



# What is job shadowing?

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OF SUSSEX

The Sussex job shadowing scheme offers you an opportunity to gain insights into the roles and responsibilities of other members of staff and departments.

WHAT IS JOB SHADOWING?

# Sharing knowledge



WHAT IS JOB SHADOWING?

# Developing new skills

## WHAT IS JOB SHADOWING?

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Job shadowing is a short 'placement' where you spend time with, and observe the work of, another member of staff. It is an opportunity to gain insight into a specific role, or a particular area of work in another department.

It can also be an opportunity to work alongside more experienced colleagues (including colleagues within your own department) so that you can learn and develop within your current role.

### CAN I TAKE PART IN JOB SHADOWING?

Our job shadowing placement scheme is available to all University of Sussex Professional Services and Technical Staff who have successfully completed their probation and/or have been employed by the University for a minimum of 12 months. Nominees must have also been performing satisfactorily in their substantive role.

### HOW LONG IS A PLACEMENT?

Typically a job shadowing placement will range from one morning session to two/three days. In exceptional circumstances this may be extended. The length of the placement will be influenced by the type of job shadowing arrangement agreed and how long will be needed in order for the learning objectives to be met. For example, an observation job shadowing may take place in one day. Whereas a job trial placement may take place for a few hours over a 4–6 week period.

It is important that the schedule for the placement is agreed by both parties before the job shadowing arrangement begins.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Guest

This is the member of staff undertaking the job shadowing opportunity.

#### Host

This is the member of staff who is being observed.

#### Designated representative

This is the person who will authorise and make arrangements for the placement to take place. Within our Schools this is the School Manager/Administrator. Within Professional Services it may be the Director or a member of the senior management team.

#### Line manager

The line manager of the member of staff wishing to undertake a job shadowing placement must agree that the staff member's development needs will be best met through a job shadowing opportunity.

Line managers should consider whether it is possible to release the member of staff from their current role for the requested time period. However, it is essential that the line manager ensures that all eligible staff members have equality of opportunity to participate in the job shadowing scheme and that no member of staff is unfairly discriminated against. Further guidance is available to line managers from their HR Business Partner/Adviser.



# Widening experience

“Although I often write research news stories for the SPRU website, I was intrigued as to the additional processes involved in writing and distributing a piece for external media. I also wanted to learn more about the work of the media team, and to build working relationships with its staff.”

KATHERINE DAVIES  
RESEARCH IMPACT OFFICER (BMEc)

JOB SHADOWING HOST: JAMES HAKNER  
SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER (EXTERNAL RELATIONS)

## THE BENEFITS OF JOB SHADOWING

### JOB SHADOWING PROMOTES THE SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE AND GOOD PRACTICE ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY

#### LEARNING

Offers insights into the roles and responsibilities of other members of staff and departments.

#### DEVELOPING NEW SKILLS

Enables you to take ownership of your own self-development – widening your experience and skillset. It also provides opportunities for the host to develop their own coaching and mentoring skills.

#### NETWORKING

Provides excellent networking opportunities, bringing people together who might not normally have contact.

#### WIDENING EXPERIENCE

Provides opportunities for you to 'test out' possible career options.

#### WORKING TOGETHER

Improves the effectiveness of inter-departmental communication and encourages collaboration.



