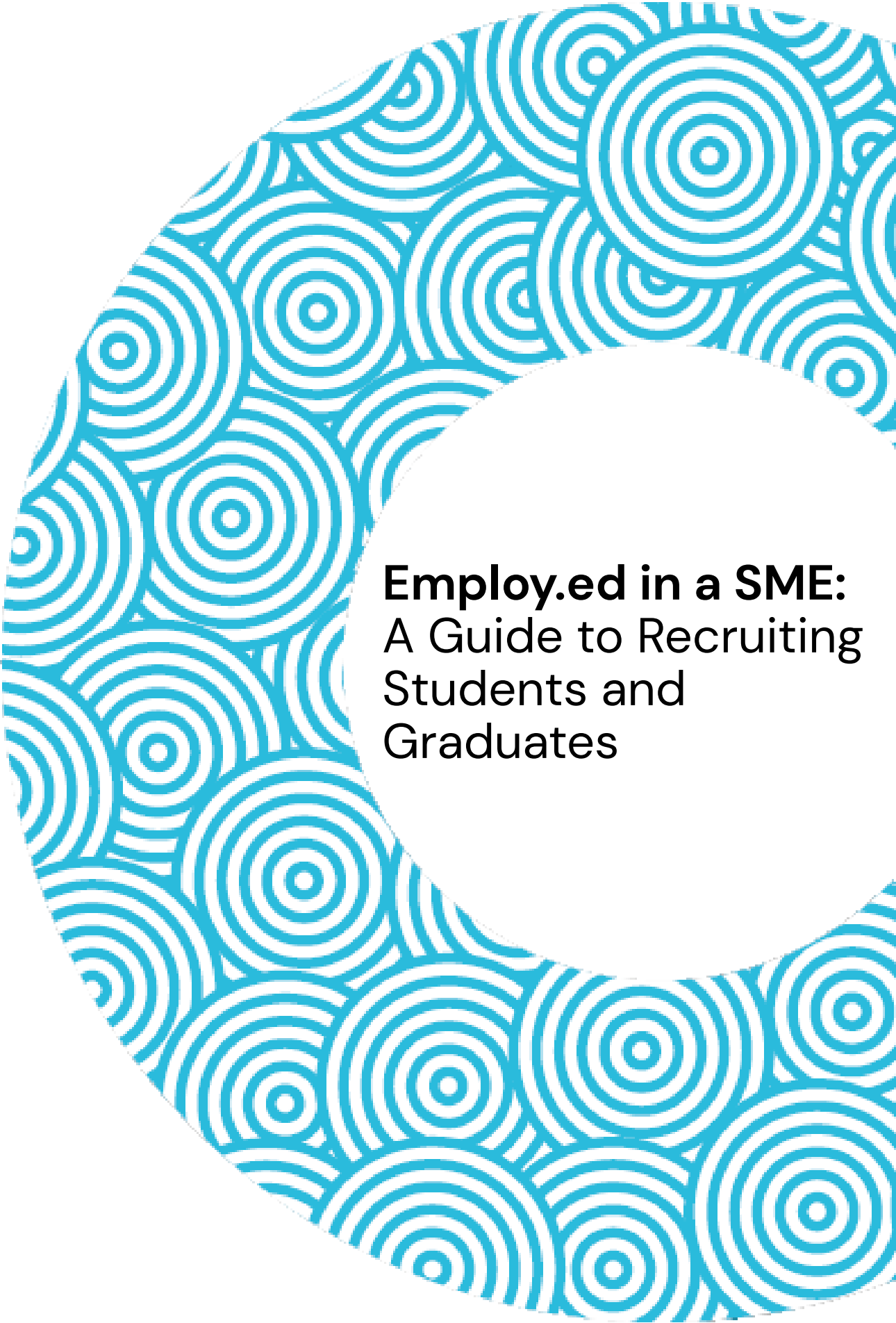




THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Careers, Skills &
Student Development



Employ.ed in a SME: A Guide to Recruiting Students and Graduates



Introduction and how we will support you

This guide is here to support you in recruiting an intern through the Employ.ed programme for SMEs. Hosting an intern is a fantastic opportunity to bring fresh ideas, new skills, and different perspectives into your organisation while supporting the development of emerging talent.

