'How To' Guide
Virtual Experiences of the Workplace

Through the Gatsby Benchmarks, schools and colleges across England have been asked to provide every student with at least one experience of the workplace between the ages of 11-16 and another between the ages of 16-18 (Gatsby Benchmark 6).

As an alternative to traditional work experience many schools and college will need to offer "virtual" experiences of the workplace giving students an insight into how a real workplace operates, the jobs that exist there, and the skills needed for these roles. It is this type of experience that this guide focuses on.

What's in this guide?

- What is a virtual experience of the workplace?

- What needs to be included?

- How to run a virtual experience of the workplace with an example agenda

What needs to be included in the virtual experience

The Careers & Enterprise Company have set out the following minimum requirements for a virtual experience of the workplace:

- Learning outcomes are defined
- Students meets a range of people from the workplace (for example, 3 different work roles)
- There is two-way interaction between the students and the employees
- Students must perform a task or produce a piece of work relevant to that workplace and receive feedback on it from the employer
- There is no specific time requirement – so the experience could be anything from half a day to a full week. It can be split, and run in parts over a period of time.

How to run a virtual experience of the workplace

1. Connect with a school or college

Our Enterprise Coordinators can connect you with a school or college who wants to run this activity. They will support an initial conversation between you and the lead teacher to agree on the structure of the event and allocate roles and responsibilities.

Typically, this initial conversation would cover:

- Number of students taking part
- The activities on the day and who will lead them, materials (eg accompanying workbook)
- Details about the students taking part i.e. age, ability, previous careers experiences
- Date/timings for the event
- Any additional requirements for the specific students taking part i.e. SEND needs
- The potential safeguarding risks and how they can be managed.

2. What to expect when delivering virtually – Our top tips

You are likely to be presenting to students via an online video call, with the students grouped together watching you on a screen at the front of the classroom. Our top tips for delivering careers activities in this format are:

- Limit the time you spend speaking at the students (maximum 15 minutes at a time) to help them stay focused. Ask them questions to help break it up.
- Make the experience interactive by getting students to work on a range of activities – either individually or in groups.
- Involve their teacher in the planning so that they understand the activities and how they can support. They will also need to help manage behaviour.

What do you need to do for safeguarding?

Ask the lead teacher about their online safeguarding rules at an early stage as they can vary. In some cases, they may ask that their students are not on camera at any time, and you present with your camera off. They may also have rules about how students can interact. Whatever safeguarding measures they put in place, it is still possible to run a virtual experience of the workplace and our Enterprise Coordinators can help discuss solutions with you.

3. Preparing the students

To ensure that students are able take part in the event properly, students should at a minimum understand what they will be doing and what will be expected of them in advance. Additional preparation tasks can also help them make the most of the opportunity. For example, students can research your organisation online or reflect on what questions they want to ask in advance. The Careers & Enterprise Company's Making it Meaningful Guide provides helpful guidance to schools and colleges on this.   If you are using an accompanying workbook, go through this with students.

4. What the agenda could look like

Agree clear learning outcomes with the lead teacher.   Design the agenda to be interactive and fast paced, with a variety of activities for students to take part in. We recommend that a virtual experience of the workplace contains at least 2-3 hours of activity. This can be delivered in a single half-day block or over a series of lessons within students' normal timetable.
See our example agenda at the end of this guide.

6. Using pre-recorded videos

You can complement live elements with pre-recorded videos that teachers can view in advance to allay concerns around safeguarding. Tours of your workplace, talking heads with staff members who can't support a live interaction, or a promotional overview of your business can all be useful pre-recorded additions to your virtual experience of the workplace.

There are also many pre-recorded careers videos online that can be easily used and your lead teacher can suggest how these might be included in the agenda, including:

- The Career & Enterprise Company's My Week of Work and My Choices
- resources.
- Learn Live's series of sector talks that can be used to give students additional information on your industry sector.

7. Setting a challenge and providing feedback to the students

To meet Gatsby Benchmark 6 your virtual experience of a workplace must ask students to perform or produce a piece of work relevant to your workplace. There are a wide range of tasks that could be suitable. Discuss ideas and the way feedback will be provided with the lead teacher so they can ensure it is appropriate for their students. You may want to provide a work book to go accompany your work experience.

Example tasks based on your workplace

- Listening to a customer complaint and writing a formal letter to them to apologise
- Creating a presentation on how your business can improve their social media presence
- Researching your key competitors and summarising how they compare
- Creating a presentation on how your organisation can advertise its job roles to young people
- Designing a new futuristic office and pitching their design to a panel
- Watching a recorded meeting and creating meeting notes on key points

Example challenges based on relevant skills (see Skillsbuilder framework)
Your lead teacher can help build this into the agenda.