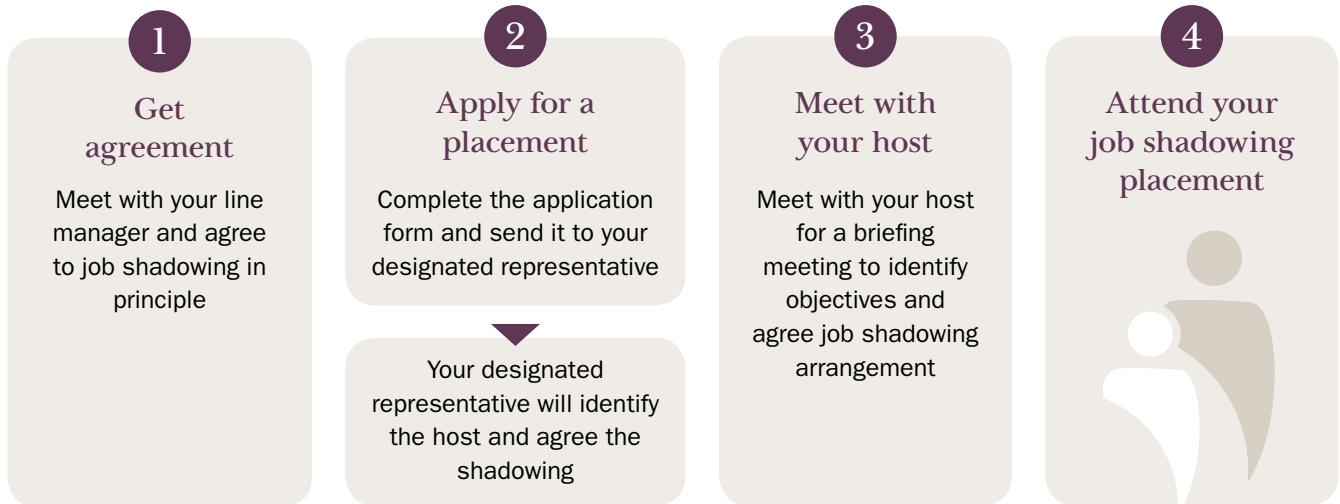
THE BENEFITS OF JOB SHADOWING

# Networking

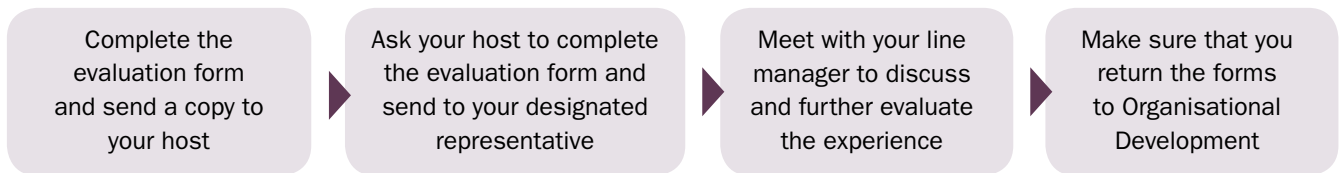


# Bringing people together

# The job shadowing process



## Evaluate your experience



# The different types of job shadowing

There are three main different types of job shadowing:

## OBSERVATION

As a guest you will spend an agreed period of time observing the day-to-day work of the host, gaining a deeper understanding as to what they do on a daily basis. For example, attending meetings or observing interactions with students and other staff teams. This type of job shadowing provides an opportunity to gain a real insight and understanding of a host's job role. It is ideal for those who would like to see how they could develop or improve their working processes with another department or for someone considering a career change who wants to see what the role actually consists of.

At the end of the experience, the host will provide an opportunity for debriefing to ensure that both parties benefit from the shadowing experience.

When deciding which particular job shadowing opportunity would be most suitable, the guest should take into consideration that observation is a passive interaction and limited to improving knowledge and awareness. There is little opportunity for you to learn or develop any particular skills.

## REGULAR FOCUSED ACTIVITY

This involves shadowing the host for specific activities over a period of time. This should be preceded by a mini briefing and a thorough de-brief at the end.

This type of shadowing provides short periods of focused activity rather than passive ongoing observation. It provides a real targeted focus on the guest's learning objectives. However, it needs careful timing and planning if it is not to become disruptive and time consuming for the host and relies on setting realistic learning objectives.

## HANDS ON – JOB TRIAL

This is an extension of the observation model, where the guest undertakes tasks for the host which they have earlier observed. It provides you with hands-on experience in the role whilst under the supervision of the host.

This type of job shadowing provides first-hand experience of the role, together with a meaningful task to undertake whilst under the supervision of the host. It is a more involved processes for both parties requiring detailed explanation, discussion and interaction. This type of job shadowing might not always be possible. As it can be time consuming for the host, and needs to be discussed and agreed between the host and the guest.



# Applying for a job shadowing placement

If you are interested in undertaking a job shadowing arrangement you should first seek the permission of your line manager. You can discuss the type of role you would like to shadow, what you want to get out of the experience and the learning and skills you hope to obtain.

## **In your initial meeting with your line manager you should discuss, and clarify, the following points:**

- The objectives of the shadowing: why you would like to participate and what you hope to get out of the experience.
- The type of job shadowing that would be most appropriate to achieve your objectives.
- The period of time and type of activity to be shadowed.
- Relevance of the shadowing on your current and/or future role/s.
- Consideration of any staffing issues that may arise as a result of the shadowing arrangement.
- How the knowledge/experience gained will be cascaded and shared with your team/department.