Recruitment doesn't have to be daunting. Hiring an intern is much like hiring any other member of staff, and this guide will take you through each stage of the process, from planning your internship and attracting the right candidates to welcoming and inducting your new team member.

Throughout your recruitment journey, the Careers Team at the University of Edinburgh is here to help. We will provide advice and guidance, advertise your opportunity free of charge, and work with you to find a student who is a great fit for your internship role.

What this guide covers:



Planning and Preparation



Writing a job advert and description



Advertising



Shortlisting



Interviews and feedback



Appointment and contracts



Induction Support





Planning and Preparation

Define the Role and Outcomes

Taking time to plan your internship will help you and your intern get the most from the experience. The best internships give students the opportunity to make a genuine contribution while developing their skills and confidence.

When planning your internship, consider:

- What success will look like and the outcomes you hope to achieve.
- How the internship supports your wider business objectives.
- Which skills are essential for the role and which can be developed during the internship.

Being clear about these areas will help you create a realistic job description that encourages students to see the opportunity as attractive and worth applying for.

Plan the Hours and Timing

You should also consider how many hours will be needed to complete the project and when those hours will take place. Internships can take place at any time of year, but students' availability may vary depending on their academic commitments.

- During semester: the University recommends that undergraduate and taught postgraduate students work no more than 15 hours per week alongside their studies.
- During University vacation periods: students have more flexibility may be able to work more hours.

Checking the University's [Semester Dates](#) can help you plan a realistic time frame and working pattern for your internship.

You should also be aware that some international students may have restrictions on the number of hours they are permitted to work.

Put the Right Support in Place

As you plan, think about the support your intern will need to succeed. This includes:

- Assigning a **dedicated line manager** (and, where possible, a buddy or mentor).
- Sharing a **clear project plan/brief** with your intern.
- Planning an **induction**, **regular check-ins and opportunities for feedback**.





- Ensuring the intern has the **equipment, workspace and training** they need.
- Building in **clear milestones and a variety of meaningful tasks**, with contingency work if projects are completed ahead of schedule.

Employing someone for the first time?

If you have not employed staff before, you will need to make sure your organisation is set up to employ someone and that you understand your responsibilities as an employer. This includes areas such as registering as an employer where required, payroll, employment rights, insurance and workplace pensions. The [UK Government's Employing people guidance](#) provides an overview of what you need to consider. Organisations in Scotland can also find practical support through [Business Gateway](#).

For more detailed guidance and practical tips on designing a student friendly internship, read the [Planning Your Internship guide](#). If you would like to discuss your plans, the Employ.ed Team (employ.ed@ed.ac.uk) is here to support.

How much should I pay?

Interns must receive at least the [National Minimum Wage \(NMW\)](#).

The Living Wage Foundation calculates the real Living Wage each year based on the cost of living and what people and their families need to live in the UK. Although it is voluntary, many employers have adopted the real Living Wage as their minimum rate of pay. For the latest real Living Wage rates, please visit the [Living Wage Foundation website](#).

Research similar positions in your area before advertising to find out what rate of pay is offered by similar organisations.

Use the [GOV.UK holiday entitlement calculator](#) to calculate statutory paid holiday.





Writing a job advert and description

A clear job advert and role description will help you attract the right candidates and make shortlisting more efficient.

This may be the first time a student is being introduced to your organisation, so use it to showcase who you are, your working culture, what you do, and why they should apply. Clearly explain the role, the skills or qualities you are looking for, and who would be a good fit.

Be clear about what success looks like by outlining the outcomes you expect the intern to achieve during the internship. Also highlight what the student will gain from the experience, such as developing new skills, receiving mentoring, building professional networks, and gaining valuable industry experience.

In order to support you with writing your job advert and description, here are templates for you to complete:

- [Job Description Template](#)
- [Job Advert Template](#)

The templates include helpful prompts, tips and guidance to support you in creating a student-friendly internship opportunity. Once you've completed both templates, please send them to employ.ed@ed.ac.uk. The Careers Team will review them to ensure the language is clear and accessible for students while maintaining your organisation's unique tone, culture and personality.

In addition to submitting your job advert and job description, please complete the following form. It asks for a little more background information about your internship to help us process and support the opportunity.

