece of jargon is new to you – you're still a student and the company won't expect you to know everything in the beginning. It takes time to get used to new things. So don't be afraid to ask questions; whether you're clarifying something you've been asked to do or you don't know the meaning of a particular abbreviation, asking a question shows that you care and ensures no time is wasted due to misunderstandings.

"Don't worry if you don't know it all at the end of your first day, or even your first week. It takes time to get used to working in a new company doing something you haven't done before."

Emma, UKESF Scholar

3. **Take an Interest.** Jump in to anything that gets offered to you; whether a new project given to you by your supervisor or a social event to get to know your department, employers like enthusiasm and immersing yourself is a way of getting noticed. Be interested in your colleagues and ask them what they're doing – you'll meet some interesting people with exciting careers and be surprised what you can learn.

4. **Prepare.** Update your LinkedIn profile. Consider taking some biscuits or a cake with you on your first day (most engineers love cake!) Prepare before meetings in order to get the most out of them and plan any questions you want to ask. Also, be prepared to offer an opinion, if asked.
5. **Take Notes.** Carry a notebook at all times: make notes of important or interesting information, maintain a to-do list and keep a record of what you've achieved, set daily and weekly targets to incentivise yourself, and jot down anything you want to research or ask your supervisor about later.
6. **Socialise.** Check if there are any organised social activities at lunchtime or after work; socialising with colleagues will make you feel more comfortable and confident, both in your new place of work and potentially a new city.
7. **Reflect.** Be honest about your performance, your strengths and the ways you could improve, and take advantage of the insights other people can bring to your work. Don't worry about making mistakes; just use the experience to your advantage by finding out what went wrong and why, and learn something new in the process.



“As an intern, it is guaranteed you won't have a clue what is going on a lot of the time, but use that as an advantage to find out and learn everything you possibly can throughout your placement.”

Conor, UKESF Scholar

Remember to have a good time and get involved in as much as possible to make the most of your placement! And if you're not enjoying it, make sure that you talk to someone that you feel comfortable with and try to resolve the situation positively. Don't be afraid to let your employer know if you'd like to try out in different department. As long as you're polite, most companies are willing to be flexible.

Undertaking a Remote Work Placement

These tips are fine for physical work placements, however, because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, some placements this summer are likely to be 'virtual', as remote working continues for many. Indeed, some companies will be adopting a 'hybrid' model with a mixture of physical and remote working as the 'new normal'. Therefore, we gathered some thoughts from scholars who completed remote placements last year (thanks to Ayo, Daniel, Edward, Emily, Gavin, Kai, Lewis M and Lewis R).

“Flexitime, and the addition of casual 'coffee break' video calls were two of the things that I was very grateful to my sponsor company for, as they definitely helped keep things fresh, along with an exciting project to work on.”

Lewis R, UKESF Scholar

What were the additional challenges of working remotely?

- Working remotely made it more difficult to discuss ideas and plans with colleagues, especially in the first few weeks when I was still trying to understand my role and how the company worked.
- It can sometimes feel harder to ask small questions by calling or texting someone, versus just turning around to ask quickly in person.
- It can be more difficult to manage the split between working hours and personal time.
- I missed the social contact that I would have had with work colleagues.

What tips and advice would you give for working remotely? What helped you?

Honest Communications. Be honest with your manager about how your project is going. As they cannot easily see how things are going, they may only know that you need help if you ask for it.

Keep in contact. Regular video calls helped me adapt to and gain confidence in communicating with my colleagues. Quick, informal, daily meetings with everyone's cameras on really helped me stay connected with the team. Arrange calls and chat to as many people as possible. This is a good way to build connections and improve your knowledge so that you can make the most of your placement.

Organisation. Set up a good work environment at home, creating a clean and organised desk space. Do not try working from your bed; it is unprofessional. Try to follow office hours and for those with flexitime arrangements, make sure you set your own schedule and stick to it.

"The company laptop acted as a 'workplace', which was invaluable in maintaining a good work-life balance, an aspect of working from home which can be extremely challenging, and one that is more important than ever before."

Kai, UKESF Scholar

Finally, whether or not your placement is physical or remote, remember that asking questions is a sign of strength, not weakness. Good luck!