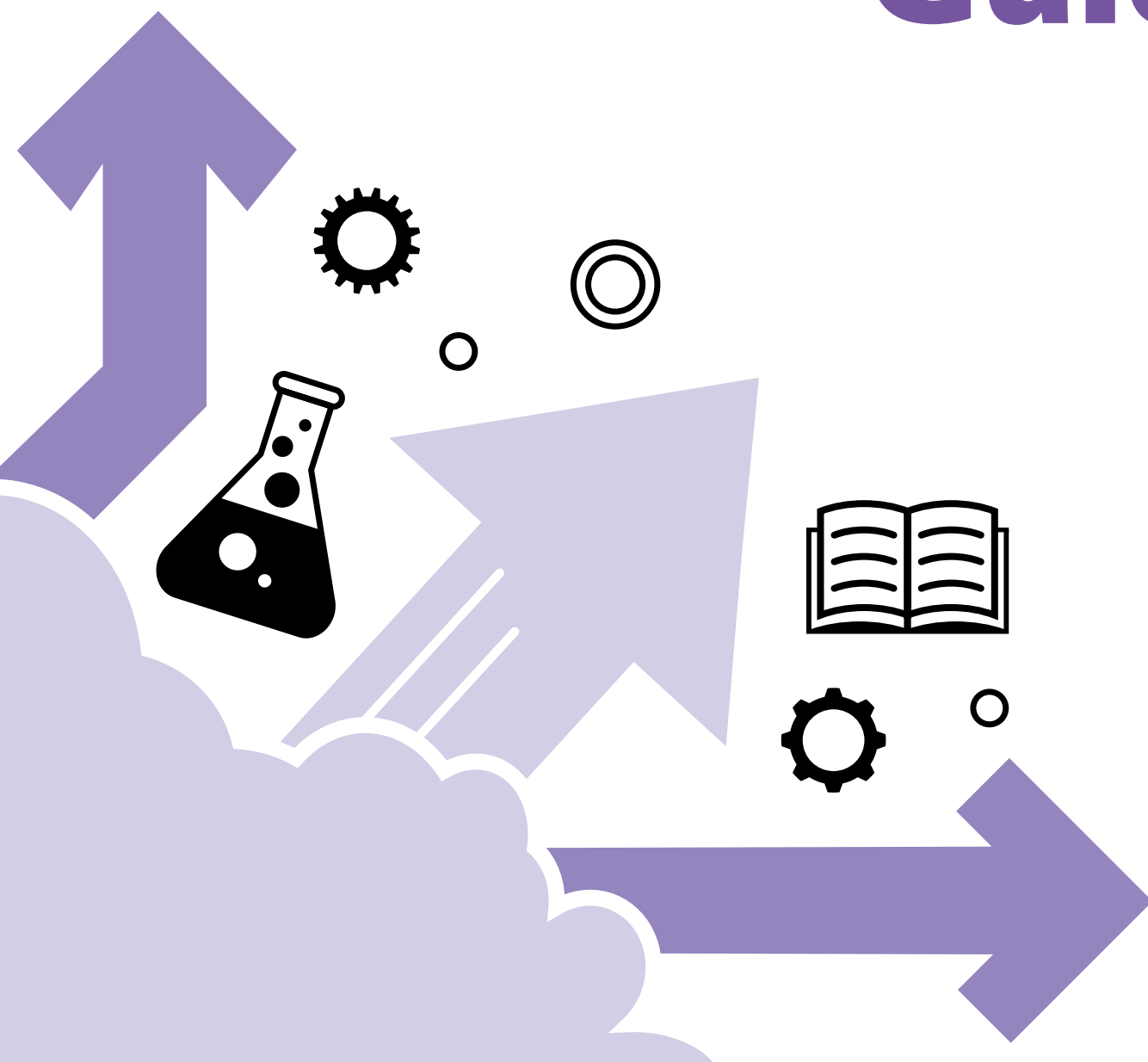




Cirencester
College

T-LEVELS

T-level Industry Placement Guide



What are T-levels?

T-levels are exciting, new technical qualifications designed to prepare students for skilled employment, progression into Higher Education or for specialist vocational qualifications. They are equivalent to 3 A levels and are delivered over 2 years.

For most T-levels, 80% of the course is classroom-based learning and theory at level 3.

The most challenging and exciting element of the programme is the compulsory industry placement. Students must complete at least 315 hours of work placement or 750 hours for those on the Childcare and Education pathway.

