



**Durham**  
University

Careers and Enterprise

Inspiring the extraordinary

# Careers and Enterprise

Making real-world impact



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# Welcome

At Durham University, we attract the brightest minds and most talented individuals regardless of their background or circumstances.

Durham students become part of a connected, global community that supports and inspires them throughout their time with us and well into their professional lives.

Our graduates are among the most sought after internationally, equipped with knowledge, skills and experience developed through excellent teaching, world-leading research and outstanding student support.

We work closely with graduate employers around the world to help our students build the skills and confidence they need to succeed in a changing, global job market.

Our alumni play a key role in this, offering advice, mentoring and access to networks that open doors in the UK and internationally.

Support for Enterprise at Durham has already delivered significant impact. We are committed to building on this momentum.

With your help we can go further still: by expanding access to high-quality, in-person and virtual internships for all our students, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds.

We are grateful to all who partner with us to help our graduates thrive in a complex and competitive world.

**Professor Karen O'Brien**  
Vice-Chancellor and Warden

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# Working with Careers and Enterprise

Durham University is a world-leading institution renowned for academic excellence, research impact and a diverse global student community. We have four faculties: Arts and Humanities, Business, Science, and Social Sciences, which offer a wide range of disciplines. The University's distinctive collegiate system fosters community, leadership and personal development beyond the labs and lecture rooms. Combined with an outstanding student experience, including volunteering, sports and extracurricular activities, we equip students with the skills, adaptability and ambition valued by employers across all sectors.

Our professional Careers and Enterprise team is dedicated to supporting both student and business development. We support our students to make a real impact in the workplace while helping businesses, from local enterprises to global organisations, connect with, engage and recruit talented students and graduates. Through tailored support, we bridge the gap between education and industry, ensuring mutual success.

We rely on the generosity of our community to help us deliver our initiatives through providing programme and scholarship funding, as well as offering their time and expertise to transform students' career opportunities.

## > Placements and work-based learning

Collaborating with our Careers and Enterprise team offers employers and alumni the chance to shape student development through tailored internship programmes and skill-building initiatives. Whether focusing on student development or organisational talent pipeline recruitment, we can work together to support student development and provide valuable real-world opportunities for growth.



By working with us, you can help students grow personally and professionally, while also creating lasting connections with future talent.

## > Placements

A Placement Year, typically lasting nine to twelve months, offers students a valuable opportunity to gain work experience as part of their degree. Students apply their academic knowledge, develop employability skills and gain insight into their career interests. Employers benefit by gaining an enthusiastic, skilled team member while building a pipeline for future graduate recruitment. Hiring a Placement Year student allows you to benefit from fresh perspectives, gain support for specific projects, and assess potential future hires without long-term, permanent commitment.

## > Internships

Internships offer students hands-on experience, typically lasting ten to twelve weeks in summer or up to four weeks during spring. They allow students to apply academic knowledge, develop professional skills and explore career paths, building CVs and networks that enhance employability. For employers, internships are a great opportunity to engage with potential future talent, raise brand awareness, and support short-term projects. Internships help develop a skilled workforce while fostering relationships with students, who gain valuable insights and real-world experience as they prepare for their future careers.



# Case study 1

Following high levels of student demand, Careers and Enterprise secured funding to launch a Summer Sustainability Internship project. The project connected students with businesses focused on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the funding, five businesses hosted student interns which enabled them to take actionable steps towards environmental responsibility, community engagement and sustainable growth. The students' contributions were pivotal in driving forward the companies' efforts to meet targets on clean energy, responsible consumption and climate action, making this project a vital bridge between education, employment, and sustainability goals.

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# Case study 2

As part of our widening participation strategic aims, Careers and Enterprise developed a virtual micro internships programme. These short-term, accessible opportunities enable student consultancy teams to work on real industry client briefs, providing students with valuable career development and industry insights. One iteration of the programme saw student teams working for 25 hours across two to three weeks to solve a business problem. Delivered fully online, students collaborated in teams of six with real industry clients, ensuring authentic industry engagement. The experience included structured project check-in points and two consultancy skills workshops to support student professional development.

The virtual internship programme provided students with a fully accessible and flexible way to gain real-world experience.



