

Is work-based learning right for me

A. Introduction

To get the best from and learn the most from a secondment or other work-based learning opportunity, it's important that you think carefully about why you are interested in such an opportunity and what you hope to gain from it. Here is some guidance to help ensure you are in the best place to benefit from work-based learning.

Alongside this pre-thinking, it is very important that you talk about your plans with your line manager- it is essential to get their buy-in and support, especially if you may be away from your day job for a substantial amount of time.

Here's a checklist that you can work through to ensure that you are clear about what you would like to gain from the opportunity and to help you set out a strong case to your line manager. We recommend that you carefully reflect on your development goals and consider aspects of your role that may need to be covered by another colleague while you undertake your work-based learning.

Readiness Checklist for Job Shadowing, Secondments & Short-Term Projects

1. Mindset Check

- I am keen to learn new skills and to increase my professional knowledge.
- I'm comfortable stepping outside my usual routine.
- I can adapt to new people, environments, and ways of working.
- I'm prepared to take initiative and ask thoughtful questions, to maximise my learning.
- I feel resilient enough to manage change or uncertainty.

2. Motivation Check

- I can clearly explain why I want to take this opportunity.
- I know what skills, knowledge, or experiences I want to gain.
- I have discussed my goals during my ARC conversation with my line manager.
- My goals for work-based learning are aligned with my development goals and career direction.
- I can clearly answer the question: "What do I hope to be able to do differently after the experience?"

I can clearly answer the question: “How will I know that the experience has been worthwhile?”

3. Practical Readiness

I’ve reviewed my current workload and know what needs to be covered.

My manager supports my participation.

I understand the time commitment and scope.

I have the capacity to take this on without significant stress.

4. Engagement & Relationships

I’ve spoken with the host manager or project lead.

My manager has spoken with the host manager or project lead, and they agree about the appropriateness of the opportunity.

I know who to contact for support or guidance during the work-based learning activity.

I understand the host team's working style and expectations.

5. Preparation

I’ve reviewed any relevant background materials.

I’ve set 2–3 clear learning objectives in conjunction with my line manager and the host manager.

I know how I’ll capture my learning (notes, reflection log, check-ins).

I’m prepared to represent my permanent team in a positive and respectful manner.

6. After the Experience

I’m keen to share what I've learned with my manager or team.

I have a plan for how I’ll apply what I learn.

I’ve considered how I’ll transition back to my usual work smoothly with my line manager's support.