Assessment includes a combination of technical exams and completion of a mandatory Industry Placement.

Essential information about your industry placement:

- To successfully complete your T-level you must spend at least 315 hours on placement (750 hours for students on Childcare and Education T-levels).
- You must also demonstrate sufficient progress towards your learning goals which will be developed by your tutor and employer at the start of your placement.
- Placements must take place in a real-life working environment. Students cannot work from home.
- You can work with a maximum of 2 employers to achieve the required hours although up to 35 hours can be used flexibly for work-taster activities, employer visits or job shadowing to help you decide what type of role you might want to do on placement.



Why is a Work Placement important?

Relevant experience is important to employers when they are recruiting at any level. As a student, your primary focus until now may have been your academic education so whilst you have up to date qualifications you may not have developed all the skills that employers prize. These can be both technical and personal. A meaningful and high-quality placement will set you aside from other applicants on your career pathway by allowing you to:

- Gain experience of a work place; understand what a regular work routine is like; experience travel to and from work and participation in a team.
- Step out of your comfort zone and build confidence by meeting new people.
- Identify what sort of job you might like to do and what sort of organisation you would like to work in.
- Start building a network of industry contacts who can potentially provide you with a reference or give you advice and encouragement.
- Develop technical skills and knowledge to move you closer to your ultimate goals.
- Enhance your interpersonal and presentation skills.
- Provide you with a key requirement which you must successfully complete to achieve your T-level.

T-LEVELS



Preparing for your T-level Work Placement:

Students are expected to play an active role in identifying potential work placements and preparing well for the opportunities. Starting a placement in a new and unfamiliar environment, away from friends and in a team of professional people can be daunting however there is lots of support available through the College to help you prepare, including fantastic Careers resources. It is really important to take advantage of the resources available to you when thinking about your T-level work placement.

Tutorials:

During your T-level programme and in addition to your technical lessons, you will be expected to attend our tutorial programme which is designed to cover a range of relevant topics but is also focused on the extended industry placement that you will realistically need to have started before the end of your first year on programme. These tutorials will cover sessions on CV writing, cover letters, employability skills, study skills and more. It is vital to make a good first impression when approaching employers to ask for a work placement and we will help and support you to do this.

Pastoral support:

The college will allocate you a personal tutor who is likely to be a teacher on your programme and a pastoral tutor, who can offer help and support throughout your college life. In addition, the college has a Careers Adviser and a wealth of resources for you to utilise to support your preparation for placement and employment. Personal Development Plans and a range of tools are available on our Student Intranet (CCO) to help you reflect on your career and life goals.

Employer Engagement Team:

The College also has a team dedicated to employer engagement who can support students in setting up placements. The team plays a strategic role in promoting T-levels and placements to employers, monitoring health and safety arrangements and co-ordinating performance reviews. With the increasing number of applications to T-level programmes this team is working to promote T-levels to employers and link students with these opportunities. If several students are interested in a placement that we have brokered, then employers may ask for CVs and cover letter and invite candidates to interview.



Things to do before you start your work placement:

- Research your industry.
- Identify which roles interest you.
- Short list a range of companies that you would like to approach.
- Talk to college staff to ensure you have feedback on your plan for work placement.
- Complete the employability quiz to identify skills and behaviours you need to work on.
- Work on your CV and a cover letter that you can send out to employers.
- You MUST complete the Health and Safety Quiz before you start a placement.
- Work on your Personal Development Plan; it will help you to reflect on your career goals and to set targets which will help you move towards your goal.

You may need official identification particularly to apply for a DBS, e.g. Passport, Birth Certificate or Provisional Driving License.



T-level Placement

The Preparation Process

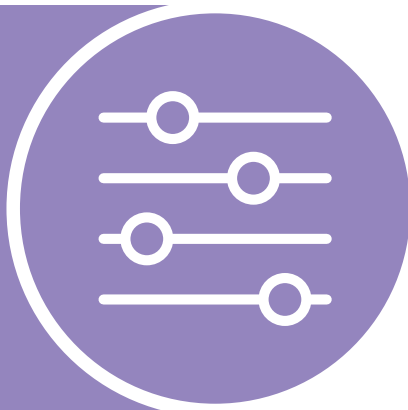
Student enrolment and induction to T-levels at Cirencester College