## > Project outcomes



### For students:

The internships allowed students to gain practical experience in sustainability by working directly on projects that aligned with SDGs. This hands-on work helped them to deepen their understanding of sustainability practices and enhanced their employability in the growing field of green business. Interns contributed to resource efficiency, carbon reduction and corporate social responsibility.



### For businesses:

Participating businesses benefitted from the fresh perspectives and innovative ideas brought by the student interns. The interns contributed directly to the businesses' sustainability strategies, helping them refine and implement practical solutions to achieve specific SDGs. For example, one business focused on reducing its carbon footprint, while another developed strategies for more sustainable supply chain management. This funded project helped these businesses align their operations with broader global sustainability goals while supporting them in their ambitions for continuous improvement in sustainability practices.

## > Project outcomes



### For students:

The virtual internship programme provided students with a fully accessible and flexible way to gain real-world experience, particularly for those who faced barriers to traditional internships or Placement Years. Working to a set brief from an employer client, students engaged with organisational representatives, collaborated as part of a cross-departmental consultancy team, and produced reports that offered valuable insights into various industries. Through this experience, they developed key professional and employability skills, strengthened their CVs and enhanced their personal development, all while gaining a deeper understanding of potential career paths.



### For businesses:

Micro internships offered businesses the opportunity to utilise the skills and creativity of students to address real business challenges. By engaging students in short, focused assignments, companies gained fresh perspectives and innovative solutions that helped solve problems, improve processes and drive efficiency. These internships engaged specialised, enthusiastic and diverse student talent to support businesses in responding to emerging industry changes, with the added benefit of identifying potential long-term hires based on students' performance.



# Promoting your business opportunities

Our Careers and Enterprise team offer a comprehensive range of services to help businesses build their brand on campus, connect with talented students and graduates, and develop a strong future talent pipeline. We provide tailored support at every stage, from vacancy design and recruitment guidance to exclusive partnerships, digital advertising, and a diverse programme of employer events to help make it easier to reach the right candidates.

@ For further information, please get in touch at [employers@durham.ac.uk](mailto:employers@durham.ac.uk)

We have a variety of options to help you connect with our talented students.



## Hosting an event

We support employers in delivering a wide range of bespoke events throughout the year, both in person and online, tailored to meet the unique needs of your organisation. Hosting an event on campus provides a fantastic opportunity to raise your profile with a targeted audience eager to learn about work experience opportunities and graduate roles. From informal networking activities like café pop-ups and drop-in sessions to engaging employer-led presentations and exciting outdoor promotional events, we have a variety of options to help you connect with our talented students and graduates.

## Our careers weeks

Our careers weeks, held throughout the academic year, offer a prime platform for engaging with a diverse range of motivated students. These events provide an ideal opportunity to promote your organisation and share details about placements, internships and graduate opportunities. The events are widely promoted on campus, attracting students eager to understand the job market and plan their future careers. Our careers weeks are flexible and tailored to align with student sector interests, offering a variety of focused recruitment activities throughout the academic year. Previous careers weeks have included Law, STEM, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Film and TV, and Explore More, each designed to connect employers with students pursuing specific career paths.

## Careers fairs

Our sector-specific careers fairs draw approximately 1,000 students per event. They offer an excellent opportunity for employers to engage directly with a diverse student audience to showcase opportunities and increase visibility and brand presence on campus. Fairs offer the chance to identify potential candidates and engage in meaningful conversations with students who are actively seeking to learn more about your industry, organisations and career opportunities within it. Previous careers fairs have included: Law Fair, STEM Fair, Business, Finance and Consulting Fair, and SME or Regional Careers Fair.

Listen to employer and student testimonials about the benefits of engagement via career fairs on this short [YouTube video](#).

## Advertise your opportunity

Promote your opportunities to students and graduates through our free online vacancy advertising service, or partner with us to provide exclusive opportunities to Durham students and graduates as part of our DU Exclusive Supported Recruitment programme. Our DU Exclusive programme offers custom recruitment support including extensive vacancy promotion and targeted marketing to build brand awareness and increase likelihood of recruitment success.

## Digital marketing

To enhance visibility and engage directly with Durham students, we offer a range of dynamic digital marketing services. Our portable plasma screens on campus offer enhanced profiles for events, while the Online Marketing Package promotes opportunities on our careers portal and across our social media platforms. Additionally, our student emails deliver employer event and vacancy information to students, helping to directly connect you with our diverse, talented student body. These services support maximum exposure for events and opportunities, helping you to attract the right candidates for your organisation.

