

### What is the Student Project Scheme/Shell Step?

The Student Project Scheme, which incorporates Shell Step, is different from many work placement or work experience programmes because you are given your own project-based assignment for which you are responsible on a day-to-day basis. The status of your project will mean regular contact with senior members of the management team. For the first time you will be able to put theory into practice, using your own initiative to reach a successful conclusion.

The scheme provides you with an opportunity to gain practical experience within a real work environment. An eight-week placement prior to your final year should be seen as an excellent investment in the rest of your life. Why? Because you will be able to use the skills you have developed throughout your project during your final year of study and you will be able to show potential employers that you have the skills and experience they so often require.

### By taking part you can gain on three levels:

**Personal Skills:** You will learn how to manage your time, work with others, manage and present information. You will also grow in self-confidence and other areas of personal development.

**Course Work:** You will be able to use the skills you have developed during your course.

**Future Career:** You will be able to show to future employers that you have the skills and experience that they are increasingly looking for in graduates.

### Who are the Companies?

The companies are all in the small and medium enterprise sector (SME), which means they generally have fewer than 250 employees, many with considerably less.

This provides an excellent opportunity to get close to all aspects of the business that is not usually possible in larger organisations.

SMEs will appeal to those who will want to demonstrate their enterprise and initiative without the constraints often found by being a 'small fish in a big pond'.

The companies are located throughout the West Midlands area and several are in rural locations. We, therefore, have greater flexibility placing students who have access to their own transport.

There is a wide range of companies and students often have the opportunity of doing a project in a business area that is otherwise unfamiliar.

The companies taking part also expect to benefit from the project undertaken. They have limited resources in terms of skill, staff, time and money, yet they recognise that these projects will make a positive contribution to the future of their business.

Although the scheme is a very practical way of giving the student relevant experience, at the same time, the company will expect results.

## What are the Projects?

Projects, like the companies, take many different forms. Generally they are of a technological or business nature.

They usually cover areas like engineering, manufacturing, information systems, computing and business, but there are sometimes placements in other areas.

## Examples of projects undertaken recently included:

- Creation of a computer simulation model
- Undertaking an environmental audit
- Designing Internet web pages
- Writing and modifying computer systems
- Design, build and implement new machines
- Produce inter-active software package
- Researching the market potential for new products and services
- Sales analysis, financial and business planning

Sometimes the course the student was doing did not obviously fit the project, but the student soon discovered that they already possessed the skills that could be used to achieve the desired results.

Students also get the opportunity to develop skills in interpersonal relationships, lateral thinking, innovation, communication, research and teamwork - transferable skills valuable to any organisation.

***If you think you are up to the challenge,  
we will be pleased to hear from you.***

## How the scheme works:

1. Applications may be made from January and must be received by 28 May 2008.
2. During the Spring, companies throughout the West Midlands work with Science Park staff to identify suitable projects.
3. Science Park staff review projects and student applications to find potentially suitable matches.
4. Applications from selected students are forwarded to the company for consideration, and interviews are arranged during early summer.
5. Placement offers and contracts are drawn up for successful students. Students are not employed directly by the Company or the Science Park but are paid an Industrial Training Award.
6. Successful students attend induction by qualified trainers before the start of the project.
7. Science Park staff visit students and the host company supervisors during the placement.
8. Mid-way through the placement, students return for a review and further project management training.
9. At the end of the placement, students are expected to produce a report and make a presentation to a panel of judges.
10. Students with the best overall performance receive cash prizes and may have the opportunity to go forward to the Regional and National Shell Step Finals.

## For further information:

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**Science Park**

## What students have said:

*It has been a fantastic opportunity working for a company so dynamic and open to new ways to develop projects.*

**Yannis Maos, Rapide Communication Ltd  
(Local & Central England Winner)**

*By working with a real business, I have a better understanding of the problems faced with a business and how they are overcome.*

**Daniel Bull, noise.co.uk  
(Runner-up Local)**

*I enjoyed every moment of the experience and hope to bring this experience with me as a reminder of where I started to learn about business.*

**Emma Hayles, URHired.com**

*I feel that this experience has been excellent for my personal and professional development.*

**Amardeep Singh, Production Modelling**

*Definitely an invaluable experience – learning curve about the business and myself.*

**Jaspreet Bans, Indigo Retail Holdings Ltd**

*I have always wanted to develop my skills, but this placement has really given me the opportunity to do this.*

**Charlotte Hughes, Customer Research Technology**

*As well as obtaining good experience for my CV, and to show future employers I have got a good understanding of what work is going to be like in my future chosen area.*

**Jonathan Packer, Indigo Retail Holdings Ltd**

*Throughout the project I have learnt many new skills, most notably through the adaptation and academic to business project management.*

**Fiona Holder, Athium Ltd**

*It has been a great experience for me to boost my team working. I worked with three managing directors on a daily basis.*

**Steven Heyburn, Buddyfit**

*I have been able to show, construct and implement an entire marketing project, and have it as my own responsibility.*

**Sunita Chanian, Pembroke Thomas (Direct) Ltd**