Student allocated a personal tutor and a pastoral tutor



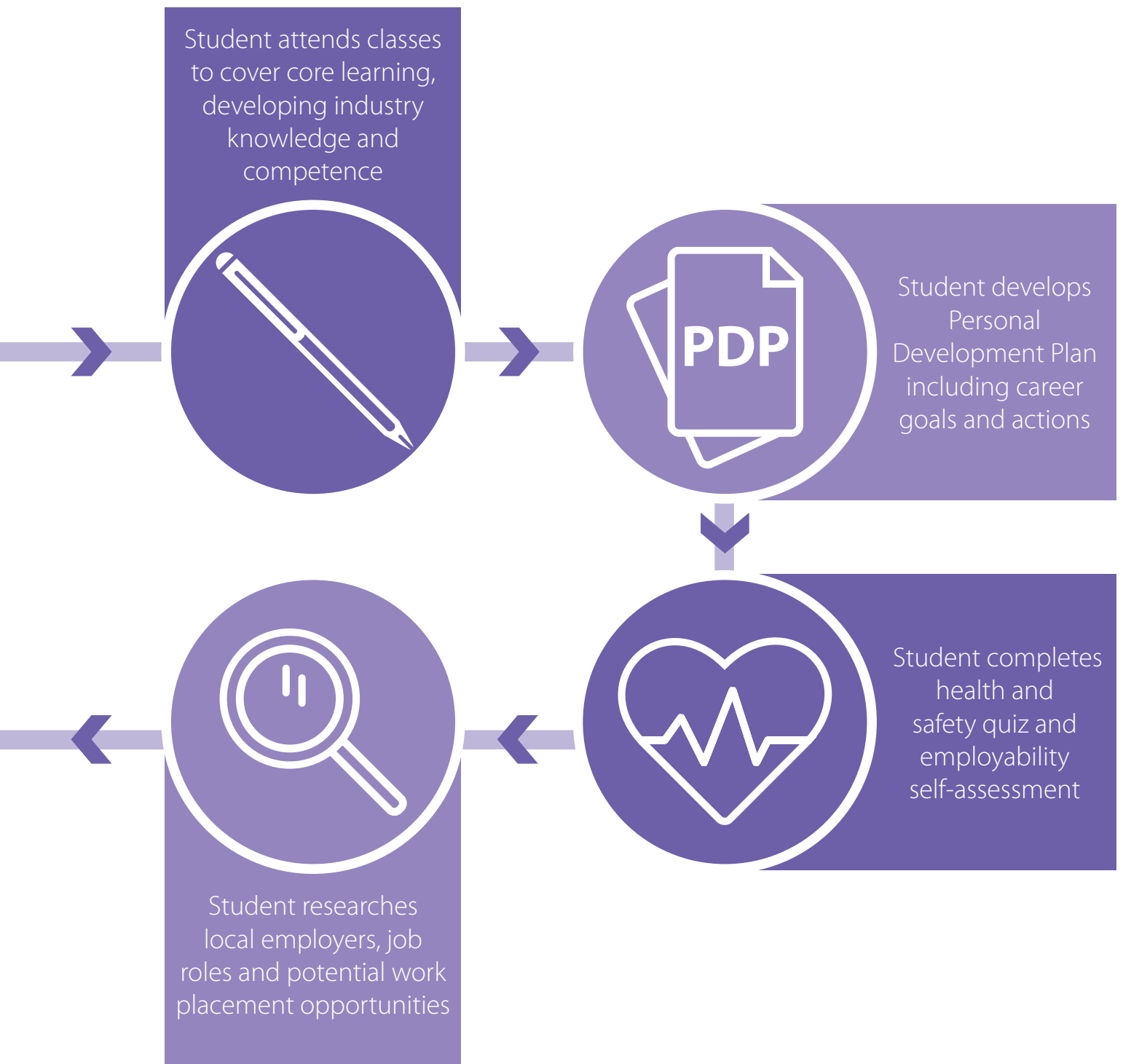
Student works with college staff to refine applications or to register interest in a placement opportunity



Student works on a CV and cover letter for prospective placements

Student given the go ahead to apply for a placement relevant to the T-level course





Several of these activities may be going on at the same time, but all of the elements must be completed before the student applies for a work placement. College staff need to ensure that the placement is relevant to the course before learners apply or begin as any hours accumulated on a placement that is not directly relevant to the T-level area of study will not be counted towards the placement hours.

It is also essential that students have prepared high quality CVs and cover letters to ensure the best possible chance of success.