[Employ.ed SME Job Advert and Job Description Submission Form](#)





Advertising and Support with Applications

As part of the Employ.ed in an SME programme, the Careers Team will promote your internship opportunity at no cost and provide students with application support. This helps maximise the visibility of your role while ensuring applicants are well prepared.

What we do

How it benefits your internship

Advertise on MyCareerHub

Your internship will be listed on MyCareerHub (MCH), the University of Edinburgh's exclusive careers platform for students. MCH is the primary destination for graduate jobs, internships, part-time roles, vacation work and other opportunities.

Targeted student email

The Careers Team will send a targeted email to students who best match your internship criteria. For example, a science internship aimed at final-year undergraduates will be promoted directly to eligible students within the University's science schools.

Social Media Promotion

Your opportunity will also be promoted through the Careers Team social media channels, including LinkedIn and Instagram, helping to increase awareness and attract suitable applicants throughout the advertising period.

Application support for students

While your internship is being advertised, students can access a wide range of Careers support, including application guidance, information and advice drop-ins, one-to-one appointments with Careers Consultants, and online resources. Details of this support will be included within your internship advert to encourage strong, well-prepared applications.





Shortlisting

At this stage you will narrow down your candidates and decide who to invite for an interview.

A shortlisting matrix can be a helpful tool when assessing applications, as it allows you to evaluate each candidate consistently against the criteria set out in your job advert. Candidates should be assessed against these criteria, rather than against one another.

It's important to assess all candidates fairly. To help reduce unconscious bias, consider removing names and other identifying information from applications during the shortlisting process.

Where possible, the same panel members should be involved in both the shortlisting and interview stages. Your panel should be a small but representative group of people who understand the role and its requirements. Panel members should also be familiar with the Equality Act 2010 and follow good recruitment practice to help ensure a fair and inclusive recruitment process.



Interviews and feedback

An interview is more than just an opportunity to assess a candidate, it is also your chance to showcase your organisation and help students decide if your business is the right fit for them. By creating a positive, welcoming experience, you will encourage candidates to perform at their best and leave with a great impression of your organisation.

Plan your interview around the role by:

- **Defining your criteria:** know the skills, behaviours and qualities you are looking for before the interview begins.
- **Using realistic tasks:** asking candidates to complete a short activity that reflects the job, such as using Excel, solving a problem or delivering a brief presentation.
- **Assessing team fit:** involve colleagues where appropriate so candidates can meet the team and you can see how they interact.
- **Providing constructive feedback:** where possible, offer feedback to unsuccessful candidates to support their future development.





For many students, this could be their first professional interview, so a supportive approach can help them demonstrate their true potential.

The Careers Team offers a range of resources to help students prepare for interviews, including:

- [Support on our website for before and after interviews](#)
- Students can book a practice interview with a Careers Consultant via our [appointment system](#)

Create a positive interview experience by:

- Choosing a quiet, distraction-free location.
- Making candidates feel welcome and giving them time to settle.
- Asking open-ended questions and allowing thinking time before answers.
- Explaining the interview format and giving plenty of notice.
- Looking beyond work experience - focus on potential, motivation and transferable skills.
- Checking whether candidates need any reasonable adjustments or have academic commitments that should be considered. For example, a reasonable adjustment could be sharing a few interview questions in advance to help candidates prepare.

The Careers Team can send rejection emails to candidates who are unsuccessful and not selected for an interview. However, we recommend that you personally follow up with candidates you interviewed, as you will be able to provide constructive feedback to help them prepare for future interviews.





Appointment and Contracts

Once you have selected your preferred candidate, there are some important steps to complete before your intern starts.

You are responsible for checking your selected candidate has the right to work in the UK and for providing the appropriate employment documentation/contract, including information about the terms and conditions of their employment.

As employment requirements can change, we recommend checking the latest official guidance before making an appointment.

For current information and guidance, visit:

- **GOV.UK:** Guidance on right to work checks, employment contracts and written statements of employment particulars.
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/right-to-work-checks-employer-guidance>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/employment-contracts-and-conditions/written-statement-of-employment-particulars>
- **Business Gateway:** Practical guidance on taking on and employing staff.
 - [Employing People: Explore Staffing Options, Outsourcing, and Hiring for Business Growth | Business Gateway](#)
 - [Step-by-step guide to hiring your first employee, from legal requirements to onboarding and compliance. | Business Gateway](#)

Acas also provides useful guidance and templates you can adapt when making a job offer and preparing employment documentation: <https://www.acas.org.uk/templates>

These resources should be used to ensure you understand your responsibilities and have the appropriate arrangements in place before your intern starts.