Careers fairs offer the chance to identify potential candidates and engage in meaningful conversations with students.



# Case study 3

A Durham-based SME, with no prior history of hiring Durham graduates and some initial reservations about the value of university partnerships, attended one of our careers fairs. They were immediately impressed by the professionalism, enthusiasm and diverse skill sets displayed by the students they met. This led to the recruitment of a final year student into a permanent graduate role. On the back of this success, the company decided to take part in a part-funded internship scheme being offered by the University. They advertised the role as an exclusive opportunity, benefitting from increased visibility through targeted promotion, and went on to select two students for summer internships.



On the back of this success, the company decided to take part in a part-funded internship scheme being offered by the University.



## > Project outcomes



### For students:

The careers fair introduced students to an employer they might not have otherwise considered, increasing awareness of local career options. The exclusive listing made the internship more visible, helping students find roles they may have otherwise missed. In-person conversations gave insight into company culture and values, while building students' confidence, networking skills and career clarity. The internships also provided paid, hands-on experience in commercial and research environments, helping students bridge the gap between academia and industry. Working in an SME developed their confidence, skills, and understanding of specialist tools and technologies and gave them early levels of responsibility and input into business activities.



### For businesses:

Participation in the careers fair and internship programme enabled the SME to build a strong recruitment pipeline without significant upfront costs. Face-to-face engagement gave immediate insight into candidates' skills, strengths and motivations informing future hiring approaches. The part-funded internship arrangement reduced risk and made it easier to bring in emerging talent, while interns contributed energy, ideas, and additional capacity to support new projects. This direct engagement boosted business productivity, supported innovation, and raised the company's profile among students. What began as a tentative step has now become a core strand of the SME's recruitment strategy, offering a strategic way to connect with and invest in the next generation of talent.

# Join our mission

Our work in supporting students and graduates to achieve their personal career ambitions is only possible through the generous support of our donors, employers, alumni and colleagues. By joining us on our mission, you can play a pivotal role in creating career opportunities across a variety of sectors and organisations, contributing to the future success of our students and graduates and create lasting impact.

You can support our work with students and graduates, through, for example, sponsoring a work-based learning programme, engaging with our team to promote your opportunities, or offering your time and expertise to provide student skills development workshops. We truly appreciate any support you can provide, whether in-person or virtually, as it plays a crucial role in helping our students and graduates achieve their career goals.

- **Donate:** We rely on the generosity of our community partners to bring meaningful opportunities to life for our students. Your support helps us deliver impactful initiatives, including bespoke internship programmes tailored to student needs and sector priorities, as well as skill development opportunities that prepare students for the world of work. By contributing, you play a direct role in strengthening the pipeline of talent into industry and shaping the future of our graduates.
- **Advertise opportunities and attend careers events:** Work with our Employer Services team to promote your opportunities and build your brand awareness with students.
- **Volunteer:** We greatly value the time, experience, and insights of our alumni community and employer partners. By sharing your knowledge through a careers insight session or leading an employability workshop, you can make a real difference in helping our students navigate their career journeys and prepare for life beyond university.
- **Student Employability Fund:** A key initiative within the Student Opportunities Fund, this programme provides bursaries to help students cover career-related costs, such as travel, professional attire, training courses, and conferences. For more information see our ['Giving' page](#).

- **Sponsor:** Increase your brand awareness at Durham and directly engage with the next generation of talent by sponsoring a careers fair or work-based learning programme. Exclusive fair sponsorship guarantees prime employer location at careers fairs, along with headline advertising, ensuring high student footfall and increased opportunity to meet potential candidates.

Employer sponsorship and involvement with work-based learning programmes (such as career mentoring, consultancy projects), provide meaningful engagement with a diverse range of students and insight into potential candidate's skills and motivations. Depending on the nature of the programme, work-based learning programmes can also provide businesses with fresh ideas and innovation, staff CPD and support organisational EDI objectives.

## Get in touch

If you want to discuss partnering with us, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please email: [employers@durham.ac.uk](mailto:employers@durham.ac.uk)





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