Interviews:

Before offering you a work placement some employers like to meet students informally or you may be offered an interview. In life, many people can become anxious about attending interviews however they are really an opportunity for employers to find out whether you will fit into their team and for you to think about whether this is a company you want to work for. Think of it as a two-way conversation. Staff at Cirencester College can help you to prepare for interviews, including giving you time to develop your Personal Development Plan or talking to you about your concerns. If you have never had an interview before, we may be able to set up a practise or mock interview for you.

You will be asked questions about:

Any previous work experience, skills and abilities based on your CV.

Your career aspirations.

Your T-level course – what you have learnt and what you have enjoyed.

What you like about their organisation and why you have applied.

What you could bring to the workplace and what you hope to learn from it.



Useful tips for preparing for an interview:

- Research the organisation. Discover as much as you can about what they do and consider what you might gain from a placement with this company.
- Think about the questions you might be asked and prepare your responses. You might want to write things down or rehearse conversations. The notes you have made on your PDP can help you prepare. If you have identified communication skills as one of your strengths, think about an example where you have demonstrated this. Perhaps you help to coach a junior sports team, have taken part in the school debating team or work part-time and are used to addressing customers.
- Some employers may want to see examples of your work, a portfolio that shows off your skills. This could be things you have done at college or in your spare time. Think about what you could use e.g.: an architectural plan using specific software or a programme you have created.
- Make sure you can get to the employer, not only for the interview but if you are offered a placement. Look at public transport or walk the route to ensure that you can get there and plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early. Being punctual makes a good first impression, whilst arriving late and flustered will not.
- Have the employer's contact details to hand so that if you are delayed you can phone in advance to let them know.
- Dress appropriately. If you have any doubts, speak to your tutor or try to find out what the dress code of the organisation is. Dressing smartly creates a good impression and shows you are serious about the role.
- Once at the interview, put your phone on silent and focus on the interview.
- Even if you are feeling nervous, try and start the interview with confidence. Make eye contact, smile and keep your head up. Your employer will appreciate that you may have had limited experience of interviews, but they have invited you to talk to them because they think you might be a good fit for the company.
- Be positive and enthusiastic about the opportunity. Take your time to answer questions and don't worry if you don't know the answer, just say so. Perhaps when you are invited to ask questions at the end of the interview you can ask them more about this.
- Try and have at least one question prepared as most employers will ask you if there is anything you want to know about them.



Fantastic news you've been offered a work placement!

If you haven't already, you must now let the Employer Engagement Team know and provide them with the name and address of the company, a named contact and their e-mail address. Before you start a placement, the team need to check out the health and safety arrangements at the company. Employers are required to have Employer Liability Insurance and adequate health and safety arrangements to ensure your safety on placement. Employers will also be asked to provide a description of the type of work you will be doing to add to your training plan.

Starting a work placement:

Everybody is nervous and excited on the first day of a new job and you are likely to feel the same on the first day of your placement. Being organised and in control can make things feel more manageable, so here are a few things to think about before the first day:

- Know which days you need to attend your placement.
- Know the start and finish times for each day.
- Plan your travel.
- Have enough money with you to cover your travel, lunch etc.
- Have suitable clothes and any equipment you need, including a notebook and pen.
- Have the contact details for your employer, and know who to ask for when you arrive at your placement.
- Have the contact details for your tutor, so you can keep in touch whilst on placement.
- Have 5 questions that you can ask your manager and colleagues on your first day to help start a conversation and to show interest in your colleagues.

These could include:

- What does your job involve?
- What do you enjoy about your job?
- How did you get into this industry?
- What is the biggest priority or challenge you are working on now?
- How can I be a valuable team member?
- Do you have any advice to help me get the most out of my placement?

Induction:

As with any new activity it will take time to settle in, get to know the culture of the organisation and the expectations of your role. You may not have experienced this type of work or environment but your employer will be expected to offer you a thorough induction to the organisation. This should broadly cover the following types of information although it will be linked to your industry sector:

- Overview of the organisation and its activities.
- Your role during your placement, who you will be working with and where.
- Who will be line-managing or mentoring you.
- Time keeping, breaks, lunches. What to do if you are running late.
- A tour of the organisation, including the location of facilities such as toilets and staff rooms.
- Absence – who to contact if you are sick.
- What to do in an emergency. Where to assemble and how to behave.
- The organisation's policies and procedures e.g. dress code, health and safety, mobile phone policies.
- Potential risks and hazards, including restricted areas or practises.
- Safe working practises and procedures.
- Use of personal protective equipment and any other safety equipment.
- What to do in the event of an accident or injury and who is your first aider.
- Office or site etiquette, how to address management, colleagues or customers. How to engage and interact in meetings.
- Time management and what to do if you have a problem or are running late on a task.