Reference Top Tips

We recommend that you ask successful interns to provide at least one reference before they are appointed. When requesting and considering references:

1. Make the offer conditional where appropriate. A job offer can be made subject to receiving a satisfactory reference.





2. Get the candidate's permission first. Only contact a referee once the candidate has given permission. They may not want their current employer or another referee to be contacted until they have been successful in the recruitment process.

3. Focus on relevant, factual information. You can ask the referee to confirm details such as the candidate's dates of employment, role and duties, as well as relevant skills and experience.

4. Ask questions relevant to the internship. You may wish to ask about the candidate's ability to carry out the responsibilities of the role and provide the internship job description for context. Avoid requesting personal information or asking referees to speculate or provide conjecture.

5. Be aware that references may be limited. Employers are not generally obliged to provide a reference, and some organisations have policies restricting references to factual information, such as dates of employment and job title.

Please note: Students may have limited previous work experience and may therefore provide an academic referee, such as a tutor, lecturer or supervisor, rather than a previous employer. An academic referee may be able to comment on relevant skills and attributes demonstrated through the student's studies, such as reliability, communication, teamwork, organisation and their approach to learning.

Students can also find guidance on the [Careers Team website](#) on obtaining and using references.





Induction Support

Induction Support Checklist

To help your new team member settle in quickly and get off to a strong start, we have created an Induction Support Checklist. Please download and review the checklist to help ensure your intern has a smooth and successful start to their internship.

Employment Basics

Employing staff for the first time?

Find out what you need to do before becoming an employer on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Who has the right to work in the UK?

Before you employ anyone, you must check that they have permission to work in the UK. During the interview stage, check all job applicants' 'right to work' documents. Keep copies for your records.

Read the [Government's guide on document checking](#).

Remember that at no point in recruitment should you discriminate against anyone because of nationality.

Can international students and graduates work in the UK?

International students and graduates bring valuable skills, global perspectives and multilingual abilities to UK employers. Their right to work depends on their immigration status and visa conditions. Employers should always check the latest [UK Government guidance](#) before recruiting international candidates.

- Students from outside the UK and Ireland must have the appropriate immigration permission to study and work in the UK. Most international students hold a Student visa.
- Students on a student visa are usually permitted to work part-time during term time (typically up to 20 hours per week for degree-level courses) and full-time during official university vacations, subject to the conditions of their visa.
- After successfully completing an eligible degree, graduates may apply for the Graduate visa, which allows them to live and work in the UK without employer sponsorship. The Graduate visa is an unsponsored route and enables graduates to work in most roles or look for work.





Useful Links

Business Gateway

Guidance on managing and supporting people.

<https://www.bgateway.com/resources/human-resources>

Guide to Internships

The Careers Team's guide to support organisations that want to hire an intern from Edinburgh University.

<https://careers.ed.ac.uk/employers/support-and-guidance/guide-to-internships>

Employment rights for interns

Interns' employment rights and entitlement to the National Minimum Wage depend on their employment status.

<https://www.gov.uk/employment-rights-for-interns>

Contracts of employment and working hours

Government guidance on employment contracts and workplace rights, including employment status, flexible and part-time working, working hours, breaks, holidays, overtime, and discrimination.

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people/contracts>

Statutory Sick Pay

Employees' entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), including how much they can receive, when payments start and stop, and employers' responsibilities.

<https://www.gov.uk/employers-sick-pay/entitlement>

Recruiting International Graduates

Guidance for employers on recruiting international graduates, including hiring through the Graduate and Skilled Worker visa routes and the skills international graduates can bring to organisations.

https://ise.org.uk/knowledge/resources/289/recruiting_international_graduates_a_guide_for_employers

Promoting EDI in recruitment

Guidance for employers on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in recruitment, with practical ways to attract and support a more diverse range of candidates.

<https://careers.ed.ac.uk/employers/support-and-guidance/promoting-edi-in-recruitment>