You should then complete the application form and send it to your designated representative (within your School/ Division) who will try to find a suitable host. *It should be noted that whilst every effort will be made to find a suitable match they cannot always guarantee to do so.*

Once agreed, it is the responsibility of the guest to make arrangements for the job shadowing to take place and agree to the code of practice (see page 19).

At the end of the placement, all parties will complete an evaluation no more than two weeks after the visit. You should then arrange to meet with the host to evaluate the job shadowing experience. A copy of the evaluation form will be submitted to the designated representative and to Organisational Development.

Following this, you should meet with your line manager for further discussion as part of your ongoing performance management cycle. Please refer to the job shadowing flowchart on page 11 for further clarification.

Download application and evaluation forms from:  
**[www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development/planning/job-shadowing](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development/planning/job-shadowing)**

# Making the most of job shadowing

It's important to prepare to ensure that you get the most out of the experience. Think about what you want to achieve, ask your host questions and explore what skills and experience they think are relevant.

Here are some useful questions that you may want to ask your host when you are job shadowing:

## ASK THE HOST ABOUT THEIR JOB

- Could you give me an example of a typical day?
- What do you spend most of your day doing?
- What is the career path for this sort of role? Where could you progress to?
- Who do you work with and what are the relationship links?
- How important is team work to this role?
- How much of the work is self-directed and how much is regulated by others?
- What are the usual work patterns like in this role?

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

- What education/training did you have before taking this role? How helpful was it in getting you the role and supporting you in the role?
- Are there any other experiences – work or non-work related – that have supported you in your career?
- Would you do anything differently in preparation for this career path?
- Are there any journals or career-related web sites that would be helpful in learning about this role?
- Are there any professional groups I could join that would be useful to me?
- What qualifications do you feel are important for this role?
- What personal qualities do you need to succeed in this role?
- Why did you apply for this role?

“Welcoming a new colleague into the department in this capacity encouraged all members of staff to reflect on their role and helped them to articulate the nature of their work and its importance to the institution.”

DAVID WALKER  
HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING

JOB SHADOWING HOST

## CASE STUDY: GUEST

### EVALUATION BY GUEST

**Name:**

Katherine Davies

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**Job title:**

Research Impact Officer (BMEc)

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**What were you hoping to gain from the experience of shadowing?**

Although I often write research news stories for the SPRU website, I was intrigued as to the additional processes involved in writing and distributing a piece for external media. I also wanted to learn more about the work of the Media team, and to build working relationships with its staff.

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**To what extent was this achieved?**

I spent a full day working with James in the Press and Communications Office, followed by some additional two-hour sessions, during which we planned, wrote and disseminated a press release. I learned about a series of processes involved in writing and sending out press releases, which I found both interesting and informative.

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**What worked well and why?**

James was an instructive and patient mentor, happy to juggle his own work alongside guiding me through the press release tasks. Working at various available desks during shadowing sessions, I enjoyed interacting with the Press and Communications team – some of whom I'd worked with previously, others I'd not yet met – all of whom provided a welcoming and productive environment. Placed there, as opposed to at my own desk, I was able to concentrate and immerse myself fully in the press release task, without the distractions of other work.

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**What did not work so well and why?**

Although it was initially suggested that a day's shadowing would offer useful insight, it soon became apparent that returning for additional sessions to complete all stages of the process would provide a much fuller and more comprehensive learning experience. Indeed, the tasks least familiar to me – and therefore the most relevant, training-wise e.g. identifying journalists, submitting the press release to an

external news service – could not have been completed within one day, not least because we had to allow the academic (whose research news we were working on) time to check and approve the story.

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**How will you use the knowledge, skills or experience gained in your workplace?**

Working with James has given me the confidence and awareness to investigate media work further – with the knowledge I've gained, I feel better equipped to identify engagement opportunities within my School, and to act upon these to enhance research dissemination.

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**In what ways has the experience been of benefit to your team and School/Division?**

I feel that I've strengthened my working relationships with the media team and, as a result, will be better placed to identify and support media dissemination of BMEc research in future.

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## CASE STUDY: HOST

### EVALUATION BY HOST

**Name:**

James Hakner

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**Job title:**

Senior Communications Manager  
(External Relations)

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**What were you hoping to gain from the experience of being shadowed?**

The nature of my role means that I am frequently working with a number of communications colleagues, such as Katherine, within the Schools in which I operate. Through taking part in the shadowing scheme, I hoped to strengthen my relationship with Katherine and to better understand how I might improve understanding and co-ordination between central and remote teams. Additionally, I was keen to expand my experience of managing and supervising and this scheme afforded a good opportunity to evaluate my performance in this regard.