If you are not provided with this information or there is anything you don't remember or are unsure of you **MUST** ask your supervisor. Make a note of the key details for future reference.

Employer's expectations

Employers will expect you to display professional behaviour and a positive attitude for the duration of your work placement.

Professional behaviours cover:

- Communicating appropriately using a polite tone and professional language.
- Working hard and taking advantage of the opportunities available.
- Adhering to the code of conduct and rules employers have shared with you.
- Being enthusiastic and building positive relationships with your team.
- Taking feedback and growing from the learning experience.
- Listening and asking questions.
- Dressing appropriately for the employer's work environment.
- Being honest and approachable.

It is important to emphasise that how you behave on placement will have an impact on staff at the organisation, the reputation of the college, but perhaps more importantly on your potential to achieve on the course. If you are struggling at college, home or on the placement make sure you tell someone who can help you before things become too much. Perhaps you will find that the role you are doing is not what you expected or focuses on an area of the industry that you aren't so interested in. You may gain a valuable insight into work but it may mean that you want to seek out opportunities with a second employer.





Developing professional behaviours:

The college expects all students to behave sensibly and appropriately at all times, and we want to help you to achieve your full potential.

We want you to enjoy your time here at college, but for your T-Level placement it is important that you strive to be the best and can show us and your employer what you are capable of.

It is important to remember that how you behave at college can have an impact on how you behave in your work placement.

Behaviours in College:		What employers see:
Poor punctuality in lessons.	➤	Likely to arrive late, take extended breaks. Appears disengaged and unreliable.
Attendance below college expected levels.	➤	More likely to be absent and miss placement days.
Poor communication skills with teachers and staff.	➤	Not following instructions, not listening, not asking questions, not engaging, not able to work as part of a team.
Using inappropriate language.	➤	Not polite, not respectful, not professional.
A dependency on a mobile phone, using mobile phone in lessons.	➤	Struggle to stay focussed, will get easily distracted.
Not listening, not following instructions and/or requests.	➤	May not comply to meet organisations standards and expectations, doesn't listen, doesn't seem engaged or interested, too much staff time to support them.

Professional behaviour and attitudes you need to demonstrate in the workplace

All T-levels have core employment skills which you will be measured against during your placement. These provide you with a framework to develop; no-one is expecting you to have all of the skills at the appropriate level when you first start your placement. The key is that you understand what you need to do to continually improve.

To display professionalism students should:

- Be courteous and respectful to other staff and members of the public.
- Have good attendance and time keeping.
- Be calm under pressure.
- Be reliable e.g. contact your manager directly if you are unable to attend work due to illness or another reason.
- Show enthusiasm and interest in your work.
- Avoid being distracted by personal issues or your mobile phone whilst at work, and only use your phone during formally recognised breaks or in an emergency.
- Always adhere to organisation policy and procedures eg: around Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, Equality and Diversity and appropriate IT use.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding any of the information you access whilst on your placement. This includes not gossiping and keeping confidential any personal information that work colleagues share with you.
- Behave in a responsible manner. Do not do anything which may bring you and/or the college or the organisation into disrepute.
- Dress appropriately for the employer's work environment.

Take responsibility for your actions:

- Be open to feedback and act on feedback given.
- Be honest if you make a mistake and seek to learn from them, so you can avoid them in the future.



Producing results:

- Work hard to complete work to an agreed standard, with very few or no errors.
- Be organised, plan your work effectively, prioritise tasks, work independently as needed and meet deadlines.
- Always ask for support or clarity if you are unsure of what you need to do.
- Look for opportunities to learn and develop your skills.
- Receive feedback graciously and act on any feedback given.

Communicate appropriately:

- Use a polite and professional tone and language when communicating with colleagues and customers.
- Produce clear, well written work which uses the right tone for the audience, and has very few or no mistakes.
- Share your thoughts and present your ideas clearly.
- Follow instructions and listen carefully to what you need to do.
- Use positive and open body language, including maintaining eye contact, to show that you are approachable and ready to listen.
- Are confident to check your understanding of tasks you've been asked to do, and ask for clarification as needed.

To work well as part of a team

- Build good relationships with your colleagues, understand what your role in the team is and show a positive attitude to working as part of a team.
- Treat all colleagues with respect e.g. say thank you for the help you receive.
- Listen effectively to different points of view and respond in a professional way.
- Be a supportive team member, proactively offering help and support to the team.