- Speaking - Preparing for and taking part in a debate on issues that relate to your sector.
- Listening – Listening to 3 conflicting speeches and summarising the issue into a briefing for their manager
- Creativity – Create a new product and outline an advertising campaign for it
- Problem solving - Setting out a difficult professional scenario, planning their response and then role-playing it in pairs.

Employability Tasks

- Self-reflection tasks on their skills and strengths and what roles they could do
- Mini interviews for a job at your organisation
- Writing an application or CV for a specific job description at your company
- Group assessment tasks you may use for entry-level recruitment

They must also receive feedback from you on their work, either as an individual or in a small group. This can be written or verbal, in-person or pre-recorded. What's important is that the student learns what they did well and how they could improve.

8. Collect feedback

Collect feedback from everyone taking part in the event. This is important as schools/colleges are now asked to provide evidence of the impact careers activities have on the students taking part.

Take a look at The Careers & Enterprise Company's example evaluations for students, parents and school staff and employer volunteers.

Example Virtual Workplace Experience Agenda for a half day (3-4 hours)

Three sessions – these could be delivered in one half day experience, or broken into three separate sessions delivered on different days.

Session 1: Introducing your organisation & a virtual tour (1 hour)

Example learning outcomes:

- Students can give examples of different business organisational structures, how they operate and how they measure success.

- Students can give examples of different kinds of work and why people's satisfaction with their working lives can change

- Students can provide different explanations of what careers are, how they can be developed and can discuss the skills involved in managing your own career

Time Allocated	Activity	Lead
5 mins	Welcome and setting expectations	Teacher / Lead employee
10 mins	Company overview – outline the organisation's purpose and structure	Lead employee or senior employee
15 mins	Virtual office tour with input from different role/departments	Pre-recorded
10 mins	Student preparation – tell the students who they are about to meet and give them 10 minutes to think about what questions they could ask.	Teacher
20 mins	Q&A session with a range of employees from your organisation – students should be able to ask questions in the chat, or directly.	Company employee/s
5 mins	Ask students to reflect on what they have learned so far, and outline what's coming next.	Teacher/lead employee

Session 2: The Enterprise Challenge (1 to 2 hours)

Example learning outcomes:

- Students can recognise the qualities and skills they have demonstrated both in and out of school that will help to make them employable

- Students can recognise when they are using qualities and skills that entrepreneurs demonstrate

Time Allocated	Activity	Lead
10 mins	Warm up exercise (teacher to provide, or other resource (eg **Barclays Life Skills modules**)	Teacher
10 mins	Introduce the challenge or task Outline the task to the students, emphasising how the task is relevant to your place of work. Ideally the task should be an authentic (but simplified) example of the type of task employees at your organisation might undertake.	Lead employee – live or pre-recorded
Between 30 mins and 1 hour	Your employer challenge Students work on the task or challenge you have set for them. This could be in virtual break-out rooms or offline at home or in their classroom. Students produce a piece of work to receive feedback. Feedback can be done individually, or in small groups. The work could include creating a short presentation, drafting a letter to a customer, suggesting improvements to website, designing something, etc)	Lead employee with teacher support
	Employer provides feedback to student (individual or in groups). If the task is one which will take longer than the virtual experience, then feedback could be given at a later date – real time or recorded.	
10 mins	Student debrief – reflect on what they learned, what they did well and what they could improve.	Teacher

Session 3: Feedback and Career Pathways (duration 30 mins to 1 hour)

Example learning outcomes:

• Students can explain how they are benefitting as a learner from careers, employability and enterprise activities and experiences Students can explain how work and working life is changing and how this may impact on your own and other people's career satisfaction

• Students are be able to research their education, training, apprenticeship, employment and volunteering options including information about the best progression pathways through to specific goals

Time Allocated	Activity	Lead
10 mins	Future of the industry – lead employee summaries how the industry is changing and what it may look like in the future. Can use other resources and pre-recorded talks.	Lead employer
10-20 mins	Career pathways in this industry – overview of apprenticeships, entry level roles, graduate entry, school leaver programmes etc.	Lead employee/Teacher
5 mins	Final Q&A session with lead employee	Teacher and lead employee
5 mins	Collect feedback and thanks	Teacher

What format/platform to use?

Work with your lead teacher to agree the best way of scheduling the sessions and of providing links to meetings, videos and tasks. This may be on Microsoft Teams, or Google Classroom for example. If you have a large number of students taking part, you might want to consider using breakout rooms, and cover for the activities so that there is someone on hand to help the students and to keep them on track.

If you have any suggestions on other useful information to include in this guide, or would like to have a chat about offering virtual work experience, please contact: LEP_ECS@lincolnshire.gov.uk

For more information about the Greater Lincolnshire Enterprise Adviser Network, please visit:https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/priorities-and-plans/priorities/working-with-schools/