

# Work Experience – Key to Effective Recruitment

## A guide for RAC Contractors

Most 14 to 16 year old school pupils do one or two weeks work experience to learn about life outside school. It's a great opportunity to promote the refrigeration and air conditioning industry to potential recruits. If you already recruit school leavers, or intend to, then this is an opportunity to spread the word.

Work experience with RAC contractors:

- ☑ raises awareness of our industry – an invisible giant which is essential to life today and tomorrow;
- ☑ shows that the work is interesting, satisfying and varied, encompassing mechanical, electrical and electronic skills;
- ☑ highlights the job opportunities - there is a severe skills shortage which positive exposure through work experience can help to solve in the longer term.

Many young people enter our industry because they've enjoyed their work experience with RAC companies.

It also gives your staff the opportunity to improve their supervisory skills.

This leaflet is an introduction to work experience for refrigeration and air conditioning contractors. You can get more detailed information from the organisations listed on the last page.

### **Most of my work is on customers sites in plant rooms etc. – is this appropriate for school pupils?**

Yes – and beneficial. It's an advantage to show that not all jobs are factory, shop or office based – many young people would much rather be “out on the road” and independent. Most RAC end users offer work experience themselves in their shops, offices, hotels, factories etc. and are aware of the benefits. However, there are some premises where under 16's will not be allowed. You must, of course, ensure the young people understand the health and safety issues associated with working on site, and that they are always properly supervised.

### **Will my insurance cover me for school pupils?**

You should be covered by your employers liability insurance (insurers have agreed that pupils on work experience should be treated as employees for the purposes of insurance against personal injury). You must inform your insurance company that you will be providing work experience.

### **What about working time – can they work the same hours as my engineers?**

This is by agreement with the school, the student and his / her parents. In general young people should not be asked to work longer than eight hours a day, and they should not work more than five consecutive days out of seven.

### **What type of work can students carry out?**

The next two pages gives suggestions for planning an interesting and varied programme. For health and safety reasons students will have to observe some activities, but there are plenty of jobs which they can carry out themselves.

## How do I get started?

The information on the back page tells you what to do next. You will need to invest some time into planning the work experience, and you may find that you want to work more closely with local schools, for example giving careers talks and helping with technology related activities.

### Putting together a worthwhile programme

Your company and your work experience students will benefit if you:

- Plan the programme thoroughly;
- Ensure there is a variety of activities for the student;
- Involve your staff in the planning as well as the work experience.

Many contractors provide students on work experience with their own work clothes as well as PPE. This helps the student to feel “part of the team”.

### Supervision

Work experience students must be supervised. It's best if the same engineer can do this for the whole visit. Select the supervising engineer with care. He or she should be:

- Enthusiastic about his / her job;
- Willing and able to supervise a young person;
- Knowledgeable about your company and its customers, the RAC industry and prospects for young people;
- Technically experienced and competent.

The supervising engineer will probably have to be able to collect the student from home and return him / her back after work most days.

### Health and Safety

Understanding the importance of health and safety is an important part of work experience for young people. Many students will have had no experience of working, especially on site, and will be unaware of potential hazards. They should not use machinery or power tools, work with harmful substances or lift heavy equipment. It is essential they are properly briefed. This should include:

- Explaining to the student who he / she “reports to”;
- Explaining your company's health and safety policy;
- Showing how the PPE you provide should be used;
- Handing out relevant safety literature;
- Identifying to the student any areas and work which are prohibited;
- Outlining emergency procedures.

You will also need to carry out a work experience risk assessment. Guidelines for this are available from the Education Business Partnership (contact details are given on the last page).

## An example programme

This example programme is for a one week work experience placement with a contractor carrying out installation, service and maintenance work in the commercial refrigeration sector. It can be adapted for other sectors. Companies who do a greater variety of work, such as manufacturing can offer a wider range of activities. The programme should be flexible to take advantage of interesting opportunities from work in progress that week.

### Day 1, morning

Young people seldom have the experience to understand how a business operates, what is involved in the day to day running and what services it offers, The first day is your opportunity to cover this. During this induction you can give information about:

- Your company and its main business activities, size, customer base, number of employees and their roles;
- The refrigeration industry;
- Health and safety;
- Organisational information including who's who, what's where, start / finish times;
- Refrigeration technology – handling out a simple booklet may help here – see the back pages for suggestions. This will also give the student something to study when not otherwise occupied during the week.

This is the best time to introduce the supervising engineer(s) – it's useful if he / she is present at the induction.

### Day 1, afternoon

Structured time with staff from different departments including accounts, sales / marketing, service, human resources and project engineering. A member of staff from each department should explain what the department does, and if possible give the student a short job to do. This could include adding information into a spreadsheet to produce a report, for example on refrigerant usage; answering the phone and taking messages.