During your placement:

During your placement you will have the opportunity to apply the knowledge that you have learnt in the classroom to a real job role and your experience in the workplace may bring new meaning to your studies. You will meet new people, use new equipment, see new processes and develop new skills.

You will be required to log the number of hours you have worked and what you have done on the College's work experience portal (WEX). You will also be invited to identify the skills that you have used from a menu of options on the portal e.g. communication skills; team-working; problem-solving.

You need to add as much detail as you can to support the review process; to aid your evaluation of the placement and to help support future applications to potential employers or Universities. Your entries on the WEX system will be signed off by your employer who will receive a weekly e-mail asking them to validate the hours worked and activities.



Reviews:

When you begin your placement an Industry Placement Agreement (IPA) will be generated. It will contain practical details of your placement, the activities which you might be expected to take part in (although this will not be a complete list of everything you might reasonably be expected to do) and some learning goals linked to the T-Level Curriculum.

You will be asked to confirm that you have done the College's basic health and safety training and the employability self-assessment. You might wish to speak to your tutor about both the learning goals and the employability skills that you want to focus on, which will feature in the IPA. The employer, your tutor and you will be asked to sign the document. By signing the document, you are making a commitment to the employer to attend regularly as agreed and to adhere to the employer's code of conduct, health and safety regulations and the standards of professional behaviour. This document will also form the basis of your first review.

1.

The first will come at the beginning of your placement to check you have settled in. College staff will speak to you and the employer about your work, successes, challenges and areas for development. You will usually be attending college and have informal contact with your tutor, so you can talk through your experiences in class, or during tutorials.

2.

Your second review will be a technical review, completed by your tutor. The more detail you have included in your placement log, the more evidence you will have to show personal and technical development. If you have made sufficient progress you will be given new targets and if there are areas for development, college staff will try to help you whether the issues are technical or personal. For example, you may be doing well on placement but your time-keeping is letting you down. Use the college resources to help plan your journey better so that you can get the best out of your placement.

3.

At your final review, the employer will be asked to provide a summary of your achievements and areas for future development. You will also be asked to contribute your thoughts about your placement and encouraged to think about next steps. The employer will be asked to sign off the placement. To do this they have to be satisfied that you have completed the requisite number of hours AND have made sufficient progress towards your learning goals. This is crucial; **failure to complete the required hours on placement or failure to make sufficient progress over the duration of the placement could jeopardise your qualification.**

If you have not achieved the required number of hours, you can work with a second employer to gain further experience. Your tutors may have arranged some trips, talks or work-taster activities which have inspired you to try another area of work. Speak to your tutor and the Employer Engagement Team about your new ideas.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Will I get paid on my placement?

Employers are not obliged to pay students on a T-Level work placement, however some employers may contribute to travel and subsistence. This should be agreed in advance of beginning a placement. If you have financial concerns about any aspect of your placement, the college may be able to help you with costs.



More details are available on the
Cirencester College website.

The work I am doing is not what I expected or hoped for; What should I do?

Speak to your tutor about what you are doing and how it is not meeting your expectations so that the tutor is aware and can monitor the situation. In any job role there are some tasks that are more enjoyable than others. It may be that as you settle in and you begin to feel more of a team member, your employer may be able to give you more interesting, relevant or exciting work. If, however you have been in placement for some time and this is not what you want to do, speak to your tutor so that the college can put a plan in place to support you.

What happens if I don't feel able to do the work I am given?

Your work placement is designed to help you apply your knowledge to the work place and the learning goals you have been set in your IPA are designed to stretch you. If you are struggling, it is best to be honest and ask for help. Some employers may have made assumptions about your skills or confidence to perform a task, but will be happy to teach you the skills. It is sometimes hard to ask for help, but you are a student and this experience is designed to help you learn rather than make you feel bad about yourself. Listening to the employer, taking notes and becoming proficient in your work is a great outcome for everybody. Use down time on placement to practice and refine the skills that you have been shown.

I am being asked to do longer hours than I am expected to, what should I do?

If you are being asked to do more hours than expected, or to work evenings and weekends, please do let the Employer Engagement Team and your tutor know. Students may wish to do more hours over the summer holidays for example, to accrue lots of hours out of term time. It is important that college staff know that you are working during the holidays and students are discouraged from undertaking work placement activities at the weekend or evenings when college staff are unlikely to be on call to assist with any issues.