

Title: Micro-internships: An inclusive way to increase student participation in work based learning

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Summary:

Student participation rates in yearlong work placements vary, but an overall declining trend in the number of university students opting for yearlong placements is acknowledged. While longer placements offer substantial benefits, they also extend the course duration which poses challenges for students balancing family commitments or caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, their rigorous and competitive recruitment processes, particularly unfamiliar to international students, further hinder participation rates. [Previous studies](#) have highlighted such disparities as barriers to accessing yearlong work placements. Addressing these challenges and fostering inclusivity in employability initiatives remains a complex task for placement professionals and academics. The adoption of shorter, one-day micro-internships could potentially provide a viable solution.

The Micro-Internship:

Introduced in March 2023, the micro-internships we employ are one-day, in-person, team-based work experiences situated within local businesses or charities. Developed in collaboration with our Business Clinic, each micro-internship is curated for a maximum of 10 students. Students spend the day on the company premises, immersed in the company's environment, which allows students to gain real insights into the complexity organisations face. Students collaborate as a group, addressing an authentic contemporary challenge selected by the business. Challenges may include offering recommendations to the company's social media strategy or developing options for business expansion plans. Solutions and recommendations are grounded in research and enable students to apply classroom knowledge and theory to tangible business problems. Moreover, these micro-internships serve as a mutually beneficial partnership, aiding local employers and charities in problem-solving and offering creative solutions to meet their business needs.

An Inclusive Approach

Recent US [data](#) shows that over 80% of individuals seeking micro-internship opportunities are from underrepresented backgrounds. Consequently, the application process for our micro-internships has been intentionally designed to be simple and accessible: no lengthy forms or interviews. Instead, students submit a brief Expression of Interest (EOI) via email to our Business Clinic. This streamlined approach benefits international students who may be less familiar with UK recruitment procedures, as well as those time-constrained through juggling multiple commitments. By minimising barriers to entry, we aim to encourage a more diverse range of students to engage in work based learning

opportunities, including those who may not typically pursue such experiences or find traditional placement options daunting or difficult to obtain.

Student Feedback on their Micro-Internship Experience:

Since their inception in 2023, Liverpool Business School has provided five micro-internship opportunities to students, with 30 students having participated in this enriching experience thus far. Though still in its infancy, this initiative has already demonstrated clear benefits for our business students:

“Working in a diverse team provided a valuable opportunity to enhance our collaboration skills. I would recommend this experience to other students, putting theories into action and validating their accuracy in the real business world is great opportunity for us.”

“Many thanks for providing this kind of opportunity for business students which is practical and useful. Being in a group with different attitudes toward business challenges was a new experience that I really enjoyed.”

“We not only enjoyed the experience, but it also felt good that we offered our strategy to help the organisation and it was really welcomed and greatly appreciated.”

What next

This summer, as recipients of the ASET Geoffrey Copeland Bursary, LJMU will embark on comprehensive research into the efficacy and inclusivity of micro-internships in engaging students in work-based learning. This project will actively seek employer perspectives to delve deeper into the mutual benefits for both students and businesses stemming from this micro-internship initiative.

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