### Day 2

Time on site with the supervising engineer carrying out routine maintenance work. The supervising engineer should explain what he / she is doing and why. For much of the time the student will be observing and listening, but he / she can do some jobs such as

- Leak testing;
- Logging operating temperatures and pressures and using a comparator to check evaporating and condensing temperatures from pressures;
- Checking and noting oil and liquid line sight glasses;
- Checking and noting condition of cold store / cabinet structure, pipe insulation, door strips, night blinds.

### Day 3, morning

Time with a project engineer sizing equipment. After the project engineer explains his / her job, the student could:

- Use a computer programme to calculate heat loads, select equipment or size pipe work;
- Accompany an project engineer on a site survey;
- Do a simple costing exercise.

### Day 3, afternoon

Time in the workshop with the workshop supervisor. The student could:

- Help to strip down failed components such as compressors;
- Help assemble or dress units.

### Day 4, all day and Day 5, morning

Time on site with the supervising engineer carrying out service work. In most cases the engineer will need to explain the problem and solution, and the student will observe and help. The student could complete the paperwork and copy this for his / her own log book.

### Day 5 afternoon

De briefing session with time for the student to complete his / her log book. You could ask the student to give a brief presentation on what he / she has learnt during work experience. Including the staff who have worked with the student in this increases their morale and improves team working. You can use the de briefing session to identify how you can improve work experience for future students. Some contractors use a questionnaire to get feedback from the student.

Note – the student will receive a visit from a teacher during the placement. Time needs to be provided for this. Students complete a log book of their work experience – they may need time to do this.

## The logistics

The organisation of work experience varies with different local authorities. In general the Local Education Authority (LEA) or the local Education Business Partnership (EBP) organises work experience with school and local businesses. To start with you should contact your local Education Business Partnership by contacting:

National Education Business Partnership Network  
188 Main Street  
New Greenham Park  
Thatcham  
Berks., RG19 6HW.  
Phone 01635 279911, fax 01635 279919  
[www.nebpn.org](http://www.nebpn.org)  
[office@nebpn.org](mailto:office@nebpn.org)

The website is the simplest way to find information about your local EBP.

You will need to provide information about:

- Your company;
- The tasks the young person would carry out;
- How many placements you can offer and when;
- The refrigeration and air conditioning industry as a background to your company, its customers and the type of work you carry out. It is helpful to include information about the range of skills and knowledge a refrigeration engineer uses such as mechanical, electrical and electronic practical and theoretical engineering, communication and trouble shooting.

Later on you will also need to provide a completed health and safety questionnaire and will need to have your employer and public liability certificates available for inspection. You will also need to complete a risk assessment – the EBP will help you do this. This information is passed onto the parents.

When your offer has been accepted you will probably receive a profile of students who will be doing their work experience with you. In most cases you will be required to “interview” the students before they start the placement. This is good experience for them, and can be used to provide experience in interviewing techniques for your staff. This is the opportunity to explain the type of work which the student will be doing and start / finish times, transport arrangements (if necessary) and suggested work wear.

At the end of the placement you will probably be asked to report on the students’ work experience.

## For more information ...

For more detailed information about work experience for employers:

- Work Experience – a guide for employers, published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), ref number SPD/WEE 01/1199;
- Improving Work Experience – a good practice guide for employers, published by the DfEE, ref number EG1.

For these publications phone 0845 60 222 60, or fax 0845 60 333 60, or email [dfee@prologistics.co.uk](mailto:dfee@prologistics.co.uk) or visit the website [www.dfef.gov.uk/wexps](http://www.dfef.gov.uk/wexps)

For help on recruitment and training for the heating, ventilating, air conditioning and refrigeration industries, including work experience:

- Recruitment and training in three simple stages, published by the Engineering Services Training Trust Ltd (ESTTL), phone 0191 490 3306, fax 0191 477 5737, email [contact@esttl.org.uk](mailto:contact@esttl.org.uk) or visit the website [www.esttl.org.uk](http://www.esttl.org.uk)

For information about careers in refrigeration and air conditioning contact the Institute of Refrigeration, phone 020 8647 7033, fax 020 8773 0165, email [miriam@ior.org.uk](mailto:miriam@ior.org.uk) or visit the website [www.ior.org.uk](http://www.ior.org.uk)

For brief guides to refrigeration technology:

- Good Practice Guide 280 Energy efficient refrigeration technology – the fundamentals, published by the Government’s Action Energy programme;
- Everyone’s Guide to Saving energy in refrigeration, published by the Government’s Action Energy programme.

For both these publications contact the Energy and Environment Helpline on 0800 585794 or visit the website [www.actionenergy.org.uk](http://www.actionenergy.org.uk)

If you wanted to invest in a text book “Refrigeration Equipment” by A C Bryant is a good start, ISBN0 7506 0007 1, available through bookshops.

The Institute of Refrigeration’s Service Engineer section (see above for contact details) also provides information which may be useful for the supervising engineer and the student.