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**To what extent was this achieved?**

Katherine was a pleasure to work with and was proactive in identifying and understanding a newsworthy research paper and translating this into engaging content for a lay audience. She displayed confidence and competence in dealing with the academic author of the paper.

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**What worked well and why?**

Katherine was flexible and understanding in terms of timings and fitting in around my workload. She came to the office already well-equipped with a strong skillset in communications and with a clear sense of what she wanted to achieve from the process. This made it far easier to focus on the areas that were of most use to her development, particularly the systems and processes employed in press-release distribution and measurement/evaluation.

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**What did not work so well and why?**

It was impossible to complete the task of writing and publishing a press release within one working day, so we agreed to hold two further (shorter)

sessions as and when other key milestones occurred in the process. It might be useful to present this in the future as a 'project shadowing' opportunity, giving the shadowee the opportunity to see through a mini project from start to finish.

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**In what ways has the experience been of benefit to your team and School/Division?**

Some members of the team already knew Katherine but others did not, so it was useful for building relationships with other parts of the University. Katherine was inquisitive and hard-working and offered intelligent contributions to work discussions taking place in our open-plan office. It also meant that BMEc and the University as a whole benefited from a piece of publicity that in all likelihood would not have otherwise occurred. Katherine achieved coverage across five continents with her press release and delivered real-world impact for the individual researcher and the institution.

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## JOB SHADOWING RESPONSIBILITIES

Job shadowing is for the mutual benefit of both the guest and the host, with the aim of sharing our knowledge and skills across the University. Job shadowing relies on a degree of trust and openness, as well as some responsibilities, which will be reciprocated by all those participating.

### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A GUEST

You and your line manager should:

- Provide the host with an outline of what you are expecting from the shadowing prior to the shadowing taking place.
- Maintain confidentiality and agree to abide by the code of practice at all times (see page 19).
- Familiarise yourself with the procedures and working practices of the host and try to learn as much as they can prior to the shadowing, for example reviewing their job description and person specification.
- Observe good time keeping and inform your host if you are unavailable for any reason.
- Ensure colleagues are aware of your absence and appropriate cover is arranged.
- Provide your host with feedback and reflections on what you have observed and learnt from the experience.
- Make sure you discuss any disability requirements with your host in advance of the placement so that the host has enough time to put adjustments in place in order to maximise the benefits of the shadowing.

### THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HOST

The host and their line manager should:

- Provide the guest with a timetable for when the shadowing will take place and agree a suitable schedule for the shadowing (dependent of the guest's objectives and the service needs in the host area).
- Prepare an area for the guest to be placed.
- Ensure other colleagues are briefed about the shadowing experience.
- Provide time between sessions or prior to sessions for questions or feedback.
- Provide the guest with information on the team/department that the shadowing is taking place in.
- Provide appropriate notice and reasons if the shadowing activity has to be cancelled or changed in anyway.
- Make arrangements to provide constructive feedback to the guest within two weeks of the end of the job shadowing placement.
- Ensure that any disability requirements are discussed with the guest in advance of the placement and that any adjustments are put in place in order to maximise the benefits of the experience.

# Code of practice

The University of Sussex Job Shadowing Scheme is supported by the following code of practice. All parties must agree to the code of practice and will be required to confirm their commitment on the application form.

The code of practice comprises of five key principles detailed below:

## MUTUALITY

Job shadowing is for the mutual benefit of both the guest and the host.

## TRUST AND OPENNESS

Job shadowing relies on the sharing of personal knowledge and experience and therefore relies on a degree of trust and openness which will be reciprocated by all those participating.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Organisational knowledge and information gained during the job shadowing arrangement which is deemed to be confidential will remain confidential between the parties.

## PARTNERSHIP

The University of Sussex job shadowing scheme is aimed at creating and developing partnerships between Schools, Departments and Divisions. Those parties participating in the scheme will be acting as ambassadors and will agree to the continuous development of partnerships throughout the University.

## ENGAGEMENT

All staff participating will agree to adhere to the guidelines of the University of Sussex's job shadowing scheme.

## ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### FIND OUT MORE:

[www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development)

[od@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:od@sussex.ac.uk)

01273 606755 (ext: 4806)

Organisational Development  
supports the University's staff to  
realise their full potential.  
We provide a range of workshops  
designed to enhance the skills and  
knowledge of employees.



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